

EXPLORING OUR COMMON HUMANITY

# Landscaping Regional Research and Leadership Capacities for the Study of *Human Flourishing* in Latin America

— SUMMARY REPORT 2025 —



IN ALLIANCE WITH:



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# Landscaping Regional Research and Leadership Capacities for the Study of Human Flourishing in Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and Brazil

## ABSTRACT

This document summarizes a multi-year project mapping academic research on Human Flourishing in Latin America. The initiative brought together researchers from Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and the United States. The study focuses on academic research rather than practical initiatives related to Human Flourishing—although these are referenced throughout the study. Its aim is to map scholarly efforts to deepen understanding of the diverse dimensions of human flourishing, contextualized within the Latin American reality. Since the term “human flourishing” is not widely used in the region, the study explores related concepts, involved disciplines, and indigenous philosophical contributions such as *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay*. The concepts related to human flourishing form a list of keywords present in international academic literature, and it has been described in a previous work (Cebal et al., 2022)<sup>1</sup>.

A hybrid methodology was applied, combining bibliometric analysis with qualitative research through interviews with key actors in the flourishing human research ecosystem. The bibliometric analysis involved the creation of a database of approximately 320,000 documents, while qualitative data were collected from about 70 individual and group interviews with scholars and other research stakeholders. The information was organized into five categories: academic leadership, research capacities, collaboration, resources, and the broader research ecosystem. The main results are summarized below.

The region’s most studied topics reflect regional concerns and needs: quality of life, human rights, mental health, culture and life satisfaction, public health, and sustainability, particularly regarding rural and indigenous populations. Topics from international mainstream research—such as happiness, positive psychology, subjective well-being, circular economy, and climate change—are also represented. Concepts rooted in indigenous thought, such as *sumak kawsay* (good living) are present to a lesser extent but show growing interest. Brazil,

Chile, Colombia and Mexico are the focused cases in this exploration. Each case has profiles of its own (Chile slightly more in the individual’s perspective, Brazil more on diversity and spiritual topics, Mexico about economy and happiness, Colombia minding the post-conflict challenges), but share strong common features (paradoxical satisfaction with life, and endurance to hard flourishing, to flourish in despite of adversity).

Finally, we propose some ideas for a concept of human flourishing that reflects the needs and ideas present in Latin-American academia, considering socio-economic challenges, cultural heritage, and the ways in which these societies are confronting the demands of the modern world. In this vision, community and personal relationships hold a central place, along with respect for and the responsible use of nature, universal access to human rights, and a commitment to social justice that prioritizes inclusion and the eradication of racism and other forms of discrimination. Additionally, it embraces a joy for living that is not based on material consumerism.

This study represents the first large-scale mapping of academic research on human flourishing in the region. It reveals significant contributions in areas such as quality of life, mental health, sustainability, and indigenous perspectives. However, the field still faces considerable challenges, including fragmentation, limited funding, and language barriers, which hinder the development of a cohesive research agenda. Strengthening collaboration, fostering interdisciplinary efforts, and aligning research with social needs—such as public policy, community engagement, and civil society initiatives—will be essential to position human flourishing as both a distinct academic field and a pressing societal concern in Latin America.



Human Flourishing may represent “new types of thought processes, approaches, the birth of a line of questioning for the current context we are living in”

(INTERVIEW WITH A. BANIWA, BRAZILIAN INDIGENOUS SCHOLAR)

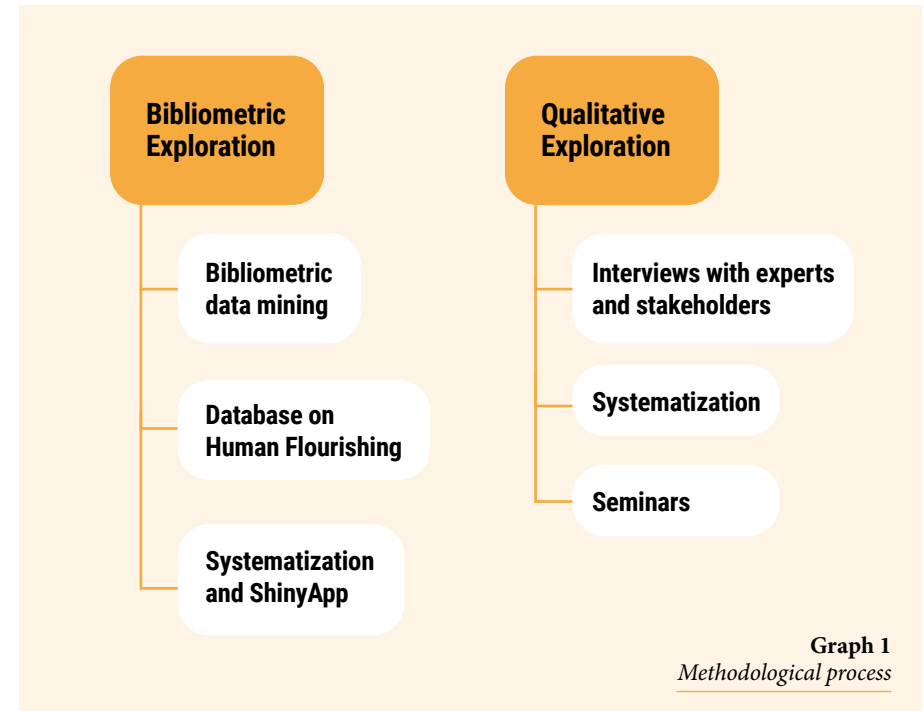
<sup>1</sup> Cebal-Loureda, M., Tamés-Muñoz, E., & Hernández-Baqueiro, A. (2022). The Fertility of a Concept: A Bibliometric Review of Human Flourishing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(5), 2586. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052586>

## Methodology and results

This exploration was guided by five key questions: (1) Who are the main actors in human flourishing research in the region—individuals, universities, civil organizations, research centers, government entities, and sponsors? This question should lead to a description of the research ecosystem on this topic in each country. (2) What are the topics and areas of knowledge? This question involves discovering what are the topics on which researchers in the region are working, which of these works are part of international trends and which are distinctive of the region. (3) How have studies of human flourishing evolved over time? What are the current research trends? These questions lead us to describe the thematic trajectory from 2000 to 2023 in the four countries and in the region as a whole. (4) What are the networks and modes of collaboration in research? What are the communication channels and meeting points for researchers? (5) What are the main limitations of research in the region? Such limitations could be found in the theory and in the scarcity of resources, personnel, training programs, capacity to impact society, symbolic capital, and communication with society in general and with specific social actors such as governments, private companies, communities, and organizations, among others.

The research employed a hybrid methodology combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method consisted of a bibliometric analysis that mapped the academic landscape with predefined boundaries. This effort produced a comprehensive database of academic publications and an interactive digital application (ShinyApp)<sup>2</sup>. The qualitative approach involved semi-structured interviews and seminars with leading scholars, as well as focus groups that included representatives from civil society organizations, private foundations, and community leaders.

<sup>2</sup> <https://floreCIMIENTOhumanotec.shinyapps.io/latinamericanMappingApp/>



### Bibliographic searching:

Six thematic domains organize the concepts related to human flourishing in the bibliographic search:

1. Sustainability and Environment
2. Positive Psychology
3. Economic Development
4. Diversity, Inclusion, and Human Rights
5. Indigenous Perspectives
6. Spirituality and Religion

The 320,000 compiled documents were organized into three categories: citations (influence), number of documents (productivity), and relevance (keywords related to human flourishing). A custom metric — the Flourishing Research Indicator (FRI) — was developed to rank publications, scholars, and institutions based on these three criteria: publication volume, citation counts, and keyword relevance.

## Bibliometric exploration: Trends in Publishing and Language Distribution

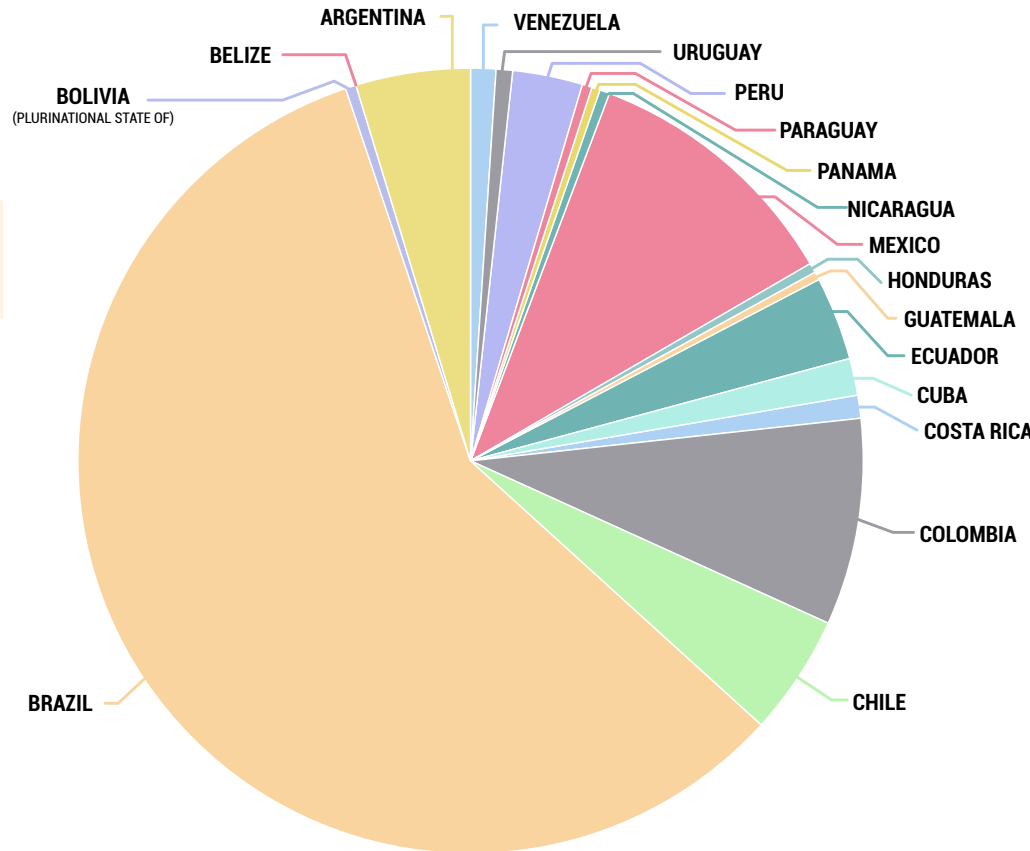
The study analyzed 318,704 academic documents published in Latin America between the years 2000 and 2023, revealing notable trends in both publication volume and language use. Graph 2 shows the publication per country in the region. Almost all countries contribute to some extent. The quantitative major contributions in order belong to Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Argentina.

“ The dominant language of publication is English (166,560 documents), followed by Portuguese (120,469) and Spanish (33,037). ”

**27**  
COUNTRIES  
INCLUDED

COUNTRY	DOCUMENTS
Brazil	194462
Mexico	37139
Colombia	25187
Chile	18814
Argentina	18118
Ecuador	7681
Peru	6928
Cuba	4568
Costa Rica	2783
Venezuela	2695
Uruguay	1751
Panama	916
Paraguay	724
Guatemala	590
Puerto Rico	574
Nicaragua	443
Honduras	340
El Salvador	307
Dominican Republic	294
Bolivia	120
Guyana	69
French Guiana	32
Martinique	30
Haiti	26
Belize	22
Suriname	21
Guadeloupe	19

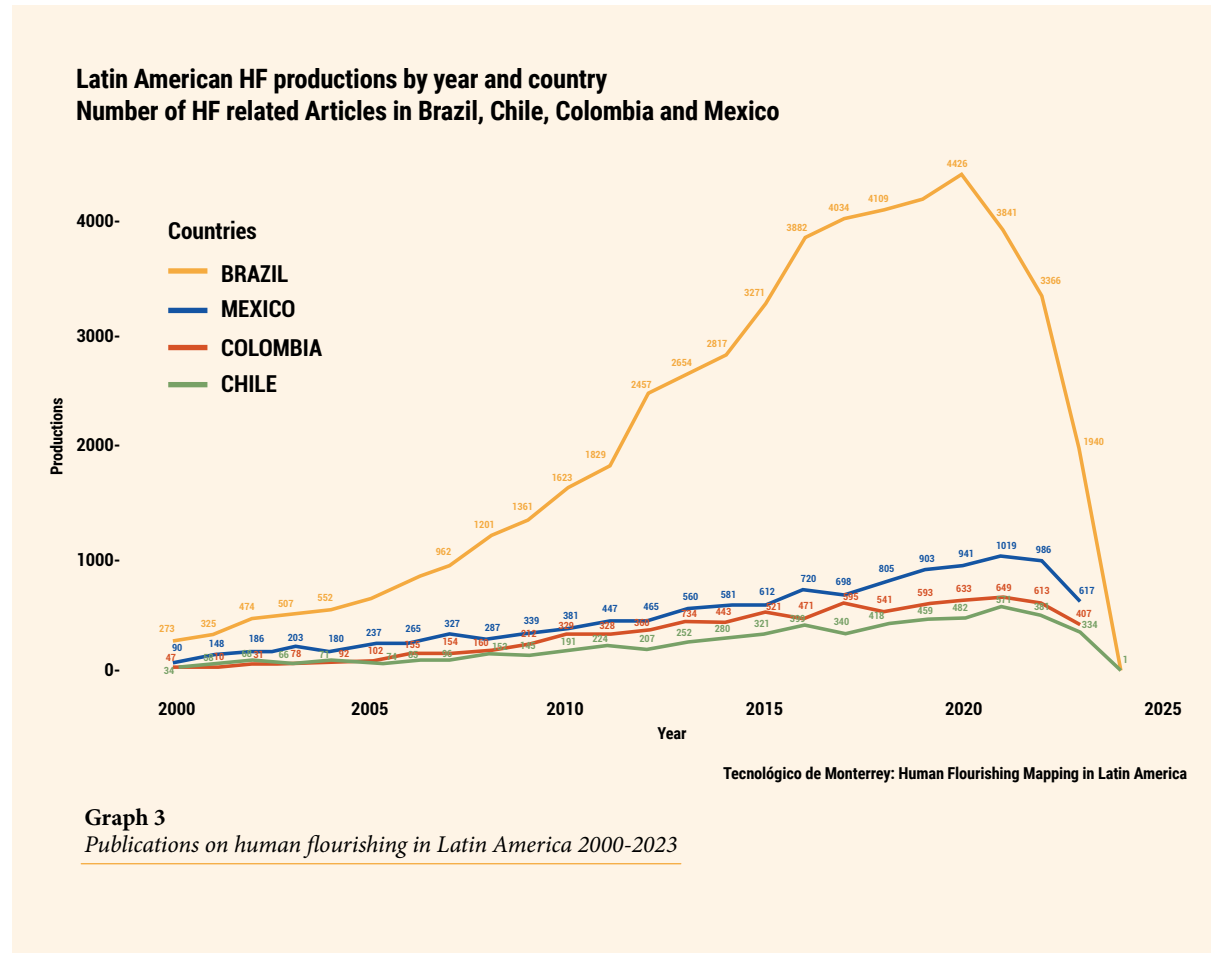
**Graph 2**  
*Documents per country*



While research related to human flourishing is widespread across disciplines, only 946 articles explicitly use the term “human flourishing.” This suggests that although the themes are present, the specific terminology is not yet mainstream in Latin American scholarship.

A critical issue highlighted is the implications of the language of publication: authors from the region prioritize English-language journals, which enhances international visibility but probably also limits local engagement and regional discourse, especially in Spanish-speaking countries. The case of Brazil is somehow different given the large number of documents written in Portuguese, in comparison with those written in Spanish. This language gap may reduce the impact of local research and inhibit the development of a uniquely Latin American perspective on human flourishing.

Graph 3 shows the continuous growth of publications related to human flourishing, especially in the case of Brazil<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>3</sup>A full explanation of the growing gap between Brazilian publications and those of the other three countries requires a more in-depth analysis than is possible here. However, a key factor appears to be the differing levels of investment in scientific research. According to World Bank data from 2018 and 2019, Brazil invested 1.21% of its GDP in research and development, while Colombia invested 0.23%, Chile 0.34%, and Mexico 0.31%—all approximately four times less than Brazil (World Bank, 2020). In the years that followed, Brazil further increased its investment, whereas Mexico’s investment declined, and Colombia and Chile maintained similar levels (World Bank, 2020). On the other hand, when consider only the Scopus database Spanish has a larger number of documents than Portuguese, both languages far below English.

## Bibliometric exploration: Trends in Publishing and Language Distribution

The decline of the curve in 2022 and 2023 does not necessarily indicate a decreasing interest in the topics but rather a delay in the registration of documents in the databases. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021 may have impacted academic publications. It is worth clarifying that if we limit ourselves to the Scopus database, which is more academically rigorous, the proportions of languages change significantly: there are slightly more publications in Spanish than in Portuguese, but English remains by far the most predominant language.

Regarding the types of documents, all four countries follow the same pattern. Most of the academic output on human flourishing consists of journal articles, followed by book chapters, conference papers, and reviews. The row “Other” in Graph 4 corresponds to editorials and letters, among others. A notable limitation is the scarcity of books—a format that allows for more comprehensive theoretical and empirical exploration. This lack of extended works may restrict deeper academic engagement with the concept of human flourishing in the region.

### Tendencies and main topics

The following are the most outstanding themes in the Latin American academic documents.

- **Quality of life** appears as the most dominant and dynamic research topic throughout Latin America, with a strong participation of the medical or health perspective.
- **Human rights** are a basic theme, present in the region throughout the period in a constant manner.
- **Mental health, happiness and positive psychology** are important areas of study, especially in Chile and Colombia.
- The relationship between **culture** and life is a topic of regional work.

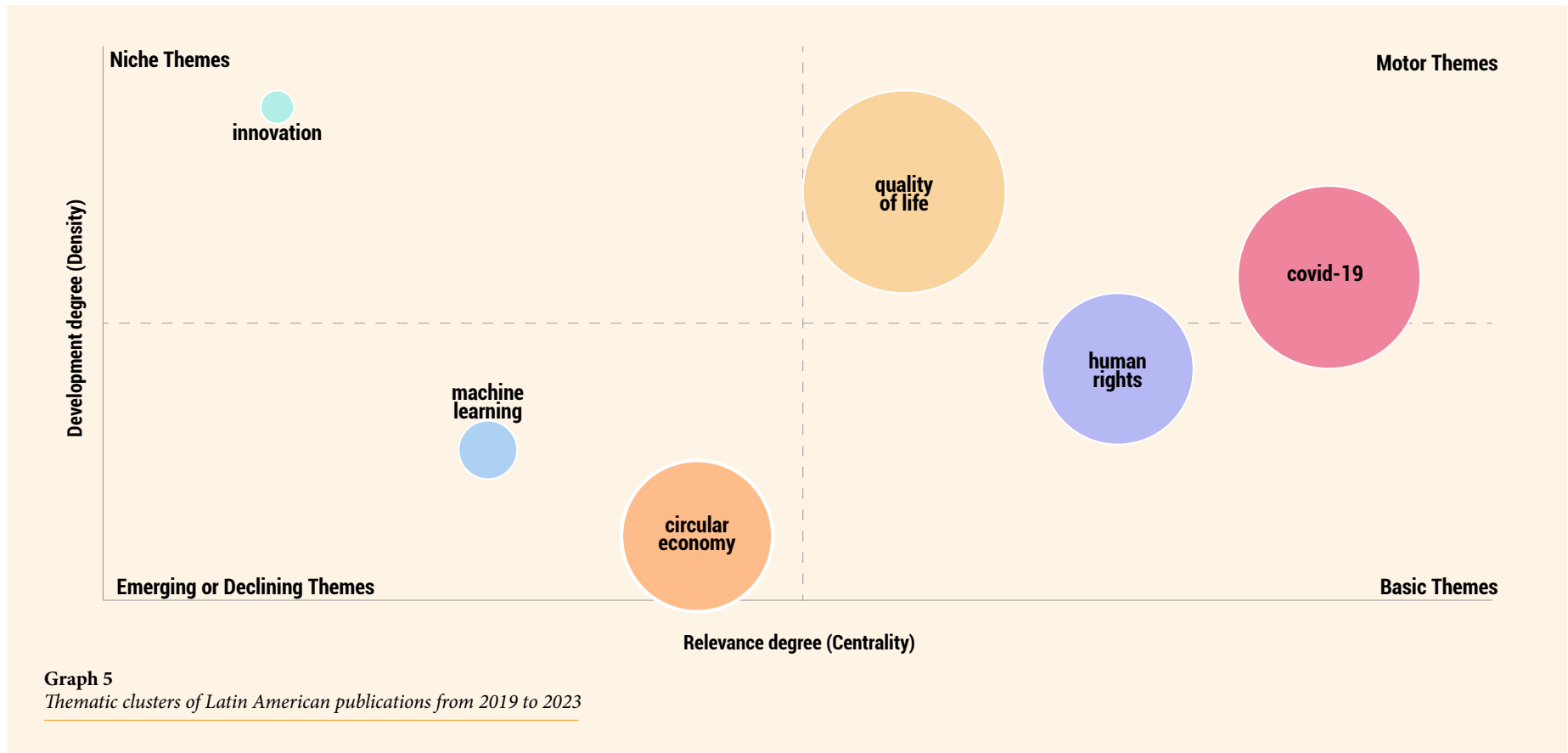
**Graph 4**  
*Distribution by type of document*

	MEXICO	CHILE	COLOMBIA	BRAZIL	REGIONAL
<b>Articles</b>	<b>32789</b>	<b>16969</b>	<b>23205</b>	<b>183297</b>	<b>296132</b>
<b>Book chapter</b>	<b>1707</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>3388</b>	<b>7827</b>
<b>Conference paper</b>	<b>1249</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>3339</b>	<b>6585</b>
<b>Review</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>2723</b>	<b>4963</b>
<b>Book</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>401</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>1543</b>	<b>2796</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>37139</b>	<b>18814</b>	<b>25187</b>	<b>194462</b>	<b>318704</b>

- **Public health** is a topic of study in the region, especially in Mexico and Brazil.
- **Sustainability:** the circular economy and climate change have gained importance in recent years as emerging issues.
- **Subjective well-being** this is also a common topic of interest in the region.
- **Spirituality and religion** occupy a more prominent place in Brazilian research compared to other countries.

Indigenous concepts such as *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir* (good living) have limited representation in the academic literature, although interest is growing.

## Bibliometric exploration: Trends in Publishing and Language Distribution



The map of thematic evolution of regional research for the period 2019-2023 (Graph 5) shows the most important clusters, including attention to the covid-19 pandemic in this period. The **quality of life** cluster includes the topics quality of life properly speaking (which comprises 3192 documents) and other like exercise, aging, rehabilitation, and health related quality of life (all of them with less than 360 documents each). Clearly, the research on health-related issues permeates the interest in this cluster. Nevertheless, another branch of research regards the socio-economical aspects of the concept. Two different international associations correspond to both perspectives, the International Association of Quality of Life

Research (ISOQOL) is devoted to health related issues, while the International Associations of Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS) is interested in policy and society changes based on scientific knowledge, notably from social sciences.

Probably more interesting for those in social sciences, the cluster named by the topic human rights includes several topics that have a political, sociological and humanistic flavor. It includes the themes human rights (414 documents) and the circular economy cluster, situated as an emergent group of rising topics, includes the themes of circular economy (with 1107 documents), sustainability (881

## Bibliometric exploration: Trends in Publishing and Language Distribution

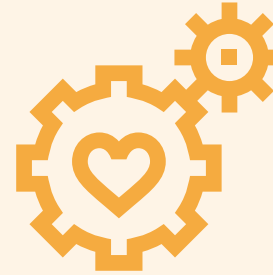
documents) and sustainable development (303 documents). These themes show the growing impact of sustainability issues, and the answers that scientists and technicians are contributing to in addition to the philosophical, economic and political discussion.

Several themes stand out in publications from the selected countries, including spirituality, religion, and palliative care. These topics reflect a growing interest in the effects of spirituality on health—an area that has also captured attention in other regions. This focus is particularly evident in Brazil and Colombia. Public health, which sits at the intersection of health sciences and social sciences, is especially prominent in Brazil and Mexico. Another cluster of themes—happiness, positive psychology, life satisfaction, and culture—appears frequently in the literature from Mexico and Colombia. Topics related to children and adolescence are notably present in Chile, while subjective well-being is a subject of interest in Chile, Colombia, and Mexico.

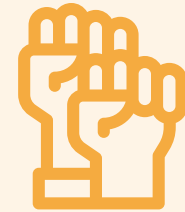
### Major institutions in regional human flourishing research

Public universities dominate research, with Brazil leading given the number of active institutions. Additionally, according to the Flourishing Research Indicator (FRI), the top 100 researchers in the region are distributed in this way: Brazil (67 researchers), followed by Mexico (13), with smaller numbers in Chile (8), Argentina (5), Colombia (2) Peru (2), Uruguay, Panama, and Ecuador (one each).

## Thematic common clusters details 2019-2023



**Motor clusters**  
**QUALITY OF LIFE**  
**(HEALTH RELATED)**



**Basic clusters**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS, NATIONAL**  
**INTEREST CLUSTERS**



**Emerging clusters**  
**CIRCULAR ECONOMY,**  
**SUSTAINABILITY,**  
**CLIMATE CHANGE**



**Niche clusters**  
**MACHINE LEARNING,**  
**INNOVATION, HEALTH,**  
**EDUCATION, ARTIFICIAL**  
**INTELLIGENCE**



## Qualitative exploration

The qualitative research was structured around four core themes used to guide interviews with 54 prominent academics from Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico, plus a series of focus groups with non-scholar stakeholders of the research ecosystem and four seminars. A fifth theme—the human flourishing research ecosystem—emerged from interviews with actors beyond academia.

Core themes used to guide interviews:

- a) Academic leadership in the disciplines
- b) Research capacity at national and regional levels
- c) Collaboration and networking
- d) Resources and funding for academic research
- e) Research ecosystem and actors

## Qualitative exploration

### Academic leadership

Human flourishing is not, strictly speaking, a central concern for most researchers. While many work on topics related to the concept, they are not necessarily engaged with the broader philosophy that underpins it. Nevertheless, some substantial areas for human flourishing such as well-being, happiness, education, health, spirituality, and religion are explicitly addressed by some interviewees. Several factors influencing academic research follow similar patterns in the four countries, including reliance on public funding, capacity building for research, training and collaboration, researchers' personal commitment to their fields, and the episodic impact of the 2020–2021 pandemic.

Brazilian academics lead the field of human flourishing research in Latin America, supported by well-established research networks and strong international collaborations. In Chile, the research landscape is more evenly distributed between public and private universities, as well as between institutions in the capital and those in other regions. In contrast, research efforts in Colombia and Mexico are more fragmented, with topics often driven by external funding priorities rather than a cohesive national agenda. Although Mexico has a significant number of graduate programs and universities, their quality is uneven in terms of contributions to scientific research. A notable component of regional academic leadership is the strong social commitment of the researchers interviewed—many expressed a deep interest in working with communities and vulnerable populations, and a willingness to make efficient use of limited resources, including personally funding research initiatives.

In Brazil, there is a strong focus on social inequality, environmental challenges (such as deforestation in the Amazon), and Indigenous rights. In contrast, research in Chile tends to center on economic inequality, human rights, and democracy, shaped by the country's experience with dictatorship and its ongoing social movements. In Colombia, the research agenda is largely shaped by issues of peacebuilding, security, drug trafficking, and conflict resolution, reflecting the



...to strengthen an expression that is called *huasicamas*, to be guardians of the earth, but it is also like guardians of the territory, it is like the skin, this skin, which is a meeting point between the outside world and the inner world and that it is also the one that shelters and is the place where dialogues can be established, in front of ourselves as human beings, but also with all the other beings that are inside us and outside of us.”

(H. CHINDOY, COLOMBIAN SCHOLAR)

nation's post-conflict landscape. In Mexico, key research areas include migration, violence, poverty, and sustainable development, with growing interest in the intersection of technology and welfare.

### Research capacities

In general terms, scientific research is carried out predominantly within public universities, with some specific involvement in human flourishing issues by private universities and other academic institutions. Private universities may have characteristics that allow them to approach problems in a different way than public universities (such as religion, spirituality, happiness, and well-being, among others). Local or regional universities have a relevant presence in research on human flourishing due to their proximity to social actors and problems such as well-being, health, education and even religiosity.

### Collaboration

Partnerships with social and private organizations strengthen various spaces for analysis and contribute to the issues under study. These different forms of collaboration reflect shared interests and involve the adoption of strategies that go beyond the academic sphere, aiming to influence people's everyday lives. Social organizations can also allocate or secure resources to deepen the understanding of the topics they address. However, there are few professional associations of researchers at the regional and national levels that have incorporated themes related to human flourishing.

**Collaboration and networking occur at multiple levels**

University partnerships, civil society associations, and international funding agencies contribute to the topic. Private universities in Colombia and Mexico are playing an increasingly important role in research, though public institutions still dominate the landscape. International networks are especially influential in Chile and Brazil, where research on sustainability and well-being aligns with global trends.

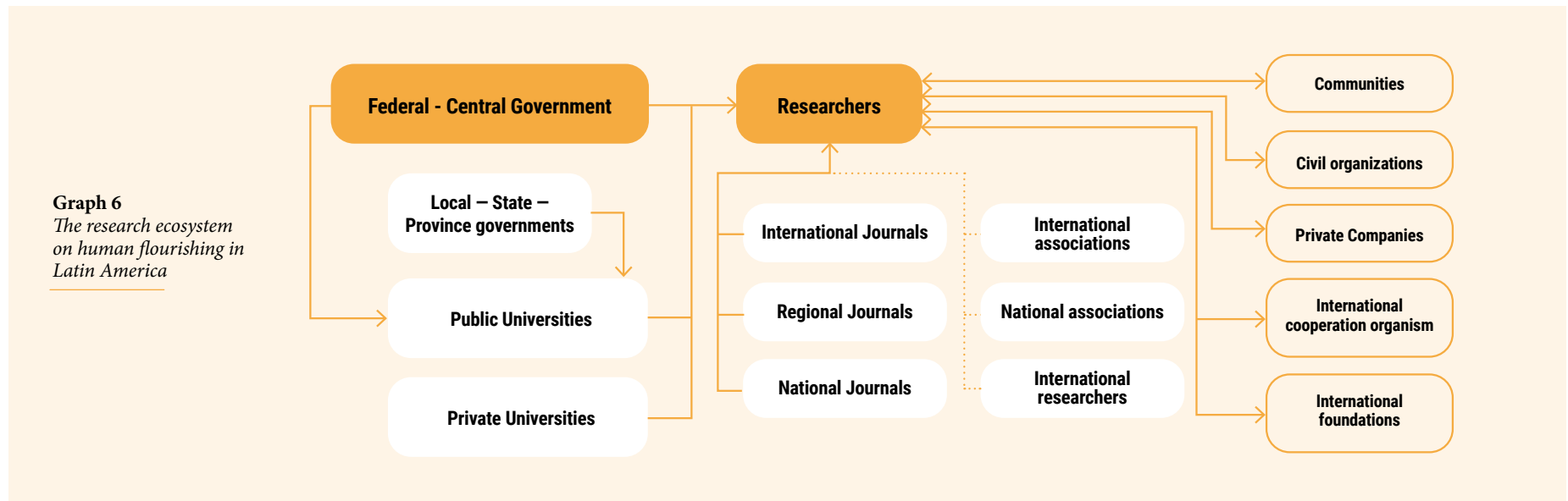
**Resources and funding**

The state is the main source of scientific research. In recent years, budget cuts affecting public institutions have impacted both the volume of research and the types of topics being explored. Funding organizations have adjusted their priorities and agendas, making it more difficult to include subjects related to human flourishing. Self-funding is very common—whether through researchers’ own salaries or through startups created specifically for this purpose. Limited resources affect other research-related activities, such as investigations into social issues.

This leads to greater challenges in communicating research findings, a lack of trust from funding agencies in allocating resources, and a slow development of dedicated academic programs focused on these themes.

**Research ecosystem**

The regional research ecosystem is illustrated in the following diagram, acknowledging the contextual nuances in each of the four countries involved in this phase of the study. At the regional level, research is primarily conducted by public institutions, with local policies strongly influencing research priorities and funding. Private universities and funders play a more limited role. Access to prestigious publications—mainly in English—and collaboration with international research centers are decisive factors for researchers. Key stakeholders in this ecosystem include local communities, civil society organizations, international cooperation agencies, and international donors.



## Qualitative exploration

Perceptions and reactions about the human flourishing concept include curiosity, criticism, and interest that vary depending on stakeholders' backgrounds and affiliations. For example, faith-based and philanthropic organizations tend to resonate with themes of human flourishing, while funding entities are more focused on the climate crisis, environmental narratives, and public policy discussions. Academia is expected to develop practical applications of research and to communicate results to broader audiences beyond academic circles. The social value of research is widely acknowledged, though its applicability in contexts of social conflict remains unclear. Academia can contribute by providing rigorous data to justify interventions (such as surveys and other analyses), offering evidence-based evaluation of those interventions—including the measurement and definition of indicators—and delivering training in key skills to other social actors.

To fulfill this role, several obstacles must be overcome, such as the gap between research and practice, lack of incentives for collaboration, and misaligned priorities between academia and institutional philanthropy.

The challenges and opportunities for human flourishing research in Latin America can be categorized into two main areas. The first involves research funding and institutional barriers. Funding is decreasing for science, forcing researchers

to seek private or international support. Public institutions retain control over most research budgets, thereby shaping research priorities and limiting access to resources.

The second area concerns conceptual and practical challenges. “Human flourishing” remains an underdeveloped concept in Latin America, even though closely related fields—such as well-being, sustainability, and human rights—are actively explored within traditional disciplines like economics, psychology, environmental sciences, and health sciences. As a result, researchers interested in human flourishing often work in isolation, with limited access to resources or collaborative opportunities. Indigenous perspectives on well-being, such as *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay*, continue to be underrepresented in academic research. Additionally, the strong emphasis on publishing in English-language journals creates further barriers for Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking scholars.

As for future lines of research, the growing interest in sustainability, well-being, and the circular economy—as well as intersections with technological innovation—suggests an expanding field. Interdisciplinary collaboration will be key to advancing research on human flourishing, particularly in psychology, social sciences, and environmental studies.

## Mapping research in Brazil

Brazil's history, vast territory, large population, and diverse socioeconomic conditions make it a significant case for research on human flourishing. Three major contextual factors currently shape research priorities in the region. First, environmental crises are becoming increasingly urgent, driven by rising deforestation, climate-related disasters, and the implementation of anti-ecological policies. Second, social conflicts play a central role, with persistent issues such as poverty, inequality, political polarization, and widespread anxiety dominating both academic and political discussions. Third, growing concerns about well-being are coming to the forefront, as Brazil reports some of the highest anxiety rates in the world, alongside a surge in burnout cases and significant mental health challenges.

Based on an analysis of 194,462 documents, the bibliometric study of Brazil allows some remarks: a peak in research output occurred between 2015 and 2020, followed by a decline after 2020. The leading research institutions include the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) and the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Key research themes include positive psychology, sustainable development, social justice, religion and spirituality, education, and innovation. Graph 7 schematizes the main topics and subtopics found in the Brazilian bibliography.



## Mapping research in Brazil

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS
<b>Positive Psychology and Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive psychology</li> <li>• Subjective well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience</li> <li>• Family dynamics, mental health, and quality of life</li> <li>• Quality of life in the work environment and the relationship between meaningful work and well-being</li> <li>• Psychological assessment in health contexts and emotional regulation</li> <li>• Mental health, stress, and depression, with an emphasis on minority groups</li> <li>• Subjective well-being, resilience assessment, and coping strategies in health contexts</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable Development and Environmental Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate justice, low-carbon economy, and social aspects to sustainable development</li> <li>• Sustainability, eco-innovation, socio-environmental transformation, and decolonial environmental education</li> <li>• Circular economy and upcycling</li> <li>• Environmental law, governance, and socio-environmental justice</li> </ul>
<b>Social Justice and Human Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social justice, fundamental rights, and inclusion policies</li> <li>• Decoloniality and critical thinking applied to "<i>buen vivir</i>" and urban sustainability</li> <li>• Social movements, anti-racism, and affirmative actions</li> </ul>
<b>Religion and Spirituality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of religious organizations in societal ethics, faith-based entrepreneurship, religious coping, and spirituality in health</li> <li>• Theology of liberation, pluralism, alterity, and spirituality</li> <li>• Psychology of religion, mental health, and applied spirituality in specific groups</li> <li>• Spirituality and religiosity regarding the relationship between aging, anxiety, and depression</li> </ul>
<b>Education and Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous education, interculturality, and colonial pedagogical paradigms</li> <li>• Affection-based education, learning styles, and childhood citizenship</li> <li>• Sustainable education, active methodologies, interdisciplinarity, and collaborative learning</li> <li>• Inclusion and academic suffering among minority populations</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation and Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation networks, dynamic capabilities, and sustainable entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Sustainable business models, eco-innovation, technological innovation and blockchain</li> <li>• Creative economy, local development, and innovation in urban environments</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Management and Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of life at work and organizational commitments</li> <li>• Work dynamics and sustainable transitions in the organizational context</li> <li>• Organizational justice, leadership, and organizational culture</li> </ul>

**Graph 7**  
*Human Flourishing research topics identified among Brazilian authors.*

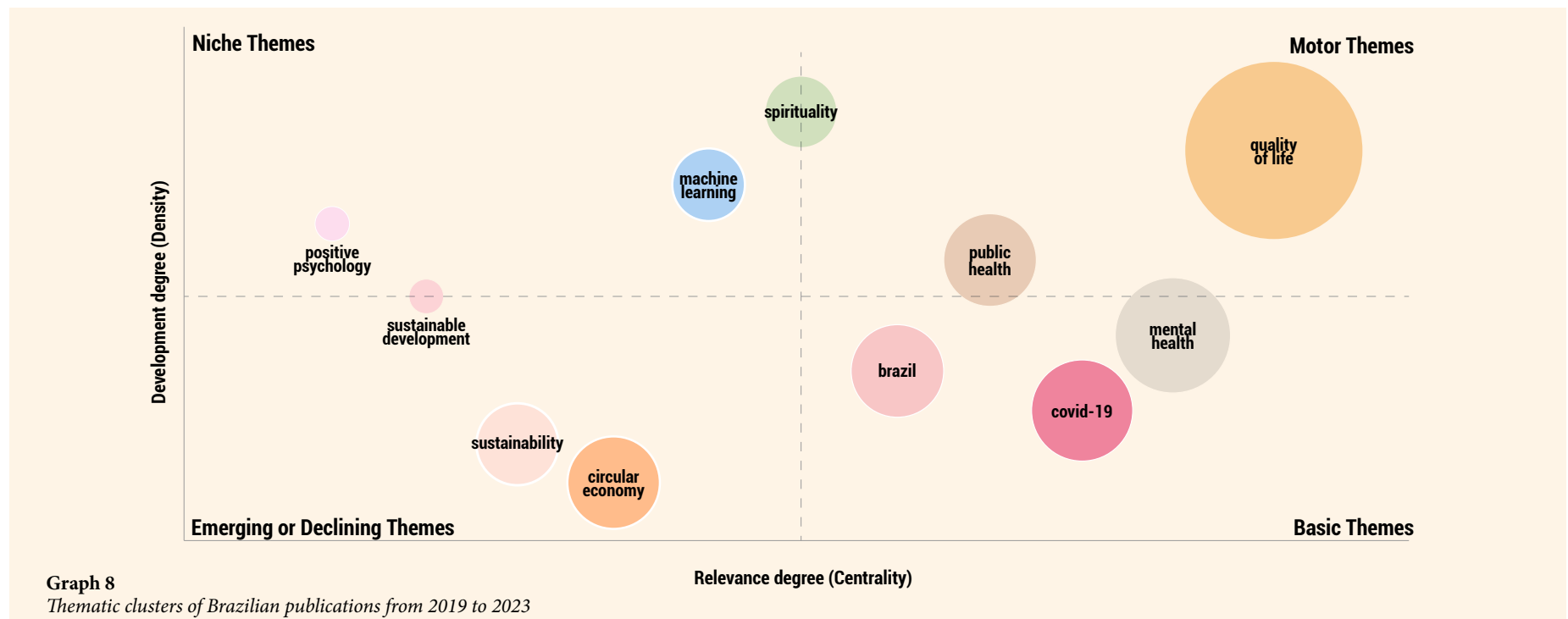
## Mapping research in Brazil

### Some key research trends to highlight:

- **Tools for resilience and psychological well-being:** Research focuses on mindfulness, self-compassion, stress management, and quality of life. Brazil has pioneered the development of quantitative metrics for well-being and workplace happiness.
- **Environment and sustainability:** Studies address climate justice, the circular economy, and ecological resilience. The concept of *Buen Vivir*, an Indigenous-based philosophy, emerges as an alternative model of sustainability.
- **Religion and spirituality:** Research explores the role of spirituality in well-being, mental health, and coping mechanisms. Studies on religious dynamics, faith-based entrepreneurship, and spiritual resilience are gaining importance.

- **Educating for flourishing:** The education sector incorporates concepts of human flourishing, focusing on inclusion, holistic learning, and resilience. Research also examines how pedagogy can support the development of human flourishing.
- **Technology and innovation:** Studies analyze the impact of digital transformation on well-being. Digital technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence are explored for their potential to advance sustainability and social justice.

Regarding the thematic evolution in the period from 2019 to 2023, Graph 8 shows eleven clusters.



## Mapping research in Brazil

What challenges and future directions can be identified for human flourishing research in Brazil? On the one hand, even having the largest PIB percentage aimed to investigation and development in the region, the country is experiencing significant funding cuts—a 42% reduction in public investment for research overall. On the other hand, post-pandemic effects continue to impact multiple sectors of society, including academic research. As in other countries, experts emphasize the need to link academic knowledge with real-world applications, particularly in the formulation of public policies.

In Brazil, human flourishing research is notably interdisciplinary, integrating fields such as psychology, sustainability, spirituality, and education. Despite financial and political challenges, the emphasis on resilience and well-being solutions remains influential in shaping current debates. Looking ahead, future directions point toward deeper collaborations, stronger integration with public policy, and a broader inclusion of Indigenous and environmental perspectives.



## Mapping research in Chile

Chile stands out in Latin America for its geographic isolation and unique socioeconomic characteristics. Despite notable economic growth, the country continues to face persistent inequalities. The 2019 social uprising reflected widespread discontent with systemic injustice, leading to two unsuccessful attempts to amend the constitution. Chile's academic environment is robust, with prestigious institutions such as the Universidad de Chile and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile playing a prominent role in research, including in areas related to human flourishing.

The bibliometric study identified 18,814 academic publications related to human flourishing. Research output rose significantly between 2019 and 2021. Chile has the highest academic output per capita in the region (0.95 publications per 1,000 inhabitants), surpassing Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.

What are the key themes in this research? Several recurring topics emerged in the study, including psychological well-being, social inequality, quality of life, environmental sustainability, and socioemotional development.

Chile has few specialists in the field of human flourishing, with only eight of the 100 most influential regional authors residing in the country. Among institutions, the Universidad de Chile and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile lead in publication volume, while the Universidad Andrés Bello and Fundación Chile stand out for their research impact. Chilean universities are productive, but collaborative research networks are still maturing, often constrained by centralized funding structures and institutional hierarchies.



## Mapping research in Chile

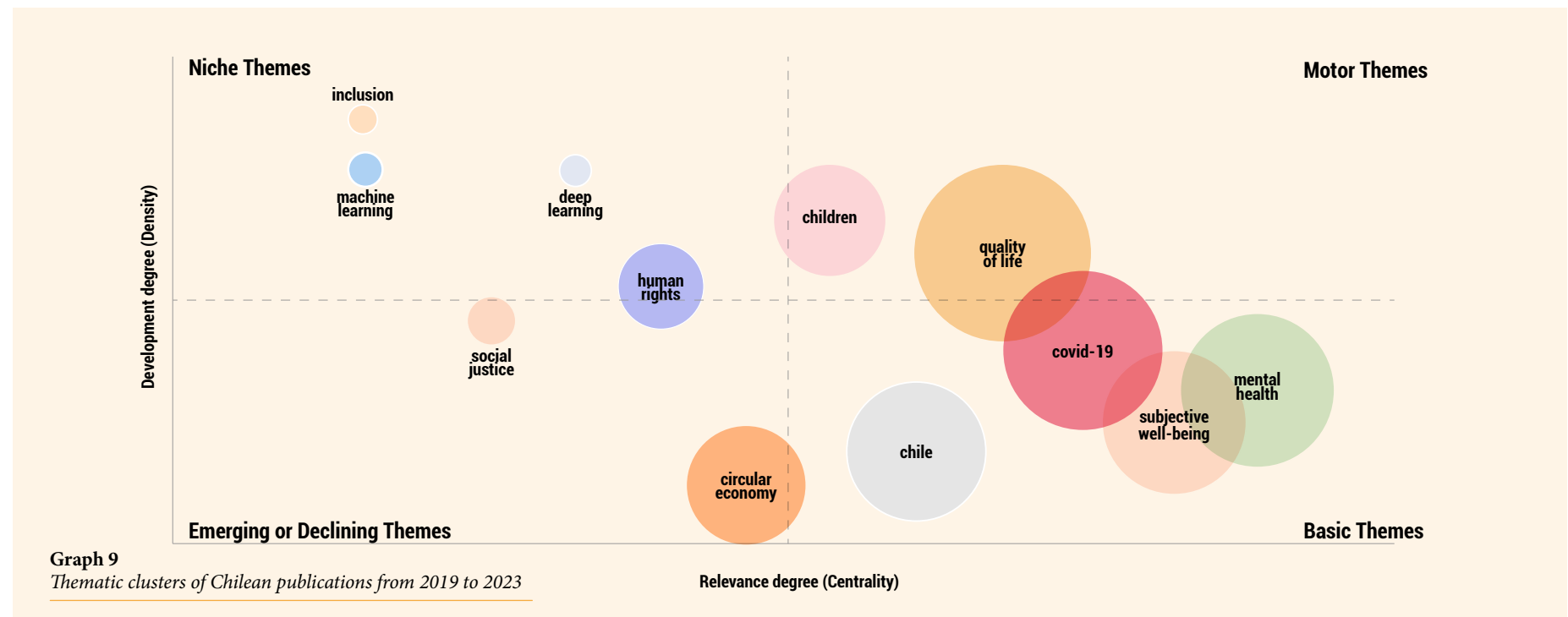
A thematic analysis of research on human flourishing in Chile reveals a blend of individual and collective perspectives:

- Well-being, happiness, and inclusion are dominant themes.
- Sustainability and the capabilities approach, inspired by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, are frequently applied in studies aimed at public policy.
- Indigenous perspectives are relevant but remain underrepresented in mainstream research.

As in other countries in the region, human flourishing is not always explicitly defined in academic studies. However, related concepts such as subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and social justice are widely explored. Researchers in Chile

approach the subject from various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, economics, and environmental studies.

The evolution of research themes in Chile reflects shifting national and global priorities, as shown in three distinct phases: from 2000 to 2011, research was primarily focused on quality of life, mental health, and education. From 2012 to 2018, themes such as happiness and family well-being gained prominence, reflecting broader debates about the social determinants of health and education. From 2019 to 2023, the focus expanded to include climate change, social justice, and human rights, likely influenced by the 2019 social protests and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these developments, research on economic inequality, gender disparities, and indigenous worldviews remains underrepresented in the literature.



The qualitative analysis indicates that many Chilean scholars do not use the term “human flourishing” explicitly but instead work on adjacent topics like well-being, social cohesion, and integral human development. In essence, they address the substance of human flourishing without referring directly to the concept.

Regarding the interdisciplinary nature of human flourishing studies, early examples exist. For instance, Chilean academics have begun to combine perspectives from psychology, urban studies, and environmental sciences to adopt a more collectively oriented approach to flourishing. However, interviewees emphasized the need for more robust interdisciplinary training and called for new educational models that integrate scientific, social, and indigenous perspectives.

Chilean researchers in this field tend to be socially engaged, driven by a desire to improve living conditions. This orientation fosters collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. Key challenges identified by academics include limited funding, the centralization of research efforts in Santiago, and difficulties securing international partnerships.

In terms of research capacity building and infrastructure, Chile has a well-established academic ecosystem, supported by robust PhD programs and research training. Institutions encourage international collaboration, particularly through the Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID). However, significant challenges persist, such as the lack of academic programs explicitly focused on human flourishing—there are very few master’s or doctoral programs dedicated to this area. Additionally, research funding remains limited, with national investment below 1% of GDP, making it difficult to secure competitive grants.

Research networks and collaborations within Chilean academic culture are still evolving, with both formal and informal networks playing important roles. On the national level, there are state-funded research centers—such as the Fondo



I would say that the concept of Human Flourishing tends to be at the basis of the purpose of the organizations we study...”

(INTERVIEW WITH E. GONZÁLEZ CARMONA, CHILEAN SCHOLAR)

de Financiamiento de Centros de Investigación en Áreas Prioritarias (FONDAP), the Millennium Institutes, and the Corporación de Fomento de la Producción (CORFO)—that support interdisciplinary projects on sustainability, well-being, and social policy. International networks also exist, involving collaborations between Chilean academics and institutions in Latin America and Europe, although financial constraints limit participation in global academic forums. Additionally, public-private partnerships connect universities with NGOs and businesses, particularly in areas like social justice, public health, and sustainability. However, university-community collaborations remain fragile due to a lack of long-term funding and institutional support, especially for applied and community-driven research initiatives.

Despite these challenges, Chile continues to be one of the most productive research ecosystems in Latin America, with strong institutional frameworks supporting studies related to human flourishing. The landscape reflects high academic productivity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a strong commitment to addressing social issues. However, structural inequalities, limited funding, and uneven regional inclusion still pose obstacles to progress. There is insufficient representation of indigenous perspectives and gender diversity in the research, and a noticeable lack of collaboration between top universities and regional institutions.

For the near future, key recommendations include strengthening interdisciplinary educational programs on human flourishing; fostering regional and community-based research partnerships; encouraging Spanish-language publications to improve accessibility; increasing funding for open-access initiatives; and boosting public engagement through policy briefs and media collaborations.

## Mapping research in Colombia

Understanding research activity in Colombia requires considering several contextual factors. Colombia is a moderately developed country that has experienced economic growth, yet it continues to grapple with high levels of inequality, as reflected in its Gini index of 0.49. It is also a post-conflict society, currently navigating ongoing peace negotiations and facing persistent challenges related to violence and displacement. Marked disparities exist between urban and rural areas, with major cities exhibiting significantly higher levels of development. Additionally, Colombia is a multiethnic nation, home to substantial Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. A striking feature of the Colombian context is the so-called Latin American paradox: despite facing considerable economic and social difficulties, the country consistently ranks among the happiest in the world according to international surveys—alongside nations like Mexico and Chile.

Human flourishing in Colombia is a complex and evolving concept, shaped by the country's social, economic, and political landscape. While research on human flourishing is expanding, it remains fragmented and underfunded. The Latin American perspective on human flourishing is particularly relevant in Colombia, given the challenges of inequality, displacement, and the need for resilience. This study highlights the lack of a strong academic community focused specifically on human flourishing and underscores the need for greater interdisciplinary integration.

The bibliometric analysis of Colombia revealed several important findings. Notably, academic interest in human flourishing has grown significantly, especially since 2000. The most frequently cited authors in this area come predominantly from the fields of medicine, psychology, and sustainability studies, with some contributions from philosophy and the social sciences. Among academic institutions, the Universidad de Antioquia stands out as the leading contributor to research on human flourishing, followed by Universidad

de los Andes, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, and Universidad Nacional de Colombia. The key research themes identified in this body of work include wellness, happiness, quality of life, Indigenous perspectives, and regenerative science.

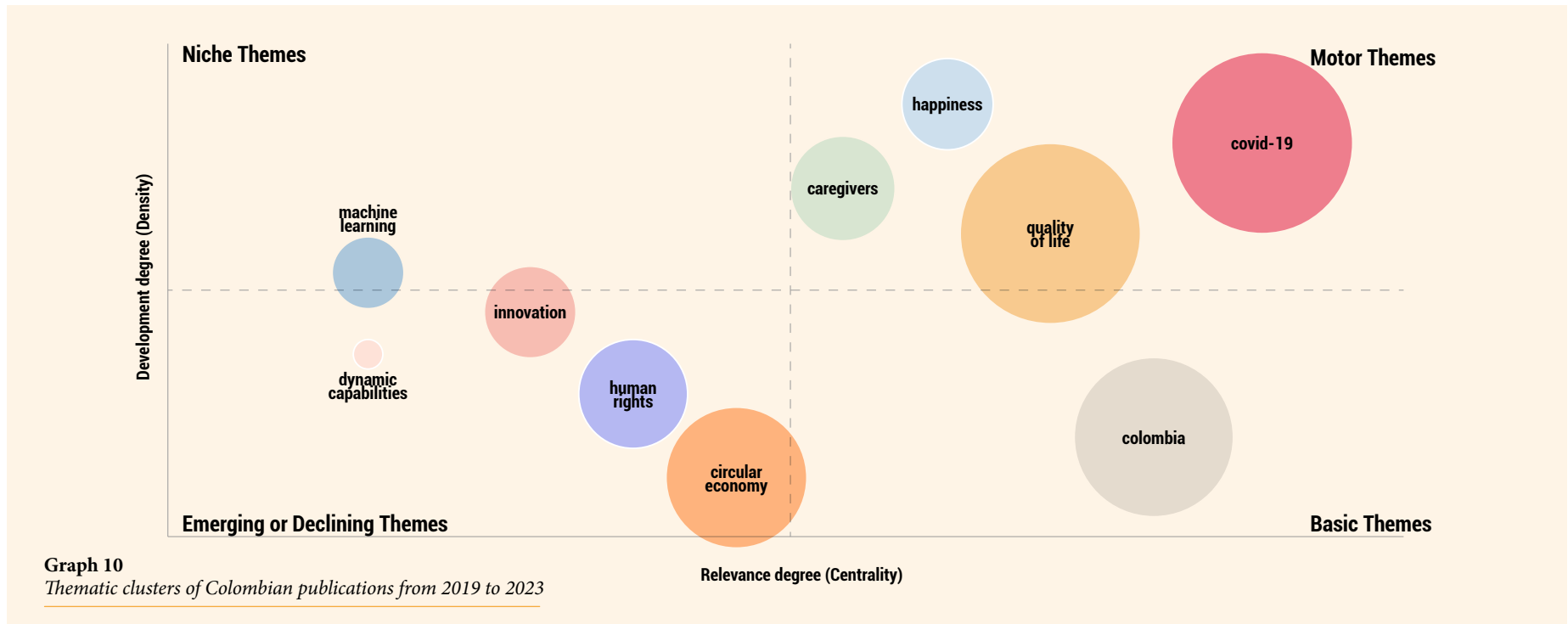
Graph 10 illustrates the wide variety of thematic clusters found in Colombian academic research between 2019 and 2023, with twelve groups of topics that go from social issues like inclusion and social justice, to psychological ones like subjective well-being and mental health, and medical issues, such as COVID-19.

Regarding the qualitative exploration, some of the findings within the categories of interest defined by the study include the following:

In the area of academic leadership, research on human flourishing in Colombia is strongly driven by social commitment. Many researchers work directly with marginalized communities, including displaced populations and Indigenous groups. This commitment explains the strong emphasis on themes such as social justice, conflict resolution, and resilience. Another important feature is interdisciplinarity. Human flourishing research in Colombia spans disciplines like psychology, sociology, philosophy, and sustainability, benefiting from a tradition of collaboration across fields.

With respect to research capabilities, the production of human flourishing research in Colombia is unevenly distributed. Major universities conduct most of the work, while regional institutions struggle with limited funding and capacity. Although PhD students contribute significantly, there is still a pressing need for improved mentorship, training, and formative processes. Education and community engagement also play a significant role in the field. There is a notable tradition of collaboration between universities and NGOs to translate academic knowledge into socially impactful projects.

## Mapping research in Colombia



In terms of networking and collaboration, Colombian universities in this area have forged international partnerships with institutions such as Harvard University, Tecnológico de Monterrey, and several European universities, which has helped expand research. However, at the national level, collaboration between academia, the private sector, and government remains weak and requires more structured initiatives. NGOs play a vital role; for example, private foundations such as the Bolívar-Davivienda Foundation and the Caja de Compensación Familiar de Antioquia (Comfama) actively support projects related to human flourishing. Government funding is generally limited and bureaucratic, making international grants essential to sustain research efforts.

As for emerging trends and challenges, social innovation and entrepreneurship have become important drivers of research across multiple sectors. There is also

a clear trend toward research supporting social reconciliation in the wake of Colombia's armed conflict. Interest in environmental sustainability—especially in the Amazon region—is increasing, and ancestral and Indigenous knowledge is becoming more prominent in the academic discourse surrounding human flourishing. As in other countries in the region, there is a lack of theoretical clarity. Human flourishing remains vaguely defined, leading to inconsistencies in research approaches. While there is some interdisciplinary dialogue, many fields still operate in isolation, making integration difficult. Additionally, funding remains scarce and difficult to secure, and the political impact of this research is limited. Despite its potential, human flourishing research has not yet been translated into effective public policy.

## Mapping research in Mexico

As in the previous countries, the study of Mexico combines bibliometric analysis with qualitative interviews involving researchers and key stakeholders. Human flourishing research in Mexico is a growing area of academic interest, despite structural limitations. Although the term “human flourishing” is not widely used in Mexican academic literature, many studies address related concepts such as well-being, quality of life, sustainability and human development. Major obstacles to research in this field include lack of funding, difficulties in accessing collaborative networks, and a challenging socioeconomic and political environment. The relationship with government and funding agencies is complex, which affects the development of long-term research projects.

Mexico is Latin America’s second-largest economy, with a population of nearly 130 million people. However, it faces profound economic and social inequalities. There is a marked contrast between the industrialized north and the less developed south, which has limited access to basic services. In addition, there are significant disparities between urban and rural areas.

In terms of higher education, Mexico has more than 4,400 institutions, although the quality of teaching varies significantly. The Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) is the largest academic and research institution in the country. Since 2025, the Ministry of Science, Technology, Humanities, and Innovation has replaced CONAHCYT as the main public agency for scientific research. However, investment in science and technology remains low, representing only 0.3% of GDP—far below the 2.5% recommended by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Nevertheless, the research budget has been continuously reduced since 2018.



“IT IS FUNDAMENTAL WITHIN HUMAN FLOURISHING (...) HOW TO GENERATE FROM SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY A VISION THAT ALLOWS TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN THE POPULATIONS” (INTERVIEW WITH J. A. VERA. MEXICAN SCHOLAR

## Mapping research in Mexico

Regarding the results of the bibliometric analysis of Mexico, Mexican researchers authored 37,139 documents. The number of publications has increased steadily since 2000, with significant acceleration after 2010.

The leading institutions in research related to human flourishing are: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (6,377 publications), Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (1,893), Universidad de Guadalajara (1,594), Instituto Politécnico Nacional (1,334), and Tecnológico de Monterrey (1,127). It is notable that only two private universities—Tecnológico de Monterrey and Universidad Iberoamericana—appear among the top institutions, confirming the predominance of state-funded research.

In terms of the main research topics, the most frequent themes in academic production related to human flourishing in Mexico include:

- **Quality of life and health:** studies on chronic diseases, mental health, aging, and public health policies.
- **Sustainability and the environment:** the relationship between human development and environmental preservation, with a focus on the circular economy and ecological regeneration, including scientific and technological perspectives.
- **Poverty and economic well-being:** research on the multidimensional measurement of poverty, inspired by the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.
- **Psychology of well-being:** studies in positive psychology, happiness, and subjective well-being.
- **Education and well-being:** pedagogical models that promote well-being and satisfaction in educational settings.

The thematic evolution in Mexico during the period 2019–2023 (as shown in Graph 11) reveals five distinct clusters. The “Quality of Life” cluster is primarily focused on health-related topics. The “Mexico” cluster encompasses a range

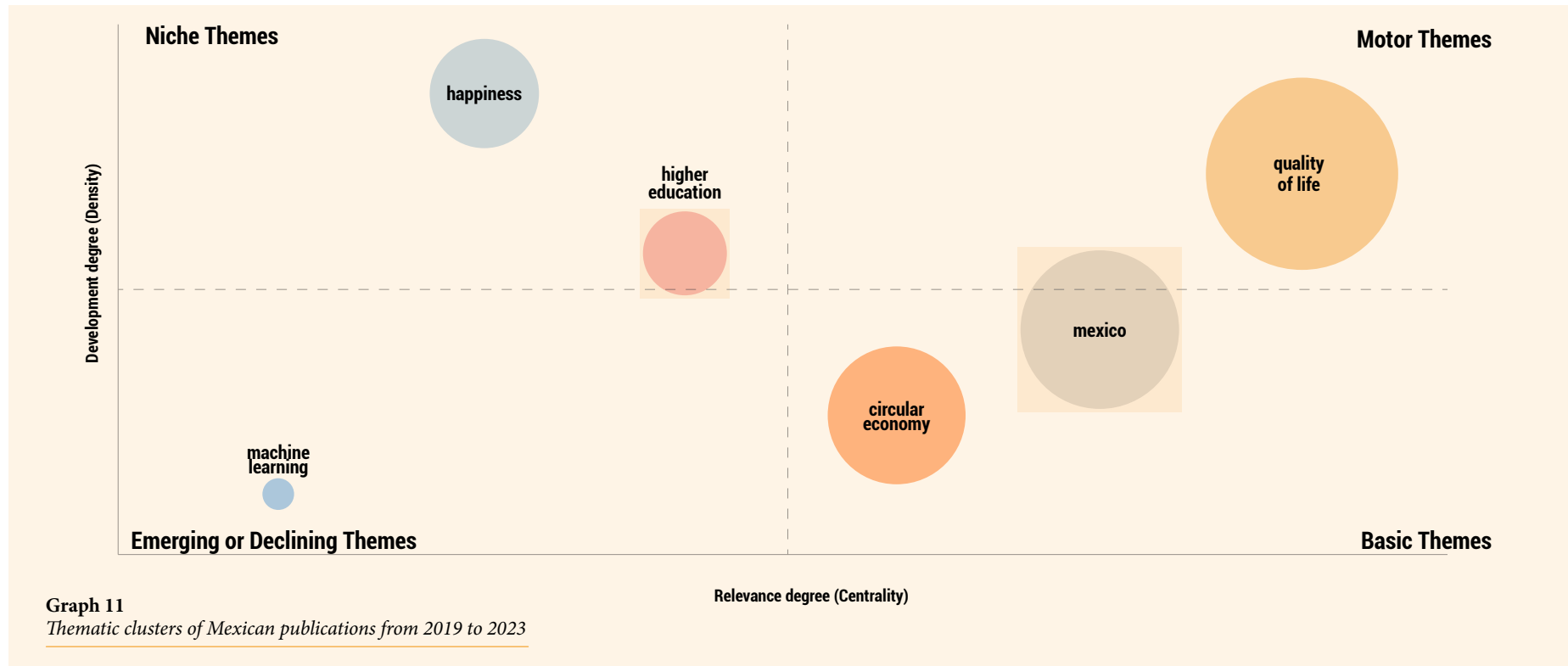
of social issues, including Latin America, human rights, education, poverty, and human development. The “Happiness” cluster has a strong psychological orientation, featuring themes such as happiness, subjective well-being, aging, and positive psychology.

Several research groups have maintained consistent lines of inquiry throughout this period, establishing themselves as academic references in their respective fields. Notable among them is the group at Universidad de Sonora focused on pro-environmental behavior, which explores the psychological factors influencing environmentally sustainable actions. Another key group, based at both the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, investigates the psychological, social, and political dimensions of quality of life, human development, and sustainability. An influential line of research on poverty and human flourishing—centered on the fulfillment of human needs—has been led by scholars from El Colegio de México. Additionally, the economics of happiness, well-being, and quality of life in Latin America is a prominent area of study developed by researchers from various institutions within the Grupo Transdisciplinario sobre Estudios del Bienestar, based at the Centro de Investigación en Ciencias Cognitivas (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos).

Regarding the qualitative exploration of research on human flourishing in Mexico, the question of research perspectives stands out. The researchers interviewed agreed that human flourishing cannot be reduced to a single concept and requires a multidisciplinary approach. Some relate it to subjective well-being and quality of life, while others consider it a social and environmental phenomenon.

Emerging trends in research on human flourishing highlight several important areas of development. First, the role of interdependence and care is gaining prominence, with a growing emphasis on the importance of social ties in

## Mapping research in Mexico



promoting well-being. Second, there is increasing interest in exploring human flourishing through a gender lens, particularly in relation to issues such as entrepreneurship and gender-based violence. Third, researchers are beginning to examine the impact of digitalization and artificial intelligence on happiness and flourishing, marking a new frontier in the intersection of technology and well-being. Finally, there is a rising focus on cultural diversity, with more efforts aimed at understanding human flourishing from the perspectives of Indigenous and marginalized communities.

Key conceptual insights have been proposed to strengthen the understanding of human flourishing. For instance, while the concept holds strong appeal, there is still no unified theory of human flourishing in Mexico. Developing such a theory

would require recognizing the essential role of interaction—with both other people and the natural environment. Equally important is a community-based perspective: a sense of belonging and meaningful social connections are fundamental components of flourishing.

Regarding the challenges for research in Mexico, experts highlighted that cuts to funding limit research efforts. In addition, most high-impact publications are in English, which hinders the local dissemination of knowledge. Challenges include weak collaboration among institutions, and the need to consolidate a unified theoretical framework. However, opportunities lie in the growing interest in transdisciplinary approaches and the potential to influence public policy and social programs.

## Towards a Latin American perspective on Human Flourishing

The social, economic, and political conditions of Latin America, along with its cultural heritage, are identified by researchers in the region as the context for academic activity related to human flourishing. Academic reflection navigates the complexities of the modern world—the critical relationship with nature, the intricacies of international markets, and the dizzying pace of new technologies—as well as regional issues such as persistent poverty, insecurity, migration, and systemic discrimination. In this context, the content of the concept cannot remain merely abstract or utopian; it must contribute to efforts aimed at improving the living conditions, future, and aspirations of these populations. In this sense, we dare to assert that human flourishing for the peoples of Latin America is fundamentally human—it is not a distinct or special kind of flourishing. However, in these countries, many basic human needs remain unmet, as poverty, discrimination, and a lack of respect persist as significant challenges. Despite these hardships, these communities demonstrate remarkable resilience, cultivating a profound joy for living. This joy does not ignore their struggles but instead draws strength from what they hold dear: community, family, friendship, and faith.

The concept of human flourishing rooted in these countries acknowledges a paradoxical fact: that many people in Latin America find life satisfaction despite adverse conditions. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as “hard flourishing” or the “Latin American paradox,” does not imply resignation to current limitations, but rather highlights the coexistence of contentment with a strong desire to improve structural factors of well-being—such as income, health, food security, employment, and respect.

Quality of life and well-being are fundamental to human flourishing in the region. These concepts encompass a wide range of topics which, although traditionally scattered across disciplines, converge around a practical aim: the improvement of people’s lives in all dimensions that constitute well-being in a broad sense. In this framework, the community dimension plays a central role. One could



argue that well-being is not possible without healthy communities; thus, social justice, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and environmental stewardship are urgent challenges.

The construction of a just society goes hand in hand with the pursuit of human flourishing. From this standpoint, a great deal of theoretical and practical work is needed to promote inclusion in all its forms: inclusion in terms of gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and equal opportunities and rights. This work must be reflected in educational efforts, both theoretical and applied, so that education becomes a vehicle for advancing ideals of solidarity, democracy, and responsibility in response to the pressing challenges of global sustainability and rapidly evolving technologies.

*Throughout this study, one essential question emerged:  
How does the concept of human flourishing contribute to scientific research?*

At the regional academic level, several perspectives have taken shape:

There is a strong social commitment to research, characterized by the aim of contributing to the well-being of society at large, and particularly to that of vulnerable communities and populations. This shared objective is a common thread among many researchers. This aspect encompasses the fact that the topics implied in human flourishing research are of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature. The topics are cross-cutting and, to be practicable, need the resources of the human, natural, technological and social sciences, as well as alternative disciplines of knowledge, traditions and religions.

There is also an emphasis on methodology and research ethics grounded in context. These elements are considered central to academic activity, serving as a fundamental justification and *raison d'être*. An ethical stance implies respect for communities and local knowledge, an egalitarian approach to authorship that avoids extractive practices, and a commitment to shared responsibility, management, benefits, and recognition with research participants—both individuals and communities.

Research is marked by its interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature, recognizing that complex problems transcend disciplinary boundaries. To address them, it is necessary to integrate contributions from the human, natural, and social sciences, as well as alternative forms of knowledge, including local and traditional wisdom, and religious insights.

To strengthen collaboration and research capacity in the region, several actions are worth proposing: It is essential to engage with emerging topics of high relevance for the near future: the political movements of Indigenous women, the ethics of care, the dynamics of faith communities, economic narratives, post-conflict and reconciliation processes, the role of spirituality in individual and collective well-being, cultural diversity, local and Indigenous worldviews, inclusion, agency, and the relationship with nature.

It is important to promote both academic output in specialized journals and the dissemination of knowledge through broader formats. This dual approach can help reach scholars as well as other stakeholders involved in the research ecosystem on human flourishing.

In terms of education and research capacity building, the development of graduate and undergraduate programs is very convenient, along with dissemination strategies targeted at the general public.

Finally, collaboration is crucial to advancing these initiatives. This includes establishing ties with scientific associations, participating in conferences and seminars, developing institutional research programs, and fostering partnerships with government agencies, civil society organizations, foundations, and international institutions.

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