

Socioeconomic patterns among international immigrants in Chile: The use of clusters

Authors:
Báltica Cabieses,
Helena Tunstall,
Kate Pickett,
Manuel Espinoza

Contacts to:
bbc500@york.ac.uk
bcabieses@udd.cl



THE UNIVERSITY of York



Facultad de Medicina
Clínica Alemana - Universidad del Desarrollo



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Why study immigrants in Chile?

- International immigration to Chile has increased rapidly in the past decade.
- It is still fairly small scale and immigrants comprise <2% of the total Chilean population.
- However, immigration has become significant for economic growth and the innovation of services.
- About 70% of immigrants come from South American countries, mostly Peru, Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador.
- No national-level study has been conducted to describe the socioeconomic status of international immigrants in Chile.

Study design - Instrument

Secondary data analysis of a national representative social survey was used to explore these variables (CASEN survey 2006; sample size 268 873; weighted estimations).

Aims:

The study aimed to explore the socioeconomic patterns of immigrants in Chile, through the analysis of a national representative survey.

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How was the study conducted?

a. Describing immigrants' socioeconomic status (SES):

- Household income per capita (continuous)
- Educational level (ordinal)
- Employment status (binary)

Preliminary analysis found the immigrants were a very heterogeneous and polarised group. E.g.: A wider gap of income inequality in this group compared to the Chilean-born.

b. Health outcomes

- Any disability
- Any chronic condition/cancer past year
- Any hospitalization past year
- Any mental health treatment last 3 months.

No clear association was found between the health outcomes and the separate SES variables - so cluster analysis was adopted.

c. SES cluster analysis:

Complete-linkage hierarchical cluster analysis was then conducted and three groups were identified:

1. High SES (n=398)
2. Medium SES (n=889)
3. Low SES (n=587)

Methodology:

Due to their great heterogeneity, hierarchical cluster analysis was used to group immigrants into three categories: Low, Medium, and High SES.

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What did the study find?

a. International immigrants in Chile

- 1% of the survey respondents reported being an international immigrant.
- The most common countries of origin were: Peru (28%), Argentina (26%), Bolivia (6%) and Ecuador (5%).

b. Describing the socioeconomic groups after cluster analysis

Cluster 1 (n=398)	Cluster 2 (n=889)	Cluster 3 (n=587)
63% women	57% women	51% women
Mean age 25 years old	Mean age 33 years old	Mean age 35 years old
30% < 15 years	All age categories	94% 16-65 years
Up to high school only	All except University level	60% professional degree
2 poorest quintiles 1 & 2	>50% middle quintiles 3 & 4	60% richest quintile
42% employed	64% employed	63% employed
No heads or managers	All categories	8% managers, 59% private sector
60% <5 years in Chile	50% <5 years in Chile	30% <1 year in Chile
40% from Argentina	>60% from Argentina & Peru	From Argentina & Peru, followed by "other countries"
Description summary: Low SES	Description summary: Medium SES	Description summary: High SES

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Discussion and interpretation of the results

a. In this study the international immigrant population in Chile were found to be a very heterogeneous group, polarised by their socioeconomic status.

b. Hierarchical cluster analysis provided an appropriate method to group immigrants according to their socioeconomic characteristics and, consequently, to provide clear patterns of SES vulnerability within the total immigrant population in the country.

c. This study indicates that immigrants living in the Low-SES cluster are a vulnerable young group that needs further attention and protection in Chile.

