Objective. To assess the prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections among children in highly deprived areas, and its possible association with demographic and socioeconomic indicators. Material and Methods. From March to September 1998 in a convenience sample of 32 communities of the border region of Chiapas, Mexico, selected at random based on the level of poverty and distance from the community to the nearest health care unit (<1 hour; 1 hour or more), one of every four households with children under 15 years of age was randomly selected to provide three stool samples from their children (n 1478). Bivariate and multivariate (generalized linear models for correlated binary data) analysis were performed. Results. The global prevalence of intestinal parasitosis was 67% (95% confidence interval [CI] 64-70%). Sixty percent had multiple parasites. The prevalence of Entamoeba histolytica/E dispar was 51.2%, that of Giardia lamblia 18.3%, and that of Ascaris lumbricoides 14.5%. Multivariate analysis showed that age and speaking an indigenous language were significantly associated with the presence of E histolytica/ E dispar and Giardia lamblia. Source of water and lacking a refrigerator and electricity were associated with the presence of Ascaris lumbricoides. Conclusions. Measures should be taken to improve water quality, sewage disposal, and domestic hygiene. Furthermore, health programs should be established to promote breast-feeding, and education policies aimed at reinforcing the use of indigenous languages by physicians in the health services.

Keywords
intestinal parasitosis; poverty; child health; multivariate analysis; Mexico