

Policies to Promote the Inclusion and Well-being of People with Disabilities: Evidence and Knowledge Gaps

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→ Policies to Promote the Inclusion and Well-being of People with Disabilities: Evidence and Knowledge Gaps

Despite representing a significant share of the population, persons with disabilities (PwD) continue to face challenges to social and economic inclusion. In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), approximately 1 out of every 7 people have a disability, upwards of 88 million people in 2020 (Berlinski et al., 2021). The rapid pace at which population is aging in LAC is expected to expand the population with disabilities by 60 million in the region over the next three decades, reaching a total of 150 million.¹ Recognizing the significance of this population group has given rise to improvements in legal frameworks and policies focused on people with disabilities. Yet, gaps between people with and without disabilities persist in virtually every aspect of social and economic life.

The disparities in inclusion and well-being between people with and without disabilities highlights the need to understand which policies and programs effectively reduce said gaps. In the past few years, the evidence-base regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities has advanced rapidly, both in high- and low-to-mid income countries. This policy brief focuses on the lessons learned from rigorous studies in education, social protection and labor markets and identifies the key knowledge gaps relevant for LAC.

1. Disability prevalence rates in LAC are 4 to 6 times higher for people in their 60s as for people in their 20s. Therefore, if age-specific disability prevalence rates remain constant, it is projected that the total population of PwD in LAC will increase from 14.8% of the population in 2020 to 20.3% by 2050, reaching a total of approximately 150 million people (Berlinski et al., 2021).

Research in LAC and other developing countries about the effectiveness of interventions is particularly needed, as these nations might face stricter budget constraints that might impact the development, quality, and outcomes of policies for PwD. This policy brief highlights research from LAC where available.

Further, this policy brief highlights research where people with disabilities are the primary focus. Research particularly in education and social protection, often focuses on the impacts of disability programs and policy on family members and peers, ignoring the impacts on people with disabilities. Increasingly, people with disabilities are at the center of research, and these studies are guided by human rights frameworks.

→ Disability in LAC: Which inequalities persist?

Table 1 presents socioeconomic indicators for individuals with and without disabilities by gender across five countries in the region. **In education, although primary school completion rates are high for students with disabilities, not all countries have closed the gaps in completion between children with and without disabilities.** Whereas two-thirds or more of children with disabilities in LAC are likely to complete the primary level of education, primary school completion is almost 100% across all countries for the recent cohort without disabilities. Gaps in access and learning environments at the primary level build up and become more noticeable at higher levels of education (Hincapié et al., 2019) such that a more considerable difference is observed in secondary completion rates. The disparity in secondary completion varies across the countries but is more pronounced for males. The type of education facility attended is another important consideration. Studies estimate that a **large share of children with disabilities in the region continue to attend segregated special schools in primary education**, although experiences vary across countries (Garcia Mora et al., 2021).

In the labor market, gaps persist in employment, formality rates, and wages. According to the OECD (2010), people with disabilities exhibit a significantly lower employment rate, standing at just 44%, in contrast to the 75% employment rate observed among individuals without disabilities. However, gaps in employment are lower in LAC, with approximately a 20-30 percentage point difference, whether mea-

Although primary school completion rates are high for students with disabilities, not all countries have closed the gaps in completion between children with and without disabilities

members to assist with daily activities. Data from Mexico and Chile indicate that between 14% and 37% of people with a severe disability receive assistance from another person to perform everyday tasks such as eating, bathing, or dressing. Such assistance is provided overwhelmingly by women in the family. In Peru and Chile, more than 95% of PwD receiving assistance reported receiving it from family members or friends, and only around 5% of assistants received any remuneration for the tasks performed. There is also evidence of unmet need for assistance, as in Mexico, for example, one-third of older persons with severe disabilities had unmet needs.

sured from the 2010 census round (Berlinski et al., 2021), or from the most recent household surveys in Table 1.² The generally lower employment gaps in LAC may reflect high employment rates of PwD in the informal sector. Additionally, gaps in employment across disability status are higher for men than women.

Across the different types of disabilities reported in the region, motor, and sensorial disabilities (auditory and visual) are the most prevalent. Many PwD, particularly those with high support needs, depend on unpaid family mem-

→ Measuring Disability

The UN Expert Group on Disability Statistics, known as the Washington Group (WG), has designed an instrument that has facilitated the measurement of disabilities across many outcomes and across countries, as well as disparities across disability status. The countries in Table 1 have all included instruments along these lines in their recent household surveys to measure disability.³ More countries in the region have moved to include the WG



2. Costa Rica is a notable exception.

3. The household surveys for Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico have incorporated versions of WG questions; the survey for Peru has added questions about functional limitations.

set of questions in their census and population surveys, increasing the availability of high-quality data on disability. Mitra (2021) notes that LAC is one of the regions with more availability survey instruments using this functional approach to measuring disability that minimizes bias from stigma about disability. Nonetheless, some analysis describing the situation of people with disabilities is available in other regions, but not in LAC. For example, women with disabilities report feeling less safe walking alone than women without disabilities according to surveys across 24 different countries worldwide (Mitra & Yap, 2021). Women with disabilities have also been shown to experience higher rates of gender-based violence than women without disabilities (Mitra & Yap, 2023). In LAC, only the demographic health survey in Colombia had a sufficiently large enough sample size to precisely estimate gender-based violence by disability status and demonstrate statistically higher rates of violence for women with disabilities than for their peers (Marques Garcia et al., 2019). Furthermore, globally, **people with disabilities have been shown to have higher costs of living than their counterparts without disabilities** deriving from additional transportation costs, health care costs, and costs of assistance with daily activities (Mitra et al., 2017). These higher costs have not been studied in LAC.



TABLE 1 SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES AND DISABILITY STATUS

COMPLETION RATE (%) FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION BY DISABILITY STATUS, AGES 14-24						
COUNTRY	MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
	WITH	WO	WITH	WO	WITH	WO
BOL	66.3	98.0	77.1	98.4	72.0	98.1
CHIL	98.1	99.3	99.4	99.4	99.0	99.3
CRI	97.0	98.0	93.4	98.8	95.0	98.4
MEX	89.6	98.2	93.2	98.6	91.3	98.4
PER	62.1	98.9	64.2	98.7	62.9	98.4

COMPLETION RATE (%) FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION BY DISABILITY STATUS, AGES 20-30						
COUNTRY	MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
	WITH	WO	WITH	WO	WITH	WO
BOL	53.7	79.0	57.3	77.0	55.5	78.0
CHL	87.5	89.4	90.6	92.6	89.1	90.9
CRI	54.9	63.6	68.4	74.5	61.7	69.0
MEX	45.9	61.5	51.9	61.6	48.8	61.5
PER	31.8	86.1	45.2	83.8	36.8	84.9

EMPLOYMENT RATE (%) BY DISABILITY STATUS, AGES 25-64						
COUNTRY	MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
	WITH	WO	WITH	WO	WITH	WO
BOL	76.2	92.7	59.1	64.9	67.4	78.3
CHIL	74.8	87.3	53.2	65.5	62.7	76.8
CRI	56.0	85.6	31.7	51.7	42.8	67.5
MEX	77.3	93.0	53.2	62.5	64.2	76.6
PER	63.9	92.8	51.9	73.0	58.0	82.2

Source: Authors' calculations using the following household surveys: Encuesta de Hogares, Bolivia (2021); Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional, Chile (2022); Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, Costa Rica (2022); Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares, México (2022); Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, Perú (2022).

→ Education

→ Inclusion in Education

Inclusive education refers to the practice of educating children with special education needs in mainstream schools, rather than in special schools.

This requires providing the required resources to provide real learning opportunities to all groups. There are two arguments for inclusive education. The human rights arguments states that attending mainstream schools is a human right. The second relates to the effect of inclusion, which states that it is preferable to segregated school because its effects on students. In this policy brief we focus on the latter.

The few rigorous studies that have examined the impact of mainstreaming on students with disabilities have found positive or neutral effects on educational outcomes.

Hanushek et al. (2002) find positive impacts on educational performance in Texas. Myklebust (2007) uses data from upper secondary education in Norway and finds that inclusive education has a positive effect for students with disabilities as they obtain better vocational ability.

While the primary objective of inclusive education is the experience of students with disabilities, the lion's share of studies examining the causal effects of mainstreaming focus on students without disabilities

On the other hand, a larger body of literature examines spillovers effects on students without disabilities and suggests that including children with disabilities in the classroom with adequate supports does not have large negative effects on the learning of their peers.

Hanushek et al. (2002), Friesen (2010) and Ruijs (2017) find that including students with disabilities in regular classrooms has no significant impact on the academic achievement of their peers in the US, Canada and the Netherlands respectively. In contrast, a few empirical studies on the impacts of inclusive education indicate that there may also be negative peer effects of mainstreaming students with disabilities with non-disabled students. Some studies (Fletcher, 2010; Kristoffersen et al., 2015) have found that peers' achievements are negatively affected by the presence of students with disabilities. Contreras et al. (2020) provide some insight into the dynamics of the spillover effects in a study about mainstreaming of students with disabilities in Chile. While the study finds small negative effects on math and literacy test scores of having a peer with a disability in the classroom, these negative effects are fully mitigated when a policy is implemented that provides resources and protocols to support mainstreaming. Surprisingly, few studies have rigorously examined the socio-emotional effects of inclusion in schools. One exception is Gottfried (2014) who finds that additional numbers of students with disabilities in the classroom results in small negative impacts on the self-control, externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors of classroom peers.

While the primary objective of inclusive education is the experience of students with disabilities, the lion's share of studies examining the causal effects of mainstreaming focus on students without disabilities, revealing a tremendous knowledge gap both for LAC and globally.

→ School Resources

Few studies have examined the impacts of interventions designed to promote mainstreaming in schools, such as training for teachers or the provision of assistive technology or other resources allocated to schools with students with disabilities. One exception is Vidigal (2022) who analyzes the impact of schools receiving a set of resources such as text-to-audio screen readers and adapted furniture to be used to accommodate students with disabilities in Brazil. Students attended mainstream classes and received specialized instruction in the resource room. She finds that the program boosts math test scores of 5th graders with disabilities.

Teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring the quality of education, and therefore a natural question regards their preparedness to educate students with disabilities, both before graduating and while they are working. Although crucial, the literature in the topic is scant.

Feng and Sass (2013) analyze the impact of special education training of teachers in Florida, USA. Their findings suggest that teachers certified in special education enhance achievement in math and reading for students with disabilities. However, for students without disabilities achievements are marginally reduced when taught by a teacher certified in special education. The positive impact of the teacher grows with the first years of experience emphasizing the significance of retaining special education teachers early on their careers. Interestingly, in-service professional development



does not have an impact on the performance of students with disabilities. These findings underscore the importance of teachers training on special education during their college years. However, they also highlight the challenges in translating professional training into tangible practices that positively impact students' outcomes.

An [IDB study](#) by [Contreras, Duryea and Martinez A. \(2023\)](#) finds that COVID disproportionately impacted students with disabilities finishing high school. This can be indirect evidence of the importance of in-school resources, which were limited during the pandemic due to school closures.

→ Labor Market Policies

Labor market outcomes may differ across disability status because of barriers to employment or differences in productivity. Interventions seeking to improve labor market outcomes for people with disabilities often target either employers or workers with disabilities (to improve their preparedness for work). In this section we explore the evidence on both types of interventions.

→ Interventions targeting employers

Evidence from OECD countries suggest high levels of bias against workers with disabilities. Correspondence studies have found evidence of bias of employers against people with physical disabilities. For example, Bjørnshagen and Ugreninov (2021) found that in Norway, individuals who revealed information about their disability status in their cover letters were half as likely to receive a callback for an interview. In Canada, an experiment that revealed applicants' disability status to employers through a video reduced callbacks by 25% (Bellemare et al., 2020). Hiring bias is also found in Denmark in experiments that also control for the education and experience of the job candidates (Shamshiri-Petersen & Krogh, 2020). While there is no comparable literature in LAC, bias against workers with disabilities in the region has been recognized both in legislation and policy.

→ Anti-discrimination Laws

The bulk of evidence on the impacts of anti-discrimination legislation on labor market outcomes of people with disabilities comes from studies focused on the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the United States, and the changes produced over time in PwD with respect to people without disabilities These types of laws prohibit discriminatory practices in hiring, promotion, and termination of employees. They also mandate employers provide “reasonable accommodations” to employees with disabilities unless such adjustments pose an “undue hardship” to the employer. **Early research suggests that the ADA negatively affected employment of individuals with disabilities in the years following the passage of the legislation** (Acemoglu and Angrist, 2001; DeLeire, 2003). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, where an analogous anti-discrimination law exists, Bell and Heitmueller (2009) find that the legislation did boost employment of PwD and might even had detrimental effects. These outcomes could be attributed to uncertainty around litigation costs, low levels of awareness, and lack of financial support.

Recent research nuances earlier findings suggesting that antidiscrimination laws can have neutral or even moderate positive effects on labor market outcomes for people with disabilities. Jolls and Prescott (2004) find that the decline in employment for those with disabilities was temporary and primarily associated with accommodations cost rather than “firing costs”. Kruse and Schur (2003) argue that results vary based on how disability is defined; when disability is measured more closely with ADA’s coverage criteria, emphasizing functional and activity limitations that do not hinder work, ADA appears to increase employment. Beegle and Stock (2003) found no employment effects when examining state-level anti-discrimination laws in the United States following the ADA. Other authors suggest that the decline in employment of PwD might be affected by other concurrent factors that decrease labor force participation, like changes in disability benefits or changes in health status (Bound and Waidmann, 2002; Hotchkiss, 2004). In fact, Hotchkiss (2004) argues that the drop in employment was not a result of people exiting the

labor market but rather a result of an increased number of unemployed people newly identifying as having a disability given the prospects of larger disability benefits. Jolls (2004) points out that ADA increased educational participation of PwD, which could affect their employment levels. Additionally, Button (2018) observes that when California expanded its disability discrimination law to cover those with less-severe disabilities, employment of individuals with disabilities increased.

→ Quotas

Many countries have adopted employment quotas aimed at the labor market inclusion of PwD, though evidence on their effects, especially in lower-income countries, is limited. Existing evidence from high-income countries presents a varied picture of quota effectiveness. These studies have mostly hinged on the fact that such quotas typically apply to firms exceeding certain size. In Austria, Lalive et al. (2013) examined the impact of a quota, where non-compliant companies pay a tax that subsidizes compliant firms. They find that firms subject to the quota employ 12% more workers with disabilities than those exempted. Modest positive outcomes in the employment of PwD have also been found in Japan and Spain (Malo & Pagán, 2014; Mori & Sakamoto, 2018). Conversely, Barnayet al. (2019) find a decrease in the employment rate of people with disabilities in France in the private sector, being neutral in the public sector. Additionally, Wagner, Schnabel, and Kölling (2001) and Verick (2004) find quotas in Germany to be inconsequential in affecting employment rates.



In LAC, 20 countries have legislated employment quotas in the private and/or public sector, as seen in Table 2. De Araujo et al. (2022) examined the employment quotas for PwD in Brazil from 2007 and 2016. They find no significant impact on the number of workers with disabilities in 2007, but a positive effect in 2016. They attribute the varied outcomes over the years to enhanced law enforcement. Meanwhile, Duryea, Martinez A. and Smith (2023) analyzed the effects of an employment quota introduced in Chile in 2018 and found a 15-20% rise in the employment of PwD in firms subject to it.

Additionally, some research indicates that the direct impact of quotas on employment of PwD is diluted as firms often reclassify existing employees. In Austria, Lalive et al. (2013) noted that as many as 64% of workers classified as PwD were already employed by their respective firms before receiving their disability status (Lalive et al., 2013). In the case of Chile, the figure reached about one-third of workers with disabilities (Duryea, Martinez A. and Smith, 2023).

Another set of studies show that increased risk associated with failing to comply with the quota increases employment associated with the scheme. Krekó and Telegdy (2022) and Wuellrich (2010) find that higher fines increase the effectiveness of quotas in Austria and Hungary. Furthermore, evidence from Brazil also suggests that increasing the number of inspections to verify compliance with the quota also increase its employment effects (Szerman, 2022; De Souza, 2023). Furthermore, IDB studies find that compliance can be encouraged with emails informing companies about the quota stipulations in Chile and Perú (Bosch et al., 2021; Duryea et al., 2023).

However, there is mixed evidence about the impact of quotas on firm outcomes. On one hand, there is no evidence suggesting negative impacts on firm performance from quotas. Mori and Sakamoto (2018) find that the number of employees with disabilities does not impact firm profit. Duryea, Martinez A., and Smith (2023) find that firms are not hurt by the quota. However, De Souza (2023) finds that quotas in Brazil reduced wages and employment of workers without disabilities.



TABLE 2 QUOTAS TO EMPLOY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

PUBLIC / PRIVATE SECTOR	COUNTRY	SMALLEST BINDING FIRM SIZE	PERCENTAGE	
			PUBLIC	PRIVATE
Only Public	Bahamas	>100	1%	98.4
	Colombia	All	.5-2%	
	Costa Rica	All	5%	
	Paraguay	All	5%	
Only Private	Uruguay	All		4%
Both	Argentina	All		4%
	Bolivia	All	4%	2%
	Brazil	> 50	1% - 5%	
	Chile	>100	1%	
	Dominican Republic	> 25	5%	2%
	Ecuador	> 25	4%	
	El Salvador	> 25	4%	
	Guatemala	>52	2% - 5%	
	Haiti	>1000	2%	
	Honduras	> 20	2% - 4%	
	Panama	> 50	2%	
	Peru	Public: all, Private: >50	5%	3%
	Nicaragua	> 50	2%	
	Uruguay	>50	4%	
Venezuela	All	5%		

Source: [Bregalio 2021](#) and government websites.

→ Wage Subsidies

The available evidence regarding wage subsidies for PwD is both limited and inconclusive, particularly outside developed countries. Baert (2016) conducted a correspondence experiment in Belgium where participants disclosed their disability status; additionally, half of the participants revealed their entitlement to a wage subsidy amounting 20-40% of the salary. Consistent with the existence of bias, the findings indicate reduced call-back rate for PwD. This pattern is unaffected by the disclosure of the wage subsidy entitlement suggesting that the existence of wage subsidies did not encourage employment. Similar results are found by Deucht and Kauer (2017) in Switzerland, suggesting that the subsidy did not have the intended effect of boosting employment. Conversely, Datta Gupta and Larsen (2015) find a positive effect of a wage subsidy for PwD in Denmark, when analyzing the decrease in a wage subsidy they find a decrease in the hiring of PwD.

→ Direct Employment Services

The mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the workforce through open labor market policies includes investing in the skills of PwD and lowering barriers such that all jobs are open to PwD. These direct employment services vary widely from highly involved supported employment programs to more light touch interventions such as vocational rehabilitation and case management programs. While the literature on these types of programs is limited and mostly from high-income countries, overall, the evidence suggests positive impacts on labor market outcomes.

Vocational rehabilitation consists mainly of job preparation and training, career counseling and job placement while case management programs focus on helping individuals navigate government services. These types of programs are relatively uninvolved and low-cost, making them an attractive policy alternative to more involved programs such as supported employment. These programs have been the standard intervention in the United States since the 1920s.

Both vocational rehabilitation and case management programs have had positive evaluation outcomes, albeit from few studies mostly in the United States. For instance, Yin, Siwach and Lin (2023) study vocational rehabilitation's impact on employment outcomes for transition-age youth with disabilities in Maine, USA. This program is delivered by counselors who work with their clients to identify a work plan for employment goals and connect participants to services aligned to those goals. The support includes identifying needs and required supports, and clients might receive training programs, including higher education, on-the-job-training, apprenticeship, job support, job placement, providing tools or accommodations, connecting clients with coaches who may supervise and support clients until they learn the job

skills among others. The authors find that having an individualized plan for employment increases employment by 15.4 percentage points and average quarterly earnings by US\$1,442 (2018 dollars), an 84.5% increase. The effects are larger for participants younger than 18 years old. Langi et al. (2017) find the impact is larger when preparing secondary education students with disabilities for adult employment than regular vocational rehabilitation services in a midwestern state in the US. Dean and Dolan (1991) estimate the impact of vocational training on earnings in Virginia, finding positive effects mostly for women.

Supported employment, a much more involved approach than traditional vocational rehabilitation, is an approach that focuses on persons with disabilities who were previously regarded as “incapable of work” and addresses high support needs for obtaining and maintaining jobs.

This support often includes individual placement services, job mentors who help the individual with the work, and subsidies to the employer in addition to many of the services provided through vocational rehabilitation. In contrast to inclusive labor market intermediation services where the demand and supply of talent is articulated through large platforms, counselors in supported employment programs identify employers who will reserve jobs for individual workers.

Supported employment programs have positive evaluations, mostly from high-income countries. For instance, evaluations have consistently shown that supported employment has positive impact on employment outcomes of individuals with mental illness (Bond et al., 2008; Drake et al., 2016; Kinoshita et al., 2013; Luciano et al., 2014) as well as case management programs (Dieterich et al., 2010, 2017). Further, Fogelgren et al. (2023) suggest that reducing the initial cost and uncertainties for employers when hiring PwD can increase their propensity to employ. They show that a program that provides a caseworker to support individuals in job searching, maintain close contact with employer and employee, and is ready to do the participant's job at the workplace when needed increased working rate in 10 percentage points with respect to regular vocational rehabilitation. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2017) compare different employment support strategies for people with schizophrenia in mainland China. These included individual placement and support (comprising placement, work support and coordination with vocational services), integrated supported employment (which incorporates sessions of work-related social skills training and continued support from caseworkers on social skills to resolve interpersonal problems), and traditional vocational rehabilitation. Participants in the integrated supported employment were more likely to be employed and have longer job tenure than participants in the other two groups.

→ Social Protection

→ Disability Certification

Eligibility for social protection programs, regardless of whether they are providing income subsidies, services, or assistive devices, typically requires a certification process of disability status. Difficulties with accessing and navigating the assessment process of disability creates barriers to accessing social protection programs.

Studies have examined how the complexity of application processes for disability benefits affected potential beneficiaries: overall, simplifying processes and expanding access increases applications and certifications. Deshpande and Li (2019) find that the closing of offices that receive the paperwork to file disability applications disproportionately affects applications for less educated applicants and applicants with moderately severe impairments. Foote et al (2019) examined the effects of streamlining the online application process for the disability eligibility assessment necessary for receiving subsidies in the

US (SSDI and SSI). Before the new online procedure was introduced, most applications were filed in person, although some were started by a phone call. The new process allowed applicants to learn about requirements on-line, and submit applications and appeals on-line, lowering the transaction costs of travelling to the field offices. The reduction in transaction costs was found to increase applications and appeals.

Surprisingly, research in LAC has not addressed similar questions, such as the impacts of expanding office hours or expanding the geographic coverage of administrative offices on applications to disability programs. During the pandemic, many application processes for disability programs in LAC were reformulated to allow for digital applications, but there are no rigorous studies have examined the impacts of these reforms.



→ Disability subsidies

Economists have long been concerned with estimating potential labor market disincentives of receiving disability insurance (DI) (Autor & Duggan, 2003; Bound, 1989, 1991; Gruber, 2000). In other words, providing financial subsidies may deter work for pay. Research in the US, Canada and Europe has focused largely on workers who accessed disability insurance through sufficient contributions through work in the formal sector. The impacts of disability subsidies have not been studied rigorously in LAC, although means-tested non-contributory transfer programs are important for their large informal sector. One exception is Britto et al. (2023) which examines the impact of a poverty-targeted disability pension program in Brazil. Studying the impact of means-tested non-contributory programs is highly relevant for LAC, where high levels of labor informality implies that many workers are not eligible for disability insurance as they have not made the sufficient contributions through formal jobs.

The studies in Europe, the US and Canada have found negative effects on the probability of employment and earnings of beneficiaries. Maestas, Mullen, and Strand (2013) found that receiving disability insurance decreased employment by 28 pp, although not for persons with severe disabilities. Gelber, Moore and Strand (2017) found that an additional insurance dollar decreased earned income by 20 cents. Autor et al. (2019) find that earnings fall with insurance but consumption expenditure increases by 16%, suggesting large positive welfare effects. Britto et al. (2023) find that the disability pension in Brazil reduces formal employment by about 5 days in a year, a rather minimal amount.

However, while labor market disincentives are relevant, they are not the only potential outcomes from disability subsidies; recent studies have examined the impacts on quality-of-life outcomes for people with disabilities, overall finding positive effects. Deshpande & Li (2019) examined the effects of being approved for disability subsidies on measures of financial stability in the US. For homeowners, the probability of being in foreclosure three years following application falls by 2 percentage points and the probability of selling one's home falls by 3 percentage points. Britto et al. (2023) document improvements in the financial status of households from receiving the disability pension in Brazil. Gelber, Moore, and Strand (2022) find that disability payments in the US reduced mortality rates, particularly among low-income beneficiaries. Garcia-Mandicó et al. (2020) also find that the receipt of disability transfers in the Netherlands reduced mortality, although only for women.

Receiving disability benefits has also been shown to have important, albeit mixed intergenerational effects. Using Dutch administrative data, Dahl and Gielen (2021) found that children whose parents had their disability benefits reduced, were less likely to be receiving disability benefits in their own adulthood, more likely to complete secondary school, less likely to have been arrested, and have higher earnings. In Canada however, receipt of larger disability transfers to a parent when a child was between the ages of 5 to 15 was found to increase the improve standardized scores on math exams and improve the probability that the child attends post-secondary education (Chen et al., 2019).

Applications to disability subsidies have been shown to respond to labor market conditions, with applications declining when conditions are better. Low-wage earners are more responsive to these fluctuations

Applications to disability subsidies have been shown to respond to labor market conditions, with applications declining when conditions are better. Low-wage earners are more responsive to these fluctuations (D. H. Autor and Duggan, 2003). While more than 10 papers are available for the US investigating these relationships through rigorous approaches, a gap in the literature exists for the rest of the world, including LAC. In a review of evidence for low and middle-income countries published from 2000-2018 using a rapid assessment criteria, the topics of social protection were recognized as among the least studied (Saran et al., 2020).

→ Assistive devices, personal assistance, and broader caregiving systems

Causal studies have been slim or under-powered with respect to identifying the effects of assistive devices such as screen-readers, prostheses, smart canes, real-time captioning software, among others.

Studies have lacked robust quantitative approaches or appropriate comparison groups. Only one small study has carefully examined the effect of addressing the unmet need for a wheelchair. The results from the study in Ethiopia suggest that the provision of a wheelchair to those with an unmet need increased work hours, income and reduced mendicity (Grider & Wydick, 2016). The body of evidence regarding the effect of providing corrective glasses to individuals with vision impairments is an important exception to the overall knowledge gap.

The WHO (2019) estimates the unmet need of distance vision impairment is four times higher in low and middle-income regions than in high-income regions. **The evidence suggests that there are widespread impacts of providing glasses to children with vision impairments, ranging from improvements in school performance potential impacts on psychological well-being.** Glewwe et al. (2018) find that providing eyeglasses to students in primary school in China improves test scores, particularly for lower-performing students. Hannum and Zhang (2012) also find positive effects among schoolchildren in China, with improvements in math and literacy performance and grade promotion. In a study in low-income schools in the US, Glewwe et al. (2018) show that vision screening is not sufficient to improve student achievement. Providing free eyeglasses to students improves tests scores; however, these impacts fade over time, suggesting that follow-up assistive devices are needed to sustain academic improvements. Guan et al. (2018) found

that glasses reduced levels of general anxiety for students but for some students increased their levels of learning anxiety.

In terms of assistance and broader caregiving systems, countries in LAC have experimented with programs that provide higher subsidies for PwD with high support needs or directly contract personal assistants to provide support. The region is also designing integrated models of care in which the needs of the unpaid family members providing assistance are addressed along with the needs of family members with functional dependence. The hard evidence is currently very scarce regarding the impacts of these programs, in LAC or elsewhere.



→ How can we move forward?

While progress has been made in disability policy research, significant knowledge gaps persist, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, including LAC. Addressing these gaps is vital for evidence-based inclusion policies.

In education, research in medium and high-income nations demonstrates that inclusive education positively affects children with disabilities with appropriate supports, including well-trained teachers. Expanding the evidence base for inclusive education in budget-constrained contexts, common in LAC countries, is crucial.

On the other hand, while more evidence exists on the impacts of antidiscrimination legislation and quotas, more research is needed regarding wage subsidies and direct employment services. In the region, research on quotas has emerged in the latest years, but the potential differential impact of different quota sizes has not been explored. There is also no evidence of the impact of antidiscrimination law in the region. Addi-

tionally, it is unclear how effective individual program components are at promoting employment; training, counseling, job matching, and other components have usually been evaluated together and not in isolation.

Evaluating interventions' impact on quality-of-life outcomes is essential for social protection programs. With the widespread adoption of disability certification mechanisms, understanding how certification processes and their simplicity affect benefits access is. Little causal evidence exists on the effects of providing assistive a beyond providing glasses to school children. As the region increasingly adopts disability transfers and personal assistance programs, evaluating their impacts is imperative.

Clearly, a substantial list of research gaps must be addressed to promote effective evidence-based disability policy in LAC. Engaging civil society is vital for prioritizing research topics to ensure that the research agenda responds to ongoing concerns from the disability community. This prioritization should also consider cost-effectiveness, as many of these policies and programs were developed in high-income contexts with fewer budget constraints. Finally, training academics, both with and without disabilities, in the international frameworks and concepts of disability is essential to expand knowledge production. Access to administrative data, under the proper data confidentiality conditions, is crucial to boost research in the topic in the region, as well as the inclusion of questions regarding disability in regular household surveys and censuses.

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