Project Description

The right to identity and the right to birth registration are fundamental rights protected in international human rights law. Through efforts to formalize and strengthen the right to identity and the registration of births, the United Nations and other international organizations have developed strategies to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their status or background, are able to access the benefits of having a birth certificate. In Ecuador, the under-registration rate of children under five is due in part to a combination of socioeconomic factors, such as rural population density, poverty levels, and limited access to birth registration services. The government of Ecuador is committed to achieving universal birth registration for all citizens, and the country’s 2010 census highlights the importance of this goal, as it shows that 10% of the population lacks a birth certificate.

Techniques

Identifying Regions of High Risk to Under-Registration of Births in Ecuador

Identifying factors

- Parents with low schooling or who cannot read - measured by the literacy rate.
- Parents without health insurance - measured using the median household income for the parish.
- Parents with no national identity card - measured by the rate of the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian population.
- Parents lacking a national identification card, size measured by the illiteracy rate.
- Parents from households with low education levels - measured by the mean distance to an office.

Using some of these hypothesized factors, this project identified regions where there is a higher risk of under-registration. These factors were found to be strongly correlated with the under-registration rate. Specifically, factors such as low literacy rates, lack of health insurance, and lack of national identity cards were found to be significant predictors of under-registration. The project also found that regions with higher population density and lower median household income were more likely to have higher under-registration rates.

At Risk Score by Parish

Population Density by Parish (per square km) and Risk Score

0 - 12.2 (Low Risk) 13 - 25.4 (High Risk)
34.7 - 50.5 (Medium Risk)
0.0 - 47.0 (11 - Low Risk)

Ecuador General Directorate for Civil Registration and Population Census (2010)

Calculating the “Risk Score”

Each parish was assigned a “risk score” ranging from 0 to 4, based on how prone it might be to having a high under-registration rate (or low birth registration rate). In a rural parish, if in the top quintile of the data on population density, the parish was assigned the low risk score of 1. However, in the case of population density, the scoring was reversed, since areas with lower population density have a higher risk of under-registration. In this case, the parish falling in the top quintile, whether density was high or low, was assigned a risk score of 4, while the bottom quintile received a risk score of 0.

Creating a composite map with an overall “risk score”

Finally, the risk scores for each of the five factors were added together to create a composite risk score. This was done by summing the scores for each of the five factors to create a single overall risk score.

Limitations

This project only includes five of the major factors that the literature suggests may lead to birth registration rates. It is certainly not an exhaustive list. Some of the major factors that were not included in the analysis are distance to an office and limited access to health care services. These factors may play an important role in determining the under-registration rate.

Results and Conclusions

There are 9 regions that have a high risk score of 3 or above. A high risk score of 3 or above indicates that the region has a significant under-registration rate. These regions are characterized by low median household income, high parish percentages or rates, and face more administrative barriers to registration. The regions with the highest risk scores are in the central and southern parts of the country. These regions have a high proportion of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations, which are more likely to face administrative barriers to registration.

Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Populations, Parishes at Risk

Population with No Identity Card by Parish (%) and Risk Score

3 - 1.48 (1 - Low Risk)
14 - 25.2 (3 - High Risk)
15 - 56.3 (4 - High Risk)

Ecuador General Directorate for Civil Registration and Population Census (2010)

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Data Sources:

- Ecuador Population and Housing Census, 2010
- Ecuador General Directorate for Civil Registration and Identification, 2010
- Ecuador Institute of Statistics and Censuses, 2010

Course:

- International Applications, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.