



CHILE

## COES — Illuminating social mobility and inequality in Chile



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on [un.org](https://un.org)

**Inequality in Chile has reached a 30-year high. But some people still manage to break through the class ceiling. How do they do it?**

Backed by the Julius Baer Foundation, the innovative Latin American research centre COES is striving to shed light on what enables social mobility in Chile – especially among historically marginalised groups – despite soaring levels of inequality. Based on in-depth interviews, the project is piecing together and analysing several hundred life stories of

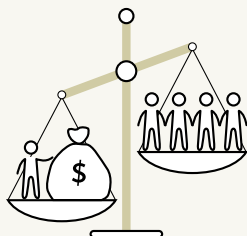
individuals who have climbed Chile's socioeconomic ladder, as well as undertaking an at-scale countrywide qualitative survey of social mobility. These include women in high-ranking positions, upwardly mobile indigenous people, young professionals and entrepreneurs working in the creative and tech economies, and those in liberal professions who have advanced their careers and changed milieus. The goal is to identify the ingredients of these 'successful' trajectories – such as supportive institutions, social policies, family and professional networks as well as personal qualities – in order to foster social mobility more broadly.

### Quick facts

- Santiago de Chile, Arica (northern Chile) and Temuco (southern Chile)
- Project support: 2022–2025
- Grant amount: CHF 150,000 per year
- Fostering spaces for greater social mobility through dialogue and consultation with CEOs, company recruiters, university authorities and others based on project research.
- Goal: Reducing wealth inequality through evidence-based policies that expand access to education, professional training, career networks and more for marginalised groups.

### From grim trends ...

Macro-level trends in Chile point to worsening wealth inequality and worrying signs of downward mobility among middle-class households. The outlook seems bleak.



### ... to rays of hope.

More granular investigation of social mobility in Chile reveals cases of marginalised individuals and groups breaking through ceilings of class, gender, race, ethnicity, geography and more. The hope is to build on their success through an understanding of the mechanisms.





“For someone who has no assets ... education is the only way out, you know? It was definitely education for me, because there was nothing else to hold on to. My choices were to become a footballer, a drug dealer or studying. Those were the only ways I saw a chance for some mobility, and I didn't know how far I could move either. Luckily, I now have a stable job and I'm comfortable, and I can make certain economic decisions that have been enabled by my level of education.”

Anonymous male interviewee

## OUTPUT



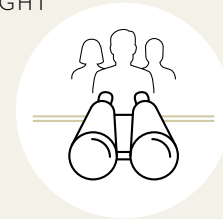
COES has shaped the Julius Baer Foundation's **understanding of social mobility** with research briefings and by helping create a Wealth Inequality Initiative Glossary: [wealth-inequality.net/glossary](http://wealth-inequality.net/glossary)

## OUTCOME



**300 stories** of social mobility and a countrywide quantitative study are being put together which will help **identify mechanisms of success** in overcoming marginalisation across generations.

## HIGHLIGHT



**Findings on social mobility** will be presented at the international conference, 'The Future of Social Mobility', hosted by COES and the Julius Baer Foundation from December 3–4, 2025.

## Pathways to more equality

- After a period of modest gains for the middle class in the 1990s and early 2000s, inequality has risen again in Chile in recent decades.
- The average income of the country's top 10% is currently 27 times higher than the poorest 10%.
- Some families who previously achieved middle class status are now plagued by a 'fear of falling back' into the ranks of the working poor.
- Collaboration between the Julius Baer Foundation and COES centres on identifying what has enabled certain individuals and families to rise, against the odds, in Chile's economy.
- The hope is to find ways of replicating the keys to successful social mobility – in terms of institutions, support mechanisms and policies – identified in study participants' biographies.

## About COES

Founded in 2013, the Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies (COES) is one of the few centres of excellence in Latin America devoted to bringing together social scientists from diverse backgrounds to focus on issues of social conflict and cohesion. It encompasses some of the most prestigious universities in the country. In the relatively short time since its foundation, it has published over 400 indexed articles and engaged 35 post-doctoral researchers, while actively informing public policy.



More information about COES and their project in Chile: [coes.cl](http://coes.cl)

## Do you feel inspired by the COES project and would like to support it?

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us! [foundation@juliusbaer.com](mailto:foundation@juliusbaer.com)



Learn more about our mission and our projects on the Wealth Inequality Initiative platform.

## Julius Baer Foundation

Established in 1965 by Walter J. Bär (1895–1970), the Julius Baer Foundation has a long history of supporting diverse philanthropic initiatives. Today, our focus is on reducing wealth inequality by convening leading thinkers and actors on the topic and supporting projects worldwide that foster collaboration between individuals, groups and organisations across the wealth spectrum to create a world of equal opportunities.

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