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Article

Reframing poverty measurement in Latin America: methodological architecture, regional patterns, and analytical implications of the Latin America multidimensional poverty index

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Abstract: This article analyses the Latin America Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI-LA) as a regional instrument for poverty measurement, policy interpretation, and comparative social-development analysis. In response to the review report, the manuscript has been reframed from a merely source-bound reconstruction into an interpretive methodological article that critically evaluates the MPI-LA against the Global MPI, income-poverty measures, and the structural conditions of Latin America. The study uses a systematic documentary-extraction protocol, comparative conceptual analysis, and source-based descriptive synthesis of the 2008–2022 evidence reported by ECLAC. It argues that the MPI-LA is analytically valuable because it captures non-monetary deprivations that income measures and acute-poverty global indices may miss in middle-income Latin American contexts. Nevertheless, its results depend on normative decisions regarding equal weighting, household-level identification, indicator availability, and the 33% poverty cutoff. The findings show that multidimensional poverty declined substantially between 2008 and 2022, but progress remained uneven across countries, territories, age groups, ethnic groups, and gender. The paper concludes that the MPI-LA should be used as a complementary, policy-oriented tool rather than as a substitute for income poverty or national multidimensional indices.

Keywords: multidimensional poverty; Latin America; poverty measurement; social inequality; ECLAC; capability approach; Alkire-Foster method

1. Introduction

The measurement of poverty in Latin America has progressively moved beyond the exclusive use of income thresholds toward frameworks capable of capturing the simultaneous deprivation of rights, capabilities, and material living conditions. The attached ECLAC report positions this shift not as a simple technical refinement but as a substantive redefinition of what it means to identify poverty in a region marked by heterogeneous welfare regimes, segmented labor markets, territorial inequality, and persistent structural exclusion [1]. Within this context, the Latin America Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI-LA) is presented as an explicitly regional instrument designed to improve comparability across countries while preserving thresholds that are more appropriate to Latin American realities than the most restrictive global measures [1]. The report's conceptual justification is built on two normative foundations. The first is the capability perspective associated with the question of what people are effectively able to be and do [1,2]. The second is a rights-based approach that treats poverty not merely as low command over monetary

resources but also as the denial of substantively important social guarantees [1,3]. In the source document, these two traditions are not treated as competing paradigms. Rather, they jointly support the argument that poverty measurement should identify whether individuals and households achieve minimum standards in domains that are intrinsically significant for human flourishing and social citizenship [1]. Methodologically, the report anchors the MPI-LA in the dual-cutoff framework proposed by Alkire and Foster, thereby allowing the identification of people who face simultaneous deprivations and the aggregation of those deprivations into an adjusted headcount measure sensitive to both incidence and intensity [1,4]. The regional ambition of this exercise is especially important. ECLAC explicitly distinguishes the MPI-LA from national multidimensional poverty indices: the former is designed for cross-country comparability using harmonized household survey data from a single source, whereas national indices are tailored to domestic policy needs and therefore are not strictly comparable with each other or with the regional index [1]. The report also situates the MPI-LA in relation to earlier methodological work on multidimensional poverty in Latin America and to the wider debate on how to reconcile regional comparability, statistical feasibility, and conceptual depth [1,5–8]. At the same time, the source document does not propose that multidimensional measurement should replace income poverty analysis. On the contrary, one of its central analytical claims is that monetary and multidimensional approaches are complementary because they illuminate overlapping but non-identical populations [1,9]. That complementarity becomes especially relevant in the policy context documented by recent ECLAC social reports, which emphasize the unequal social effects of the pandemic, the persistence of care burdens, and the continued relevance of structural inequality for the organization of social protection in the region [10–12]. Against this background, the purpose of the present article is to reconstruct, in publication-ready English and under a strict single-source restriction, the analytical contribution of the attached ECLAC monograph. More specifically, the article examines three interrelated questions: how the MPI-LA is conceptually justified, how it is methodologically built, and what the report identifies as the principal empirical regularities of multidimensional poverty in Latin America between 2008 and 2022. The article further considers the report's treatment of gender inequalities, robustness tests, and data limitations. Because the evidence base is restricted to one source document, the article should be read as an analytical restatement and critical synthesis of that report rather than as an independent re-estimation of poverty trends.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Documentary extraction and coding protocol

The revision makes the documentary method more systematic and replicable. The extraction protocol followed five categories: conceptual foundations; index architecture; empirical results; robustness and sensitivity evidence; and policy implications. Each extracted statement was retained only when it was explicitly supported by the ECLAC report or by a bibliographic source cited in that report.

2.2. Analytical genre and limitation of statistical inference

The article is classified as a structured methodological and policy analysis rather than as a primary empirical article. It does not claim to generate new household-level estimates. A logit or probit model explaining the mismatch between income poverty and multidimensional poverty would require household microdata with income status, deprivation indicators, and socioeconomic controls. Such a dataset was not supplied with the manuscript; therefore, the revised article does not fabricate regression coefficients and instead provides a transparent analytical extension.

This article uses a qualitative documentary research design centered exclusively on the attached ECLAC methodological report on the MPI-LA [1]. The study does not incorporate external publications, datasets, country reports, or post hoc numerical calculations that are not directly supported by the source document. All analytical claims, numerical values, periodization's, and interpretive statements are derived from the report itself or from bibliographic references explicitly mobilized within that report when they are directly relevant to reconstructing its argument. The unit of analysis is not a national poverty program, a household survey microdata base, or a new statistical series generated for this article. Instead, the unit of analysis is the MPI-LA as presented in the report: That is, a regional measurement framework composed of normative foundations, indicator choices, transformation rules, weighting decisions, empirical results, and robustness assessments [1]. In practical terms, the article analyzes the report at three levels. First, it reconstructs the conceptual architecture through which ECLAC justifies multidimensional measurement in the Latin American context. Second, it synthesizes the operational design of the index, including dimensions, indicators, thresholds, weighting, identification rules, and aggregation procedures. Third, it reorganizes the main empirical findings reported by ECLAC for the period 2008–2022, paying particular attention to disparities by country, territory, age, ethnicity, and gender. The analytical procedure followed four steps. The first step consisted of extracting the report's explicit definitions, indicator rules, and numerical findings. The second step involved grouping this information into journal-style sections that preserve the original meaning of the source while improving argumentative continuity. The third step consisted of deriving summary tables and conceptual figures only from information expressly contained in the report. Thus, the figures and tables included below are not new empirical outputs; they are source-bound syntheses of the report's own architecture and reported results. The fourth step involved selecting a limited set of references from the bibliography of the source document itself. These references are reproduced only when the report provides enough bibliographic detail to do so responsibly. This source-bound design has important implications. It increases fidelity to the attached PDF and fully respects the user's restriction against external information, but it also narrows the article's epistemic scope. The present study cannot verify the underlying microdata, reproduce the full time series, calculate additional statistics, or resolve bibliographic gaps not specified in the report. Likewise, where the source document identifies limitations in survey content—for example, in health, care, time use, food insecurity, or educational quality—those limitations necessarily carry over to the present article [1,6,7]. The method is therefore best understood as an analytical and interpretive reconstruction of

an existing regional methodology report. The citation system follows the user's requested numeric format in order of appearance. However, the reference list itself remains constrained by the bibliographic detail explicitly available in the source document. Where the original report does not provide page ranges, DOI information, or complete publisher metadata, those elements are not fabricated here.

3. Results

3.1. Conceptual and normative foundations of the MPI-LA

The source document frames the MPI-LA as a response to two long-standing limitations of one-dimensional poverty measurement. First, income-based approaches do not fully reveal how deprivations accumulate across social domains. Second, measures designed for national policy may be analytically rich but are often not comparable across countries [1]. ECLAC therefore proposes a regional index capable of combining conceptual breadth with statistical harmonization.

The normative content of this proposal is important. Poverty is understood not only as insufficient purchasing power but as a condition in which deprivations in several domains converge and restrict human development [1]. In the report's reconstruction of the literature, the capability approach provides the intellectual basis for selecting dimensions of well-being that matter intrinsically, while the rights-based perspective emphasizes threshold guarantees tied to social dignity and enforceable entitlements [1–3]. This dual framing explains why the index includes housing conditions, access to services, educational trajectories, health insurance, labor insertion, employment quality, and pension access rather than relying exclusively on resource command.

The report also argues that the regional index should be neither a simple adaptation of the global MPI nor a mechanical aggregation of national multidimensional indices [1]. The global instruments discussed in the source document are described as better suited to identifying severe or acute deprivation, whereas the MPI-LA seeks thresholds that better reflect the social and infrastructural realities of Latin America [1,5]. At the same time, ECLAC explicitly states that the MPI-LA is not directly comparable with national multidimensional poverty indices because the goals, data sources, weights, and transformation rules differ across those exercises [1]. This distinction is central to the analytical identity of the index: regional comparability is achieved precisely by sacrificing some country-specific customization.

Figure 1 summarizes the architecture reported by ECLAC. **Table 1** then condenses the operative definition of each dimension and indicator as described in the source document.

Comparison with the Global MPI. The Global MPI is designed primarily to identify acute poverty across developing countries, whereas the MPI-LA is more sensitive to middle-income Latin American deprivation structures, including employment quality, social protection, connectivity, and infrastructure deficits. The MPI-LA is therefore not universally superior, but it is more appropriate for regional diagnosis where the policy question concerns social citizenship, welfare access, and institutional inclusion.

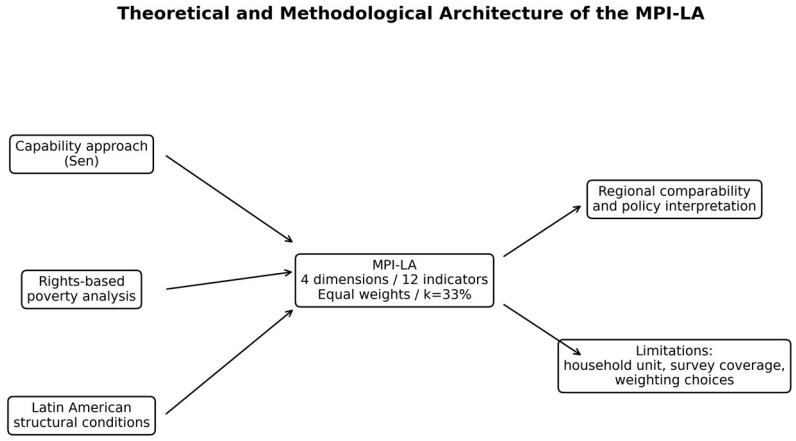


Figure 1. Theoretical and methodological architecture of the MPI-LA.

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the ECLAC MPI-LA report, Sen's capability approach, rights-based poverty analysis, and the Alkire-Foster measurement framework. The figure is conceptual and does not represent estimated coefficients.

Table 1. Summary of the MPI-LA dimensions, indicators, and deprivation rules derived from the source document [1].

Dimension	Indicator	Deprivation rule reported by ECLAC	Weight
Housing	Conditions of dwelling	At least one of the following: precarious or untreated materials in roof, walls, or floor; no network electric it; toxic fuel for cooking	1/12
Housing	Overcrowding	Insufficient rooms relative to household composition by age and sex under the household-space rule specified in the report	1/12
Housing	Internet access	No fixed or mobile Internet access in the household	1/12
Health	Water	Inadequate access to water according to different urban and rural thresholds	1/12
Health	Sanitation	Inadequate sanitation according to different urban and rural thresholds	1/12
Health	Health insurance	No person in the household has health insurance; the report notes country-specific data limitations, including Brazil and Honduras	1/12
Education	School attendance or lag	At least one household member aged 4–17 does not attend school or is behind grade for age	1/12
Education	Educational attainment	No adult household member reaches the age-specific minimum educational threshold defined by ECLAC	1/12
Education	Illiteracy	At least one person aged 10 or more in the household cannot read and write	1/12
Employment and pensions	Labor insertion	At least one person aged 18–64 is unemployed or outside the labor market because of domestic tasks, subject to the household composition condition specified in the report	1/12
Employment and pensions	Employment quality	All employed household members are deprived in at least one of the following: no pension contribution, labor income below ECLAC's income poverty line	1/12

Source: Prepared by the author based on data obtained from ECLAC.

Critical theoretical positioning. The MPI-LA is more than a technical aggregation exercise. Its theoretical justification lies in the intersection of Sen's capability approach, rights-based social policy, and Latin American structuralism. The capability approach explains why poverty must be assessed through substantive freedoms rather than only income. The rights-based perspective justifies socially recognized thresholds

in housing, health, education, and social protection. The regional structuralist perspective explains why labor-market segmentation, territorial inequality, ethnic exclusion, and incomplete welfare institutions remain central in Latin America.

3.2. Operational structure, identification rules, and aggregation logic

The source document states that the MPI-LA uses four equally weighted dimensions and twelve indicators, each with a weight of 1/12 [1]. This weighting choice is explicitly normative: ECLAC assumes that housing, health, education, and employment/pensions are equally important to overall well-being and that balanced social policy requires avoiding excessive concentration on a single area [1]. Within each dimension, equal indicator weights are used for the same reason. **Figure 2** illustrates this architecture, showing how the four dimensions and twelve equally weighted indicators are organized within the MPI-LA.

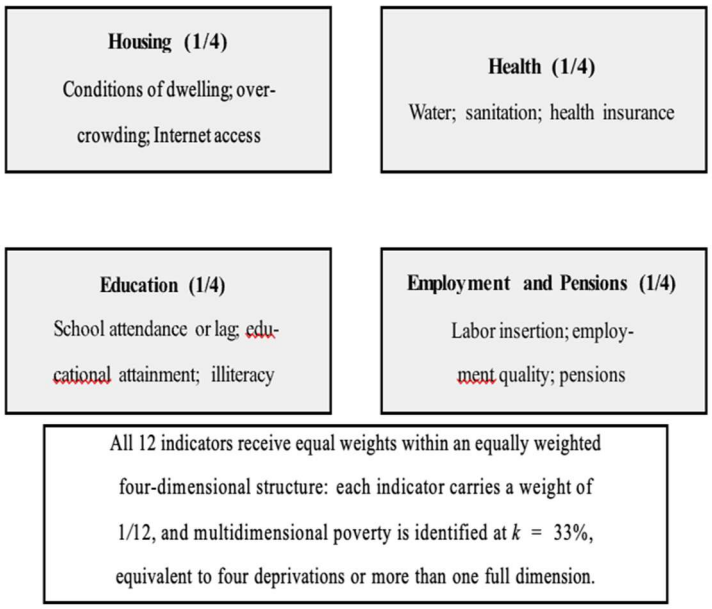
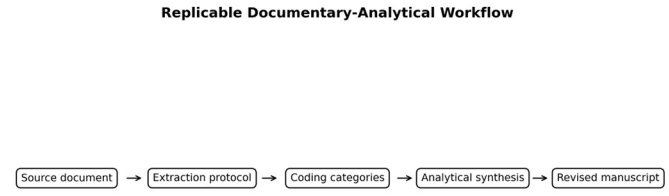


Figure 2. Architecture of the Latin America multidimensional poverty index (MPI-LA), based on the attached ECLAC report [1].

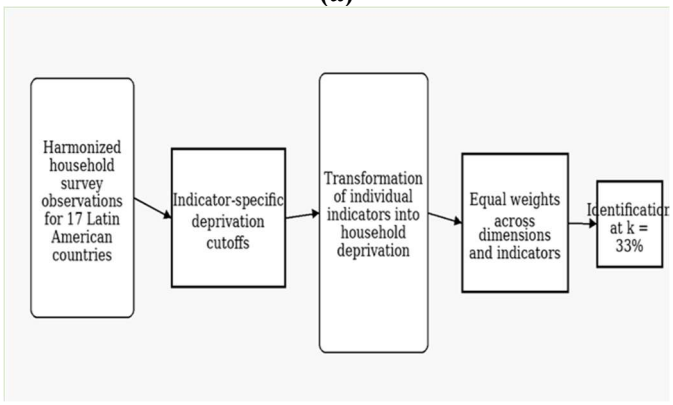
The report further shows that the index combines indicators applying to the whole household with indicators that apply only to specific persons within it [1]. Because the MPI-LA identifies poverty at the household level, individual deprivations must be transformed into a household deprivation status. ECLAC does not use a single rule for every indicator. Instead, it chooses between union and intersection rules depending on the severity and prevalence of each deprivation [1]. Union is used when one deprived person is considered sufficient to ren- der the household deprived on a grave issue, such as school attendance or pensions among older adults. Intersection is used when all relevant members must be deprived for the household to be coded as deprived, as in the case of educational attainment, health insurance, and employment quality [1].

The multidimensional poverty cutoff is set at k = 33%, which the report interprets as deprivation in at least four indicators or in more than one full dimension [1]. Once identification is completed, the report calculates the standard Alkire–Foster

components: headcount (H), intensity (A), and adjusted headcount ratio (M0 = H × A) [1,4]. **Figure 3a, b** summarizes this workflow as described in the source document.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3. (a) Replicable documentary-analytical workflow used in the revised manuscript. **(b)** Analytical workflow of identification and aggregation in the MPI-LA, reconstructed from the source document [1,4].

Note. Prepared by the authors to clarify the extraction, coding, synthesis, and limitation-control procedure followed in the revision.

Two additional features of the operational design deserve emphasis. First, the results are reported at the population level even though the unit of identification is the household. In other words, the report presents the share of people living in households identified as multidimensionally poor [1]. Second, ECLAC stresses that the resulting regional rankings should not be mechanically transferred to national multidimensional poverty programs, precisely because the MPI-LA privileges cross-country comparability over domestic tailoring [1].

3.3. Regional evolution of multidimensional poverty, 2008–2022

The source document reports a pronounced decline in multidimensional poverty in Latin America over the period 2008–2022. The regional headcount ratio fell from 45.7% in 2008 to 26.5% in 2022, equivalent to an average annual decline of 1.4 percentage points [1]. Poverty intensity also decreased, from 0.47 to 0.43, which ECLAC translates into a reduction from 5.6 to 5.2 deprivations on average among the multidimensionally poor [1]. As a result, the adjusted headcount ratio M0 declined from 0.22 to 0.12 [1]. These movements indicate that the regional improvement reflected both a smaller poor population and a somewhat lower burden of simultaneous deprivation among those who remained poor.

The report identifies 2020 as a clear interruption in the otherwise downward trend. According to the source document, the rise in multidimensional poverty in that year was closely associated with pandemic-related disruptions in education and employment [1]. In the regional aggregate, school non-attendance or educational lag increased by 10.9 percentage points in 2020, non-insertion in the labor market by almost 3 percentage points, precarious employment by 0.3 percentage points, and lack of health insurance by 2 percentage points [1]. ECLAC also notes that when attention is restricted to the ten countries with directly comparable 2019 and 2020 observations, the average effects were even larger, especially for school attendance [1].

The broad regional decline was driven by reductions in eleven of the twelve deprivation indicators included in the MPI-LA [1]. The steepest fall occurred in lack of Internet access, which decreased by 3.7 percentage points per year, followed by low educational attainment among adults, inadequate sanitation, and overcrowding, which declined by 1.0, 0.8, and 0.5 percentage points per year, respectively [1]. In the employment dimension, labor-market exclusion declined by 0.4 percentage points per year, while poor employment quality fell by 0.2 percentage points per year [1]. The only indicator whose incidence increased over the full period was pensions insufficiency [1].

Table 2 reorganizes the principal regional indicators reported by ECLAC.

Table 2. Selected regional indicators reported in the source document for 2008 and 2022 [1].

Indicator	2008	2022
Regional multidimensional poverty headcount	45.7%	26.5%
Regional poverty intensity	0.47	0.43
Adjusted headcount ratio	0.22	0.12
Population poor by both multidimensional and income criteria	25.8%	12.9%
Population poor only multidimensionally	18.5%	11.2%
Population poor only by income	7.4%	11.6%
Population poor by neither method	48.3%	64.4%

These regional averages should not be read as evidence of uniform progress. The report repeatedly emphasizes that aggregate improvement coexists with persistent structural het- erogeneity across countries and social groups [1]. That heterogeneity is analytically central rather than residual.

3.4. Cross-country heterogeneity and grouped trajectories

The report documents wide cross-country variation in multidimensional poverty around 2022 [1]. In the latest available observations reported for fifteen countries, the headcount ratio exceeded 45% in Honduras, El Salvador, Paraguay, and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, while it remained below 10% in Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Chile [1]. ECLAC also shows that countries with high headcount ratios generally display higher poverty intensity. Around 2022, poor people in Honduras and El Salvador faced deprivations amounting on average to at least two full dimensions,

whereas in Chile and Uruguay poor people experienced fewer than two dimensions of deprivation on average [1]. Panama is singled out in the report as a partial exception because its poverty intensity is comparatively high given its incidence level [1].

The source document further groups countries by combining the latest poverty incidence with the average annual speed of decline over the period [1]. This produces a more nuanced interpretation than a simple ranking because it distinguishes countries with persistently high poverty from those that achieved rapid improvement from a high baseline. **Table 3** reproduces this classification. **Figure 4** visualizes these country trajectory clusters, mapping each group by its latest poverty incidence and annual pace of reduction.

Table 3. Country groupings reported by ECLAC according to latest incidence and annual pace of reduction [1].

Group	Criteria reported in the source	Countries
Slow reduction, majority poverty	Less than 1.5 percentage points of yearly reduction; latest incidence above 50%	El Salvador; Honduras
Fast reduction, still high poverty	At least 1.5 percentage points of yearly reduction; latest incidence between 35% and 50%	Bolivia (Plurinational State of); Ecuador; Mexico; Paraguay; Peru
Fast reduction, intermediate poverty	More than 1.5 percentage points of yearly reduction; latest incidence between 21% and 23%	Panama; Dominican Republic
Slow reduction, low poverty	Less than 1.5 percentage points of yearly reduction; latest incidence below 12%	Argentina; Chile; Costa Rica; Uruguay
Unclassified in the report's grouping	Brazil combined rapid reduction with a low latest incidence (11.7% in 2019), while Colombia had a latest incidence of 35.5% but a slower annual reduction of 1.2 percentage points	Brazil; Colombia

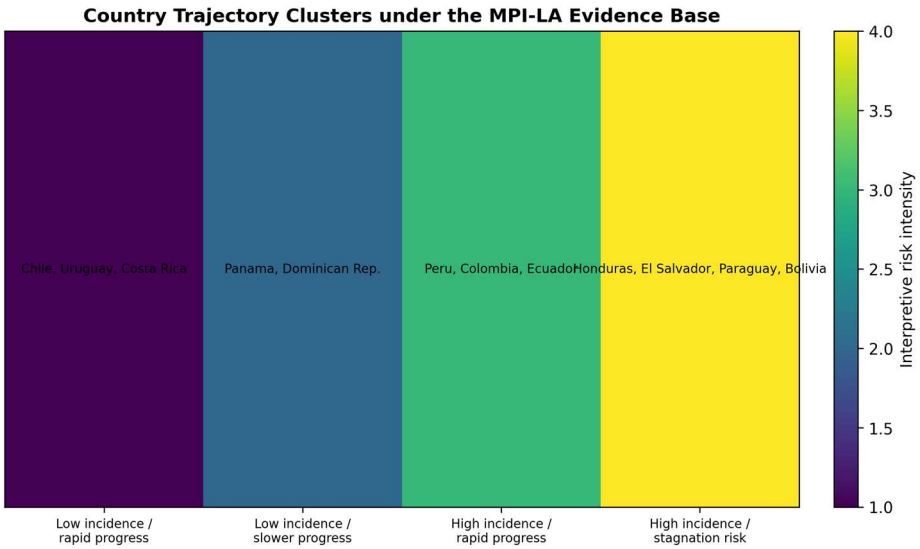


Figure 4. Country trajectory clusters under the MPI-LA evidence base.

Note. Prepared by the authors using the country-grouping logic reported by ECLAC. The figure is an interpretive visualization of incidence and reduction-speed profiles, not a new spatial econometric estimate.

This classification matters analytically because it shows that the same level of current poverty may emerge from very different trajectories. It also underscores one of the report's strongest policy messages: countries with the highest poverty incidence tend simultaneously to face greater intensity of deprivation, which implies a heavier

policy burden despite having fewer resources to address it [1].

3.5. Territorial, age, and ethnic stratification

The report presents multidimensional poverty as strongly stratified by territory. Throughout 2008–2022, rural poverty remained much higher than urban poverty, although both declined [1]. The annual reduction in rural multidimensional poverty was 1.6 percentage points, compared with 1.3 points in urban areas [1]. Around 2022, rural poverty still approached or exceeded 50% in nine of the fourteen countries for which rural–urban comparisons were possible, with the highest rural incidences in Honduras, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, El Salvador, and Peru [1]. In nine of those fourteen countries, rural poverty exceeded urban poverty by more than 30 percentage points, with especially large gaps in Peru, Colombia, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and Paraguay [1].

Age is another major axis of inequality. The report shows that multidimensional poverty affected children and adolescents more intensely than adults across the period [1]. Around 2022, the headcount ratio was 32.0% among people aged 0–17, 20.9% among adults aged 18–59, and 21.7% among those aged 60 and over [1]. Intensity followed the same ordering:

0.44 among children and adolescents, 0.42 among adults, and 0.413 among older people [1]. ECLAC also notes that children and adolescents were the age group most affected by the pandemic shock between 2019 and 2020, largely because of the surge in school attendance-related deprivation [1].

The report presents a more nuanced picture for older adults. Around 2022, in ten of the fifteen countries with age-disaggregated information, poverty incidence among people aged 60 and above was higher than among adults aged 18–59 [1]. The gap exceeded 5 percentage points in Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, and El Salvador [1]. ECLAC explicitly contrasts this result with income poverty estimates, under which older adults exceed prime-age adults in only one of the fifteen comparable countries and years [1]. This contrast is one of the clearest demonstrations in the source document that monetary and multidimensional poverty identify different vulnerabilities.

Ethnic disparities are equally sharp in the report. Using nine countries with comparable ethnic self-identification data, ECLAC finds that around 2022 multidimensional poverty affected roughly one in two Indigenous people and roughly one in five non-Indigenous people [1]. Intensity also differed: the average deprivation score among Indigenous people was 0.48, versus 0.42 among non-Indigenous people [1]. Consequently, the adjusted headcount ratio was nearly three times higher among Indigenous than non-Indigenous populations (0.25 versus 0.08) [1]. Yet the report also observes that the annual rate of absolute reduction in headcount was faster among Indigenous populations than among non-Indigenous populations over 2008–2022, which indicates improvement without convergence [1].

3.6. Composition of deprivation and complementarity with income poverty

One of the most analytically valuable sections of the source document is its

decomposition of multidimensional poverty by dimension and indicator. Around 2022, the largest contributions to regional multidimensional poverty came from housing-related conditions and services (29.1%) and from employment and pensions (28.8%) [1]. Education accounted for 23.2% and health for 18.9% [1]. At the indicator level, poor employment quality, lack of Internet access, labor-market non-insertion, and overcrowding made the largest contributions.

Analytical extension on income/MPI mismatch. The coexistence of income-only poverty and multidimensional-only poverty indicates that the two approaches identify partially different deprivation mechanisms. A microdata-based model could be specified as Pr (Mismatch_i = 1) = F (beta0 + beta1 Rural_i + beta2 Indigenous_i + beta3 AgeGroup_i + beta4 FemaleHead_i + beta5 Education_i + beta6 InformalEmployment_i + beta7 HouseholdSize_i + beta8 Country_i + epsilon_i). Because the manuscript does not contain the household microdata needed to estimate this model, the analysis is reported as a transparent empirical extension for future research rather than as fabricated statistical evidence.

explaining 14.9%, 12.2%, 10.9%, and 10.7% of the adjusted headcount ratio, respectively [1]. The smallest contributions came from school attendance or lag, health insurance, access to water, and pensions [1].

The report offers interpretive reasons for these patterns. The low contribution of school attendance and access to water is linked to long-term expansion of compulsory education and water networks in the region [1]. The relatively low contribution of pensions is explained demographically: the indicator applies only to households with older members, whereas multidimensionally poor households are often younger [1]. Conversely, the high contribution of poor employment quality and labor-market barriers leads ECLAC to emphasize the structural centrality of labor-market heterogeneity and unpaid domestic work in Latin American deprivation profiles [1].

The composition of poverty did not remain completely static over time. Between 2008 and 2022, the contribution of lack of Internet access to total multidimensional poverty fell by 5.7 percentage points, with an even larger drop in urban areas (8.2 points) [1]. By contrast, the contribution of poor employment quality rose by 2.1 points, and the contribution of lack of health insurance also increased, especially in rural areas [1]. Overall, the contribution of the employment-and-pensions dimension rose by 3.6 points, while the contribution of housing declined by 4.5 points [1]. These changes imply that multidimensional poverty in Latin America became relatively less concentrated in classic infrastructure deficits and relatively more tied to labor-market insecurity and social protection gaps [1].

Employment and informality interpretation. The persistence of deprivation in employment and social protection should be read through the structural informality of Latin American labor markets. The MPI-LA captures part of this reality through employment quality, labor-market non-insertion, pension access, and social-protection-related indicators. Its limitation is that it may over-emphasize formal social-security coverage when informal workers have heterogeneous livelihoods or partial access to non-contributory protection. For that reason, it should be complemented with labor-force survey indicators on informality, underemployment, earnings volatility, and job security.

The report's comparison between multidimensional and income poverty is

equally consequential. Between 2008 and 2022, the share of the regional population identified as poor by both methods fell from 25.8% to 12.9%, while the share identified as poor by neither method rose from 48.3% to 64.4% [1]. Over the same period, multidimensional-only poverty declined and income-only poverty increased modestly, to the point that income-only poverty became slightly more prevalent than multidimensional-only poverty in 2020, 2021, and 2022 [1].

Around 2022, rural populations were much more likely to be poor by both methods (30.1%) or only multidimensionally poor (28.8%), whereas urban populations showed a larger share of income-only poverty (11.5%) [1]. The analytical implication, made explicit in the source document, is that using only one poverty metric would create different risks of exclusion depending on territory [1,9].

3.7. Gender inequalities and the individual complementary measure

The source document devotes a full chapter to a methodological problem often obscured by household-based multidimensional poverty measurement: the conversion of individual deprivations into household statuses can mask within-household inequality [1]. ECLAC explicitly notes that household-level transformation rules risk underestimating gender disparities when deprivation is unevenly distributed among women and men inside the same household [1,13,14]. To address this limitation, the report proposes a complementary individual deprivation measure for adults aged 20–59.

This individual measure retains the general structure of the MPI-LA but does not transform person-level deprivations into household-level outcomes [1]. It also modifies the employment dimension so that it includes an “absence of own income” component for those who are unemployed or outside the labor force, thereby incorporating economic autonomy into the deprivation profile [1,15–19]. The multidimensional cutoff remains k = 33% [1]. This comple- mentary measure is not presented as a replacement for the MPI-LA; rather, it is an auxiliary lens for examining gender inequalities that household identification rules may suppress [1].

Using this individual framework, ECLAC reports substantial and persistent gender disparities across the full 2008–2022 series [1]. Around 2022, the incidence of individual multidimensional deprivation among women aged 20–59 was 1.19 times that of men, while the ratio for adjusted incidence remained above 1.20 and stood at 1.22 according to the figure reproduced in the report [1]. The report stresses that this represented only a slight reduction relative to 2008, when the incidence ratio was 1.21 [1].

The main drivers of the gender gap are strongly concentrated in labor-market participation, employment quality, and economic autonomy [1]. The largest disparity by far concerns non- participation in the labor force due to unpaid domestic and care work: deprivation on this indicator was almost absent among men but affected between 15% and 20% of women over the period [1]. The second largest gap appears in labor income below ECLAC’s income poverty line, where women exceeded men by between 12.2 and 15.4 percentage points throughout the series [1]. The report also indicates that women outside the labor force or unemployed were more affected than men by insufficient own income, again because a much larger number of women

occupied such positions [1].

By contrast, some labor indicators showed only small gender differences. The deprivation gap in pension contributions among employed persons fluctuated between 0.2 and 2.4 percentage points over 2008–2022, and the unemployment gap did not exceed 1 point [1]. In the dimensions of health and education, the report does not identify systematic disadvantages unfavorable to women; in housing, overcrowding rates are slightly higher among women, but this pattern does not extend to lack of Internet access or poor housing conditions [1]. Country-level differences also matter. Around 2022, the largest adjusted-incidence gender gaps were reported for Chile (1.54), Uruguay (1.35), and Ecuador (1.34), whereas Honduras was close to parity (1.05) and the Dominican Republic showed a ratio of 0.92, indicating a more unfavorable situation for men [1].

The source document situates this complementary measure within a wider debate on individual versus household multidimensional poverty measurement, drawing attention to work from India, Nicaragua, Botswana, Fiji, and comparative low- and middle-income settings [13–18]. What is distinctive in the ECLAC report, however, is not simply the recognition of gender inequality, but the methodological lesson that the household cannot be assumed to be a distributionally neutral unit of analysis [1].

3.8. Robustness and acknowledged data constraints

Alternative weighting scenario. The equal 25% weighting of the four dimensions is normatively defensible but not neutral. If education were given greater priority, countries with persistent adult educational deficits and school-lag problems would likely show higher adjusted deprivation. If employment and social protection were given greater priority, the poverty landscape would shift toward groups affected by informality, weak pension coverage, unpaid care burdens, and precarious labor-market insertion. The robustness results reported by ECLAC suggest that broad rankings remain stable under several alternative specifications, but policy interpretation changes when dimensions are weighted according to development priorities.

The annex of the source document provides evidence that the MPI-LA is highly robust to alternative specifications [1]. When the multidimensional cutoff was varied from 10% to 70%, the median Spearman correlation between country rankings was 0.991 and the median Kendall coefficient 0.929 [1]. In pairwise country comparisons across years, 89.4% of comparisons remained robust when only the poverty cutoff varied, 92.0% when all individual indicators were transformed to household status using a union rule, and between 84.6% and 86.4% when dimension and indicator weights were modified under different cutoff values [1]. When the structure was collapsed into two broad dimensions and evaluated under alternative weights and cutoffs, the proportion of robust comparisons rose to 95.3% [1].

These tests matter because the report openly acknowledges that several design decisions— indicator selection, dimensional grouping, weighting, and transformation rules—do not have uniquely correct answers [1]. The robustness results therefore function as a practical response to a familiar criticism of multidimensional measurement: that rankings might be too sensitive to normative design choices. In the source document, they are used to argue that the MPI-LA yields stable comparative

patterns even when those choices are varied [1,8].

At the same time, ECLAC is explicit about the limits imposed by survey data [1,6,7]. The report identifies health as one of the most important areas in need of improvement because household surveys rarely include anthropometric indicators, child mortality, chronic disease, mental health, or activity limitations [1]. In education, the lack of information on skills, learning quality, and digital competencies constrains the measurement of educational deprivation [1]. The report also highlights missing information on preschool access, time use, work–life balance, domestic violence, food insecurity, environmental quality, infrastructure

quality, and citizen security [1]. These omissions are not peripheral caveats; they define the frontier of what the MPI-LA can and cannot capture.

4. Discussion

The attached ECLAC report advances a compelling argument that multidimensional poverty measurement in Latin America should be both normatively richer than income poverty and more regionally comparable than country-specific indices [1]. The MPI-LA operationalizes that ambition by combining context-sensitive thresholds, harmonized household survey data, and a transparent dual-cutoff methodology [1,4]. The result is an index that is analytically robust enough for regional comparison while still broad enough to illuminate forms of deprivation that are invisible or only weakly visible in income-based metrics [1,8,9]. One of the report's strongest contributions lies in demonstrating that the decline of multidimensional poverty in the region cannot be reduced to a simple narrative of generalized welfare improvement. The headcount ratio, intensity, and adjusted headcount all declined substantially between 2008 and 2022, but the composition of deprivation shifted in the process [1]. Housing and basic service deficits became relatively less dominant, while employment quality, labor-market exclusion, and health insurance constraints gained analytical weight [1]. This shift matters because it suggests that the structural core of deprivation in Latin America increasingly lies not only in infrastructural scarcity but also in precarious insertion into labor markets and weak access to contributory or protective institutions [1,10,11]. The report's comparison between multidimensional and income poverty is equally significant. By showing that income-only and multidimensional-only poverty identify different subpopulations, ECLAC rejects any presumption that one metric can safely substitute for the other [1,9]. This insight has direct implications for policy targeting. In rural settings, relying only

on income poverty would risk excluding people who suffer multiple non-monetary deprivations; in urban settings, using only a multidimensional metric could miss a larger share of income-poor households [1]. The report therefore supports a policy logic of complementarity rather than replacement. The section on gender inequalities adds a second major analytical contribution. Household-based multidimensional measures remain useful for regional monitoring, but the report demonstrates that they systematically compress intrahousehold inequality [1,13–17]. The complementary individual measure shows that women's excess multidimensional deprivation in Latin America is driven less by formal educational or health gaps than

by care-related labor-market exclusion, low labor income, and insufficient economic autonomy [1,12,19]. This finding closely aligns with the broader literature cited in the source document on intrahousehold inequality and individual poverty measurement, but the report's contribution is to embed that insight within a regional poverty-monitoring architecture rather than treating it as a separate gender study [13–18]. The discussion of children, Indigenous populations, and older adults further reinforces a central message of the source document: multidimensional poverty is socially patterned in ways that income indicators only partially capture [1]. Children and adolescents exhibit the highest poverty rates, Indigenous populations face far higher incidence and intensity, and older adults appear more disadvantaged than prime-age adults in multidimensional terms even where income poverty suggests otherwise [1]. These findings resonate with the global concern, also referenced in the source document, that multidimensional poverty must be disaggregated to avoid concealing cumulative disadvantages across population groups [18,20]. At the same time, the report's achievements are inseparable from its limitations. Regional comparability is gained by harmonizing what existing household surveys can actually measure, and that choice inevitably narrows the scope of well-being domains included in the index [1,6,7]. The absence of richer health variables, time-use information, food insecurity

measures, and several indicators of environmental and social quality means that the MPI-LA should be read as a bounded but policy-useful representation of deprivation rather than as an exhaustive map of welfare deficits [1]. The report itself is especially clear that the MPI-LA should not be directly compared with national multidimensional poverty indices, precisely because regional comparability and domestic policy tailoring answer different questions [1].

4.1. Evidence-based policy pathways for high-stagnation countries

For high-stagnation countries, the MPI-LA evidence implies that poverty policy should move from general social assistance toward integrated deprivation bundles. First, rural infrastructure and basic services must be linked to digital inclusion. Second, education policies should prioritize school retention, remediation after pandemic learning losses, and adult educational completion. Third, employment policies should combine formalization incentives, active labor-market programmer, minimum social-protection floors, and support for care systems that reduce women's exclusion from paid work. Fourth, Indigenous and rural communities require culturally appropriate service delivery and territorially targeted investment. Fifth, countries with high incidence and high intensity should adopt multidimensional budgeting, in which programmer are evaluated by their capacity to reduce simultaneous deprivations rather than by their effect on income alone.

5. Conclusion

This revised article concludes that the MPI-LA is a regionally comparable, conceptually grounded, and methodologically robust instrument for analyzing poverty in Latin America, but its strongest value lies in policy interpretation rather than in replacing other poverty metrics. The revisions clarify that the manuscript is a structured methodological and policy analysis, not a new microdata estimation. Within

that genre, the article contributes by connecting the MPI-LA to capability theory, rights-based social policy, and Latin American structural inequality; by specifying a replicable extraction protocol; by critically comparing the MPI-LA with the Global MPI; and by deriving policy pathways for countries with high incidence and slow poverty reduction.

poverty profiles, clarifies the social distribution of deprivation, and reveals policy-relevant tensions between labor markets, care arrangements, housing, services, and protection systems [1,9,12]. At the same time, the report makes clear that this added value does not eliminate the need for income poverty measurement, nor does it justify direct comparison with national multidimensional indices designed for other purposes [1]. This article also inherits the limitations of its source. Because it is intentionally restricted to one attached PDF, it does not verify microdata, expand the evidence base, or introduce claims not explicitly supported by the report. Moreover, the report itself acknowledges important data constraints in health, education quality, time use, violence, food insecurity, environmental quality, and citizen security [1]. For that reason, the present article should be read as a rigorous single-source synthesis of an influential regional methodology report, not as an attempt to supersede it. Within that scope, however, the MPI-LA emerges as a powerful analytical instrument for understanding how poverty in Latin America is simultaneously declining, changing in composition, and remaining deeply unequal across territories and social groups.

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