

# Crossing the ‘Global South Frontier’: Mapping Latin American Presence in International Relations Publications

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## Abstract

*Despite increasing calls to globalise and pluralise the field, International Relations (IR) remains dominated by institutions based in the Global North. This paper engages with the theme of exclusion with access by complementing ongoing critiques of the discipline’s epistemic hierarchies by examining how Latin American scholars are represented in top-tier IR journals. While the inclusion of Global South voices has become more visible, such inclusion is often symbolic, conditional and structurally constrained. By mapping Latin American authors who published in ten prestigious IR journals from 2010 to 2024, we analyse training backgrounds, publication locations, co-authorship networks and research themes to reveal the material and epistemic barriers that shape visibility and legitimacy in IR. We conceptualise these barriers as part of a broader ‘Global South frontier’ that limits transformative participation. With its hybrid position as Westernised yet peripheral, Latin America offers a unique lens for interrogating the discipline’s persistent inequalities. This paper contributes to*

*broader debates on knowledge production, reflexivity and structural gatekeeping in IR by centering the publication process as a key site of disciplinary power.*

**Keywords:** *global IR, epistemic hierarchies, Latin America, knowledge production, Global South, exclusion with access*

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## Introduction

Mainstream International Relations (IR) grapples with parochialism as its dominant theories and concepts are mainly developed in the Global North, especially the United States and Western Europe, and are presented as universal tools for explaining international phenomena (Bilgin 2008). Leading publishers, influential scholars and flagship journals are mostly based in the Global North, reinforcing its status as the central hub of IR knowledge production (Biersteker 2009; Kristensen 2018). This has led to ongoing critiques that IR maintains an exclusion of Global South scholars, whose contributions are, at best, superficially acknowledged in paradigmatic debates, academic venues and university curricula (Loke & Owen 2024). Although their work may be cited, their frameworks and insights are frequently dismissed as context-specific, anecdotal or lacking in theoretical rigor, reflecting a core-periphery structure of knowledge production rooted in Western ontological and epistemological assumptions (Blaney & Tickner 2017). In response, calls to globalise or de-Westernise IR aim to break down this structure by bringing marginalised knowledge to the core, working toward more diversity and pluralism in the discipline (Buzan & Acharya 2019; Gelardi 2020).

There are many ways to engage with IR knowledge production from a non-Western standpoint, including detaching, emulation, localisation, pluralisation or emancipation, depending on the complex issues surrounding identification, material and spatial context, and institutional setting (Loke & Owen 2022). Regarding pluralisation or diversification, it can involve examining how IR scholarship is taught and researched in non-Western regions (Medeiros et al. 2016), advocating for Indigenous theorising and incorporating local voices and experiences (Acharya et al. 2022), or promoting the dissemination of 'national schools', such as the Chinese or Indian Schools (Zhang & Kristensen 2017). In these cases, the goal is not to erase but rather to include and adapt the existing centre by exploring how homegrown theories and perspectives from the periphery can be transformative (Azdinli & Biltekin 2018). Many, however, remain sceptical, arguing that such efforts risk merely 'cataloging theoretical Others' in isolation from the mainstream, while still perpetuating the same type of parochialism they critique (Chu 2022; Vasilaki 2012). Some postcolonial scholars also contend that Global IR initiatives

may only serve as performative strategies, providing access through symbolic inclusion to non-Western scholars while ultimately denying them substantial influence over the discipline's core structures (Barnett & Zarakol 2023). Instead, these scholars promote epistemic disobedience, refusing to conform to embedded hierarchies while creating alternative spaces for knowledge production beyond the confines of the North (Mignolo 2009).

These discussions about the diverse practices of International Relations (IR) across different positionalities, contexts and institutional settings raise important questions about how inclusions and exclusions are assessed and measured within the discipline. Shaped by inherently unequal spaces of knowledge production, the field reflects a complex, spatialised and situated landscape that resists easy transformation (Loke & Owen 2022). Engaging with ongoing debates about exclusion and access in knowledge creation, this paper maps Latin American scholars publishing in top-tier IR journals to provide further evidence that inclusion is often selective, conditional or symbolic. Peer-reviewed journals are crucial spaces where disciplines advance or stagnate. They serve as platforms for presenting and debating ideas, which are then disseminated among peers and students as established knowledge. Additionally, publications are vital for academic career progression, affecting hiring decisions, tenure and funding opportunities. Consequently, journals often act as mechanisms of leaping forward or gatekeeping within academia. Globalising IR, therefore, requires diversifying not only the content of journals but also who gets to publish. However, Biersteker (2009) points out that journals remain a central site of American and English-speaking dominance in the field, both in terms of authors and editorial boards. Despite positive, though gradual, changes in recent years, publishing trends, such as the increasing influence of indexes and citation rankings, can have the opposite effect, helping to maintain or even deepen existing hierarchies (Koch & Vanderstraeten 2021).

This paper explores who gets to represent Latin America in top IR journals, moving beyond binary notions of inclusion and exclusion by emphasising the structural conditions that enable or hinder participation. Instead of focusing on what is produced and consumed within Latin America, we invert our analytical lens to investigate how Latin American scholars are integrated into mainstream spaces where IR is shaped and made universal. By analysing where these scholars were educated, where they publish, their co-authorship networks and their chosen topics, we aim to interrogate the material conditions of research and the epistemic and ontological aspects of publications that enable ideas to move from the local to the 'global'. In doing so, we consider whether a 'Global South frontier' – rooted in epistemological hierarchies – exists, serving as a set of barriers that may restrict the spread of knowledge from the Global South and that only a few scholars can navigate successfully to gain visibility in spaces regarded as mainstream within the discipline.

We approach Latin America as a strategically significant case to explore experiences of the Global South and to examine issues of exclusion related to access and epistemic hierarchies in IR. Factors like inequalities, material constraints, colonial legacies and dependency dynamics set the region's academic landscape apart from that of the Global North. Ontologically, it occupies a complex position: being Westernised but not in the West (Fawcett 2012; Villa & Pimenta 2017; Gelardi 2020). For decades, Latin America has been relegated to the status of a US sphere of influence (Tickner 2003). Consequently, many IR scholars have historically overlooked the region, with some claiming it lacks independent agency both academically and politically (Turton 2015). However, this claim lacks a solid empirical foundation. Latin America has made significant contributions to international thought and has developed sophisticated, locally rooted traditions in law, security and political economy (Acharya et al. 2022). It hosts well-established academic networks and epistemic communities in IR, even though its global visibility remains limited. Therefore, Latin America can be understood as occupying an 'in-between location' within the discipline – geopolitically in the Global South but epistemically intertwined with Western traditions. We argue this position makes the region a valuable site for examining the epistemic barriers that continue to shape knowledge production in IR.

This paper is part of a discussion on reflexivity and knowledge production while examining the conditions for an essential disciplinary practice: publishing peer-reviewed articles. Our analysis focuses on Latin American authors based in institutions both in and outside the region who have managed to overcome what we identify as Westernised structural gatekeeping, along with the conditions under which this occurs. Our contribution lies in shedding light on the structural, material and immaterial barriers faced by Global South scholars when they attempt to contribute to IR's globalisation. Our findings support the idea that international academic experience outside the region has often served as a 'make it or break it' factor for publishing in the discipline's most prestigious outlets. This reinforces the perception that scholars must conform and 'speak in the idiom of the North' to gain recognition and legitimacy within the field – an issue that Tickner (2003) and Kristensen (2015) have already emphasised.

Nevertheless, disciplinary gatekeeping does not necessarily operate through outright exclusion but rather by controlling access and visibility for those trained in the 'hidden curriculum' (Barham & Wood 2022). In other words, academics in the Global South, whether in the periphery or semi-periphery, such as in Latin America, are given a chance at inclusion as long as they are willing to learn and incorporate the written and unwritten rules of mainstream academic spaces. That is what we, following the term proposed by this thematic section, refer to as 'exclusion with access'. This term helps us emphasise the complexity of this issue and how hierarchies can persist even when they are seemingly fading.

While we recognise the validity of critiques that question the usefulness of reformist approaches to such entrenched epistemic hierarchies, we argue that having a unified academic community, even if imperfect, is preferable to its complete absence (Sylvester 2007). To advance this argument, the paper is divided into four parts. First, we examine reflexivity and knowledge production within IR. Second, we describe our methodology for analysing the selected journals. Third, we summarise our findings. Finally, we discuss the implications and conclude by emphasising the importance of structural gatekeeping and the need for more active and deliberate strategies to reform the discipline.

### **The (in)material structures of IR knowledge production: Limited diversity and conditional inclusion**

The call for globalising IR arose from concerns over the field's persistent Eurocentric and North American biases, despite claiming to study global affairs (Chakrabarty 2000; Aydinlı & Biltekin 2018). When theories and concepts are mainly based on a narrow set of experiences, their claims to universality are not only questionable, but can reinforce problematic conceptions of science as neutral and separate from material realities and political interests (Escobar 2003; Lander 2005). The Global IR initiative thus aims to highlight alternative experiences, actors and frameworks for understanding international dynamics. It involves reimagining the field as a global discipline that is more inclusive in how it understands, teaches and practices IR (Acharya 2011). To promote this inclusivity, we need to first examine who holds epistemic power and what mechanisms maintain and reproduce these hierarchies.

While acknowledging ongoing debates about IR's disciplinary status, we view IR as a field of study that engages multiple objects and brings together a diverse community of scholars interested in international affairs by establishing knowledge production practices, identity markers and institutionalisation mechanisms (Corry 2022). A field does not require a single origin, as knowledge often emerges and circulates unevenly across different parts of the world. Instead, a field solidifies through widespread but shared practices of identity-building, research, publishing and teaching (Bueger & Gadinger 2007). While it may be challenging to define a clearly bounded domain for IR, there is general agreement that it remains anchored in a subject matter (the 'international arena' where actors interrelate) that provides direction, means and institutional spaces for its continued operation.

A disciplinary field is thus a knowledge complex that organises and regulates an academic community by setting norms, practices and parameters of legitimacy (Corry 2022). In IR, insights about international affairs are discussed and circulated through scholarly publications, moving the discipline as a living body. However, not everyone has equal opportunities to write or be read – knowledge production is deeply entangled with material, institutional and symbolic inequalities. As

Wallerstein (2000) observed, the social sciences have predominantly been produced by those with more resources, causing lasting distortions in what is known and by whom. Addressing these disparities requires challenging the structures that uphold them.

Scientific communities simultaneously enable and constrain their members, articulating professional identity and solidarity, as well as negotiating consensus on methods, relevance, and research agendas (Bueger & Gadinger 2007). As in all fields, global material and political asymmetries are reflected in and reproduced by IR (Rosenberg et al. 2022). What counts as valuable knowledge – and who gets to produce it – is constantly shaped and reshaped by power relations and interests both inside and outside the discipline. No science is made in a vacuum, and disciplines are a constitutive element of general politics as they produce knowledge that guides decision-making across many areas of life (Grenier 2015). Understanding how a field is structured is therefore essential to recognising and addressing its embedded hierarchies (Alejandro 2019).

Peer-reviewed journals play a fundamental role in shaping any academic discipline's contours by acting as legitimacy and visibility holders. Through editorial decisions and peer review, journals decide which ideas are circulated and define the epistemological, methodological and thematic boundaries of what is considered valid knowledge (Forsberg et al. 2022). Therefore, journals are essential tools for authors to establish themselves as knowledge authorities: They are where research becomes accessible for peers to read, discuss and teach. Publishing in these journals offers status and intellectual authority and opens many doors to access selective associations, funding and networks. In this way, they are not neutral spaces but active participants, both influenced by and reproducing existing disciplinary hierarchies (Grenier & Hagmann 2016; Koch & Vanderstraeten 2021).

Wæver (1998) pointed to US dominance in the discipline by examining geographical trends in publication within IR journals, while Risse et al. (2022) demonstrated that little has changed in the core-periphery structure of the field. Due to material differences, access to academic institutions – such as universities, research centres, journals, grants, conferences and seminars – remains highly unequal between the Global North and the South. Editorial boards, review standards, language requirements and citation practices thus eventually act as gatekeeping mechanisms by establishing standards that reflect socioeconomic inequalities (Loke & Owen 2022). For many non-Western scholars, barriers extend beyond content or a paper's originality; they include navigating unspoken discipline rules, such as fluency in English, specific theoretical frameworks, methodological choices and Western stylistic conventions. Disparities in institutional prestige, funding, mobility, access to data and information, and library and laboratory infrastructure worsen these challenges.

In this sense, context, whether material, political, embodied, temporal or spatial, matters. As Loke and Owen (2024: 63) argue, context in IR knowledge production

is 'a bounded and situated relational structure that links the individual scholar to their environment, conditioning and shaping knowledge production practices and, consequently, knowledge claims'. This is not to say that context predetermines scholarly work but that it highlights the agent–structure dynamics inherent in knowledge production and the social practices that sustain it. Academia is shaped by a range of institutions that provide the material conditions under which scholars operate – conditions that affect individuals differently depending on their location, resources available, work precariousness and the political environments surrounding their intellectual labour. Therefore, epistemological debates about who produces knowledge must connect to material realities, as these are inherently reflected in what is published at the top. As Fonseca (2019) put it, a critical engagement with globalising IR must explore the exclusionary effects of global material inequalities in higher education.

Kristensen (2018) argued that publishing in Global North journals has traditionally conferred legitimacy and academic capital. As such, many scholars, regardless of their origin, are motivated to publish in these outlets to improve their impact factors and secure funding and consequently boost their careers. However, gatekeeping operates not only through exclusions but also by disciplining authors, rendering certain forms of knowledge visible only when reformulated according to dominant standards, as they must speak the 'language of the North' (Tickner 2003). If indeed most authors from the Global South publishing in these journals have some prior training in the Global North, it indicates that access alone does not translate into greater epistemic equality; it signals, hence, conditional inclusion.

Conditional inclusion dialogues with 'exclusion with access', the theme of this issue. It describes situations where groups or ideas traditionally barred from an intellectual framework begin to be formally included but remain largely restricted from transforming such structures. Their inclusion is mainly symbolic and performative, often serving as a token with limited impact rather than a genuine driver of change. In IR knowledge production, the pressure to follow a 'hidden curriculum' (Barham & Wood 2022) as an easier way to get published operates as a mechanism of exclusion with access, since it can isolate authors unwilling or unable to conform. This conditional inclusion in perceived internationalised spaces reinforces long-standing patterns of what counts as acceptable academic work by only accepting a few pieces of non-Western knowledge that fit its criteria. Consequently, it sustains existing hierarchies between the core and the periphery in IR (Risse et al. 2022) while establishing new hierarchies within the periphery between those who can engage with the centre and those who remain confined to 'local' spaces.

## Methodology

We map how many Latin American authors have published in ten 'top' peer-reviewed IR journals from 2010 to 2024: the *European Journal of International*

Relations (EJIR), International Affairs (IA), International Organization (IO), International Security (IS), International Studies Quarterly (ISQ), International Studies Review (ISR), International Theory (IT), Review of International Organizations (RIO), Review of International Studies (RIS), and World Politics (WP). We selected these journals based on Clarivate's Journal Impact Factor (JIF) for the field of Political Science and International Relations.<sup>1</sup> We excluded broader Political Science (PS) journals since IR is not considered a subdiscipline of PS in all countries.

Data collection was conducted manually by reviewing all research articles published in each issue of the ten selected journals throughout the period.<sup>2</sup> We define Latin America as including the countries of South America, Central America and Mexico. An author is considered Latin American based on two criteria: (1) explicit self-identification as being born in one of these countries, or (2) completion of a bachelor's degree at an institution located in the region. To gather this information, we consulted the authors' Curriculum Vitae, which were, in most cases, accessible through their institutional or personal websites or via LinkedIn. We included all articles that featured at least one Latin American author, including those co-authored with scholars from outside the region, regardless of authorship order.

Our methodology has some potential limitations. First, since data collection was conducted manually, it is naturally prone to human error. Second, because most authors do not disclose their nationality on their CVs or personal websites, we used the country where they obtained their bachelor's degree as a proxy for regional origin. Although this method is not perfect, we observed a strong correlation between birthplace and undergraduate education in cases where both pieces of information were available. Finally, although it is possible some authors might have bypassed our dual criteria, we believe such cases are few.

Despite its limitations, the data we collected achieved our goal of providing an accurate depiction of Latin American authors publishing in top-ranked journals while contributing to Global IR discussions. Our criteria include scholars who are originally from but no longer reside in Latin America, excluding those from other regions who live or have lived there. Although their number is small (only nine according to our database), these experiences highlight the complexities of belonging and inclusion. While these scholars, originally from and trained

- 1 Data from access in March 2023. More info on JIF is available at Clarivate's website: <https://clarivate.com/academia-government/scientific-and-academic-research/research-funding-analytics/journal-citation-reports/>. We recognise the limitations of using quantitative data such as citation reports; however, it is indisputable that they constitute an important reference by which academic work is judged.
- 2 We only investigated research articles, removing from the sample research notes, research essays, symposiums, book reviews, book review essays, authors' answers, errata and corrections. This way, we included original works that (likely) passed the peer-review process.

in the Global North, have certain advantages, they also work or have worked within the material constraints of Global South institutions; the opposite applies to Latin Americans working in the Global North.

We recognise that the notion of 'belonging' to a region, especially within broader debates on Global South representation, can be highly contested. While some authors have emphasised how everyday life experiences can influence academic work (Tickner 2003), others have highlighted differences in undergraduate or graduate curricula and training that may play a part in shaping future academic careers (Tickner & Weaver 2009; Colgan 2016; Barasuol & Silva 2016). The Global IR project itself argues that including 'marginal' voices in the debate can have meaningful effects not only on what kinds of phenomena are analysed within 'IR' but also on how we understand them. At the same time, it is equally important to stress that academic careers are becoming more globalised, and many scholars find themselves in 'third' (Chagas-Bastos et al. 2023) or liminal spaces that are often difficult to navigate. Our goal here is not to diminish the complexity of these experiences or to define a fixed idea of what it means to be Latin American, but rather to highlight how different trajectories influence the likelihood of publication in mainstream journals.

## Results

We examined 5,626 research articles published between 2010 and 2024 in ten IR peer-reviewed journals and found 140 articles with at least one Latin American author, accounting for 2.5% of the total sample. Table 1 displays the distribution of these articles, which suggests that Latin American authors are significantly underrepresented or marginalised in high-impact IR publishing. ISR has the highest representation, while IT and IS have only published one and two articles with Latin American authors, respectively, over the course of 15 years.

Figure 1 illustrates this distribution by year and journal. Although there has been a noticeable increase in these publications since around 2015, the possible upward trend cannot yet be considered a clear or consistent trajectory. It is essential to consider factors such as special issues, which can create temporary spikes. For instance, in 2017, IA published a special issue on 'Brazil and the graduation dilemma', which accounted for all the articles by Latin American authors published in the journal that year.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of authors by country, with a clear dominance of Brazilians (33.6%), followed by Argentineans (24.8%), Mexicans (13.6%) and Colombians (9.6%). Several aspects of this distribution are noteworthy. While Brazil's share is fairly expected given its population size and GDP, Mexico seems underrepresented relative to its demographic and economic weight. On the other hand, Argentina's participation is surprisingly high. Although the Argentinian government's spending on tertiary education is not particularly remarkable, the

Table 1: Research articles with at least one Latin-American author (2010–2024)

Journal	Total Research Articles	Articles with one or more Latin American authors	Percentage
<i>European Journal of International Relations</i>	595	8	1.3%
<i>International Affairs</i>	1024	34	3.3%
<i>International Organization</i>	329	9	2.8%
<i>International Security</i>	284	2	0.7%
<i>International Studies Quarterly</i>	1199	29	2.5%
<i>International Studies Review</i>	524	20	3.8%
<i>International Theory</i>	321	1	0.3%
<i>Review of International Organizations</i>	326	9	2.8%
<i>Review of International Studies</i>	756	11	1.4%
<i>World Politics</i>	273	17	6.2%

Source: Authors

country has the region’s highest rate of higher education enrollment, which may explain its strong representation.<sup>3</sup>

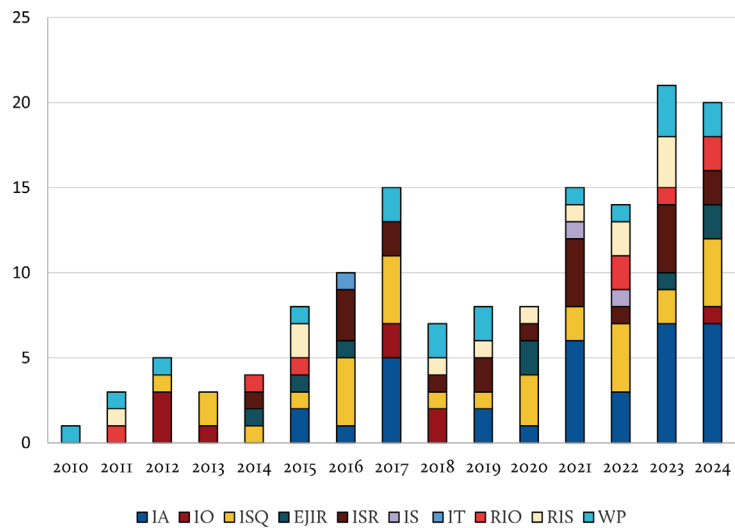
We also analyse the authors’ backgrounds and institutional affiliations through their CVs. A clear pattern emerges: Many articles were published while authors were affiliated with non-Latin American universities. Brazil, however, is an exception, with most articles published when the authors are affiliated with a Brazilian institution. Figure 3 displays these findings.

Notably, some countries ‘lose’ more scholars than others. For instance, Brazil has retained much of its academic expertise, while others have seen significant outflows. While differences in higher education expenditure may be part of the explanation, they hardly paint a complete picture, as all countries in Figure 3 have similar rates.<sup>4</sup> Factors such as quality of life, funding availability, job opportunities and prospects for career advancement also influence the situation. In short, fully understanding these differences would require a deeper look into the dynamics of ‘brain drain’, which is beyond this article’s scope.

3 All data is sourced from the World Bank Database (<https://data.worldbank.org/>). In 2020, Argentina had the highest higher education enrolment rate at 99%, followed by Chile (89%) and Uruguay (65%). Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador reported around 55%, and Mexico 45% (data for several countries was unavailable).

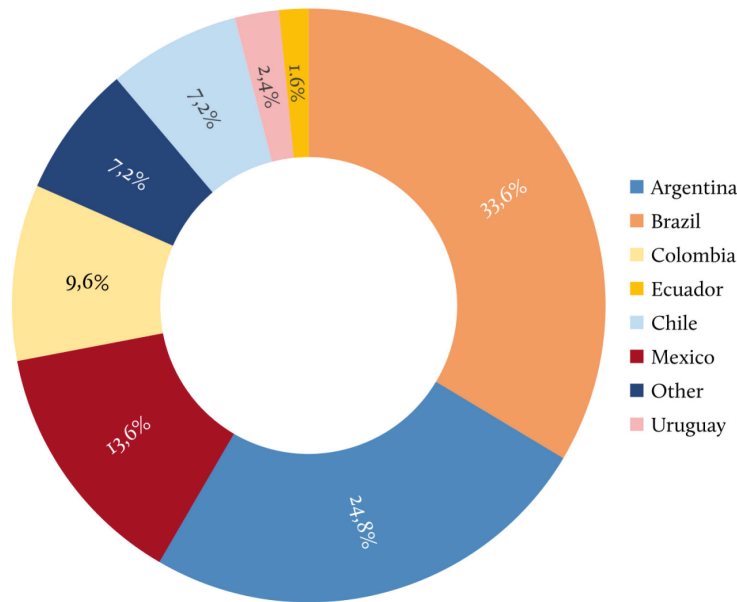
4 Data from the World Bank Database as footnote 5.

Figure 1: Research articles with at least one Latin American author by year and journal



Source: Authors

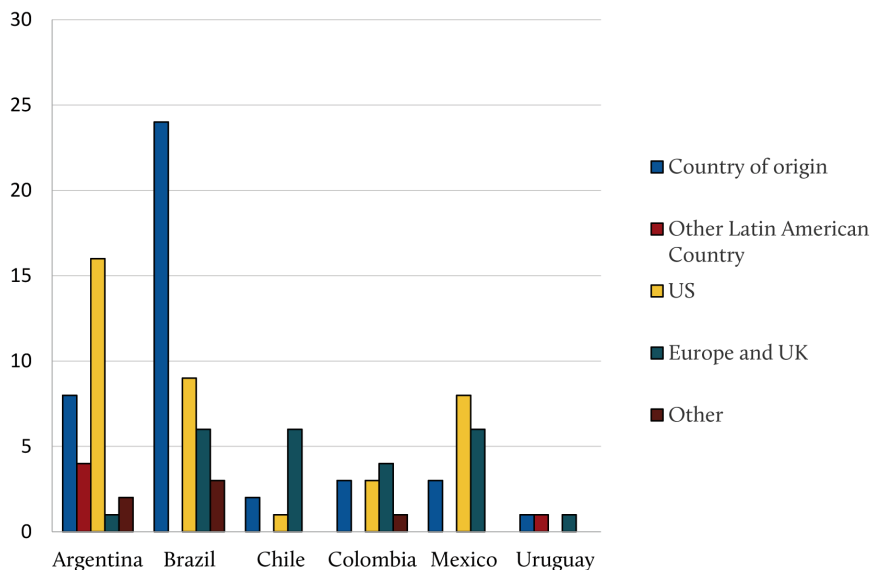
Figure 2: Distribution of authors by country



Source: Authors

**Note:** The category Other includes Bolivia (2), Costa Rica (1), El Salvador (1), Peru (2), Puerto Rico (1) and Venezuela (2).

Figure 3: Where authors were based when articles were published



Source: Authors

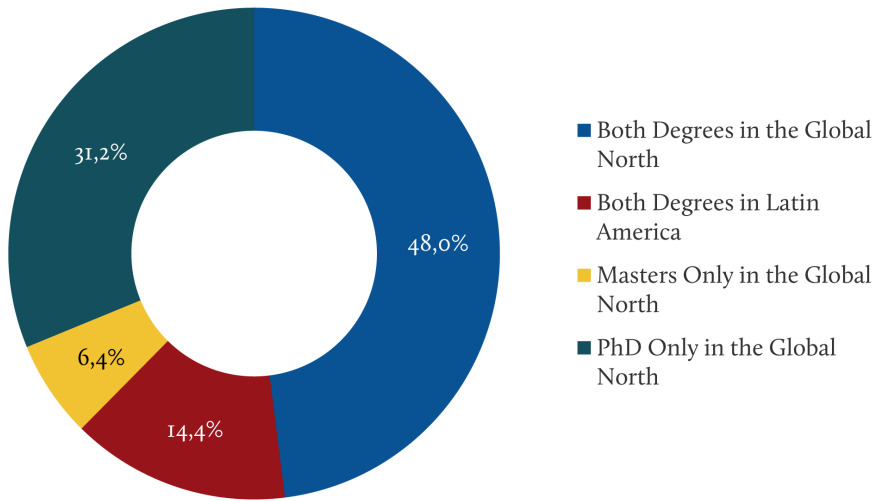
**Note:** For easier visualisation, we only included nationalities that were represented three or more times. The category 'Other' includes Canada, Australia and the United Arab Emirates.

Although we cannot explain the causes, we can consider the implications. An author's regional background continues to shape and impact their academic work, even if they no longer live there. However, being affiliated with an institution in the Global North offers both tangible and intangible benefits. In fact, it is notable that most authors in our sample have spent some time at Northern academic institutions, as shown in Figure 4.

Of the 125 authors analysed, only 14.4% completed both their master's and PhDs in Latin America. Adding the 6.4% who have completed only a master's abroad, this means 20.8% earned their PhDs in the region. Among these, all but two are Argentinians or Brazilians who received their degrees in their home countries. Notably, about one-third of them (7 out of 19) later spent time as postdoctoral researchers, visiting scholars or fellows in the United States, Europe or the United Kingdom. Overall, nearly 80% have earned either their PhD or both their master's and PhD in the Global North, and 85% have spent professional time abroad. Figure 5 illustrates this distribution of PhD locations.

Most authors completed their PhDs in the US, Europe or the UK. Since a PhD is likely the most important degree for a researcher and possibly the key experience that shapes many of us into researchers, it is easy to understand the importance of these figures. Figure 6 summarises these findings by showing the movement of researchers from Latin America to the Global North to earn their PhDs, with many staying there to build their academic careers.

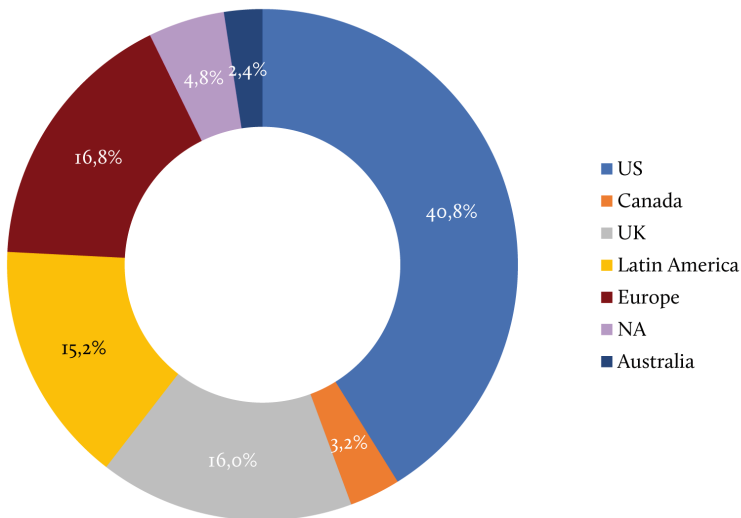
Figure 4: Where authors completed their master's and PhDs



Source: Authors

**Note:** We could not find the source of eight of the 125 authors' master's degrees. In four cases, we found that their PhD was obtained in the US, meaning they likely did not pursue a separate master's degree.

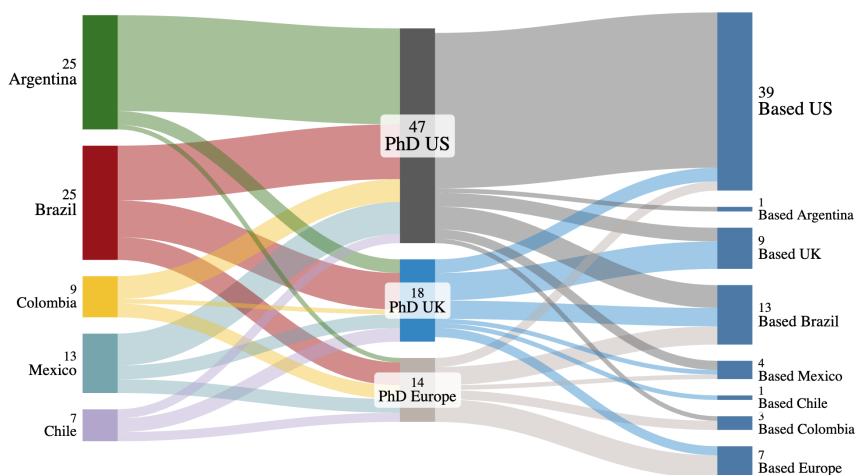
Figure 5: Countries where authors completed their PhD



Source: Authors

**Note:** The category 'Other' (too small to be labelled in the figure) accounts for a researcher who did their PhD in Japan and one who did theirs in Turkey. N.A., in many cases, means the authors have not completed a PhD.

Figure 6: Career paths of authors who completed PhDs in the US, UK or Europe



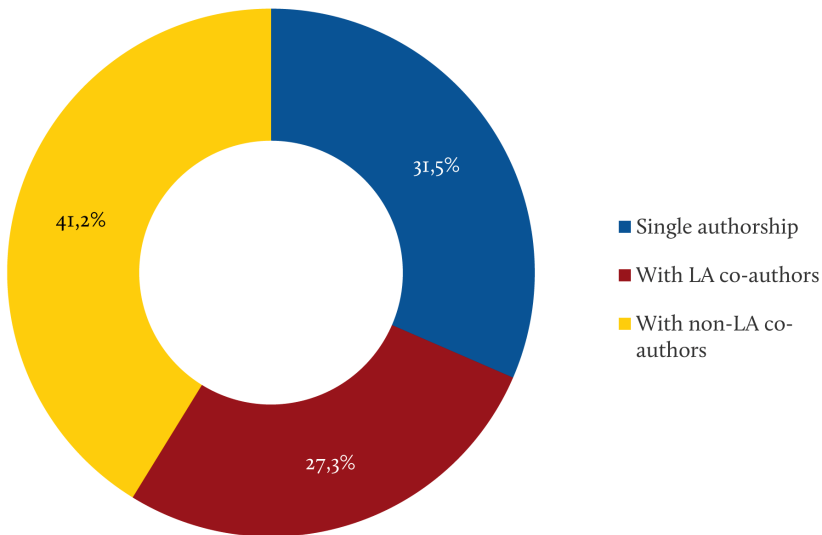
Source: Authors

We also examined the co-authorship patterns shown in Figure 7. Single authorship makes up a significant portion, indicating a level of academic autonomy among Latin American researchers. For articles with multiple authors, co-authorship with non-Latin American scholars exceeds that with Latin Americans. Several assumptions can be hypothesised. First, Latin American researchers might simply be publishing together in other outlets. Second, limited resources or career expectations may influence external publication efforts at Latin American institutions. Third, co-authorship with non-Latin American colleagues could reflect an internationalisation of research and a preference for cross-regional collaboration, possibly due to access to better resources, networks or funding. Fourth, these collaborations might be a strategic move to improve acceptance prospects, as Western colleagues are often more familiar with the publication process. Finally, it may suggest these researchers are truly integrated into the academic systems to which they migrated. However, none of these hypotheses can be proven with our data and would require further investigation.

Turning to the articles' characteristics, we start with the issue of methodology, as shown in Table 2. We classified the methodology by reviewing each article's abstract, introduction and/or methodology sections. Any statistical analysis of data was classified as quantitative, while qualitative methods include all data treatment that is not quantitative.<sup>5</sup> Some articles did not specify any methodology or

5 Qualitative methodologies include case studies, ethnography, archival research, semi-structured interviews, discourse analysis, surveys with non-quantifiable results, process-tracing.

Figure 7: Type of authorship



Source: Authors

**Note:** This data counts each instance of authorship individually, meaning that both authors (those who published multiple times within our sample) and articles (those with more than one Latin American author) may appear more than once.

were purely conceptual or theoretical, such as describing a specific author's work or developing but not applying a new framework or concept, and were therefore classified as 'unspecified or purely conceptual.'

The most striking result of our findings is that a large percentage (33%) of articles employ quantitative methods or formal modelling. This is much higher than what is shown in TRIP's database of journal articles, where, in 2018, only about 6% employed quantitative methods.<sup>6</sup> While this discrepancy is probably due in part to differences in coding, our results are still impressive compared to those published in Latin America.<sup>7</sup> Using a coding similar to ours, Medeiros et al. (2016) revealed that only 4.82% of articles published in 35 South American journals use quantitative methods. Notably, only 13% of articles in their sample clearly specify the use of any methodology, a result echoed in Carvalho et al.'s (2021) analysis of Brazilian journals, where they identified that less than half of the articles ex-

6 TRIP (Teaching, Research and International Policy) results were accessed via their dashboard, available at <https://trip.wm.edu/dashboard/journal-articles>.

7 TRIP codes quantitative research as this methodology involves numerical values for both the IVs and DVs and some way of linking the IV and DV values. Hence, articles that contain only descriptive statistics that illustrate an empirical trend do not qualify and should instead be categorised as descriptive. We did not verify whether statistical treatment was given to both IVs and DVs.

Table 2: Methodology according to the journal

Journal	Quantitative or Formal Model	Qualitative	Mixed Methods	Unspecified or Purely Conceptual
<i>EJIR</i>	2	5	0	1
<i>IA</i>	0	18	0	16
<i>IO</i>	5	4	0	0
<i>IS</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>ISQ</i>	18	6	4	1
<i>ISR</i>	1	4	0	15
<i>IT</i>	0	1	0	0
<i>RIO</i>	8	1	0	0
<i>RIS</i>	0	5	0	6
<i>WP</i>	11	2	1	0
<b>Total</b>	45	46	6	39

Source: Authors

**Note:** We could not access the full text of one *International Security* article and three *World Politics* articles, so we could not establish the methodology by reading the abstract alone in these cases.

explicitly describe their methodological design. Our share of articles with specified methodologies is much larger (more than 70%). That might also explain why our proportion of quantitative and qualitative methods is significantly higher – 34% in our sample versus 6.2% in Medeiros et al. (2016).

We also examined the themes of these articles. We identified eight broad categories based on the current sections of the ISA: 1) IR History; 2) Sociology, Pedagogy and Knowledge Production; 3) International Economy; 4) International Law, Governance and Organisations; 5) Subnational Politics; 6) IR Theory; 7) Foreign Policy and Security; and 8) International Security. Table 3 presents the results. Articles predominantly fall under the theme of International Law, Governance and Organisations (30 in total), which includes discussions about international courts, multilateral organisations and global governance. The second most common themes are Foreign Policy and Security and IR Theory (each with 23 articles), mainly focusing on Latin American contributions to the field's overall development, both theoretically and empirically. Articles on the International Economy (21 in total) mainly focus on trade, regulation and finance issues. Sociology of IR and IR History are more niche areas, with fewer publications (4 and 9, respectively). The distribution of themes appears to mirror the main goals of each journal, with no significant anomalies; for example, *IA* covers a broader range of topics, while *IO* or *RIS* are more focus-driven.

We were also interested in which articles were driven by country cases and whether there was a relationship between the selected country case and the author's

Table 3: Themes and journal distribution

Research themes	IO	ISQ	IT	IS	WP	EJIR	RIO	IA	RIS	ISR
<i>IR History</i>	1	2	-	1	3	1	1	-	-	-
<i>Sociology, Pedagogy and Knowledge Production</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1
<i>International Economy</i>	3	8	1		-	2	4	1	-	2
<i>International Law, Governance and Organisations</i>	5	7	-	-	3	3	1	6	-	5
<i>Subnational Politics</i>		3	-	1	8	1	-	4	3	-
<i>IR Theory</i>	-	3	-	-	-	1	1	5	3	10
<i>Foreign Policy and Security</i>	-	4	-	-	1	-	2	14	-	2

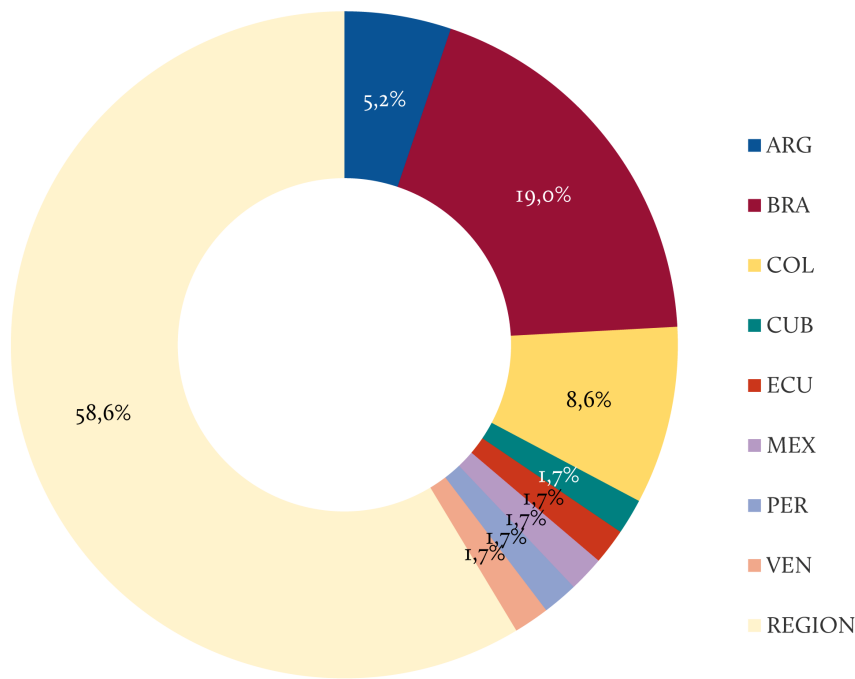
Source: Authors

country of origin. First, we divided the 140 articles into two groups, finding that 58 focused on Latin America, while 82 did not (or not exclusively) on the region. Second, we examined these 58 articles to identify country prominence, as shown in Figure 8, concluding that 19% focused on Brazil and 5.2% on Argentina. However, the majority (58.6%) concentrated on the region more broadly, exploring regional socio-political dynamics, organisations, integration efforts or patterns of interaction between countries.

Finally, we analyse the authors' countries of origin and whether their articles focus on their own country, another Latin American case, a non-Latin American case or address broader themes unrelated to a specific country or region. Figure 9 presents these findings, emphasising the total number of authors rather than articles. Argentinians and Brazilians have a more varied thematic focus, not limited to their own countries. Interestingly, Mexicans, Chileans, Uruguayans, Bolivians and Venezuelans did not publish about their home countries but instead concentrated on other cases. When considering the proportions, Colombians are more likely to focus on their own country than other authors. In conclusion, these results reveal a clear interest among authors in discussing broader regional issues rather than solely focusing on their own countries, highlighting a preference for studies that go beyond national and regional borders.

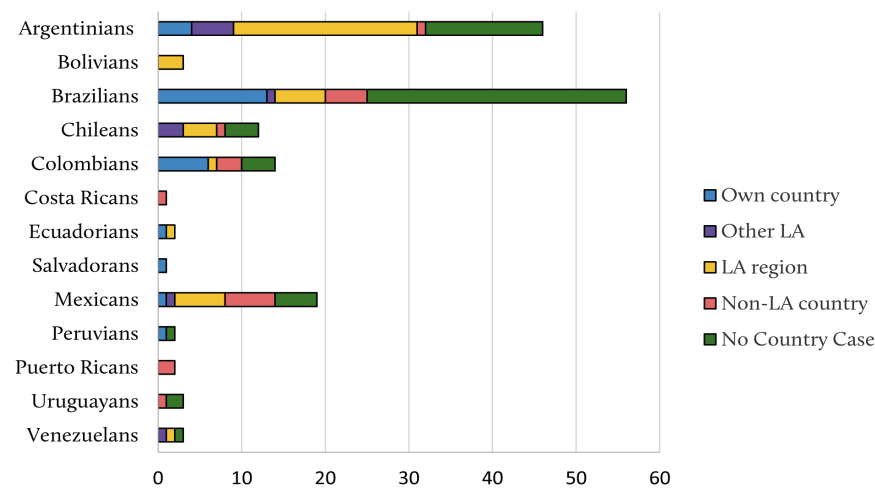
Finally, many authors appeared repeatedly, explaining why our database contains 125 authors but 140 articles. A total of 26 authors published more than one article; 10 were based in Latin America and 16 in the Global North at the time of data collection. One author had four articles, and five authors published three articles each. This pattern suggests that these individuals may have 'cracked the code' of publishing in top journals by internalising the 'hidden curricula' – adapting to these top journals' stylistic, thematic and epistemologi-

Figure 8: Case focus on Latin American-themed papers



Source: Authors

Figure 9: Authors and Country Cases



Source: Authors

cal expectations. This finding also complicates discussions around exclusion and access, highlighting how inclusion often remains selective and narrower than it may initially appear.

## **Discussion**

The first point that must be emphasised is how unexpectedly low the results were. Despite Latin America's long-standing intellectual traditions, including dependency theory, critical approaches to political economy and postcolonial thought, its presence in top IR journals remains surprisingly limited. Within our already small sample, some countries are far more represented than others, indicating not only an imbalance in visibility but also a systematic marginalisation of many national scholarly communities. Therefore, our data raises a pressing question: If Latin America is such a fertile ground for original scholarship, why are so few of its voices present in the most prestigious IR publication venues?

A first hypothesis is that Latin Americans submit to 'top' journals at a much lower rate than other scholars from the Global North. Although we lack submission data for most of the journals we examined, some earlier studies support this hypothesis. Breuning et al. (2018) studied submission patterns to the *American Political Science Review* (APSR) in 2010 and 2014, revealing that only 6.5% of submissions came from authors in the 'periphery'. Similarly, Chagas-Bastos et al. (2023) note that submissions to ISA flagship journals mostly originate from authors affiliated with US, UK or European institutions, while submissions from Global South authors ranged from 12% (to ISQ) to 26% (to both *International Studies Perspectives* and *ISR*).

To better understand this pattern of submissions, Montal et al. (2024) conducted a conjoint survey experiment involving 446 Latin American scholars. Their results indicate that the geographic location of a journal (whether in their home country, another Latin American country or the Global North) does not seem to influence submission choices. This finding appears to contradict the data presented by Breuning et al. (2018) and Chagas-Bastos et al. (2023). However, when considering where respondents obtained their PhDs, the experiment shows that US-trained academics prefer publications based in the Global North. This supports our findings that these scholars are more likely to publish in 'top' journals, suggesting that this outcome may come from their initial submission choices. Additionally, Montal et al. (2024) found that US-trained academics prefer journals where their colleagues have not published. Although this finding might seem puzzling, it seems to indicate, as we have suggested, the development of new hierarchies within academic spaces in the Global South, where specific subsets of scholars try to stand out through their connections and ability to 'speak to' the Global North. It is also worth noting that efforts to 'internationalize' scholarly output are often a product of pressures from the job market or career advance-

ment systems increasingly relying on impact metrics like citation counts. These pressures are not only present in the Global North but are also widespread in the South, including Latin America (Koch & Vanderstraeten 2021).

A second factor to consider is that, beyond submitting fewer manuscripts, Latin American authors also tend to face lower acceptance rates compared to their Global North counterparts. Available data supports this pattern. Breuning et al. (2018) report that in 2010 none of the articles submitted by periphery scholars to APSR were accepted, and in 2014 only one was accepted, while the global acceptance rates were 6.3% and 6.4%, respectively. Although Chagas-Bastos et al. (2023: 5) do not provide acceptance rates for ISA journals, they highlight a significant disparity in acceptance rates between Global North authors and the rest of the world; only a small fraction (ranging from 0 to 9% across different journals) of accepted articles were authored by Global South scholars. This indicates that structural inequalities still exist not only in access but also in the likelihood of being published. This may be related to the fact that most reviewers tend to come from Global North countries, predominantly the US (Publons 2018), although verifying this is difficult due to the lack of data specifically related to IR. Regardless of nationality, it is important to emphasise the role reviewers play in evaluating and enriching research, but also in gatekeeping and ‘disciplining’ it (Vanderstraeten 2022).

We argue that the disparity in acceptance rates, different submission strategies and the fact that most Latin American authors in our sample were trained in the Global North point to the existence of a ‘Global South Frontier’: a complex network of material and immaterial barriers that scholars from the Global South must navigate. It is already widely acknowledged that universities in the Global North benefit from greater access to research funding, well-resourced libraries and databases, administrative and research support, funding for international conferences, better working conditions and more available staff – all of which directly affect a scholar’s ability to conduct and publish research. However, beyond these structural disparities lies a ‘hidden curriculum’, a set of informal norms, rules, expectations and skills that inform the ‘ways of doing’ in academic practice (Barham & Wood 2002: 324).<sup>8</sup> That includes knowing how to structure and pitch an article, what rhetorical and stylistic conventions to follow and how to navigate journal placement strategically. In terms of research, this is how IR academics learn to ‘speak the language’ of the Global North (Tickner 2003), making their research palatable in content and form to implicit expectations of editors and reviewers.

Hence, although only academics currently affiliated with Global North institutions benefit from direct material advantages, those trained within these

8 It is considered hidden given that in contrast to the curriculum proper, it is not learned in formal spaces of lectures or seminars, but rather informally and, in some cases, even incidentally and tacitly (Elliot et al. 2016).

institutions also possess an additional, often less visible asset: They have been socialised into both the formal and informal aspects of the discipline as defined at its core. This likely explains why 80% of the authors in our sample were educated in the Global North, with many also holding positions there today. Notably, this applies to all authors who appear three or more times in our dataset. This group highlights the selective inclusion of Latin American voices, as they often learn the language and adopt methods, theoretical frameworks, data sources and rhetorical styles deemed acceptable by dominant standards. Consequently, they exemplify the dynamic of exclusion with access: gaining entry into the discipline's most prestigious platforms through conformity with central expectations.

That is not, of course, to diminish the contributions or lived experiences of scholars from the Global South who have been trained in the North or who now navigate academic life from within 'third spaces'. Many of these scholars grapple with the tensions of intellectual hybridity and positionality. However, their selective inclusion in top-tier journals may contribute to obscuring the broader diversity of Latin American scholarly voices that remain unheard in mainstream disciplinary spaces. These silenced voices may radically depart from the Western canon and also represent hybrid traditions that do not fit neatly within dominant paradigms. For example, Latin America has a long tradition of Political Economy (Luna et al. 2014) and studies that fit into a more 'essayist' style (Mansilla 2003), which are seldom visible in high-prestige IR journals. The marginalisation of such contributions reveals the limits of current inclusion efforts. It also underscores the need to broaden not just who is included but also what kinds of knowledge are recognised as valid.

What are the implications of this selective and conditional inclusion? Our results indicate that these journals have only made a narrow contribution to the broader goal of globalising IR thus far. While there is a modest upward trend in the number of Latin American scholars being published – and recent efforts to diversify editorial boards (Chagas-Bastos et al. 2023) are certainly steps in the right direction – these changes remain limited. The pattern of inclusion we observe, which favours a certain scholar and scholarship profile, raises questions about the true transformational intent of these efforts. Are they genuinely aimed at challenging the epistemological hierarchies that structure the field? Scepticism, reinforced by our empirical analysis, may indicate that these efforts are better understood as mechanisms of selective access that still exclude many.

## **Conclusions**

The pluralisation of voices in top-ranked journals is an essential step toward globalising IR, making it more diverse and reflective of the multiplicity of experiences that shape the discipline worldwide. Academic journals play a central

role in this process, functioning as platforms for knowledge dissemination, disciplinary advancement, status building and scholarly legitimacy. Meanwhile, as our study reaffirms, they also serve as active agents in maintaining epistemic hierarchies. By deciding who gets published, these journals shape the field's boundaries, either limiting or broadening the recognition of knowledge produced outside traditional centres. Examining the presence and participation conditions of Latin American scholars in these spaces helps illuminate the tensions between inclusion and marginalisation.

Our findings reveal an uneven landscape: Not only is the region under-represented, but the scholars who succeed in publishing are overwhelmingly trained in or affiliated with Global North institutions. Despite the region's rich intellectual contributions, it accounted for only 2.5% of the 5,626 research articles published in the ten journals over the 15 years we examined. This number raises questions about the structural and epistemic mechanisms through which IR continues to reproduce exclusion, even under the guise of inclusion. Therefore, our paper engages with discussions on exclusion and access by pinpointing possible conditions in which some are included through integration, while most remain excluded for not adapting or fitting in. Our results show that the 'make it or break it' factor relates to previous international experience and gaining familiarity with a 'hidden curriculum' that orients individuals to conform to implicit norms and expectations. This raises concerns about the limits of Global IR and its effort toward epistemic pluralism: Does it function only as a performative gesture?

Until we recognise the essential role of material gatekeepers, we will not fully realise the potential of globalising IR. Journals are not just passive venues for intellectual exchange but central mechanisms through which recognition, legitimacy and authority are granted or withheld. Reforming editorial structures, expanding citation practices and amplifying the space for Global South publications should be part of a deep disciplinary reckoning. We conclude by remembering that transforming epistemic hierarchies takes a village. Building on our analysis, future research should examine other regions in the Global South to better understand how structural gatekeeping functions across different geopolitical contexts. In this way, collaboratively and exploratively, we can further improve our understanding of knowledge production conditions to promote greater equality and diversity.



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### **Conflict of interest statement**

No conflict of interest was reported.

### **Data availability statement**

The dataset contains names and other personal information and, as such, is not shared alongside this article. For further inquiries about the dataset, please contact the Authors.

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