

Labor Market Returns under Educational Expansion in the Americas: Is the Value of Educational Credentials Changing?

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Over the past 50 years, the expansion of higher education has been predominantly driven by industrialized nations. This growth has been associated with strengthening educational institutions by promoting secondary education completion, aligning with economic cycles, and labor markets that increasingly prioritize formal education. This trend underscores the growing significance of higher education in shaping economic cycles and labor markets (OECD, 2023). In this context, the long-standing debate in sociology and economics has revolved around the question of how educational credentials are valued, given a specific institutional context or labor market, in creating incentives for both jobseekers and employers to invest in education and how they fare in terms of their relative scarcity. It is well established that the economic returns to education depend on several macro-level factors, in which the articulation of states, labor markets, and households portray the different institutional arrangements of welfare regimes (Barrientos, 2009; Fiszbein, 2005).

On the other hand, the Latin American region has witnessed a late expansion in education, encompassing both the primary and secondary levels, due to sectoral policies enacted since the 1990s in various countries (Marteletto et al., 2010). These changes occurred amid transitions to liberal welfare regimes characterized by a generally weak provision of social protection and increasing deregulation in labor markets. The reduction in labor income inequality has been a significant factor in the consistent decline in overall income inequality, which is a key outcome of our research. Enhanced access to compulsory education has played a crucial role in narrowing the income divide between high- and low-skilled occupations (Levy & Shady, 2013; Lustig, Lopez-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez, 2016; Schincariol et al., 2017).

In this context, it is worth wondering what the association between educational attainment and wages would look like across the liberal pool of countries in the Americas. The weaker coordination between the deregulated labor markets and the educational institutions in this context may allow us to observe the variation in trends between educational expansion, returns to education in the labor markets, and the relative value of educational credentials.

It is important to note that the potential benefits of skill-biased technological change may not diminish the differences between educational credentials, thus providing reassurance about the value of education in the labor market. Alternatively, the labor market landscape could shift dramatically if only highly educated individuals benefited from these changes, while workers with lower skill levels faced displacement due to the automation of routine jobs (Autor & Handel, 2013). Nevertheless, the growing number of highly skilled workers (such as university graduates) could also impact the relative standing of workers, similar to the increase in primary and secondary education graduates following educational reforms in Latin American nations (e.g., Brazil, 2001; Chile, 2003; Mexico, 1993; Uruguay, 2009) (Marteletto et al., 2010). These shifts may diminish the value of educational qualifications by altering their relative values. The impact of these trends on labor

market returns in liberal regimes throughout North and South America is the primary question addressed in this report.

Data and methods

We used LIS data to advance the findings of our study¹, and explore the main trends in how educational attainment value has changed over the last three decades in the Americas, a region barely studied in the literature. We employed data from 11 American countries (Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, United States, and Uruguay) between 1990 and 2019. From this, we draw a sample of labor market entrants (employees 25-35 years old) comprising a sample of 2.033.710 people, to better approximate the early career job-matching process (Bol, 2015; Di Stasio et al., 2016).

The LIS data include a rich set of income, wage, and education variables. The educational categories were derived from the variable *educlev*. We coded the original LIS values of this variable into five educational categories according to the UNESCO classification (ISCED) of educational levels (UNESCO 2012). Primary education comprises the ISCED Levels 1 and 2. It includes lower secondary education in virtually all countries, which maps the final cycle of primary education (usually grade 6th to 9th. For example, “middle education” in the US, “premedia” in Panama, “basic cycle of middle education”, in Uruguay, or 7th and 8th grade in Chile. Secondary education includes ISCED Level 3. Tertiary vocational education cluster ISCED 5 programs, including short-cycle tertiary education and between 0.2 and 0.5 percent of post-secondary non-tertiary education (vocational) (ISCED 4). The University/UG degree (300,312) maps ISCED 6, which groups bachelor's degree (“undergraduate degree”) or equivalent. Finally, postgraduate degrees represent ISCED Levels 7 and 8, including master's and PhD degrees, respectively.

To approximate workers' relative position in the educational attainment distribution to explain differences in returns to educational credentials, researchers have traditionally used a relative measure of education, operationalized as a rank-based indicator based on the percentile of years of formal schooling. Although this percentile provides valuable insights, it assumes that the relative positions of workers are equal at each point in the educational distribution (Tam, 2016). Instead, we used a positional status index (PSI) to capture the positional dimension of education. This is a monotonic transformation of years of education into a rank order measure that captures the “average number of competitors that were excluded” (ACE) (Tam 2007; 2016). The PSI index predicts rank-based inequality in returns to education, which reflects the competitive structure of the labor markets. The PSI orders workers from the sample in each country-year according to their relative positions at the educational level relative to others. We focus on workers aged 25–35 years, considering this group to be those who are entering or have recently entered the labor market in each country-year.

$$\text{Log PSI} = \text{Log} \left(\frac{P_k}{1 - P_k} \right) \quad (1)$$

In equation 1, P_k is the actual percentile in the educational hierarchy, measured from years of education, which represents the proportion of young workers with less than k years of education in each specific country-year cluster. The denominator $1 - P_k$ captures, then, the proportion of workers above k years of education. Hence, the distances increase across values close to the top of the hierarchy of the educational distribution, capturing the relative scarcity of the educational attainment of an individual, relative to competitors in the labor market. A logarithmic transformation was used to correct the skewness of the original PSI distribution and ease the interpretation as proportional changes, or elasticities (Rotman et al., 2016; Tam, 2007; 2016).

Table 1 presents the descriptive information for all measures of educational attainment used in this study. Table 2 shows the average values of individual indicators of education across the main educational credentials in the Americas.

Individual-level variation in the value of educational credentials can have aggregated effects across labor markets, which, in the case of deregulated markets such as in the Americas, may reflect a low clustering of educational credentials across occupations. To approximate the structure of local labor markets across countries, we use the local segregation index for occupations presented in Equation 2, which captures the linkage between educational credentials and occupations (Diprete et al., 2017).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for educational measures

	Absolute Education (Years)	Relative Education (Percentile)	Relative Education (PSI)	Relative Education (Log PSI)
Mean	12	50.5	9.37	0.04
SD	4	28.9	155.12	1.81
Min	0	0	0	-10.85
p5	5	5.2	0.06	-2.89
p25	9	25.6	0.34	-1.07
p50	12	50.7	1.03	0.03
p75	14	75.5	3.08	1.13
p90	16	90.4	9.47	2.25
p95	18	95.3	20.22	3.01
p99	18	99.1	106.88	4.67
Max	26	100	51621.2	10.85
N	2033710	2033710	2033710	2033710

Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Own calculations.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for educational measures in the Americas

Educational credential	Absolute Education (Years)	Relative Education (Percentile)	Relative Education (PSI)	Relative Education (Log PSI)
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Primary Education	7.18	22.86	0.39	-1.64
Secondary Education	12.10	46.46	1.46	-0.17
Tertiary Vocational	14.11	64.45	2.65	0.65
University/UG degree	16.26	85.16	13.23	1.98
PG degree	18.16	96.06	147	3.71
University/PG degree (merged)	16.61	87.20	38.18	2.30

Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Note: UG stands for undergraduate degree (university/bachelor’s degree) and PG stands for postgraduate degree (master’s and PhD). Own calculations.

$$M(occ)_j = \sum_g p_{g|j} \text{Log} \left(\frac{p_{g|j}}{p_g} \right) \quad (2)$$

Equation 2 shows the local Mutual Information Index for each occupational group j . The conditional probability of an individual having graduated from the g educational level, given that the individual was recruited in the j occupational group is denoted by $p_{g|j}$, and p_g denotes the unconditional probability of having graduated from the g educational level². The local segregation index for occupations ($M(occ)_j$) captures the recruitment process and wage setting based on the educational qualifications of workers. This helps us understand the degree of educational selectivity employers exhibit across various occupational groups. We do this within the context of educational expansion at different levels.

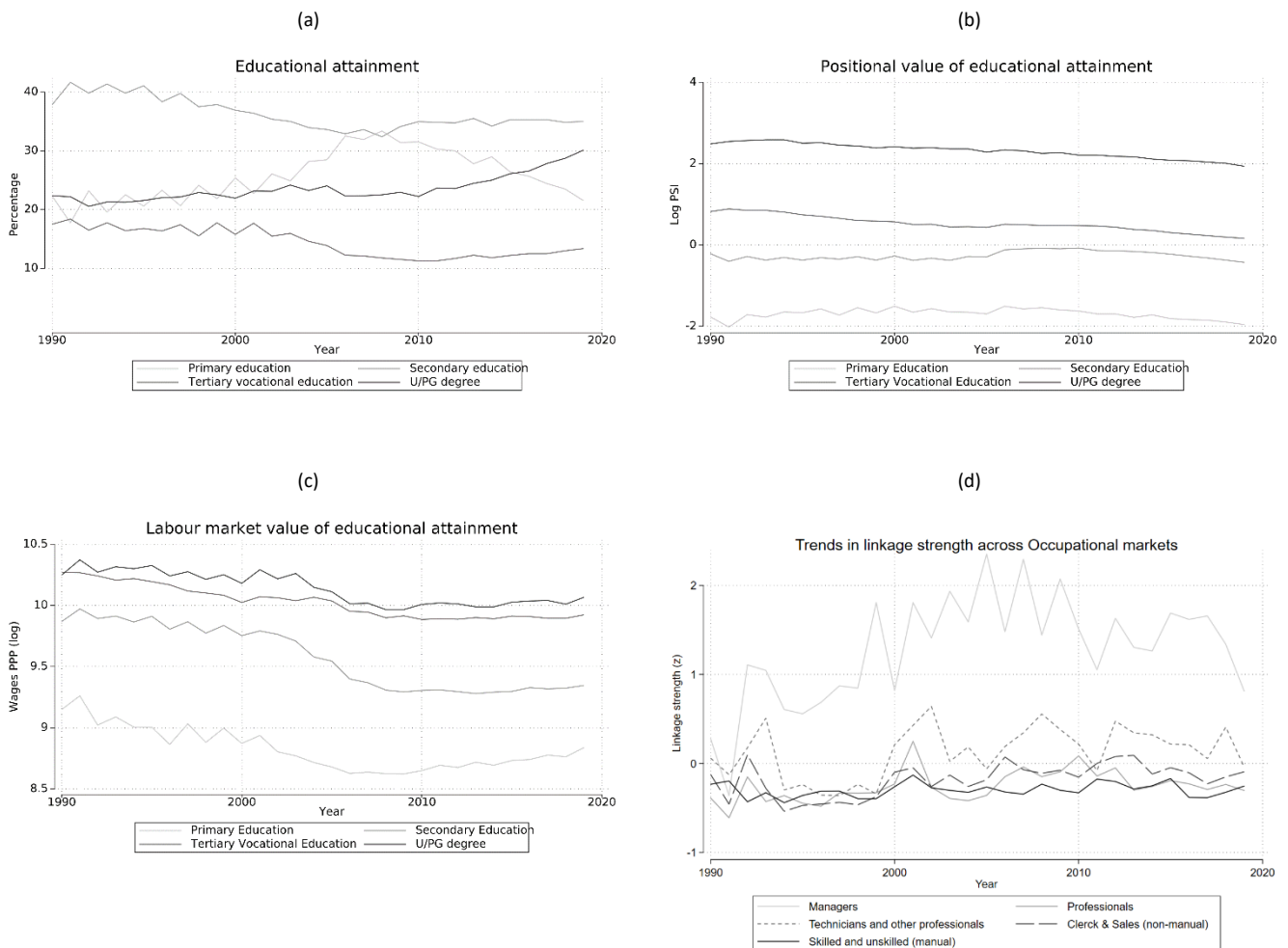
The changing value of education: regional and country trends

Figure 1 depicts the main trends in educational attainment, labor market value and structural link between educational levels and occupations in the Americas between 1990-2019 among new entrants to the labor market. Panel A portrays the share of educational attainment and Panel B the positional value of education (PSI). Panel C, in turn, shows the market value of educational attainment (log PSI), and Panel D the linkage strength across occupational groups.

Panel A shows a significant increase in the proportion of young workers with university or postgraduate degrees during the study period. Conversely, those who entered the labor market with primary and secondary education diplomas declined. The relative position of each educational level shows an overall slightly decreasing trend, particularly for those who entered the labor market with post-secondary qualifications (Panel B). In addition, we see structural differences in the average wage levels across educational credentials (Panel C), although higher educational qualifications seem to be less affected. Notably, the wage levels of primary and secondary educated job entrants declined in the early 2000s. Finally, we observed the extent of coupling between educational credentials and occupational markets, which was the highest among managerial and technical occupations (Panel D). The patterns are more heterogeneous, with an apparent increase in the late 2000s across these labor markets.

Examining educational expansion trends by country reveals more nuanced processes that are likely connected to each nation's development stage and economic conditions. While every nation experiences growth in its highly educated workforce, advanced economies, such as the United States and Canada, exhibit a transition from secondary school graduates to those with higher education degrees. By contrast, most Latin American countries experienced a

Figure 1. Share, positional, market value of educational attainment, and linkage strength of occupational groups in the Americas, 1990-2019

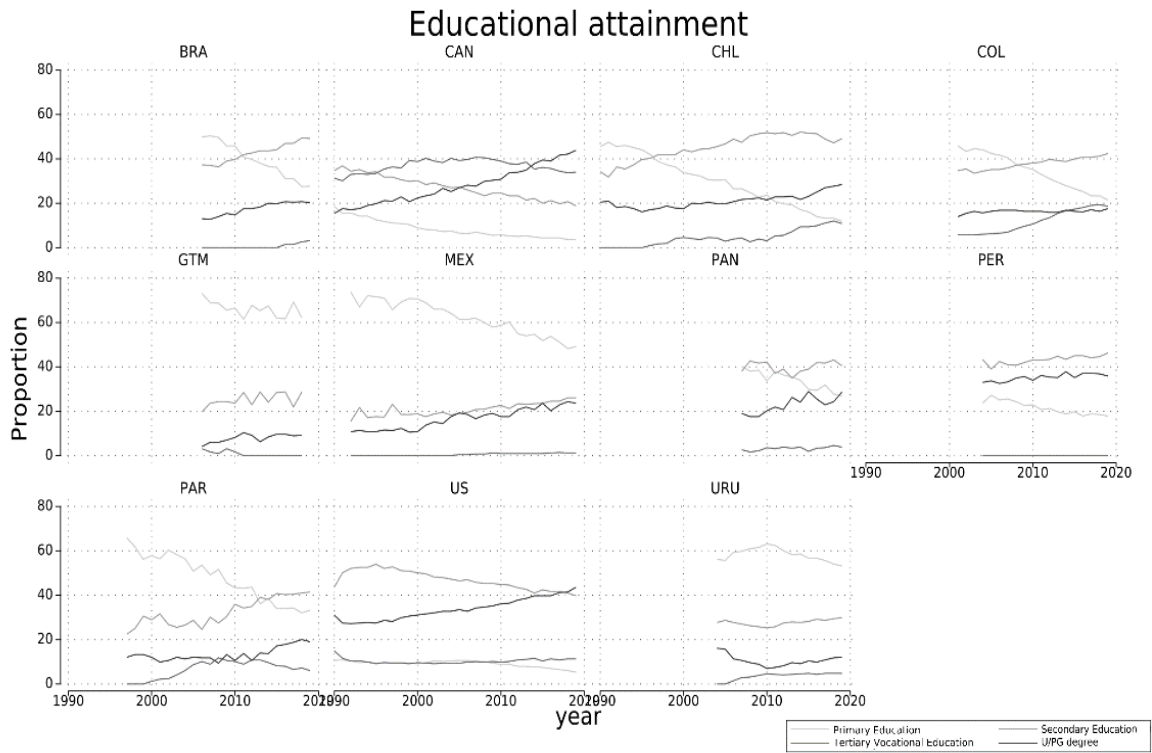


Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Sample of workers 25-35 years old. Weighted samples (normalized). Own calculations.

transition from primary to secondary education in the 1990s and the 2000s, with some showing less clear trends or indicating a similar future shift. The positional value of education exhibited a slight overall decline, maintaining clear structural differences (Figure 2 and 3). Similarly, labor market value and credentials linkage, although

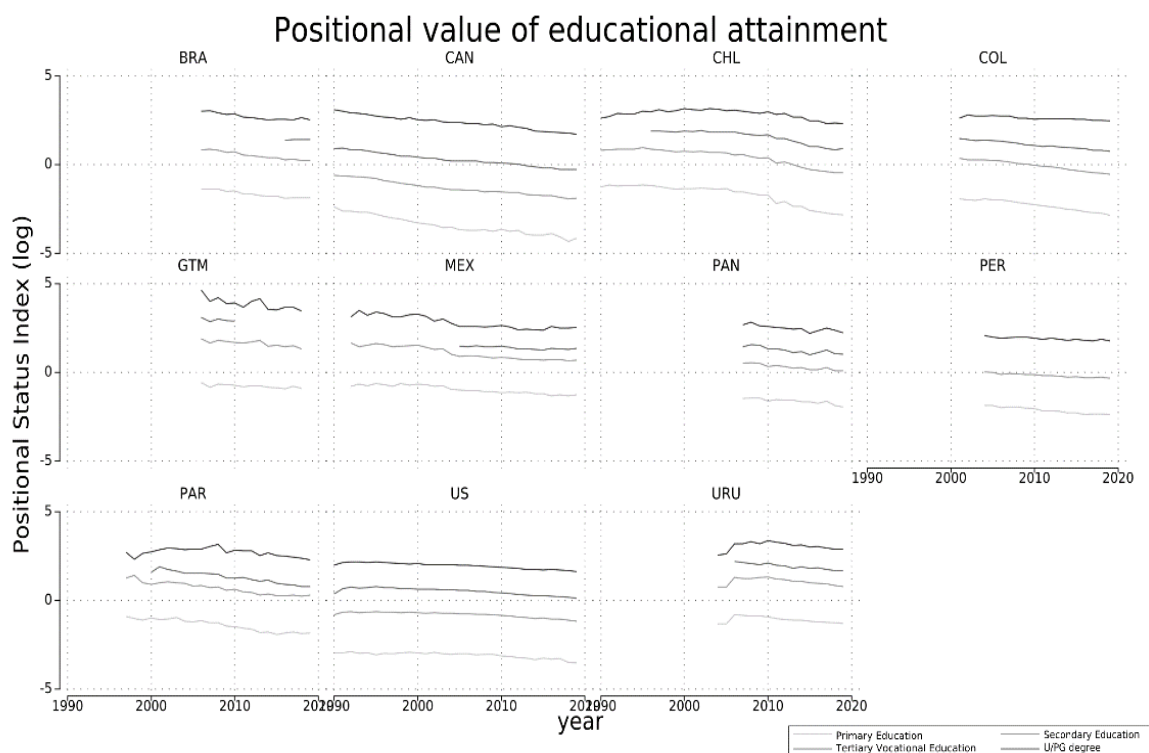
suggesting an apparent increase among lower educational levels in several countries, show no clear trend as they may be confounded with government policies (Lustig et al., 2016). The educational specificity across occupational groups, also displayed significant heterogeneity over time (Figure 4 and 5).

Figure 2. Trends in educational attainment by country 1990-2019



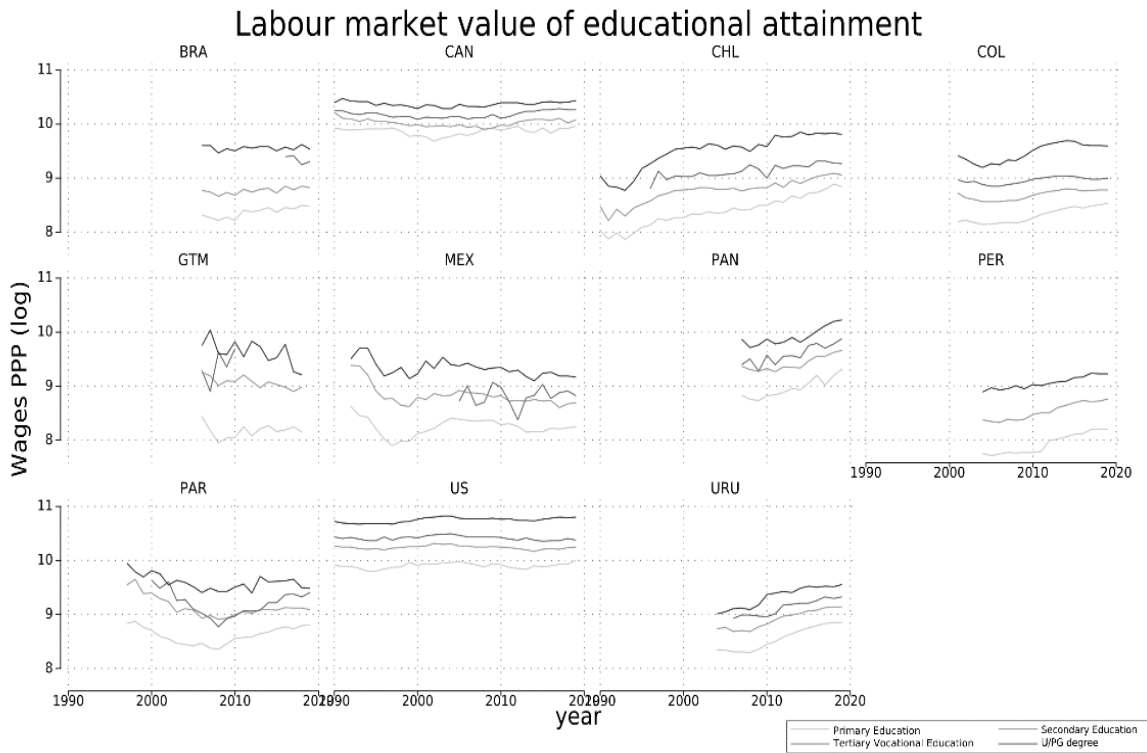
Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Sample of workers 25-35 years old. Weighted samples (normalized). Own calculations.

Figure 3. Trends in positional value of educational credentials by country 1990-2019



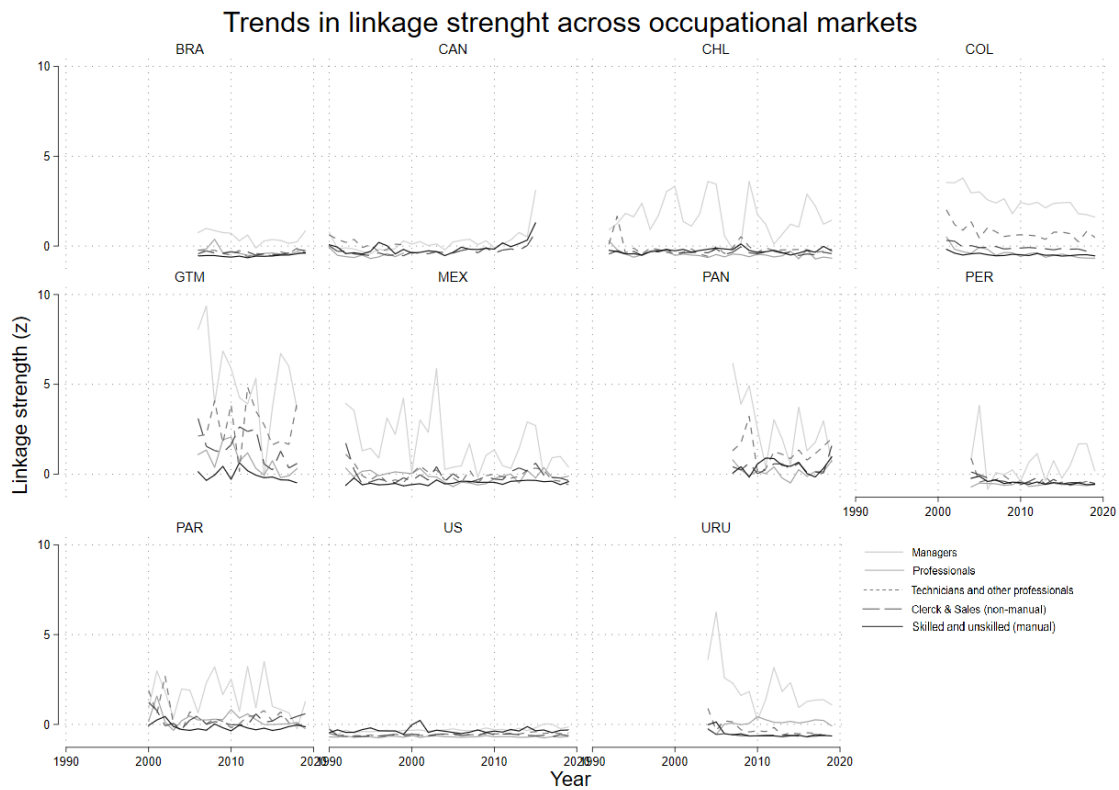
Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Sample of workers 25-35 years old. Weighted samples (normalized). Own calculations.

Figure 4. Trends in labour market value of educational attainment by country 1990-2019



Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Sample of workers 25-35 years old. Weighted samples (normalized). Own calculations.

Figure 5. Trends in linkage of educational credentials across occupational groups by country 1990-2019



Source: Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database, 1990-2019. Sample of workers 25-35 years old. Weighted samples (normalized). Own calculations.

Nevertheless, it is plausible to consider whether counterbalancing effects between the positional value of education and the way in which educational credentials are demanded across occupations can unravel patterns of wage inequalities that are more pronounced than in terms of cumulative years of education. The labor markets across countries in the region are either less structured or unstructured. Employers' coordination follows the logic of the market, meaning that employers find lower or no limits to rewards achieved or ascribed (unobserved) interpersonal differences. The absence of social partners to establish formal educational requirements and, hence, wage-setting coordination³, may rely on both formal, such educational credentials, and relatively scarce informal entry requirements, such indicators for on-the-job training, or sociocultural suitability for certain occupations (Jackson, Goldthorpe and Mills, 2005; Di Stasio et al., 2016; Rivera, 2012; Weeden, 2002).

Discussion and conclusion

These analyses suggest no direct or linear relationship between educational expansion and educational credentials' positional and monetary values. In the context of liberal governments in North and South American countries, labor markets in these areas are likely to create demand-side incentives. Employers would be inclined to value the competitive edge of job candidates, which could encompass individual productivity differences stemming from both acquired and inherent traits, particularly in a context of expanding educational opportunities. The weakly developed vocational training system and highly deregulated wage-setting coordination would also create incentives from the supply side among jobseekers to overeducate as a result of credential inflation. Nevertheless, the crucial factor here is occupations. Occupational categories represent the level at which allocation processes take place, specifically the matching or mismatching of occupational positions.

In this study, we investigated occupations by analysing the clustering of educational credentials within occupational groups (namely, educational specificity). We examined the intensity of educational credential selectivity across employers in different occupational groups, given the context of educational expansion at different levels. Our findings revealed an increasing reward of positional advantages of education across highly selective occupational groups despite the pressures to lower the wage levels associated with the increasing influx of graduates in the labor market. In a forthcoming study, we aim to build upon these findings by examining the structure of local labor markets across countries as the linkage between educational credentials and occupations as proposed by Diprete et al. (2017).

In advancing these findings, we contribute to the literature with this unique effort in taking a cross-national perspective in the Americas, an understudied case. The distinctive institutional characteristics of North and South America offer an ideal setting for gathering consistent data on the interplay between occupations, educational achievement, and labor market outcomes. While we acknowledge the limitations of using LIS harmonized datasets instead of more detailed, country-specific sources, we believe our approach has merit to easily show a general finding of trends across countries. By pooling the Americas together, it became evident that particularly the secondary level graduates found themselves put under strain in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, a comprehensive examination of the role of education in the specific regional context in which we based our analyses, could significantly contribute to the existing school-to-work transition

literature by focusing on the relationship between education's positional aspect and labor market structures.

- ¹ This research brief is an outcome of a research project carried by the first author out during his work as a postdoctoral research at University of Luxembourg, developed later on as a collaboration with prof. Andrea Canales, from the Institute of Sociology, PUC/LM2C2, Chile, and LIS data center. Early versions of this paper have been presented at the 2023 International Workshop on labour market mismatch and gender, LM²C² (Santiago, Chile), the 2023 Inaugural III/LIS Comparative Economic Inequality Conference (LSE, UK), the 2022 summer meeting (Notre Dame, US), and the 2022 spring meeting (LSE, UK) of the Research Committee on Social Stratification and Mobility (RC28) of the International Sociological Association (ISA), and the 2021 VIII International Conference "Cohesión Social en Tiempos Turbulentos" (COES, Santiago, Chile).
- ² The entropy-based Mutual Information index can be decomposed into the within component M_w , equivalent to the weighted sum of the local M indices, plus a between component. Hence, $M_w = \sum_{j=1} p_j M(occ)_j$; where the weights p_j correspond to the proportions of categories (Diprete et al., 2017).
- ³ The institutionalization of wage-setting across countries is approximate by Jahn (2014). The available information for countries in the region informs that the lowest levels of institutionalization (i.e. *corporatism index*) are present in Canada and the United States, followed by Mexico, Brazil, with lower levels, while Chile reach a middle level of institutionalization.

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Highlights from the 2nd III-LIS Comparative Economic Inequality Conference

Following the success of the **Inaugural III-LIS Comparative Economic Inequality Conference** in 2023 (London, UK), the 2nd III-LIS Conference was held on February 27-28, 2025, in Luxembourg. Similarly to the first edition, this conference brought together leading scholars, researchers, and policymakers from around the world to present and discuss the latest advancements in inequality research.

Organized by LIS and the UK LIS Satellite Office at the International Inequalities Institute (III) of the London School of Economics, and co-sponsored by the (LIS)²ER Initiative, the University of Luxembourg, and POST Luxembourg the conference featured **79 research papers**, two keynote lectures, and a special event dedicated to the discussion of Professor Branko Milanovic's (Stone Center on Socio-economic Inequality, The Graduate Center, CUNY) latest book, "*Visions of Inequality: From the French Revolution to the End of the Cold War.*"

The event opened with welcoming remarks from Francisco Ferreira (III & LIS UK Satellite Office) and Peter Lanjouw (LIS & VU Amsterdam). In their address, they applauded the success of the UK LIS Satellite Office in advancing the use of the LIS Databases both in the UK and globally while also serving as a key liaison between LIS and its data user community in the UK. They emphasised the significance of collaborative research efforts, particularly in light of the successful first edition of the conference, and highlighted the importance of fostering continued engagement through the 2nd III-LIS Comparative Economic Inequality Conference.



From left to right: Peter Lanjouw (LIS & VU Amsterdam) and Francisco Ferreira (III & LIS UK Satellite Office).

Exploring Economic Inequality: Key Themes and Discussions

The conference program consisted of 21 broad thematic sessions, organised across three parallel tracks, reflecting the diversity and complexity of contemporary inequality research. These sessions addressed key dimensions of economic inequality, offering new

empirical insights and methodological advancements. With a strong comparative and interdisciplinary approach, participants examined pressing questions such as:

- How do economic policies impact wealth and income inequality?
- What role do gender and intergenerational mobility play in shaping disparities?
- How can inequality measurement be improved through methodological innovations?
- What lessons can be drawn from historical and cross-national comparisons?

Sessions on gender inequality explored the interplay between labour market trends and gender disparities, with studies highlighting the persistent earnings penalties for women, especially mothers. These inequalities also extended to wealth accumulation, posing significant challenges for single-parent households.

Building on the discussion of long-term economic disadvantages, several presentations examined broader inequality trends, including the impact of international migration, demographic changes, and economic growth on income distribution. One study explored global inequality trajectories before and after COVID-19, revealing how policy responses influenced different income groups. Similarly, research on the inflation crisis highlighted non-uniform effects on different households, revealing gender-specific coping mechanisms.

Closely linked to these long-term trends, intergenerational mobility and household wealth discussions emphasised how family background, residential segregation, and parental occupation shape economic opportunity and income mobility. Studies on childhood poverty and labour market outcomes provided new insights into long-term economic disparities across high-income countries, reinforcing the idea that economic disadvantage is often transmitted across generations.

In response to these inequalities, policy measures emerged as a key theme, with scholars examining the role of social policies, tax systems, and government interventions to reduce economic disparities. Presentations assessed the effectiveness of progressive taxation, wealth redistribution, and labour market regulations in addressing economic disparities, while one study assessed the impact of anti-corruption reforms on wealth concentration. More broadly, discussions showcased how differences in pension systems, housing policies, and financial market structures contribute to cross-national variations in socio-economic outcomes.

Methodological innovations in inequality measurement also received significant attention. Several presentations introduced advanced techniques for analysing economic disparities, including new approaches to integrating survey and administrative data. One study examined the *income-wealth-emissions triangle* using evidence from Italy, demonstrating how linking income and wealth data with carbon emissions can provide a more comprehensive understanding of economic and environmental inequalities. Additionally, researchers explored synthetic control techniques and enhanced distributional analysis using various administrative data sources to improve the accuracy and reliability of inequality indicators. Blending multiple data sources was highlighted as a key strategy to address underreporting

and refine correction procedures, ultimately strengthening the robustness of inequality measures.

Keynote Insights: The Missing Rich and Wealth Redistribution

The conference featured two keynote lectures that delved into the complexities of economic inequality.

Professor Nora Lustig (Tulane University) delivered a compelling talk titled *“Including the Rich in Income Inequality Measures: An Assessment of Correction Approaches.”* She highlighted how traditional household surveys often fail to accurately capture the highest incomes, due to sampling errors, underreporting, and top coding. Lustig reviewed various correction methods researchers use to address this bias, focusing on *reweighting*, *replacing*, and hybrid approaches that combine both techniques. Her presentation underscored how inequality measures can be highly sensitive to methodological choices, with key implications for policy design and redistribution efforts. In addition to this, she emphasised the need to integrate tax records and other external data sources to improve accuracy.



Professor Nora Lustig giving the keynote lecture on Day 1.

Professor Fabian Pfeffer (LMU Munich) delivered a keynote lecture on *“Wealth Inequality and Redistribution”*, offering a critical perspective on the staggering levels of wealth inequality in the U.S., particularly the widening gap between the top 1% and the bottom 10%. Using survey data, he examined how different taxation scenarios – ranging from moderate adjustments to extreme redistributive measures – could reshape wealth distribution and accumulation. Pfeffer made a compelling case for far-reaching interventions to curb today’s unprecedented concentrations of wealth, advocating for policies such as substantially higher top marginal tax rates, wealth taxation, and inheritance reforms. He argued that while such measures may seem revolutionary by today’s standards, historical precedents – such as mid-20th century tax regimes – demonstrate that they have been effectively implemented before. He acknowledged that the simulations he presented did not account for behavioural responses, yet he emphasised that this remains a vital avenue for research with significant public interest and policy relevance.



Professor Fabian Pfeffer giving the keynote lecture on Day 2.

Special Event: Visions of Inequality

A special event, co-sponsored by POST Luxembourg, featured a discussion on Professor Branko Milanovic’s latest book, *“Visions of Inequality: From the French Revolution to the End of the Cold War.”* Milanovic engaged in a thought-provoking dialogue with Professors Francisco Ferreira (III & LIS UK Satellite Office) and Janet Gornick (Stone Center on Socio-economic Inequality, The Graduate Center, CUNY) reflecting on the historical evolution of global inequality and its implications for the 21st century. Around 150 local and international participants attended the event; a dedicated [article](#) in this Newsletter elaborates more about the special event.



From left to right: Janet Gornick (Stone Center/CUNY), Branko Milanovic (Stone Center/CUNY), Francisco Ferreira (III & LIS UK Satellite Office).



Venue: Salle Helix Cloud, POST Luxembourg headquarters, Luxembourg

Looking Ahead: Future Directions for Inequality Research

The conference reaffirmed the vital role of cross-disciplinary research and data innovations in tackling economic inequality. Discussions highlighted the importance of bringing together research, policy, and data, stressing that bridging the gaps is essential for developing more effective strategies to reduce inequality.

As the event drew to a close, the LIS and III teams thanked participants, emphasising the value of collaboration in advancing inequality research. The conference closed with a call for sustained engagement between academics and policymakers, ensuring that ongoing research initiatives and methodological advancements help shape future debates and drive meaningful change worldwide.

The conference presentations are now available online and can be accessed [here](#).



From left to right: Xavier Jara (III, LSE), Philippe Van Kerm (University of Luxembourg & LIS), Francisco Ferreira (III, LSE & LIS UK Satellite Office), Peter Lanjouw (LIS & VU Amsterdam), Nora Waitkus (Heidelberg University & III, LSE), Teresa Munzi (LIS).

“Visions of Inequality”

Branko Milanovic in Conversation with Francisco Ferreira and Janet Gornick

On 27 February — as part of the 2ND III/LIS COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC INEQUALITY CONFERENCE — a special evening event was held, focused on Branko Milanovic’s book *Visions of Inequality: From the French Revolution to the End of the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2023).

Milanovic is a Research Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a Senior Scholar in the Stone Center. Professors Francisco Ferreira (International Inequalities Institute, LSE) and Janet Gornick (Stone Center, Graduate Center-CUNY) direct LIS’ two satellite offices — i.e., the UK and US offices, respectively.

The event was co-sponsored by POST Luxembourg and took place at their venue in Luxembourg City, with approximately 150 people in the audience. Serge Allegrezza (STATEC, POST, and LIS Boards) introduced the event. Milanovic presented a brief overview of the core lines of argument in the book, after which he joined Ferreira and Gornick in conversation. The event closed with an audience Q&A.

Visions of Inequality presents an original history of how economists – six in particular – thought about inequality. The book’s six “main characters,” whose work spanned two centuries, have all been extensively studied. But, in this book, Milanovic revisits them and, in what is essentially a series of imaginary dialogs, he asks each of them: “What forces in your view determine income distribution and how do you see income distribution and inequality evolving in the future?” The book has been described as a “genealogy” of the discourse surrounding inequality. One reviewer said that it was “researched with forensic thoroughness,” while others have described Milanovic’s unique interpretations of these historical figures to be as unexpected as they are persuasive. Angus Deaton called *Visions of Inequality* “a truly important book.”

The heart of the book features the six historic figures chosen by Milanovic – with one chapter devoted to each – François Quesnay, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx, Vilfredo Pareto, and Simon Kuznets. Those chapters are followed by an analysis of what Milanovic refers to as “the long eclipse”, the period from the 1960s to 1990, during which, he argues, inequality studies essentially went underground. It closes with an “epilogue” focused on the contemporary period, which he describes as a time of revival.

In his prepared remarks, Milanovic introduced the underlying logic of the book, emphasizing that he chose to take no normative approach. He explained that the book’s objective was to look at how these canonical economists thought about income distribution. He explained that there are two parts to the questions that interest him and that he metaphorically asked these thinkers. The first is, what are the forces they see as determining income distribution in the place and time where and when they were writing. The second concerns how they see the evolution of income distribution in the future, taking into account the place and time in which they are situated. Milanovic explained that, for him, the choice of these six economists was not difficult because all are canonical figures generally studied in histories of economic thought, although he acknowledges that there is also a subjective or idiosyncratic element reflective of his own preferences and knowledge.

Milanovic presented a summary slide (see below), in which he placed the work of these six thinkers into a temporal framework.

Following his presentation, Ferreira and Gornick engaged Milanovic in a lively conversation.

Although they covered multiple topics, most of their exchange focused on Milanovic’s analysis of “the long eclipse.” Gornick recalled that their mutual colleague Paul Krugman argued, earlier, that Milanovic

The timeline of the authors studied

	Born	Main work		Died
Quesnay (80)	1694	1763		1774 (2 years before American independence)
Smith (67)	1723	1776 (American independence)		1790 (Just after the French revolution)
Ricardo (51)	1772	1817 (Just after the Napoleonic wars)		1823
Marx (65)	1818 (Just after the Napoleonic wars)	1848 (Revolutions in Europe)	1867 (Meiji Restoration)	1883 (Just before the division of Africa conference)
Pareto (75)	1848 (Revolutions in Europe)	1896		1923 (Mussolini in power)
Kuznets (84)	1901	1955 (Cold War)		1985 (Gorbachev in power)

neglected to recognize that international trade theorists working during that period had, in fact, focused on inequality, both implicitly and explicitly. She fleshed out that critique by adding that Milanovic, who essentially blamed the right for the eclipse, omitted some key thinkers more associated with the left, such as John Kenneth Galbraith, who also contributed to “the eclipse” by focusing greater concerns on rampant consumerism.

Ferreira argued that Milanovic had given short shrift to human capital theory and empirics, including the works of Gary Becker, Jacob Mincer, Richard Freeman – all the way to Claudia Goldin, Larry Katz, Alan Krueger, and others. He pointed out that Milanovic referred to this body of work as “incidental studies of inequality” (which drew a laugh from the audience).

Gornick also questioned Milanovic about the exclusion of scholars from the global south, as well as the notable absence of any discussion of redistribution, a topic so central to contemporary studies of inequality, especially those based on the LIS data. Ferreira closed by remarking that, in his view, what Milanovic labels as “purely empirical studies”, including early work by Tony Atkinson, François Bourguignon, and others, deserves more praise than Milanovic grants to them, adding that insights from that early work, particularly on how different measures are sensitive to different parts of the distribution, address the very nature of dispersion in a distribution; they transcend, as Ferreira put it, “just measurement”.

Milanovic responded to all of these remarks and questions, agreeing with some of the criticisms – including the absence of key voices from the left, the exclusion of inequality studies focused on labor, the



From left to right: Janet Gornick (CUNY), Tom Haas (STATEC), Branko Milanovic (CUNY), Serge Allegrezza (STATEC & POST), Francisco Ferreira (LSE).

dismissal of work focused on measurement, the neglect of economists from the global south, and the lack of reflection on redistribution – while reiterating that what he included, versus excluded, reflected his decades of engaging with economic history and scholarship on inequality. *Visions of Inequality*, Milanovic said, verges on memoir; that is, it captures his personal journey rooted in decades of reading. Ferreira, in the end, summed up the exchange with a crucial observation: “It is, after all, your book.”

The program closed with an engaged and enthusiastic exchange with the audience.

Data News / Data Release Schedule



Austria (1 new LIS dataset and 10 revised) – Addition of **AT22** to the LIS Database.

Australia (1 new LIS dataset and 1 new LWS dataset) – Addition of **AU20** to both the LIS and LWS Database.

Brazil (9 new LIS datasets and 29 revised) – Annualisation from **BR81** to **BR89** in the LIS Database.

Canada (1 new LIS dataset) – Addition of **CA21** to the LIS Database.

France (4 new LWS datasets) – France has been added to the LWS Database.

Greece (15 new LIS datasets and 7 revised) – Annualisation from **GR02** to **GR21** in the LIS Database.

Norway (1 new LIS dataset and 9 revised) – Addition of **NO22** to the LIS Database.

Norway (1 new LWS dataset and 6 revised) – Addition of **NO22** to the LWS Database.

Slovenia (1 new LWS dataset and 2 revised) – Addition of **SI21** to the LWS Database.

Finland – Variable *region_c* is now available for all Finnish LWS datasets.

Data Releases and Revisions – Luxembourg Income Study (LIS)

Austria

LIS has added one new data point to the Austrian data series in the LIS Database. The dataset is based on the Austrian Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), conducted by [Statistics Austria](#). Minor consistency revisions have been applied to ten previous datasets **AT12-AT21**, additional information for variables education background of parents (*edmom_c / eddad_c*) has been retrieved from the panel structure across the years. Note, however, that the information is not available for each person in all the years. Information in Compare.It gives more detail. **AT21** contains now newly added information on mother's and father's country of birth.

Australia

LIS has added one new data point to the Australian data series in the LIS Database. The data are drawn from the Survey of Income and Housing (SIH) conducted by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\)](#).

Brazil

Nine new datasets (**BR81** to **BR89**) have been added to the Brazilian series, extending the annual data coverage to over 40 years. The data are based on the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) by the [Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute \(IBGE\)](#). Additionally, the previously available datasets have undergone minor consistency revisions in the income taxes and social contributions.

Canada

One more datapoint has been added to the Canadian data in the LIS Database. The new dataset **CA21** is derived from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) conducted by [Statistics Canada \(StatCan\)](#).

Greece

The Greek data have been annualized from **GR02** to **GR21** in the LIS Database. The data are sourced from the Greek Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), conducted by the [Hellenic Statistical Authority \(ELSTAT\)](#). All previous datasets have been revised for improved consistency. **GR04**, **GR07**, **GR10**, **GR13**, and **GR16** have been adjusted to the latest harmonisation practices; note since LIS could rely for these datapoints on more detailed information on the Greek source data received before, some variables contain more detailed information for these data points. Additionally, **GR95** and **GR00** were

reviewed for consistency; the revision impacted for some households the variable disposable household income (*dhi*).

Norway

LIS added one more Norwegian dataset to the LIS Database. The new dataset **NO22** is based on the fully register-based Household Income Statistics maintained by [Statistics Norway \(SBB\)](#). Further clarification by Statistics Norway allowed LIS to better split pensions from other social benefits in **NO07** to **NO22**.

Data Releases and Revisions – Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS)

Australia

LIS has added one new data point to the Australian data series in the LWS Database. The data are drawn from the Survey of Income and Housing (SIH) conducted by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\)](#).

France

France is now available in the LWS Database! The new data series includes the datapoints of **FR20**, **FR17**, **FR14**, and **FR09**. The data originate from the Household Wealth Survey (Patrimoine / HVP) conducted by the [National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies \(INSEE\)](#) in collaboration with the Banque de France.

Norway

LIS added one more Norwegian dataset to the LWS Database. The new dataset **NO22** is based on the fully register-based Household Income and Wealth Statistics maintained by [Statistics Norway \(SBB\)](#). The six previous datasets have been revised for consistency. Further clarification by Statistics Norway allowed LIS to better split pensions from other social benefits, and to reallocate some items in the balance sheet (notably financial assets and consumer goods). These revisions also slightly affect the upper-level aggregates *haf*, *han*, and *dnw*.

Slovenia

The data point **SI21** has been added to the LWS Database. The data come from the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (HFCS), conducted by the [Central Bank of Slovenia](#). Two previous datasets have been revised in the section assets acquired in the past.

Finland

The variable *region_c* is now available for all Finnish LWS datasets.

LIS/LWS Data Release Schedule

	Summer 2025	Autumn 2025
LIS Database		
Germany		DE21
Iceland	IS03-IS17	
Bulgaria	BG06-BG22	
Panama		PA96-PA22
Paraguay		PY21, PY22, PY23
Poland		PL21, PL22, PL23
LWS Database		
India	IN91-IN19	
Mexico	MX19	
Spain	ES22	
United Kingdom	UK21	

News, Events and Updates

Applications to the LIS Introductory Workshop, 30 June – 04 July 2025 are Now Open!

LIS is excited to announce that the application to its Summer introductory workshop is now open. This year's workshop marks the 33rd edition after the first workshop took place in 1988. As in the last five editions, LIS, the University of Luxembourg, and LISER will jointly organize and teach the workshop on **"Comparative Inequality Measurement using the LIS & LWS Databases"**. This workshop is a one-week intensive course designed to introduce researchers in the social sciences to comparative research on income and wealth distribution, employment and social policy, using the harmonised Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) and Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS) Databases. The Workshop will be held at the University of Luxembourg, Belval Campus, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg from 30 June to 04 of July 2025.

For more details about the workshop programme and practical information, please visit the [workshop page](#).

Applications should be submitted online through this [application form](#) by **April 11, 2025**.

For questions and inquiries, please write to workshop@lisdatacenter.org.

(LIS)²ER Visitors Programme 2025

The (LIS)²ER initiative - an institutional collaboration between LIS and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER) to promote data-driven research on policies to fight inequalities - is happy to announce the list of selected candidates for this year's (LIS)²ER visiting researchers programme. The selection has been particularly competitive this year, as we received a number of excellent proposals from researchers all over the world. At the end, the initiative selected 10 short-term visitors and one senior fellow. The visitors are from high-profile institutions based in Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Peru, Spain and the United States, demonstrating the diversity of LIS users.

Selected projects also represent a wide variety of research agendas, including "Intra-couple gaps in retirees' financial resources across OECD countries" by Andreas Weiland (University of Bamberg) and Nicole Kapelle (Trinity College Dublin), "Measuring the impact of demographic change on income poverty in five advanced welfare states" by Gabriele Mariani (University of Antwerp), and "Men's marriage premium in comparative perspective" by Keon Kim (Seoul National University). Each of these visitors will be given opportunities to present their ongoing work at seminars jointly organized by LIS and LISER. Some of these projects will also be carried out in collaboration with Kun Lee, our research associate for the (LIS)²ER initiative. More details about this year's (LIS)²ER visiting scholars and their research projects will be announced on our website in due course.

Study Visit from the Youth Research Institute

On March 6, LIS had the pleasure of hosting a student group from the Youth Research Institute, Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC) as part of their study trip. The visit was organized and led by Levente Székely, PhD (Director of the Youth Research Institute, Head of the Center for Sociology, Youth Research Institute, School of Social Sciences and History) and Georgina Kiss-Kozma, PhD (Head of Research, Youth

Research Institute; Researcher Teacher, School of Social Sciences and History).

The group consisted of 13 students from diverse academic backgrounds, aiming to gain insight into LIS and its databases. Heba Omar, LIS Assistant Director of Operations, welcomed the group, provided an overview of LIS and its databases, and engaged in discussions, exchanging perspectives and ideas with the students.



LIS Team Participation in Conferences/Workshops

Teresa Munzi and Philippe Van Kerm attended the 18th Winter School on Inequality and Social Welfare Theory, which was held in Alba di Canazei (Italy) from January 7th to 10th. Teresa provided a review of poverty research that was done using the LIS data, while Philippe presented his own work on poverty trends across the world using the LIS data. They also highlighted various research opportunities at LIS - notably through the (LIS)²ER programme.

The LIS team was included in various presentations at the 2nd III-LIS Comparative Economic Inequality Conference held in Luxembourg. On February 27, Jörg Neugschwender presented the joint paper with LIS colleagues Gintare Mazeikaite and Heba Omar, and BLS colleagues on *Building a Comparable Measure of Consumption: Concepts and Measurement Challenges Faced by Emerging and Advanced Economies*, while Philippe Van Kerm presented his work on inequality of opportunity, emphasizing the importance of composition effects (*Composition matters: Re-assessing inequality of opportunity comparisons in the EU*). On February 28, Kun Lee presented his work on *The paradox of redistribution in wealth perspective: public-private pension mix and economic inequality in old age*. Two papers with active involvement of Piotr Paradowski (*Missing wealth distribution, wealth inequality, and anti-inequality policies* and *Measuring wealth indicators at regional level: an experimental approach using joint distribution*) were presented by the co-authors.

The paper *Building a Comparable Measure of Consumption: Concepts and Measurement Challenges Faced by Emerging and Advanced Economies* was presented again – and received substantial attention – at the New Techniques and Technologies for official Statistics (NTTS 2025) conference in Brussels on March 13 by Teresa Munzi.

Stone Center at GC CUNY will host its Seventh In-Person Inequality by the Numbers Workshop - Applications Open Until March 31, 2025

Applications are now open for the Stone Center's annual research workshop on socio-economic inequality, which will be held in-person at the CUNY Graduate Center from June 9-13.

Inequality by the Numbers takes a broad approach to the study of socio-economic inequalities, spanning gaps in income, wealth, employment, wages, education, social mobility, politics, health, housing, the impacts of climate change, interactions with the criminal-legal system, and other topics. Instructors view inequalities through multiple lenses, including gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, age, and immigration status, as well as through multidisciplinary perspectives. Disparities are considered in several geographic contexts: within New York City, across the U.S. states, across countries, and globally.

When and Where: June 9-13, 2025. CUNY Graduate Center.

Deadline to Apply: March 31, 2025. Apply [here](#).

Structure: This workshop is targeted to PhD students and early-career scholars who work in a range of social science disciplines, as well as other fields outside of academia.

See information about past workshops [here](#).

Email: inequalityworkshop@gc.cuny.edu.

Stone Center at GC CUNY Announced Its Seventh Cohort of Postdoctoral Scholars

A seventh cohort of postdoctoral scholars will join the Stone Center for two-year appointments that begin in August 2025. Naomi Crowther was selected for the position that focuses on wealth inequality and is affiliated with the [GC Wealth Project](#). Marai Hayes was selected for the position that broadly focuses on socio-economic inequalities.

Naomi Crowther is an economist who researches issues of gendered wealth inequality alongside the intergenerational and multidimensional effects of forced displacement. Her current research examines land restitution to formerly displaced people and contributes to extending economic theory of property rights in post-conflict settings. Additionally, she is investigating the role of inheritance in perpetuating gendered wealth inequalities. She has more than ten years of experience working in the international development field, including for the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. She is expected to receive her Ph.D. in economics from Trinity College Dublin this spring.



Marai Hayes is an economist whose research examines how health shapes the trajectory of economic outcomes over the life course, and the potential for health and social policies to address inequities in health and economic opportunity. Her current work investigates the role of childhood health on the trajectory of labor market and wealth outcomes from early adulthood to old age as well as the long-term economic effects of major public health interventions in the U.S. Future research focus areas include the intergenerational transmission of health and socioeconomic status and its effects on lifelong economic inequality. She is expected to receive her Ph.D. in health policy from Harvard University in May.

For a full list of the Stone Center's current and former postdoctoral scholars, and more information about the program, see the Stone Center's [Postdoctoral Scholars](#) page.