

DAVID RIVERA GONZALEZ

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Current position and affiliations

2022-2026	Ph.D. Candidate in Economics Bordeaux School of Economics (Bordeaux, France) Thesis: <i>Exploring the Links between Inequality, Tax-Benefit Systems, Labor, and Social Unrest in Latin America</i> Advisors: <i>Olivier Bargain (Bordeaux School of Economics)</i> <i>H. Xavier Jara (London School of Economics)</i>
2026	Visiting Research Stay UNU-WIDER (Helsinki-Finland)
2025	Visiting Research Stay London School of Economics and Political Science (London, United Kingdom)

Education

2022	M.A. in International and Development Economics PSL - Paris Dauphine University (Paris, France) Thesis: <i>COVID-19 and Gender - The 'Ins and 'Outs of Informal Employment in Latin America</i>
2019	B.S. in Applied Economics to International and Development Economics PSL - Paris Dauphine University (Paris, France) Thesis: <i>Colombia's International Commerce Structure</i>
2019 & 2020	Academic Partnerships: University of Sao Paulo (Sao Paulo, Brasil) Andes University (Bogota, Colombia)

Research fields

Public Economics, Development Economics, Labor Economics, Inequality, Microsimulation

Publications

Social Gaps, Perceived Inequality and Protests,
World Development with Olivier Bargain and H. Xavier Jara

Abstract: Latent feelings of economic vulnerability and social stagnation may have catalyzed the unprecedented uprisings that shook Latin America and other parts of the world in 2018-2019. We document this process in the context of Chile, leveraging survey data on protest participation and its potential determinants. Specifically, we construct a “social gap” index, measuring the disconnect between objective and perceived social status. Our findings suggest that this status misperception predicts protest involvement beyond factors such as perceived living costs, the subjective value of public services, peer influence, redistributive views and political demands. Notably, the social gap operates independently of broader feelings of unfairness and anger toward inequalities in explaining protests.

Working Papers

[1] Tax disincentives to formal employment in Latin America, LSE Research Online Documents
with Olivier Bargain and H. Xavier Jara

Abstract: To finance increased public spending and social programs, Latin America's tax systems need to develop further. Yet taxation can reduce the tax base by discouraging formal employment. Evidence on the intensity of the problem is limited and tends to focus on specifically large reforms of the tax system. Conversely, and to improve external validity, we study whether routine changes in tax policies also alter labor market formalization. Our approach is based on grouped-data estimations of formal employment responses to policy changes. We exploit tax variation across three countries (Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia) and three periods (2008, 2014/15, 2019). We use precise calculations of counterfactual tax burdens when moving from informal to formal jobs,

i.e. formalization tax rates (FTRs). For most countries and pairs of years, FTRs have a negative and significant effect on formal employment, particularly when wages are held constant across periods – in order to extract the pure policy effect – and in a series of sensitivity checks.

[2] Minimum Wages, Contribution Floors, and Informality (*Job Market Paper*)

Abstract: Minimum wages played a crucial role in curbing earnings inequality in Latin America. However, there is still mixed evidence on the economic effects in developing countries, especially when raised in tandem within a context of high informality. Furthermore, in many of these settings, the statutory minimum wage simultaneously anchors the base for social insurance contributions (SIC), creating a fixed per-worker cost of formal employment. Workers and firms can avoid labor legislation (and thus formal costs) by operating informally. Exploiting this institutional linkage across Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, I construct exposure measures based on changes in the minimum contribution liability and study worker and firm responses using harmonized household surveys (2008–2022) and enterprise panels (2006–2024). Groups and firms more exposed to increases in contribution floors reallocate toward informality and self-employment, and formal firms contract in employment and sales. At the same time, formal earnings compress around the minimum.

[3] The Redistributive Effect of Tax-benefit Reforms in Latin America

with Olivier Bargain, Ana Bottega, Rodrigo Chang, Mariana Dondo, Pedro Forquesato, H. Xavier Jara, David Rivera

Abstract: Standard inequality studies focus on tracking market income, blurring the role of tax-benefit systems. This paper quantifies how tax-benefit reforms shaped poverty and inequality in six Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru over two decades. We combine harmonized household surveys with microsimulation models to construct counterfactual income distributions and apply a decomposition method to isolate the pure policy effect of taxes and transfers from changes in market incomes, demographics, and nominal uprating. We examine heterogeneity across countries and across economic cycles. We elicit differential paths following the notable first expansion, mid-2010s stagnation, and the 2020 COVID shock, assessing the roles of progressive taxation, expanded social protection, and automatic stabilizers. This study delivers comparable, policy-relevant evidence on which fiscal reforms most effectively reduced poverty and inequality in the region, informing debates on fiscal space, inclusive growth, and resilience to shocks in developing economies.

Selected Works in Progress

- Social Leader Killings and Deforestation.
- Informal work in Mexico
- The link between Eradication Policies and Unexpected Crime in Colombia : An IV approach

Press and Media

- 1- Do taxes really redistribute wealth ? (05/2023) –
<https://lacledesondes.fr/podcast/les-cles-de-l-eco-2023-05-233.mp3>
- 2- There are more billionaires called Jeff than afro-american billionaires - and other inequalities (09/2023)- <https://lacledesondes.fr/podcast/les-cles-de-l-eco-2023-09-12N.mp3>
- 3- Inequalities: Well-being is also a matter of subjective placement (12/2023) -
<https://lacledesondes.fr/podcast/les-cles-de-l-eco-2023-12-12R.mp3>
- 4- Do not fear! - the real economic consequences of migration (02/2024) -
<https://lacledesondes.fr/podcast/les-cles-de-l-eco-2024-02-13m.mp3>
- 5- The Paradox of rationality and game theory (04/2024)- <https://lacledesondes.fr/podcast/les-cles-de-l-eco-2024-04-02M.mp3>

Academic Presentations

* Invited talks

2025 – WAPLAC Workshop # 2 - Quito (Presenter)
2025 – Bordeaux School of Economics PhD Seminar (Presenter)
2025 – AFEDEV Job Market Session 2025 (Presenter)
2025 - European Economic Association Conference 2025 (Presenter)
2025 - 1st Junior Workshop on Economics of Latin America – FU Berlin (Presenter)
*2025–Seminar on Political Behavior- Escuela de Gobierno Pontifica Universidad de Chile (Presenter)

2025 - London School of Economics and Political Science International Inequalities PhD Seminar (Presenter)
2024 - Bordeaux School of Economics PhD Seminar (Presenter)
2024 - International Conference in Development Economics (Presenter)
2024 - Barcelona Labor Economics Days (Presenter)
2024 – French Economic Association (Presenter)
2024 – Welfare Inequality Winter School Canazei – (Presenter)
2024 – French Economic Association (Presenter)
2023 - Bordeaux School of Economics PhD Seminar – 10/2023
2023 - Latino Workshop - Bordeaux School of Economics 14 January 2023

Grants and Scholarships

- UNU-WIDER – 2026 – Visiting Grant – 6000 Euros – Research Stay
- AAP – 2024/2025 - FORSETIE interdisciplinary research – 4,000 Euros – Research Stay - Sole Investigator funded by the “Université de Bordeaux Animation Interdisciplinarité” aimed at funding projects promoting interdisciplinary approaches or the dissemination of research. UBGRS – Research Grant 2024 - 3,050 Euros – Sole investigator Graduate Research School – Bordeaux University aimed at supporting the best candidates on their internationalization processes.
- AAP – Changes 2023/2024 – 1,000 Euros - Bordeaux University – Funding for Data – Sole Investigator - Project name: *Softwares utiles* aimed at funding software and plugins currently unavailable at the University and crucial for expanding research
- MET – Bordeaux Mobility Grant 2023 – 1,000 Euros - Sole Investigator – Funded by Bordeaux Metropole "Support for Short-Term Mobility of Doctoral Students in Social Sciences and Humanities (SHS) – 2023".
- HOPE IDEX PhD Grant 2022 - Sole Investigator - Three essays in inequality, labor, tax-benefit systems, and social unrest in Latin America

Teaching Experience

Jan. 2026 Research Methods, Supervising Bachelor Thesis
3rd year Undergraduate students Kedge Business School

Sept. 2025 Mathematics
1st year Undergraduate in economics University of Bordeaux

Sept. 2025 Microeconomics
2nd year Undergraduate in economics Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne

Sep. 2025 Initiation to Research Methods
3rd year Bank, Finance and Insurance at Kedge Business School

Jan. 2024 Imperfect Competition and Strategic Behaviors, Microeconomics
2nd year Undergraduate in economics Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne

Sept. 2023 Mathematical tools for decision Making,
3rd year Undergraduate in economics University of Bordeaux

2016-2023 High school and Middle School Teacher in Mathematics, Portuguese and Spanish,
Clevermate

Other Research Activities

Dec. 2025 WAPLAC Workshop # 2 – Conference Organizer

Aug. 2025 European Economic Association Conference- Organization Committee

May 2025 WAP conference # 2 – Bordeaux Organization Committee

May 2024 WAPLAC Workshop # 1 – Conference Organizer

May 2023 WAP conference – Bordeaux Organization Committee

Relevant Work Experience

2022	Research Assistant PSL Graduate Program at Paris Dauphine University Under the Supervision of Marta Menéndez, Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud
2021	OECD directorate of Education and Skills
2020-2021	Research Assistant at the IRD - DIAL for the ANR project COLECPOL
2020	Research Assistant for Luis Pineros Independent consultant for the Inter-American Development Bank and Ministry of Education

Computer Skills

Python, Stata, SPSS, SAS, VBA, LaTeX, R, Wordpress
EUROMOD, SOUTHMOD microsimulation
Webmaster for wapsociety.org, WAPLAC.org (founding member of the network).

Personal Information and Language Skills

*** Invited talks**

Spanish (native), English (native), French (native), Portuguese (Advanced), Japanese (beginner), Italian (beginner)

Languages and Contemporary Challenges | University Paris Dauphine Summa cum Laude

Citizenship: Colombia - France

References

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Prof Marta Menéndez

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Extracurricular activities

Cinema buff, rock climbing, chess and reading