

Bioethics and the Employment of Elderly People in the State of Hidalgo

Bioética, adultos mayores y empleo en el estado de Hidalgo

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Abstract:

A current issue in Mexico is the aging of the population. Mexico's demographic history has been strongly and directly related to political and economic decisions. Elderly people face significant income-generating challenges, which are essential to fulfil their basic needs which are increasing considerably. So it is really important to stress how the lack of job opportunities has affected the elderly in the State of Hidalgo; this based on the integration of socio-demographic and economic indicators that allow to explore of the conditions of this segment of the population, which is growing every day, and serves as an instrument to generate public policies to decrease the consequences, taking into account that this State has been placed in the first places of poverty at a national level.

Keywords:

Population, employment bioethics and elderly policies

Resumen:

Un tema actual de relevancia para México es el envejecimiento de la población, su historia demográfica ha estado fuertemente relacionada de manera directa con decisiones políticas y económicas. La población en la etapa de la senectud enfrenta retos importantes en la generación de ingresos, indispensables para poder satisfacer sus necesidades básicas que se incrementan en materia de salud considerablemente. Por lo que resulta transcendental caracterizar como la precarización laboral ha permeado a los adultos mayores del Estado de Hidalgo, ello a partir de la integración de indicadores sociodemográficos y económicos que permitan explorar las condiciones en que se encuentra este segmento de la población, que día a día va en ascenso y que sirva como instrumento para la generación de políticas públicas, que puestas en la agenda en el corto plazo vayan dirigidas a contrarrestar los efectos generados, tomando en cuenta que es esta entidad federativa una de las que se ha colocado dentro de los primeros lugares de pobreza a nivel nacional.

Palabras Clave:

Políticas de población, bioética, empleo y adultos mayores

INTRODUCTION

The demographic history of Mexico through the consolidation of institutional structures and population policies has determined the course of its population growth. For a long time, Mexican society was exposed to a population dynamics characterized by slow demographic growth. In certain years, it even registered negative numbers, that is, there were more deaths than births.

Later, the national demography recovered in a remarkable way, giving rise to the great expansion of the population, to later start a new demographic regime with the decrease in its growth rate and a substantial increase of elderly population, which before the economic crisis, the changes in the pension systems and the flexibility of the labor market face the most important challenges in generating income, making it the most vulnerable segment of the population with the need to continue in the labor market, in equal conditions to survive. Therefore, in the development of this work, the objectives are focused on

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the behavior of demographic variables embodied in the different population policies implemented in Mexico; as well as the conditioning factors of employment. To start the exploration of some socio-demographic and economic variables present in the elderly of the State of Hidalgo who continue to participate in the labor market today, data provided by the National Survey of Occupation and Employment in the first quarter of 2018, will be used.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: AN APPROACH TO BIOETHICS AND THE ELDER

The World Health Organization (WHO) points out that it is from the age of 60 years old that human beings are called "the elderly" category, as this is the average age of life expectancy in the world. This aging process of the human being is a universal phenomenon that modifies the morphophysiological, biochemical, and psychological processes of every individual. Changes in the cells, tissues, organs, and functions refer to biological characteristics. The family, work, education, culture, income, social security, quality of life, etc. refer to the social sphere (Ceballos, Betancourt and Suárez, 2012; García, et al, 2011; Rueda and Miranda, 2002; Benítez, 2009).

The demographic revolution of the last 50 years has modified population growth, and fertility policies have been adopted in developed countries, generating that the number of elderly people exceeds the number of children. (García et al, 2011; Lolas, 2001) According to the report of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the number of those over 65 years old will increase in 2010 by 14.5 million and in 2050 by 21 million. The largest of these figures will, of course, be concentrated in the developed world, since the minimal resources of Third World countries, hunger, misery, the subculture and limited access to health services create inequality in these countries. However, this does not mean that this does not concern the Third World since in the next 40 years, 8 of the 11 oldest countries will be developing ones. (García, et al, 2011; Ceballos, Betancourt and Suárez, 2012)

The aging process is a complex process that has its origin in the individual but has social, economic, work, and family connotations. It is not only biological but also mental, spiritual, social, environmental, economic, and cultural. From

a biological point of view, getting old is a general deterioration in the personal sphere and as a consequence, the elderly go from being active and productive members, to retirees and dependent on their income or on their family's economy. The foregoing may consider them as a burden and reduce the services provided to them to a minimum, and may even go as far as being violent to them. (Ocampo, 2014; Lolas, 2001; Benítez, 2009; Flores y Salas, 2018)

According to Lolas (2001), there is an ethical approach in relation to old age and aging, and it is demographic in nature. In all the countries of the world, the proportion of older adults and especially old people has increased in the last decades. Linked to the above, longevity will be accompanied by a demand of services at the end of their life, generating the making of necessary decisions to provide them help and meet their basic life needs.

From the aforementioned, the relationship with biology refers to knowledge of the biological world with the formation of attitudes and policies aimed at achieving social welfare, focusing on how to use knowledge, between natural and human sciences, being the legal field both at the legislative and jurisprudential level and from the point of view of the practical interest of those who work in these fields, who are crucial due to problematic implications and responsibilities (Casado, 1996).

According to Benavides (2009), ethics is the critical reflection on the values and principles that guide our decisions and behaviors. The word bioethics, not doctrine, is a neologism coined in 1971 by Van Rensselaer Potter, an American scientist of the University of Wisconsin who wrote the book *Bioethics: bridgetothefuture*. He defines bioethics as the "discipline that combines biological knowledge with that of human values." Bioethics is the ethics of life, of humans as biological beings who are born, live, and die; their social environment which generates rights and duties in relation to other human beings. Ethics is a practical application of philosophy, but bioethics leads to a more precise philosophical reflection, closer to the application in daily life, around fundamental values such as: the search for equity, autonomy and respect for people, solidarity, among others (Rueda and Miranda, 2002).

To a certain extent, Bioethics is a kind of critical consciousness that seeks corrections and substantial changes in the ways in which individuals relate to the biosphere and to other human beings (Zorrilla, 2001; cited in Ocampo, 2014). However, Bioethics, like Ethics or moral Philosophy, does not indicate, what are the moral decisions or behaviors that must be assumed. Its objective is to provide arguments and foundations on different directions to follow, that nothing is absolute as it is often intended, in such a way that each individual in his condition of autonomous moral subject, can act accordingly his/her ethos. (Ocampo, 2014)

With regard to the elderly, it raises specific issues, which affect the dignity conditions that every human deserves in times of technological and social development. It is like an attitude that must respond to the challenges that modern society face today. It should be studied but based on proposing action criteria to face the ethical conflicts that older adults face in their daily lives, based on the management of the fundamental criteria with which it has been conceived through bioethical principles. That is the case of the autonomy that is expressed through the recognition of the capacity of people as free moral agents, until conditions are allowed, promoting adequate conditions for their care, avoiding all circumstances that harm their physical or emotional state, based on principles of justice by giving them access to their corresponding benefits (Benavides, 2009).

It is with this orientation that Bioethics must have, as one of its main analysis objectives, highly vulnerable human groups such as the elderly. Vulnerability is understood as susceptibility to harm, men and women -without exception-, emphasizing children, unemployed women and the elderly (Ocampo, 2014, Flores and Salas, 2018).

According to Flores and Salas (2018), the literature reiterates the argument that the elderly population is in vulnerable conditions due to different factors, mostly limited to the reduction of physical and mental abilities. However, structural conditions such as poverty, lack of educational opportunities and the general informality of work, which this generation faced, are not detailed, causing this group to continue working in precarious conditions to the detriment of their quality of life.

In Mexico, the problems that the elderly face are exacerbated, placing them in a vulnerable situation. According to the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL, 2010; cited in Flores y Salas, 2018), the level of income and low savings rates have led to the increase of older adults in poverty, in addition to health problems, unemployment, low pension coverage and social protection.

The elderly in the country are the most vulnerable group of the population, evidencing themselves in different aspects such as: lack of job opportunities, insufficient income, precarious social protection systems, over-demand for health services, and social and family discrimination. Emphasizing wage insecurity, although it is not the only variable, it is one of the most impacting on the vulnerability of older adults, since low income levels trigger other factors such as the inability to save money, the insufficiency to attend to the so-called out-of-pocket expenses for diseases associated with age. A significant group of older adults is located in labor informality, which leads to the exclusion of health services and the ability to access a pension to the detriment of quality of life (Flores and Salas, 2018).

POPULATION POLICIES IN MEXICO AND THE BEHAVIOR OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

In the history of independent Mexico, one of the fundamental concerns has been in terms of population, as a measure for the settlement of regions and the defense from political divisions of the national territory. According to the National Population Program 1989 - 1994, the first public body entrusted with these issues was the Secretary for Internal and External Relations. In 1936, the first General Population Law was enacted, which addresses issues related to population growth, through elements aimed at increasing fertility and reducing mortality levels (CONAPO, 1989). According to Camposortega (1997), in 1920 mortality levels were high and fluctuating, life expectancy at birth was 28.9 years. These measures put in place revolved around political and economic demands, such as having enough strong labor, anticipating international conflicts.

During that time and until the seventies, the great demographic expansion of Mexico took place (CONAPO, 1989); that is, the

proposed objectives were met, there was a decrease in mortality and fertility remained at high levels, while interstate migratory flows continued to move to the center of the country and especially to the capital city; and those who moved internationally went to the United States. The socioeconomic conditions prevailed in those decades. In the same way, they influenced the behavior of these demographic variables, the profile of the country's population was young and in constant search for better income levels. During 1940 and 1960, mortality presented the most relevant levels of decrease, since life expectancy at birth reached 57.8 years old (Camposortega Cruz, 1997).

Derived from the direct relationship between demographic and economic growth, the researchers focused on the former and concluded that this could create an obstacle to development (Palma Cabrera, 2006), since crises were forecast in the economic structure of the country, so it would not be possible to give employment to the entire population that required it, much less education to a great demand for students. In addition, the requirements in terms of health, housing and food services would not be satisfied according to the prevailing development model, so it was necessary to rethink the policies that had been specifically pronatalist.

With the aim of counteracting the effects generated by those variables, in 1973, a new course was drawn up on the objectives of the General Population Law, to control its changes in terms of volume, structure, dynamics, and distribution, in order to direct towards a fair and equitable participation of the benefits of economic and social development (CONAPO, 1989).

Subsequently, the purposes of this law were reformulated again, with the generation of several projects such as: the national population dynamics and distribution program, family planning program, national population education program, national population program for the family, for indigenous groups and the national research program on population and development (Jiménez Guzmán, 1992). All of these policies helped the global fertility rate go from 7.5 children per woman in 1966 to 3.8 children in 1986 (Zavala de Cosío, 1989).

Among the aforementioned programs, Palma (2006) mentions that one of the fundamental and high-impact policies that contributed to the decline in fertility since the 1970s was that

of family planning starting in 1977; and until 2000, five consecutive family planning programs were launched, implemented by the Mexican Institute of Social Security, the Institute of Social Security and Social Services for State Workers and the Ministry of Health, coordinated by the latter institution; which have also contributed to better reproductive health and greater emphasis on reproductive rights.

Furthermore, these policies since their inception have also contributed to a significant decrease in mortality levels, it 1995, life expectancy at birth increased to 72.3 years old (Camposortega Cruz, 1997).

However, the National Population Program 2008 - 2012 recognizes the economic and social effects that this restructure has on the population pyramid of Mexico. For that reason, the main objective was that Mexicans achieve a dignified life without compromising the heritage of future generations, identifying the main national population challenges. Some of the strategies outlined to confront them were: to ensure the institutional conditions favorable to the exercise of reproductive rights, to lay the foundations to face population aging, to consolidate federalism in the matter of population, to promote the development of urban systems that contribute to expanding options of residence of the population (CONAPO, 2008). In the strategies of this program, a central theme is the aging of the population. In the coming decades, the proportion of minors with respect to the total population will decrease; the youth and adult segment will increase, as well as the percentage of elderly people who will impose social and income needs. This will require the elaboration of institutional plans and programs to face their short, medium and long-term manifestations.

According to the National Population Program 2014 - 2018 (CONAPO, 2014), the containment of population growth was no longer an objective, it was the mechanism to face the social and economic effects of demographic projections. Although it is pertinent to acknowledge what was mentioned by Welti (2014), regarding this last program in his analysis of the role of the National Population Council created in 1974: “[...] despite the accumulated knowledge, it has not been possible to develop a strategy that responds to the socio-demographic problems the country faces”(p. 54).

Regarding demographic projections, Partida (2005) mentions that the elderly population will continue to grow, reaching a total of 36.5 million in 2050. According to the Intercensal Survey 2015, in that year this part of the Mexican population increased to 12.4 million.

THE CONDITIONING FACTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

The issue of globalization has been studied from different perspectives, but coinciding on two opposite faces: the opportunity for the development of nations, but at the same time devastating for social conditions and labor relations. This process is currently viewed with concern in developing countries, where there has been a deficit of three million unemployed people, resulting in a deterioration in the quality of employment and an increase in the number of workers close to the poverty line (Lugo Galera, Huerta Sobrino, & Yfarraguerra Villarreal, 2014), a situation that is exacerbated in older adults, who face challenges in income generation, as well as in housing issues (basic services, quality in materials and spaces) and not in minor order of importance in health.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) through the research carried out by Paz (2010), finds that the participation of elderly people in the labor market behaves in a different way in developed countries than in those in developing stage. The early retirement age has been with a declining trend, while in the latter it remains reversed. These differences relate to a number of economic, social and ideological factors (with respect to the role of the State) in each region. However, this Organization suggested in 2008 (cited by Paz, 2010), that adequate pensions and levels of medical care coverage should be guaranteed together with the growing needs of the population. However, this Organization suggested, in 2008, (cited by Paz, 2010), that appropriate pensions and levels of health care coverage appropriate to the growing needs of the population should be guaranteed.

In addition, in the Mexican case, the places where older adults work lack the majority of basic elements of job security, labor principles, and rights are not respected, causing a situation of vulnerability. The analysis of employment has been carried out from different approaches, such as precarious or non-precarious employment, decent employment, quality

employment, among others, but showing a point of agreement in recognizing the need to integrate economic elements (availability of jobs and adequate income), regulations (worker's rights) and security (social protection) to a single concept (Oliveira, 2006).

The National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL, 2018) states that in 2016 the number of adults over 65 years old who did not have a pension (contributory or non-contributory) reached the 2 million 501 thousand 460 people, of which, in relation to gender, 61.1% are women and 38.9% are men. Older adults who continue to work even when they are at a retirement age, do so under disadvantageous contractual conditions, such as few or no labor guarantees, since, for the referred year, only 9.7% had access to health institutions.

In order to tackle these problems in the Mexican labor market, one of the policies implemented to encourage companies to hire older adults is the one that has to do with tax incentives through the Income Tax Law (Decree No. 2, 2016), whose last paragraph of Article 186 establishes:

A tax incentive will be granted to those who hire older adults, consisting of the equivalent of 25% of the salary actually paid to people aged 65 or older. For these purposes, the total salary that serves as the basis for calculating, in the corresponding exercise, the withholdings of the income tax of the worker in question, in the terms of article 96 of this Law, must be considered.

An old age together with the aging process provides a series of biological, cognitive, social, and normative peculiarities that position the elderly in positive conditions, since there is a framework of understanding about the meaning of being an older adult. However, negative conditions may also arise in their conception, which represents an obstacle for them to be considered in the labor market as important assets and to access better living conditions, social and economic well-being.

In accordance with the above, the issue of old age and employment has become a matter of primary attention, not only from the point of view of public or government policies, but also from an academic point of view, it is essential to analyze and understand this phenomenon, especially in societies such as the Mexican society and specifically in

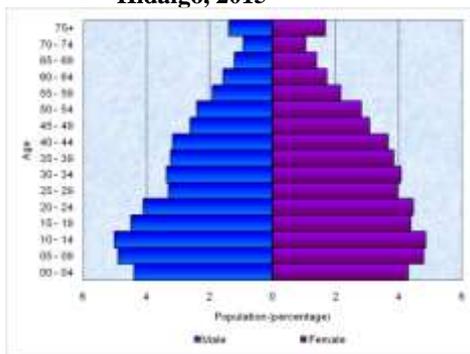
Hidalgo, where the indicators show a phenomenon with particular characteristics and constantly growing trends. In addition, in recent years this State has been placed within the top 10 with the highest poverty in the country (CONEVAL, 2016).

OLDER ADULTS FROM HIDALGO IN THE LABOR SECTOR

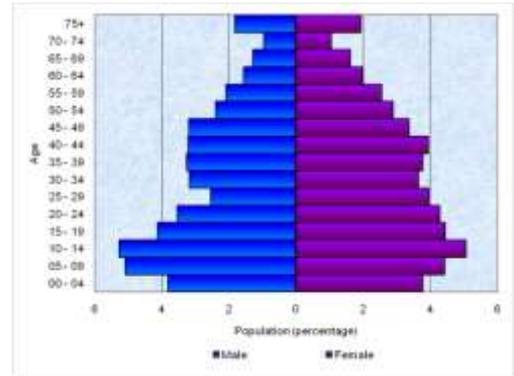
The effects of population policies are also noticeable in the State of Hidalgo. Changes in birth, mortality and migration produce important modifications in the structure by age and sex. The contraction of the population pyramid immersed in the aging process has been perceived in greater detail in these last three years, that is, the base of the pyramid has been reduced more and more every day, a result largely of the decrease in fertility present since the middle of the seventies; while the apex expands.

In relation to the composition by sex, Graphs 1 and 2 also allow us to distinguish that in both periods the proportion of women continues to be higher than that of men with a slight decrease; for 2015 the natural ratio was 91 men for every 100 women and in 2018 the masculinity index was calculated at 90 men for every 100 women. Regarding the age group of the elderly, it had an increase of 1.3%, going from 10.9 to 12.2%, in the respective years cited.

Graph 1. Population Pyramid of the State of Hidalgo, 2015



Graph 2. Population Pyramid of the State of Hidalgo, 2018



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the 2015 Intercensal Survey and the ENOE 2018 (First Quarter), INEGI.

This federal entity registered a total of 2 million 968 thousand 192 inhabitants in the first quarter of this year. It is pertinent to highlight that this figure is adjusted to demographic projections and corresponds to data provided by the National Survey of Occupation and Employment in its first quarter of 2018, so that our target population amounts to 361 thousand 880 people, which represent 12.2 percent of the total, as mentioned in previous lines*.

Analyzing the universe of study in greater detail, it is observed that according to their condition of activity, a significant percentage of this segment of the population is actively participating in the labor market (35.9%, see Table 1), which allows us to affirm that the economic crises, the changes in the pension systems and the flexibility of the labor market, make this segment of the population the most vulnerable regarding the generation of income to survive, and many times, finding a job is more difficult for them. One point six percent of economically active seniors from Hidalgo are unemployed.

Table 1. Older adults according to activity condition

Sex	Total	EAP			EIP
		Total	Employed	Unemployed	
M	167,398	94,286	92,209	2,077	73,112
F	194,482	35,753	35,753	0	158,729
Total	361,880	130,039	127,962	2,077	231,841

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the ENOE 2018 (First Quarter), INEGI.

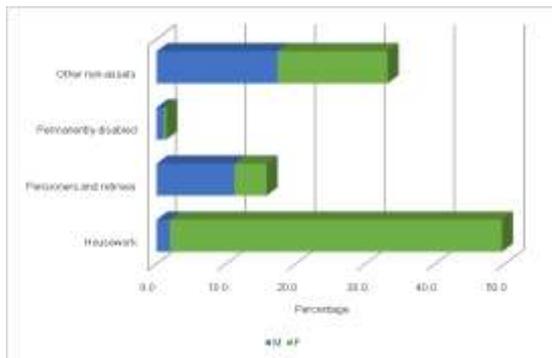
Regarding older adults who remain as a non-economically active population (PNEA), it is observed that only 15.8 percent

It is confirmed that our target population is made up of those people who are sixty years old or older, in accordance with the Article 3 of the Rights of the Elderly. (Decreto Original, 2002).

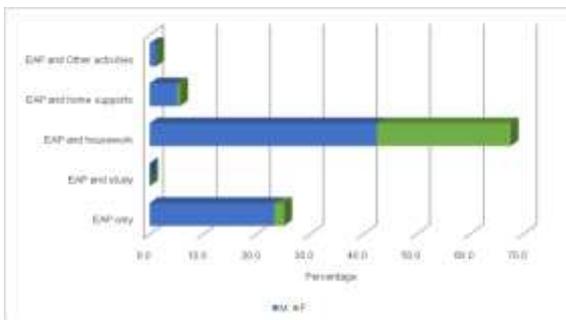
receive a retirement or pension, as shown in Figure 3; while a significant segment of these older adults help with household chores (49.6%). Another fact that stands out is the predominance of gender roles in these generations.

A similar situation occurs with older adults who, in addition to staying in the labor sector, carry out other activities in their free time, most of them collaborate at home, as shown in Graph 4, 67.7% of elderly workers help with household chores at home.

Graph 3. EIP older adults by type of non-economic activity



Graph 4. EAP older adults and other types of activities



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the ENOE, first quarter of 2018, INEGI.

In order to observe whether children are a variable that influences older adults' decision about work, who do not receive a pension or retirement, Table 2 presents information regarding the number of children born alive to women who are 60 years old or older.

Table 2. Number of children of older women

Activity condition	Number of children born alive

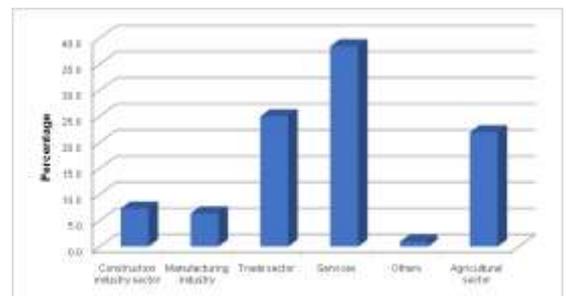
	Childless	1 to 2	3 to 5	6+
EAP female	1.9	2.7	7.9	5.9
EIP female	5.3	14.4	29.5	32.5
Total	7.1	17.1	37.5	38.4

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the 2015 Intercensal Survey and the ENOE 2018 (First Quarter), INEGI.

In general, it can be seen that most of the elderly women who participate in the labor market as those who do not, had 3 or more children; taking into account that only 18.4% remain as economically active population.

Looking specifically at older adults who remain active and engaged in a paid employment, and who represent 35.4% of the total elderly population, Graph 5 allows us to distinguish that the largest segment of them is incorporated to the tertiary sector of economy. The activities of commerce and services group 63.4% of these workers (25 and 38.4 respectively). One third are located in activities of the primary sector (21.9%), and with a similar percentage in construction and manufacturing industry (7.3 and 6.4%, respectively). This is related to the proportion of workers found in rural areas (45.95) and urban areas (54.1%).

Graph 5. Older adults employed by activity sector



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the ENOE, first quarter of 2018, INEGI.

The working conditions in which they participate are shown in Table 3. It is contrasted that only a quarter of the older employed adults receive more than 3 minimum wages, while the highest proportion of them earns a maximum minimum wage (40.2%) and mainly work independently.

The foregoing allows us to infer that a significant segment of these workers should not have labor benefits, which is corroborated with the information provided by the National

Survey of Occupation and Employment in its first quarter of 2018, only 15% have access to public health institutions. In addition, at the state level, the labor informality rate for Hidalgo stood at 75.2%.

Table 3. Older Adults Employed by Income Level and Position at Work

Position at work	Income level					
	0.00-1.00 MW	1.01-2.00MW	2.01-3.00 MW	3.01-5.00 MW	5.01+M W	No minimum wage
Subordinate and paid workers	11.5	8.9	7.6	5.0	4.2	0.0
Employers	1.6	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.6	0.0
Freelancers	27.0	10.2	5.5	4.5	1.0	7.6

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the ENOE, first quarter of 2018, INEGI.

As Paz (2010) mentions, as the life cycle of the elderly progresses, they find greater opportunities in the informal sector; characterized by offering unstable income and no benefits. In addition, it is considered that these parameters of the work of elderly people in Hidalgo, do not help them feel useful, as some theories of social gerontology suggest.

Regarding the working day, 27% work between 40 and 48 hours a week and a similar percentage (27.3%) work a strenuous day that includes more than 49 hours a week, which are part of the rate of critical conditions of occupation, which in the State increased to 22.7% in the indicated quarter.

To finish the analysis of this segment of the Hidalguense workforce, two important social features are addressed: the marital status and the level of education. Regarding the first one, Graph 6 shows that more than a half find a partner (61 married and 11% in a free union).

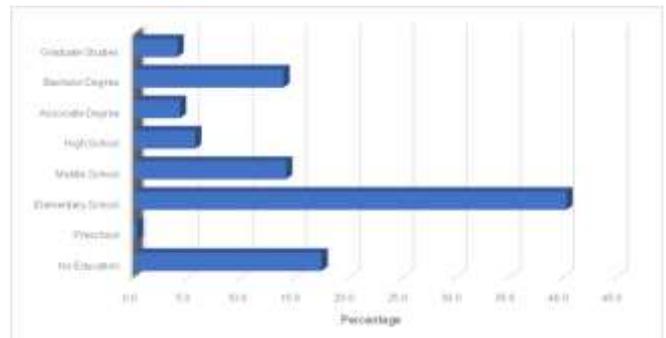
Graph 6. Marital status of employed older adults



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the 2015 Intercensal Survey and the ENOE 2018 (First Quarter), INEGI.

Regarding the second variable, determining the current labor market, Graph 7 provides the information regarding the school grade of employed older adults, highlighting that 40.3% only have primary school, 14% finished secondary school, and 11.6% studied a professional career, compared to 17.5% who did not attend school.

Graph 7. School grade of employed older adults



Source: Own elaboration based on data from the ENOE, first quarter of 2018, INEGI.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of old age and employment has become a matter of primary attention worldwide. The effects of the population policies implemented in Mexico are also evident in the State of Hidalgo. The contraction of the immersed population pyramid in the aging process is perceived in greater detail this year. The labor market has undergone significant transformations that affect the workforce that participate in it in various ways. However, when elderly workers are studied, the situation becomes more complex, it is in the commercial and service activities where the greatest number of employed older adults is inserted, it is this space where they find more job opportunities, but with the most precarious working conditions; some others subsist through independent activities.

These workers constitute a vulnerable group that is on the rise in a heterogeneous sector, where their level of education and age put them at a greater level of disadvantage, taking into account that only a small percentage have a retirement or pension.

In addition, in the case of this State, the policy on tax incentives for companies on the hiring of older adults embodied in the Income Tax Law has had little impact, so it is imperative to restructure and generate new instruments in the short and medium term, so that older adults can have an income (contributory or non-contributory) and decent benefits that allow them to meet their particular needs, which are no longer preventive in health.

The limited and deficient social security coverage and the low incomes of this segment of the population can lead Hidalgo to climb steps in the national measurement of poverty.

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