

The condition of youths in Latin America: demands and ways of tackling health inequities

Since the first decade of the 21st Century, the *condition of youths* has been reflected in numerous diagnostics and research in Latin America¹, seeking to broaden the understanding of the social situation of youth and subsidize public policies, focusing on the 15- to 29-year-old group in the case of Brazil. One of the assumptions claims that youth cannot be understood as a transitory phase for adult life and that the expectations of autonomy, emancipation, and insertion in the social life of this population segment are differentiated due to local and regional structural inequalities².

This is tantamount to saying that the ways of existing, (re)producing life and obtaining access and opportunities for young people are heterogeneous and marked by the social and territorial scenario, characterized by material conditions, gender relations, sexual norms and ethnic-racial traits. Thus, themes related to health, education, work, culture, public safety, sexual diversity and social and political participation, render current representations problematic about the meaning of being young, considering the specificities of the contexts in which the different youth trajectories develop.

In this thematic issue, we seek to elicit debate on aspects that address the relationship between the contemporary condition of youth and health in Latin American countries. This initiative results from the efforts of *Agenda Jovem Fiocruz*, a collaborative platform of Fiocruz, in the production of conceptual and methodological inputs for the formulation of policies aimed at youth with a focus on health. The issues raised by the 25 articles map current concerns, including: epidemiological and socio-anthropological analyses of health problems that affect young people; violence; evaluations of services for the care of the youth population and studies on contemporary phenomena, as the effects of the use of information and communication technologies.

The articles illustrate the contribution and potential of the health field for public policies aimed at youth and invites an intersectoral and multidisciplinary dialogue. They seek to expand the historical approaches on adolescence in health research, focusing on risk factors and/or protection of behaviors, health education and situations of vulnerability. Although adolescence is part of the juvenile condition, we stress that it does not exhaust the heuristic potential of analyses that reach the highest age groups. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to themes that strongly question the health of youth, such as the multiple expressions of violence, the health of young people who occupy informal and precarious jobs, the intersectionality of gender, race and class and contemporary youth activism beyond the reified notion of the protagonism of youth.

Lastly, this thematic issue was produced in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that revealed a situation of dramatic vulnerability for a significant portion of young people. The need for survival, the challenges for the education of young people and the increase in poverty and hunger, illustrate how the health field can say far more about the contemporary condition of youth.

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