Abstract

In Latin America, the proportion of people in middle and late age who are cohabiting is higher than in industrialized countries. Some scholars consider cohabitation as an incomplete institution, where couples fare worse in economic and social well-being compared to marriage. The paper's goal is to analyze whether cohabiting couples in old age face a different economic situation than married couples, and whether this difference is due to the fact that cohabiters might be a selected group from the general population. The analysis focuses on Mexican couples where at least one of the partners was older than 49, by using the first wave of the Mexican Health and Aging Survey (MHAS) 2001 dataset, and part of the 2003 second wave. After controlling for compositional variables (related to selection into consensual unions), the paper finds no significant difference in net worth, change in net worth (from 2001 to 2003), and perceived financial situation between married and cohabiting couples, but there is on the likelihood of owning a house.

Keywords

Cohabitation, elderly, Mexico.