



Targeting Mechanisms and Exclusion Errors in Cash Transfer Programs in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico





Study: Improving Access to Cash Transfers in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico

We are
Recording



About the webinar



Traducción al inglés y al portugués disponible

English and Portuguese translation available

Tradução disponível em inglês e português



Chat disponible durante la sesión para preguntas

Chat available during the session for questions

Chat disponível durante a sessão para perguntas



Project Presentation and Methodology

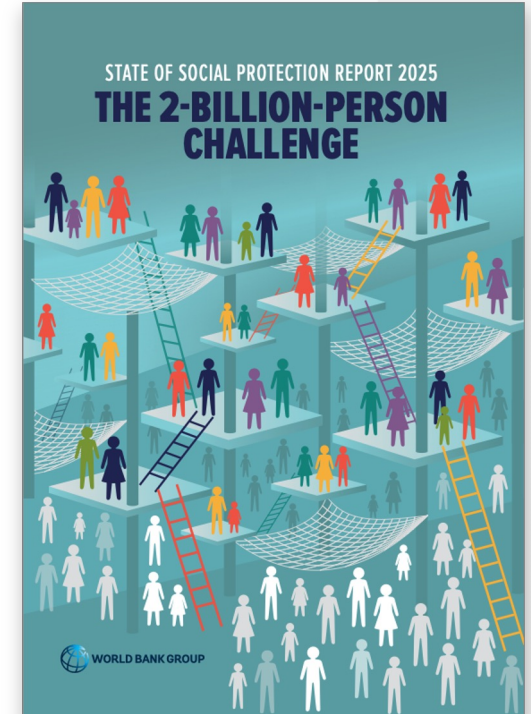
Coverage Gap Globally and in Latin America

Two billion people in low- and middle-income countries still lack social protection coverage or have inadequate coverage.



M=million

Source: Original map for this publication based on Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity (ASPIRE) household survey data(<https://www.worldbank.org/aspire>).
Note: Coverage consists of direct and indirect beneficiaries and social insurance contributors. Map is based on 130 low- and middle- income countries. For methodology, please refer to Tesliuc and Martinez Cordova (2025).



Coverage Gap

Globally and in Latin America

Percentage of people living in poverty who live in households receiving non-contributory cash transfers (~2019).



88%



87%



83%



83%



80%



72%



63%



60%



55%



47%



41%



41%



40%



37%



21%



17%



10%

AVERAGE
55%

Source: Authors' calculations based on the Inter-American Development Bank's harmonized household surveys for Latin America and the Caribbean (2023).

Notes: Poverty is defined using the international poverty line of \$6.85 per day (PPP-adjusted), based on per capita income excluding non-contributory cash transfers. Results are derived from a simulation using adjusted weights.

Project Design

Study coordinated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and implemented by three universities in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico:



Research Question:

How can cash transfer (CT) programs reduce exclusion errors and, in doing so, promote greater equity by including members of the poorest groups and those who have historically faced greater discrimination—especially individuals with overlapping or intersecting identities?

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- Characteristics of targeting mechanisms
 - Methodologies used to measure exclusion errors
 - Types and magnitude of exclusion errors
 - Specific groups that are excluded
 - Exclusion of people with intersecting identities
 - Causes of exclusion errors
 - Promising practices to achieve greater equity

Research Methodology

Mixed-methods and intersectional approach

Qualitative component

- 30 interviews and 6 focus groups per country
 - Program beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries
 - Program administrators / officials
 - Subject-matter experts (academia and organizations)
 - School administrators and teachers
 - Caregivers (mothers, grandmothers, fathers)

Quantitative component

- Analysis of national household surveys
 - **Brazil, PNADC:** Continuous National Household Sample Survey 2023. [Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios, 2023]
 - **Colombia, ENCV:** National Quality of Life Survey [Encuesta Nacional de Calidad de Vida, 2023].
 - **Mexico, ENIGH:** National Household Income and Expenditure Survey [Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares, 2022].
- Analysis of available administrative records



Expert Panel:

Analysis and Research Findings

Panelists



Dr. Ana Razo
Professor and Researcher
Universidad Autónoma
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**Dr. Humberto
Falcao Martins**
Tenured Professor
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**Dr. Sandra
García Jaramillo**
Tenured Professor
School of Government,
Universidad de los Andes



Santiago Munévar
Senior Technical Advisor
AIR

1 Current Targeting Mechanisms

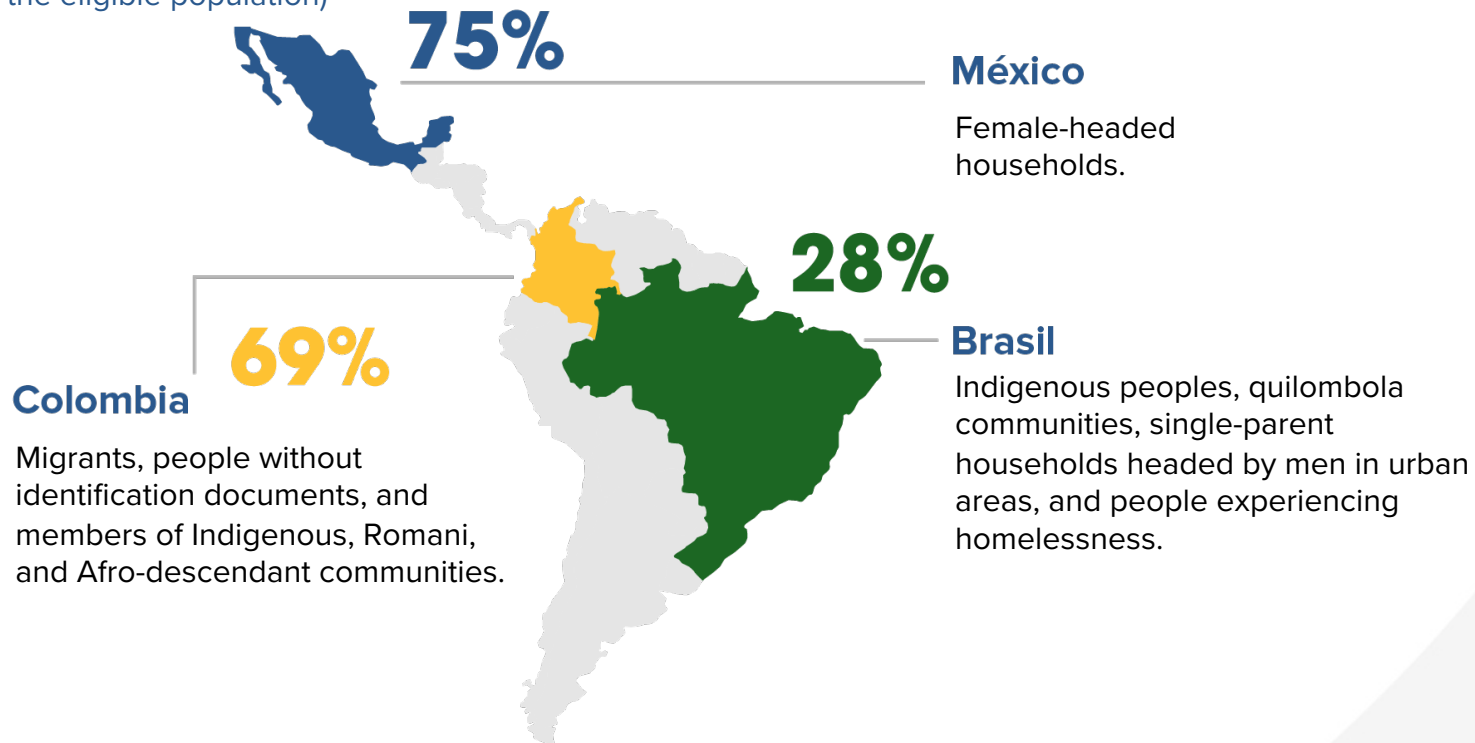
Brasil	Colombia	México
		
• Cadastro Único, the national social registry, operated by municipalities • Eligibility based on monthly income per person (max. R\$218 per month in 2024) • Self-reported income cross-checked with other administrative databases • Centralized final selection and prioritization criteria for new program slots	• Families with children under 18 living in poverty or vulnerability • System for the Identification of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programs (SISBEN) – proxy means test • Since 2021, the index includes income-generating potential as a variable • Separate databases for Indigenous and displaced populations	• Education Management Information System (EMIS) • Geographic and categorical targeting: priority schools in marginalized, Indigenous, and/or rural areas • No assessment of individual or household socioeconomic conditions • Online registration and in-person document verification • Centralized identity verification to prevent duplicates

2 Magnitude of Exclusion Errors

Who Is Being Left Behind?

What is the magnitude of exclusion errors?

(among the eligible population)



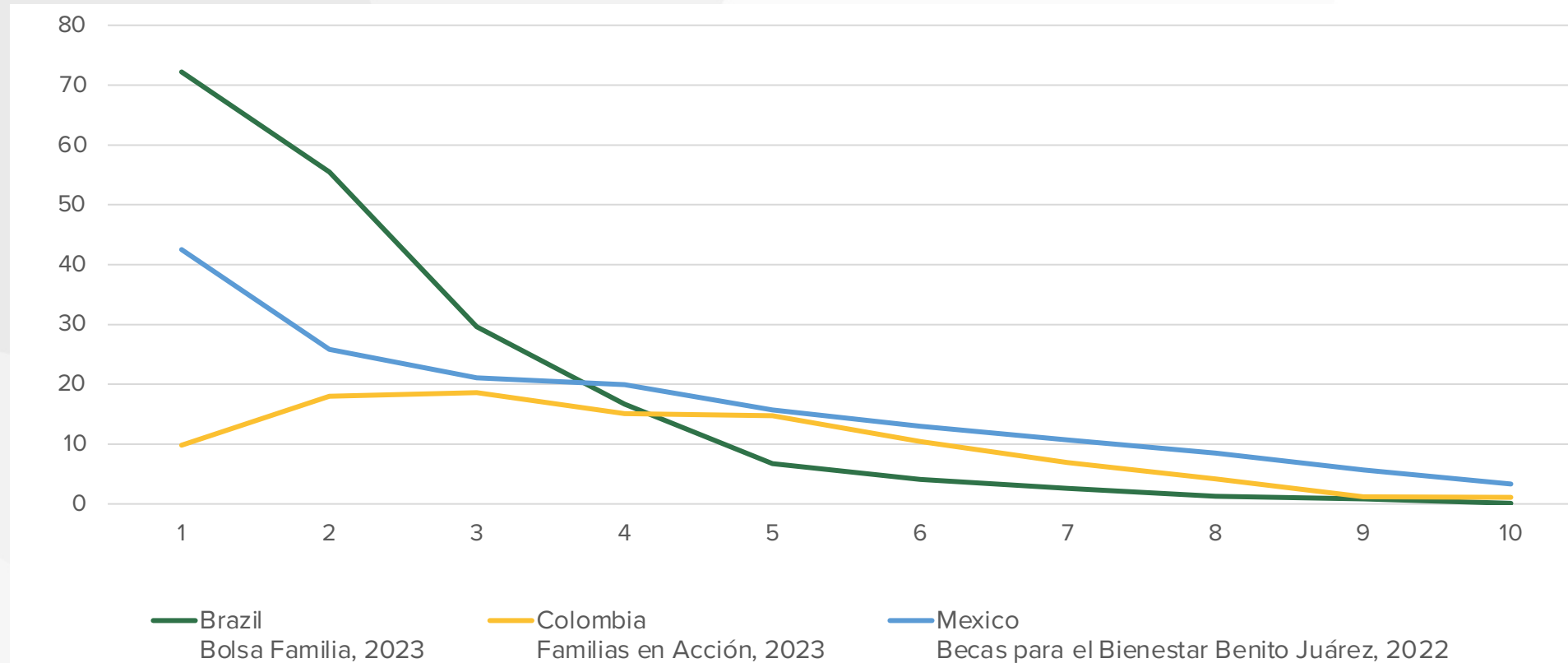
Sources:

- Brasil: Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADC) (2023).
- Colombia: National Quality of Life Survey (ENCV) 2023.
- México: National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH 2022).

Notes:

- Exclusion error is defined as the proportion of households that meet a program's eligibility criteria but do not receive benefits. Eligibility definitions and data sources vary across countries.

2 Magnitude of Exclusion Errors Who Is Being Left Behind?



Sources:

- Brazil: Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADC) (2023).
- Colombia: National Quality of Life Survey (ENCV) 2023.
- México: National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH 2022).

3 Causes of Exclusion Errors



Design Factors

Targeting Tools

- Brazil: Difficulties measuring income in the informal sector and reliance on self-reported data.
- Colombia: Limitations of SISBEN in capturing monetary poverty in real time.
- Mexico: Statistical models that generate design-related exclusion errors.

Geographic Targeting

- Brazil: Challenges in municipalities with limited access to banking, health, and education services, especially at the start of the program.
- Colombia: Geographic concentration of the program in better-equipped municipalities before its expansion into more rural areas.
- Mexico: Geographic targeting based on schools as indicators of household vulnerability.



Implementation Factors

Calidad de los datos

- Brazil: Problems with information sharing, data entry errors, and delays in updating records.
- Colombia: Challenges in updating databases, especially during the early phases of the program.
- Mexico: Limitations in the availability and consistency of databases.

Data Manipulation

- Brazil: Political manipulation and lack of transparency.
- Colombia: Early versions of SISBEN showed some cases of manipulation.
- Mexico: Institutional and governance dynamics influencing data management.

Enrollment Barriers

- Across the three countries: Complex processes, high costs, delays, rigid eligibility criteria, and strong reliance on online registration systems.

4 Promising Practices to Reduce Exclusion Errors



Design Factors

Targeting Design

- Combine multiple targeting methods (rather than relying on a single one).
- Periodically update socioeconomic measurement instruments (SISBEN, Cadastro Único).
- Integrate and cross-check administrative databases to validate information.
- Explore the use of artificial intelligence to improve targeting accuracy.

Geographic Targeting

- Ensure registration points are accessible and adapted to local geographic contexts.
- Combine multiple registration methods, both in-person and online.
- Strengthen outreach strategies to reach the most isolated populations, even in programs with universal coverage goals.



Implementation Factors

Data Quality

- Implement periodic audits and real-time monitoring.
- Consolidate interoperable and regularly updated social registries.

Data Manipulation

- Establish anti-fraud mechanisms.
- Enable automatic cross-checks of information.
- Implement clear appeals mechanisms.

Enrollment Barriers

- Simplify enrollment processes and reduce documentation requirements.
- Compensate participation costs (transportation, time, documentation).
- Engage local actors to increase trust and coverage.
- Implement hybrid processes (digital and in-person).



Conclusions:

Key Insights and Recommendations from the Research

**nadie
atrás** | Laboratorio
latinoamericano
de política social



Q&A

Methodology, Findings, and Recommendations



Thank you!

