Impact Evaluation
Program *Jóvenes con Porvenir*

Zapopan Jalisco, Mexico

Beatriz Magaloni Kerpel

Alberto Díaz Cayeros

Brenda Jarillo Rabling

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The program *Jóvenes con Porvenir* offers free vocational training courses for out-of-school youth aged 15 - 30 who live in Zapopan, a municipality in the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

The goal of the program is to promote employment among young people, encourage school reinsertion, and reduce social exclusion and vulnerability to organized crime.

1. Program Description

*Jóvenes con Porvenir (*Youth with Hope*)* is a vocational training program in Zapopan, a municipality in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, Mexico. The program offers free training courses for out-of-school youth aged 15 - 30 who live in the municipality. The goal of the program is to promote employment among young people, encourage school reinsertion, and reduce social exclusion and vulnerability to organized crime.

In Mexico, only 62% of 16 year olds are enrolled in school. About one fourth of Mexicans aged 15 to 29 are neither enrolled in school nor employed. Furthermore, about 43% of those aged 12 to 29 live in poverty.

Jóvenes con Porvenir is a public-funded program run by the government of Zapopan. This pioneering policy initiative was designed and implemented in response to the major social and economic challenges affecting young people. The program offers scholarships to young man and women not enrolled in school, so they can attend vocational training courses regardless of their employment status.

In order to tackle the social and economic issues affecting the youth in Zapopan, the program *Jóvenes con Porvenir* offers scholarships to young man and women not enrolled in school, so they can attend vocational training courses regardless of their employment status.

The scholarship fully covers the tuition of a course that lasts approximately six months. Participants enroll in one course per semester, and can take as many as three consecutive courses (e.g., 18 months of schoolwork as a maximum).

The municipal government established agreements with over 50 training centers, public and private universities, educational institutes, and academies, to offer a wide array of courses. Through this collaboration, 350 courses were offered in the initial semester of the program reaching 750 by the fourth semester.

From February 2013 to February 2015, the program granted nearly 32,000 scholarships to almost 24,000 beneficiaries. About 30.7% of all participants reenrolled in the program at least once. Overall, the program covered 10.8% of the targeted population (e.g., Zapopan's residents between 15 and 29 years old not enrolled in school).

2. Impact Evaluation

The impact evaluation aims to estimate the effect of the program in different aspects of the beneficiaries' professional and personal lives. More specifically, we evaluate the impact of the program on participants' employment and educational outcomes, access to professional networks, and weakening of social bonds to gang groups. In addition, we evaluate whether the program changed students' expectations of the future.

We estimate heterogeneous effects of the program across gender, age, and levels of marginalization. The evaluation also includes an analysis of graduation and reenrollment rates, as well as an assessment of beneficiaries' experience in the program. Finally, the study provides feedback on the design and implementation of the program for scaling-up purposes.

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2.1 Program Targeting

The analysis of beneficiaries' socioeconomic information sheds light on the characteristics of the people who enrolled in the program. Data was gathered from scholarship application of all the participants in the second to fifth cohorts of the program[1].

Overall, the distribution of beneficiaries by gender shows that more than half of the participants in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* were women. Further, women increased their participation rate in the program from 58.8% in the second cohort to 65.8% in the fifth one. Similarly, participants 23 years old or more also increased their participation from 33.2% to 53.3% in the same period.

**Distribution of Beneficiaries of *Jóvenes con Porvenir*
by Cohort, Gender, Age Group, and Level of Marginalization**

	Cohort				
	2nd	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**Total**
Total Program Beneficiaries	**7,740**	**8,075**	**9,140**	**3,769**	**28,724**
Gender					
Female	58.8%	62.9%	67.3%	65.8%	**63.6%**
Male	41.2%	37.1%	32.7%	34.2%	**36.4%**
Age					
Less than 23 years old	66.8%	45.7%	48.4%	46.7%	**52.4%**
23 years old or more	33.2%	54.3%	51.6%	53.3%	**47.6%**
Level of Marginalization					
Low	28.2%	39.2%	37.8%	35.1%	**35.2%**
Medium	46.7%	42.5%	43.5%	42.4%	**43.9%**
High	25.1%	18.3%	18.7%	22.5%	**20.8%**
Gangs Presence in the Neighborhood					
No	69.5%	68.6%	68.2%	67.7%	**68.6%**
Yes	30.5%	31.4%	31.8%	32.3%	**31.4%**
Neighborhoods by Level of Crime Rates					
Low crime rate	68.8%	74.1%	74.6%	73.5%	**72.8%**
High crime rate	31.2%	25.9%	25.4%	26.5%	**27.2%**

[1] The researchers did not have access to socioeconomic information of the first cohort of students.

About 21% of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* participants came from neighborhoods with high levels of marginalization. The percentage of participants residing in these neighborhoods decreased from 25.1% in the second cohort to 18.3% in the third one. Nonetheless, this tendency reversed in the fourth and fifth cohorts, when it increased to 22.5% and 18.7%, respectively.

The Institute of Training and Educational Offering (ICOE, according to its Spanish acronym) – the municipal agency implementing *Jóvenes con Porvenir* – carried out concerted efforts to promote higher rates of participation amongst youth living in highly-marginalized neighborhoods. Nevertheless, this group of beneficiaries was slightly under-represented in the program[2/].

ICOE was able to increase the participation of youth in neighborhoods of high marginalization. Nevertheless, this group of beneficiaries was slightly under-represented in the program.

Around 31.4% of participants of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* came from neighborhoods with gang activity.

Spatial Distribution of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* Participants and Gang Activity in Zapopan
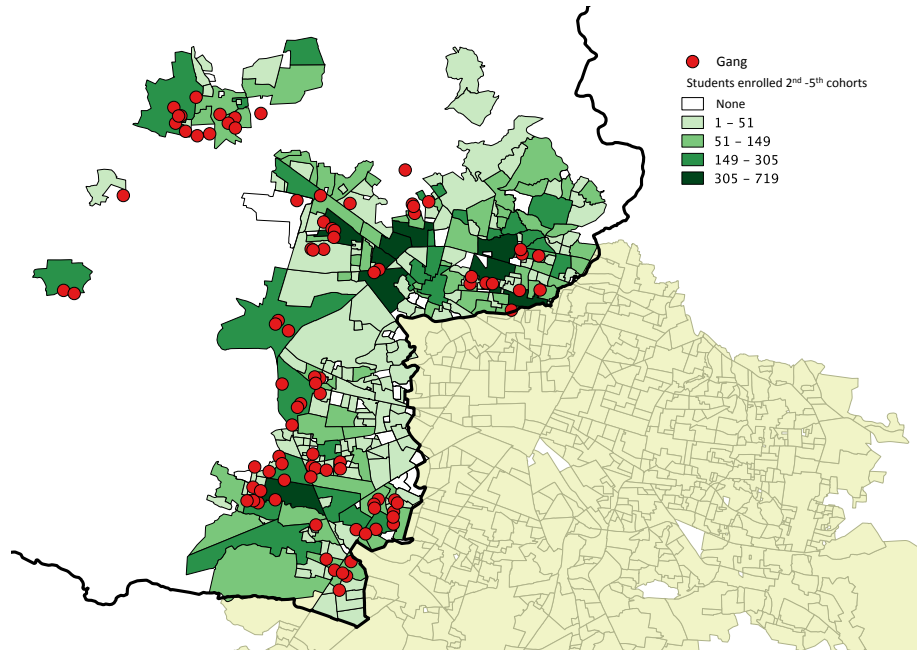
The map above shows neighborhoods with reported gang presence. This data was collected by Zapopan's Public Security Office a year before *Jóvenes con Porvenir* was implemented. An estimated 31.4% of program's participants came from these neighborhoods. This percentage was constant across cohorts.

2/ Enrollment rates of participants residing in highly marginalized neighborhoods were lower than the proportion of young people between 15 and 24 years old that are not studying and live in highly-marginalized neighborhoods according to census data.

Overall, 27.2% of participants came from neighborhoods with high crime rates.

70.5% of the overall number of students graduated from their courses.

30.9% of the total number of students enrolled in more than one round of the program.

We also identified neighborhoods with high crime rates using official data provided by municipal security forces. About 27.2% of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* participants came from these neighborhoods. This percentage was higher during the second round of the program (31.2%) and decreased in subsequent rounds as the proportion of residents of less-marginalized neighborhoods enrolled in the program.

The slight underrepresentation of youth from Zapopan's highly-marginalized neighborhoods is largely explained by the fact that such areas are located in the outskirts of the municipality. As such, transportation costs (time and money) to participate in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* were higher than for those who lived in more centric neighborhoods.

Based on information collected by our survey, we find that students from highly-marginalized neighborhoods spent 20 more minutes on average to commute to their classes, and had transportation costs 20% higher than the rest of the students.

Taking these results together we conclude that, although the overall underrepresentation of participants from highly-marginalized areas, the program was successful in reaching the neighborhoods with gang presence and high criminal activity, where there is a high number of at-risk youth.

Finally, we find that 70.5% of the beneficiaries from the second to the fifth cohorts graduated from their courses. Furthermore, 30.9% of the total number of students enrolled in more than one round of the program. The terminal efficiency and the propensity to reenroll in subsequent rounds were found to be conditioned by the student's socioeconomic circumstances, monetary expenditures, class schedule, course and school's characteristics, as well as by situations that occurred throughout the course.

Young women and students over 23 years old had higher graduation and reenrollment rates than the rest of the students. Also, the study finds that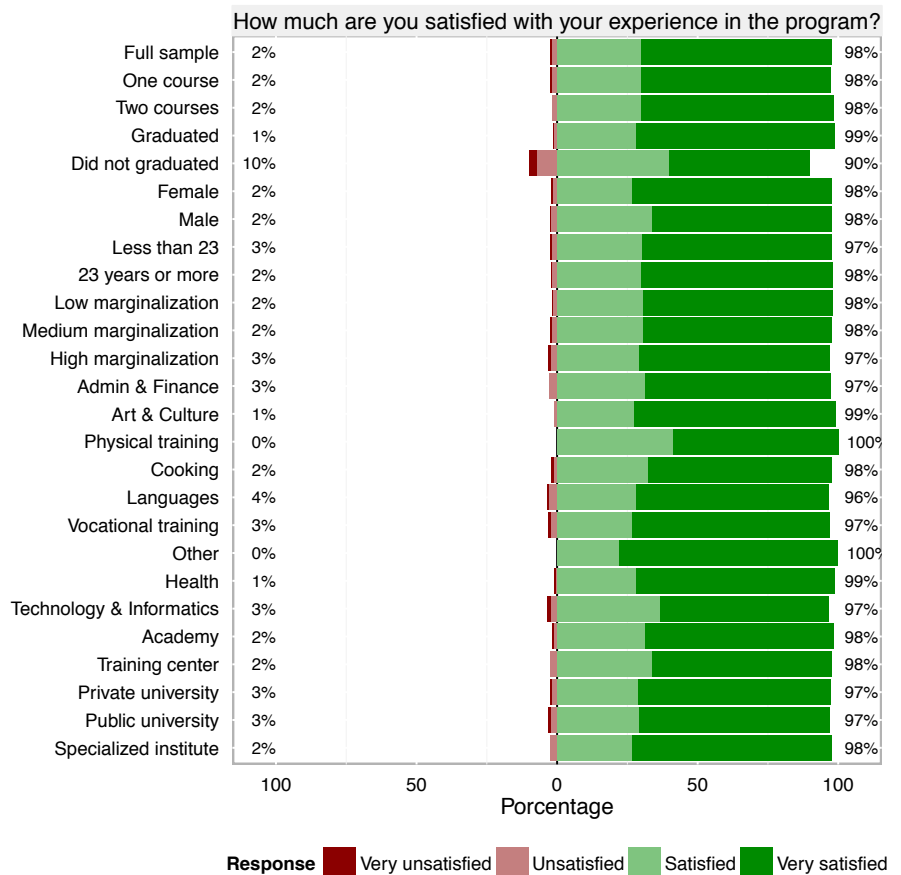 students are less likely to graduate from their courses or to reenroll in the program when they face scheduling conflicts, report a preference for working over studying, or live in neighborhoods with high crime rates.

2.2 Beneficiaries' Assessment of the Program

We selected a random sample of the students (about 10%) from the third and fourth cohorts of the program. We asked them about their experience in the program, including quality of facilities, professors, and course contents. The satisfaction rate of the program in our sample of students was 97.6 %.

Satisfaction Rate, *Jóvenes con Porvenir* Program

How much are you satisfied with your experience in the program?

Category	Negative	Positive
Full sample	2%	98%
One course	2%	98%
Two courses	2%	98%
Graduated	1%	99%
Did not graduated	10%	90%
Female	2%	98%
Male	2%	98%
Less than 23	3%	97%
23 years or more	2%	98%
Low marginalization	2%	98%
Medium marginalization	2%	98%
High marginalization	3%	97%
Admin & Finance	3%	97%
Art & Culture	1%	99%
Physical training	0%	100%
Cooking	2%	98%
Languages	4%	96%
Vocational training	3%	97%
Other	0%	100%
Health	1%	99%
Technology & Informatics	3%	97%
Academy	2%	98%
Training center	2%	98%
Private university	3%	97%
Public university	3%	97%
Specialized institute	2%	98%

Porcentage

Response: Very unsatisfied | Unsatisfied | Satisfied | Very satisfied

Satisfaction levels are similar across groups of age, gender, and marginalization level, as well as by type of course taken, and educational center. The lowest levels of satisfaction were reported by students who did not finish their course.

The terminal efficiency and propensity to reenroll in the program were higher for women and youth older than 23 years old.

Students were less likely to graduate from their courses or to reenroll in the program when they faced scheduling conflicts, reported a preference for working over studying, or lived in neighborhoods with high crime rates.

The satisfaction rate with *Jóvenes con Porvenir* was very high, 97.6 % of the sample reported being satisfied with the program.

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Students were also asked about the support provided by ICOE, the municipal agency implementing *Jóvenes con Porvenir*. Almost every interviewee expressed a positive opinion about ICOE's staff.

The majority of respondents reported a respectful and friendly treatment from ICOE's staff (97%), and indicated that their questions and needs were taken into account (95%). Also, 93% of respondents considered that ICOE's personnel had a good communication strategy, and 90% indicated that the institute was well organized and coordinated.

**Think About ICOE's Assistance and Support,
To What Extent Do You Agree with the Following Statements?**
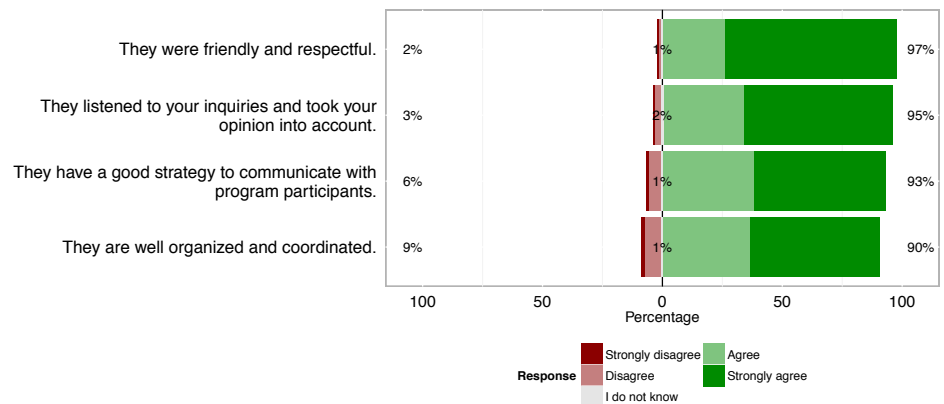
Students also reported a respectful and friendly attention by the educational institutions offering their course (98%), good communication with the students (95%), and adequate response to their questions and needs (95%). In addition, about 90% of the survey participants agreed that they were treated like any other student at the educational institute they attended.

To analyze the quality of the program, beneficiaries were asked to compare the school, teachers, and class contents of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* with their experience in their last year of formal education.
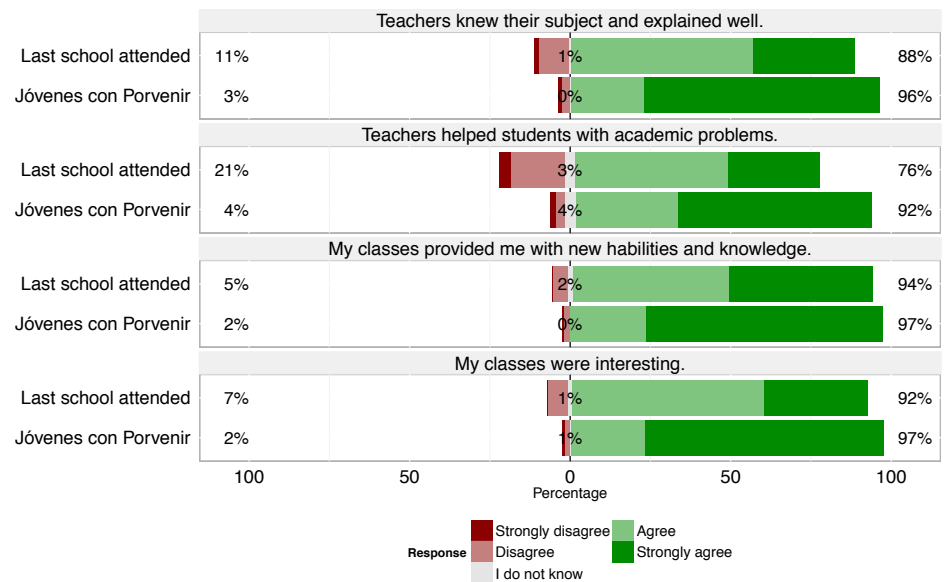
About 73% of the sample strongly agreed that teachers of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses were knowledgeable and explained concepts clearly. In comparison, 35% expressed a similar opinion regarding the teachers from their last year of formal education.

Further, 74% of the study's participants strongly agreed that the content of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses provided them with new skills and knowledge. Only 41% had the same opinion about their classes during the last year of their formal education.

Moreover, 74% of respondents strongly agreed that the course content at *Jóvenes con Porvenir* was interesting. In contrast, only 33% shared the same opinion regarding the classes of the last school attended.

43% of survey respondents reported frequent absenteeism of their classmates in the last school attended, while 33% reported similar behavior of their peers at *Jóvenes con Porvenir*.

Think About the Last School Attended/the Last Course in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* , To What Extent Do You Agree with the Following Statements?

Teachers knew their subject and explained well.
- Last school attended: 11% / 1% / 88%
- Jóvenes con Porvenir: 3% / 0% / 96%

Teachers helped students with academic problems.
- Last school attended: 21% / 3% / 76%
- Jóvenes con Porvenir: 4% / 4% / 92%

My classes provided me with new habilities and knowledge.
- Last school attended: 5% / 2% / 94%
- Jóvenes con Porvenir: 2% / 0% / 97%

My classes were interesting.
- Last school attended: 7% / 1% / 92%
- Jóvenes con Porvenir: 2% / 1% / 97%

Percentage

Response
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- I do not know
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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60% of respondents strongly agreed that teachers of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses helped students with academic problems. In contrast, 28% of them reported that teachers at the school they last attended helped students with academic difficulties.

The participants of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* also reported significantly better school conditions and learning environment than those experienced during their last year of formal education.
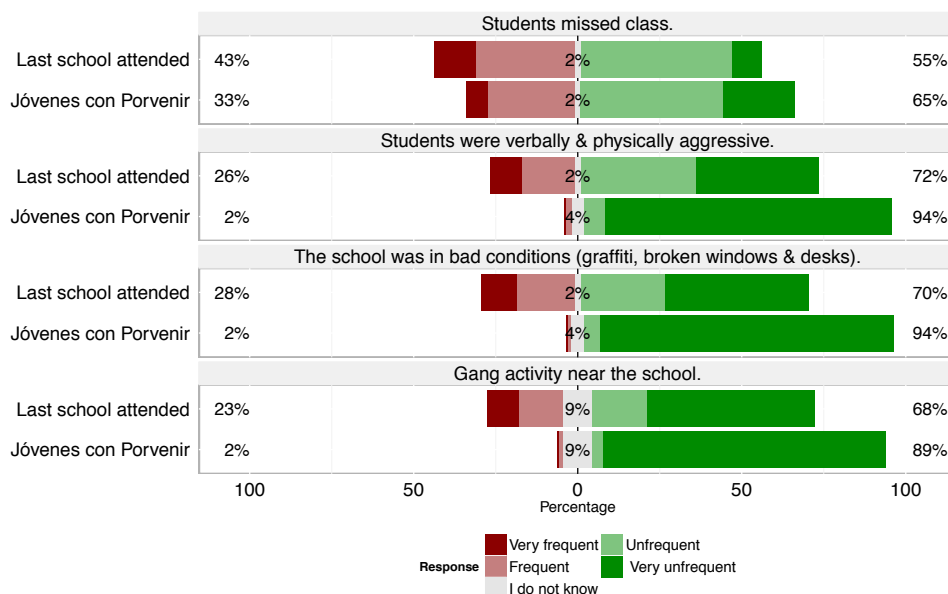
28% of the student sample reported building facilities in poor conditions in the last school attended, compared to the 2% that reported the same conditions of the facilities where they took *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses.

25% of the survey respondents reported that their peers physically and verbally assault other students at the last school they attended. In contrast, only 2% reported bullying in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses.

In the school you last attended course in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* ¿how frequent were the following situations?

	Students missed class.	
Last school attended	43%	2%	55%
Jóvenes con Porvenir	33%	2%	65%

	Students were verbally & physically aggressive.	
Last school attended	26%	2%	72%
Jóvenes con Porvenir	2%	4%	94%

	The school was in bad conditions (graffiti, broken windows & desks).	
Last school attended	28%	2%	70%
Jóvenes con Porvenir	2%	4%	94%

	Gang activity near the school.	
Last school attended	23%	9%	68%
Jóvenes con Porvenir	2%	9%	89%

Percentage: 100 — 50 — 0 — 50 — 100

Response
Very frequent — Unfrequent
Frequent — Very unfrequent
I do not know

Furthermore, only 2% of the interviewees reported gang activity near the educational institutions where they took *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses. This percentage is considerable lower than the 23% students that reported the presence of gangs near the school they last attended.
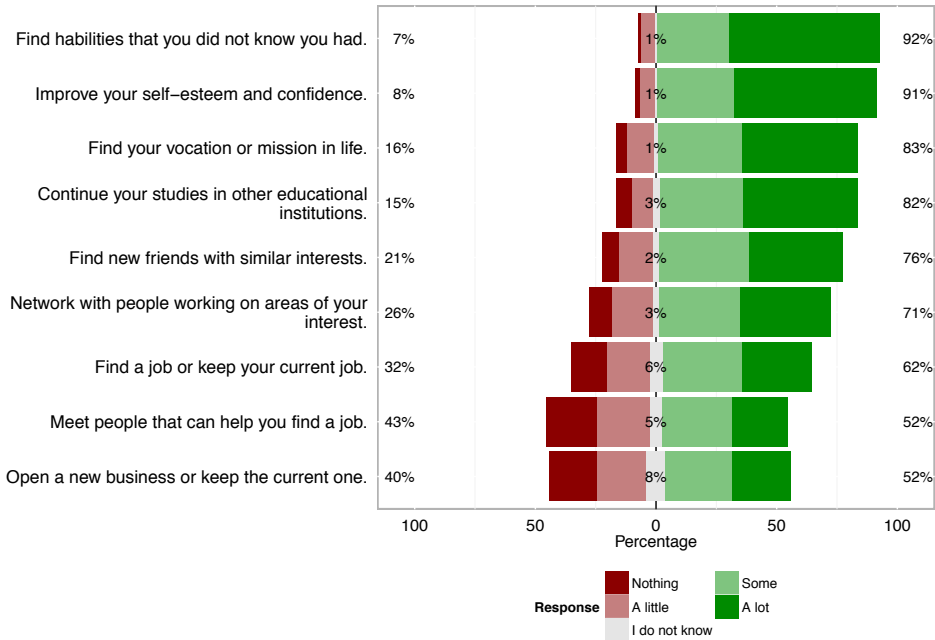
Survey participants were also asked their opinion on the success of the program in helping students achieving their goals. 27% of the sample indicated that what they learned in their courses helped them find their current job. Moreover, 5.7% reported finding their current job directly through the program—that is, either through its employment services or through a contact made via a classmate or an instructor.

27% of the interviewees reported that what they learned in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* helped them find their current job, and 5.7% indicated that they found their job directly through the program.

92% of the participants who were interviewed agreed that *Jóvenes con Porvenir* helped them develop abilities they did not know they had.

91% of the participants who were interviewed agreed that the program helped them improve their self-esteem and confidence.

How Much do You Think *Jóvenes con Porvenir* Helped You to Achieve the Following Objectives?

Objective	Nothing+A little	I do not know	A lot (right %)
Find habilities that you did not know you had.	7%	1%	92%
Improve your self–esteem and confidence.	8%	1%	91%
Find your vocation or mission in life.	16%	1%	83%
Continue your studies in other educational institutions.	15%	3%	82%
Find new friends with similar interests.	21%	2%	76%
Network with people working on areas of your interest.	26%	3%	71%
Find a job or keep your current job.	32%	6%	62%
Meet people that can help you find a job.	43%	5%	52%
Open a new business or keep the current one.	40%	8%	52%

Percentage

Response
Nothing — Some
A little — A lot
I do not know

Finally, 92% of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* beneficiaries in the sample reported that the program helped them develop abilities and talents they did not know they had; 91% said the program helped them improve their self-esteem and confidence; 83% declared the program helped them find their professional vocation; and 76% stated that the program helped them find a group of friends that shared common interests.

3. Impact Evaluation

The impact evaluation involved a quasi-experimental design with a treatment group (i.e. program beneficiaries) and a control group (i.e. youth not eligible to participate in the program). The control group serves as a counterfactual to measure what would have happened to the beneficiaries had they not participated in *Jóvenes con Porvenir.*

In contrast with experimental impact evaluations, which randomly assign interventions across two groups (treatment and control), quasi-experimental evaluations construct control groups with statistical techniques.

This impact evaluation is based on what is known as a "natural experiment". We exploit the fact that the program is targeted exclusively at Zapopan's residents but not at neighboring residents in Guadalajara's metropolitan area. The control group is then constructed by a random sample of young residents in the metropolitan area who are ineligible to participate in the program.

A panel survey was carried out using a random sample of 10% of the beneficiaries from the third and fourth cohorts of the program (1,635 students) and 875 young subjects in the control group. The sample was segmented by gender, age, and marginalization group at the block level. The baseline survey was carried out before *Jóvenes con Porvenir* courses started. The follow-up survey was implemented six months after the baseline survey, once courses had concluded.

Youth from the metropolitan area of Guadalajara were asked about their interest in participating in the program, in the hypothetically case that they were eligible. They were also asked about the course they would be interested in taking. Subjects who responded they would not subscribe to *Jóvenes con Porvenir* were excluded from the control group.

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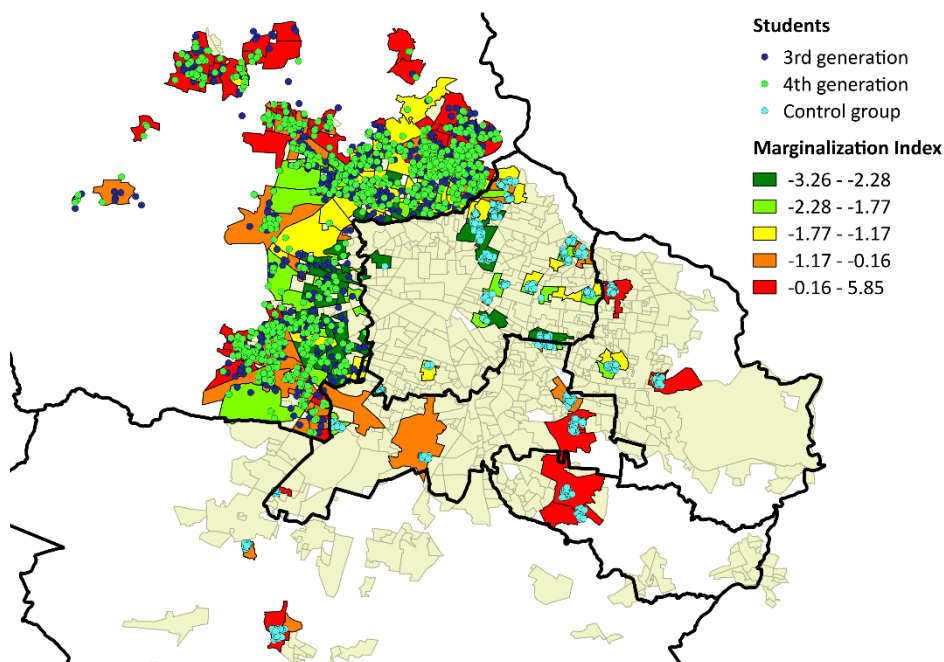
The impact evaluation of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* uses a Difference In Difference (DID) and matching strategies.

Individual weights for the control group were estimated using a "genetic" algorithm.

One of the main challenges of the empirical strategy of the study is to ensure that the control group is as similar as possible to the treatment group, in terms of the variables that simultaneously affect the decision to participate in the program and the outcomes of interest.

The impact evaluation of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* uses Difference In Difference (DID) and matching strategies. The DID methodology consists on comparing the outcome of interest over time between treatment and control groups.

Spatial Distribution of Treatment and Control Group Subjects by Levels of Marginalization

Students
- 3rd generation
- 4th generation
- Control group

Marginalization Index
- -3.26 - -2.28
- -2.28 - -1.77
- -1.77 - -1.17
- -1.17 - -0.16
- -0.16 - 5.85

The goal of the matching technique is to "balance" the treatment and control group in terms of the variables that are predictive of program participation, which in turn are correlated with the outcomes of interest. To achieve this balance, the strategy looks for individuals in the control group who are similar to those in the treatment group based on these variables.

Individual weights for the control group were estimated using a "genetic" algorithm. In order to minimize differences between the treatment and control groups, this algorithm also computes weights for the variables that are predictive of program participation. This technique performed better than other matching strategies.

3.1 Results

The results of the impact evaluation indicate that the program *Jóvenes con Porvenir* had a positive and statistically significant effect on the probability of getting a job, monthly income, hours of labor per week, access to professional networks, and beneficiaries' general optimism about their future.

With respect to the impact of the program on employment, in each round of interviews respondents were asked whether they had worked the week before participating in the survey. This binary variable was used to model the probability of being employed.

We found statistically significant effects of participation in the program on employment for participants under 23 years of age. For this age group, the model predicts an increase in the likelihood of being employed of 11 percentage points [3].

Predicted Probabilities of Being Employed
Logit Model using Genetic Matching
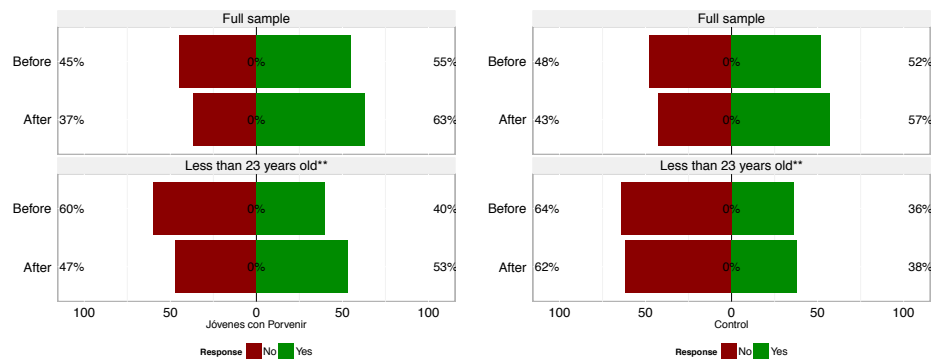
Notably, the estimated probability of employment among youth under 23 years of age is the lowest of all socio-demographic groups in our sample. This implies that *Jóvenes con Porvenir* increased the job opportunities of the age group that struggles the most in the labor market.

3/The impact of the program is estimated by subtracting the difference in the probability of employment between wave 2 and wave 1 for the treatment group from the corresponding difference for the control group. The estimated effect in the subsample of youth less than 23 years old is: (53% - 40%) – (38% - 36%) = 11 percentage points.
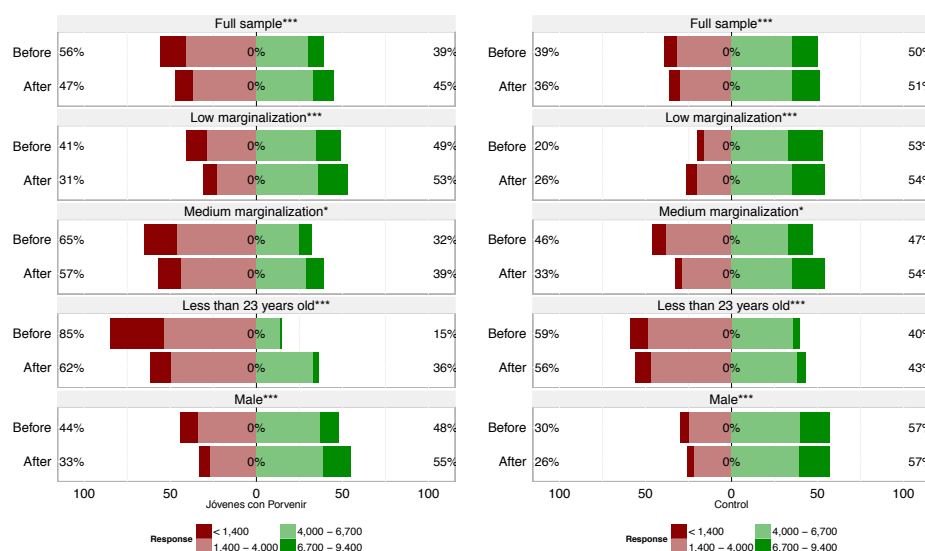

The results of the impact evaluation indicate that the program *Jóvenes con Porvenir* had a positive and statistically significant effect on the probability of getting a job, monthly income, hours of labor per week, access to professional networks, and beneficiaries' general optimism about their future.

In particular, we found that the program increased the probability of being employed in 11 percentage points for participants under 23 years of age.

The magnitude of this effect is similar to those of similar vocational training programs in Latin America.

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To estimate the impact on monthly income, we restricted the sample to subjects that reported being employed during both rounds of interviews. To reduce measurement error we use an ordinal measure of monthly wage, consisting of five ranges of reported salary [4].

We found that participation in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* had a positive impact on the monthly income of the full sample of beneficiaries. The effects were of greater magnitude for the subsamples of participants under 23 years of age, males, and residents of blocks with low and medium levels of marginalization. No significant effects were found for individuals coming from highly marginalized areas.

Jóvenes con Porvenir had a positive impact on the monthly income of the beneficiaries. The effects were of greater magnitude for the subsamples of participants under 23 years of age, males, and residents of blocks with low and medium levels of marginalization.

The largest effect on income was observed in the population of participants under 23 years of age. The model predicts that the program increased the probability of earning between $4,000 and $6,700 pesos per month (from 3 to 5 times the minimum wage) by 18 percentage points.

Predicted Probabilities for Monthly Income Bracket
Ordered Logit Model using Genetic Matching

The largest effect on income was observed for the subgroup of participants under 23 years of age. The model predicts that the program reduced the probability of earning less than $1,400 per month (equivalent to less than the minimum wage) by 18 percentage points, and increased the probability of earning between $4,000 and $6,700 pesos per month (from 3 to 5 times the minimum wage) by similar magnitude.

[4]/Less than 1,400 pesos (Less than minimum wage), between 1,400 and 4,000 pesos (from 1 to 3 minimum wages), between 4,000 and 6,700 pesos (from 3 to 5 minimum wages), between 6,700 and 9,400 pesos (from 5 to 7 minimum wages), and more than 9,400 pesos (more than 7 minimum wages).

The study found that, among beneficiaries from highly marginalized areas, program participation increased work hours by an average of 9 hours per week [5/.]

Another set of variables of interest includes school reinsertion and access to professional networks. No statistically significant effect was found in the probability of returning to school within 6 months after finishing the program.

With respect to access to professional networks, survey respondents were asked if they had met someone with a higher education degree over the past six months, and whether they had met someone who worked within their field or area of interest.

The results indicate that *Jóvenes con Porvenir* increased the likelihood of knowing someone with a higher education degree by 26 percentage points among those living in areas of high and medium levels of marginalization. We found no significant effect for participants coming from neighborhoods of low marginalization. Furthermore, the estimated impact on the likelihood of knowing someone with a higher education degree is positive and significant regardless of gender and age group.

The program also positively impacted the probability of meeting someone who worked in the field or area of interest of the beneficiaries. This effect is higher among participants from highly marginalized areas. For this group, we found that the program increased by 21 percentage points the probability of knowing someone in their field or area of interest.

Predicted Probabilities of Meeting Someone Working in the Area of Interest
**Logit Model using Genetic Matching**
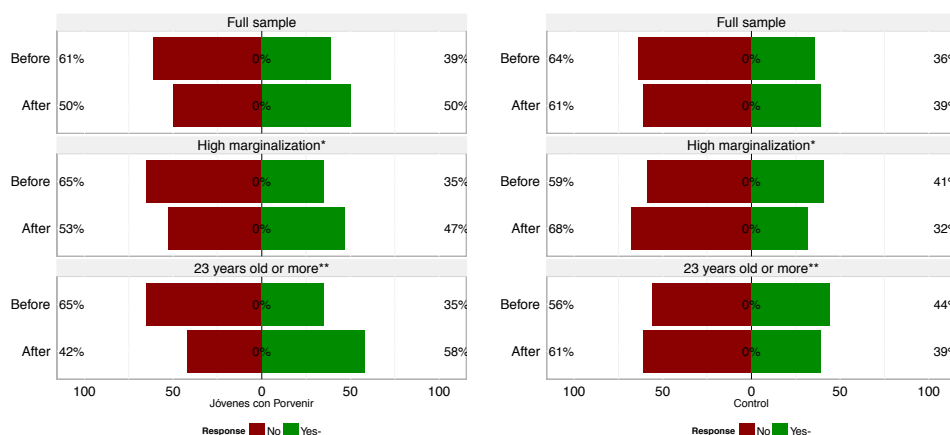
5/Respondents provided information regarding the number of hours worked each day of the week. We added them to construct a continuous variable of weekly hours of work.

Consistent with previous results, we did not find an effect on the probability of meeting people with similar professional interests among residents of low-marginalization blocks. This is mainly explained by the fact that such students have greater access to professional networks outside *Jóvenes con Porvenir*.

The study also found that the program reduced the prevalence of risk-prone behavior amongst youth. In particular, respondents were asked whether they had one or more friends involved with gangs.

Predicted Probabilities of Having a Friend Involved with Gangs
Logit Model using Genetic Matching
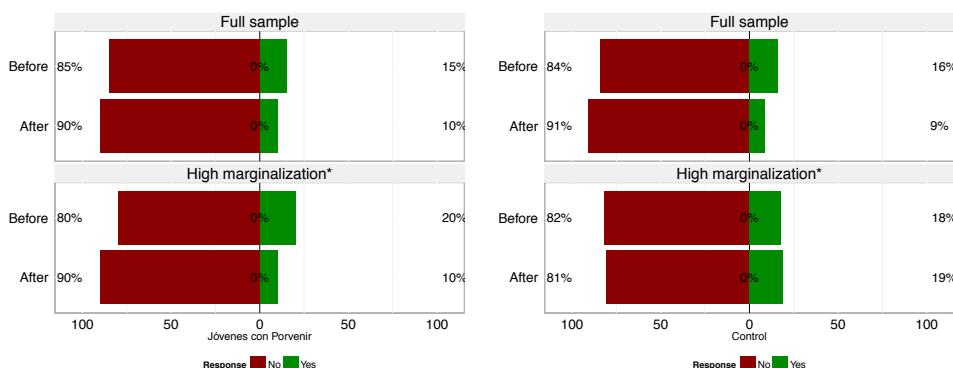
The study finds that participating in *Jóvenes con Porvenir* decreased the probability of having a friend involved with gangs by 10 percentage points among students aged 22 or less from highly-marginalized blocks.

Although the effect is only significant at the 90% confidence level, this result is relevant given that 31.4% of program participants came from neighborhoods with reported gang activity. Moreover, about 46% of survey respondents aged 15 – 22 and living in highly marginalized areas reported that they had friends linked to gang groups.

This result suggests that the program *Jóvenes con Porvenir* can be an effective prevention strategy to reduce youth violence and related behaviors among youth at-risk.

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Finally, the evaluation aimed to measure the impact of *Jóvenes con Porvenir* on beneficiaries' general optimism about their future[6/]. The study finds that *Jóvenes con Porvenir* increased the probability of feeling "very good" about the future by 7 percentage points for the full sample of students.

This effect is stronger among youth living in blocks of medium marginalization. For this subgroup, the model estimates an 11 percentage-point increase in the likelihood of feeling "very good" about the future.

Predicted Probabilities of Personal Future Outlook
Ordered Logit Model using Genetic Matching.
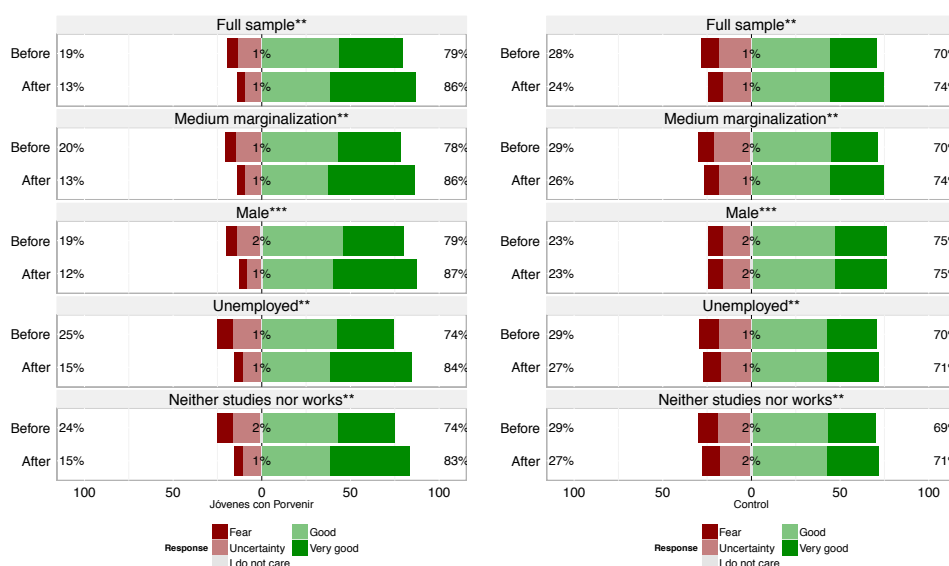
The increase in positive attitudes about the future is correlated with the positive experience in the program (e.g., high quality education, acquired skills, new social groups, etc.), and with the improvement on labor market outcomes, greater access to professional networks, and potential disengagement with gang groups.

[6/] The respondents were asked how they felt about their future. The set of answer choices was a scale of five-point scale: "I feel very good", "I feel good", " I do not care about my future", "I feel uncertainty", "I feel fear or scared".

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4. Policy Recommendations

The results of the impact evaluation and the high satisfaction reported by the program's beneficiaries suggest that it is convenient to expand the program to a larger scale, either to the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, to the state of Jalisco, or nation-wide.

The most substantive impacts of the program were found among youth living in areas of medium and high levels of marginalization, and among participants under 23 years of age. Therefore, the design of the program can be enhanced by increasing efforts on targeting these groups of beneficiaries and reducing their attrition rates. For example, the program could increase the financial support for transportation given to these participants.

Additionally, the program can be strengthened by including other evidenced-based components for improving employment outcomes amongst former program participants, such as social skills training and professional internships.

Finally, it is important to create links and collaborate with other existing complementary youth programs aimed at developing resilience and pro-social behaviors, especially among those at risk of getting involved in gangs.

Authors

Beatriz Magaloni Kerpel

Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and director of the Program of Poverty and Governance at Stanford's Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law.

Alberto Díaz Cayeros

Senior Researcher at Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and professor (by courtesy) of Political Science at Stanford University .

Brenda Jarillo Rabling

Postdoctoral fellow at the Program of Poverty and Governance at Stanford's Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law.

Program on Poverty and Governance

Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law

Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

Stanford University

616 Serra St.

Stanford, CA 94305

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