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Social Capital, Urban Settings and Demographic Behavior in Latin America

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Abstract

Based on probabilistic samples of 12,000 adults in eight Latin American countries, this article studies two dimensions of social capital—(1) community participation and (2) trust in neighbors—and their relation with urbanization, fertility, out-migration, and crime. Its purpose is to determine whether social capital explains some of the differential demographic behavior of urban populations. The data show that social capital clearly declines with urbanization, although the urban-poor show a bit higher community participation. There is a clear gradient of increased crime and reduced social capital related to urbanization. The relationship between social capital and fertility and migration is less clear and often restricted to certain sub-populations. The urban-poor do not exhibit demographic behavior significantly different than the expected given its compositional and spatial characteristics.

Basándose en muestras probabilísticas de 12.000 adultos de ocho países latinoamericanos, se estudian dos dimensiones del capital social –(1) participación comunitaria y (2) confianza en los vecinos– y su relación con urbanización, fecundidad, emigración y crimen. El objetivo es determinar el grado en que el capital social explica el comportamiento demográfico diferenciado que presentan las poblaciones urbanas. Los datos muestran que capital social claramente disminuye con la urbanización, aunque los pobres de las ciudades exhiben una participación comunitaria algo mayor. Se observa una clara gradiente de mayor crimen y menor capital social asociados a urbanización. La relación de capital social con fecundidad y emigración es menos clara y con frecuencia restringida a ciertas subpoblaciones. Los pobres de las ciudades no muestran un comportamiento demográfico significativamente distinto de lo esperado dadas sus características composicionales y espaciales.

Keywords

Social capital, Latin America, urbanization, out-migration, fertility, crime

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