

12.2 Age profile of the central government workforce

A workforce with a mix of ages can help ensure the right mix of skills, a diversity of views and approaches, and continuity in the public sector workforce. If one generation dominates the workforce, the public sector may face challenges which differ depending on the age group. Where an older generation predominates, the lack of opportune succession can represent a major challenge for the continuity of policies and services, while if public servants are predominantly from a younger generation, more investment in career development might be needed. Therefore, governments need to ensure an age-diverse workforce, which will help preserve institutional knowledge while also allowing for an orderly turnover in the workforce as older public servants retire. Achieving a balanced age profile in the central government workforce and across different positions may determine how governments in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) face current and future challenges, by ensuring a broad range of perspectives and experience, which can lead to more well-rounded and effective decision making.

On average, all age groups are represented in central government workforces in LAC countries, which have a slightly younger average age than the average for OECD countries. Workers aged between 18 and 34 years old make up 22% of the central government workforce in LAC countries on average, compared to 19% in OECD countries. In Belize, 44% of central government workers are under 35 years old. Workers aged 55 and over account for 26% on average in OECD countries and 21% in LAC countries. Middle-aged workers (35-54 year-olds) form the largest part of the central government workforce in both LAC countries (57%) and OECD countries (55%). (Figure 12.3).

This age diversity is not necessarily reflected in the age distributions for different positions in the public administration in the LAC region, as might be expected. Younger public servants will be at the beginning of their careers, while senior positions require more experience, so those employees will usually be older. On average among the LAC countries surveyed, over 90% of senior managers belong to either the middle or older age groups. Belize stands out, as 50% of its senior managers are under 35 years old, which might reflect the country's younger population compared to other LAC countries. Younger central

government employees have a greater presence in non-management positions (23% on average across LAC countries) than in management positions (10%). Compared to the other LAC countries, Brazil has an unusual age/position distribution, as 82% of its central government employees in secretarial positions are 55 years old or older (Figure 12.4).

Methodology and definitions

Data on central government employees by position and age range were collected through the 2022 IDB-OECD Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central Governments that covered 13 LAC countries. The data refer to the situation as of December 2021, while data for Argentina refer to November 2022. The survey focused on public servants in ministries and agencies in central government. Respondents to the survey were senior officials in central government human resource management (HRM) departments, and the data refer to HRM practices in central government.

Public servants are classified into three age groups: 18-34 year-olds; 35-54 year-olds; and 55 years and older. The positions used were senior management, middle management, professionals and secretarial. For definitions of the occupation levels please refer to Annex D.

Further reading

OECD (2020), *Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce: Living, Learning and Earning Longer*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/59752153-en>.

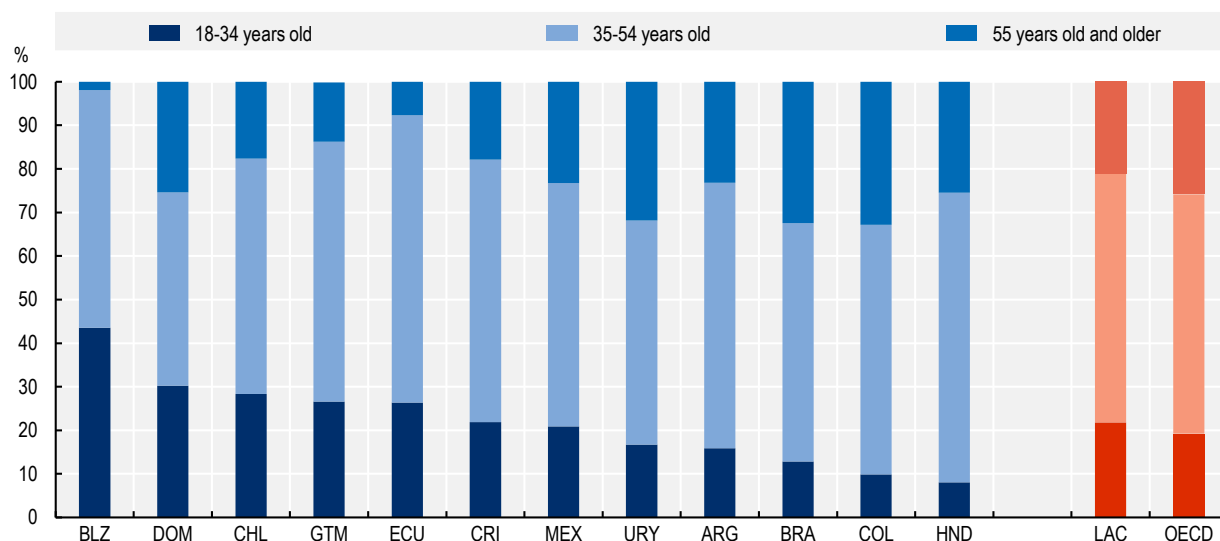
OECD (2017), *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en>.

Figure notes

Figure 12.3. Data for Trinidad and Tobago are not available.

Figure 12.4. Data for Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, and Trinidad and Tobago are not available. Data for professionals and secretarial positions are not available for Guatemala and Honduras.

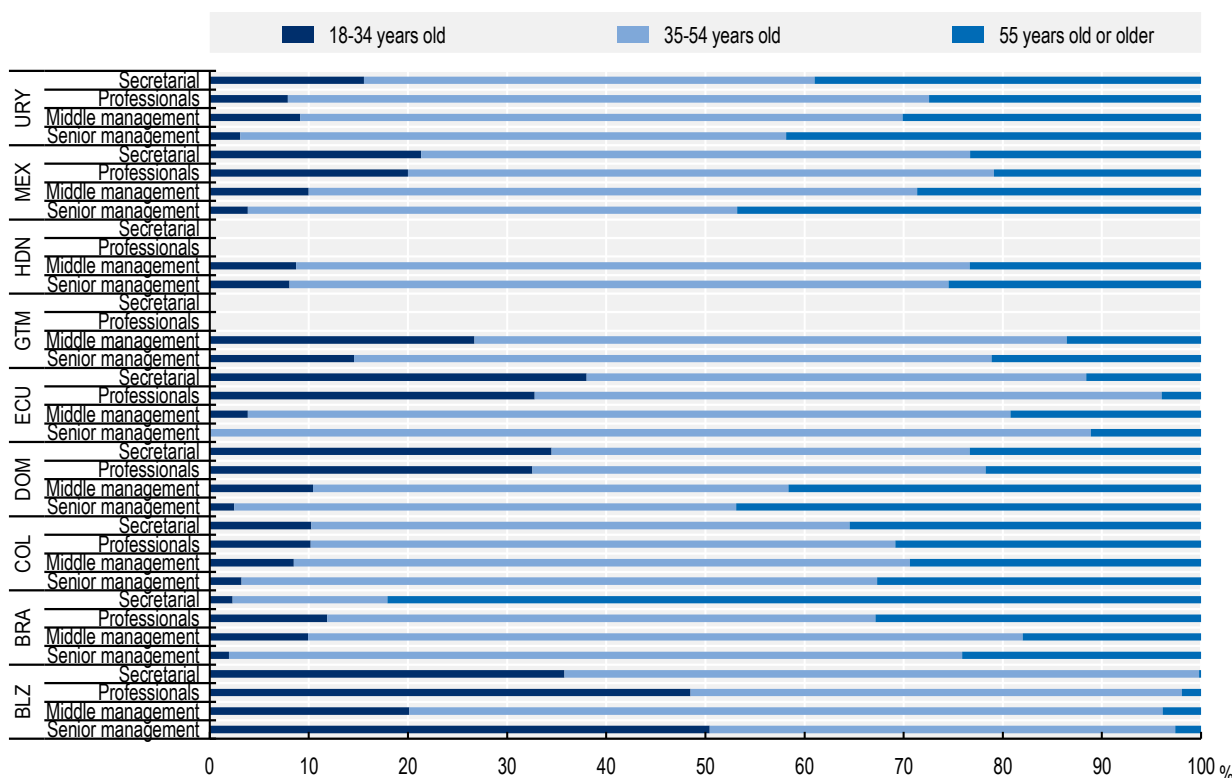
Figure 12.3. Distribution of central government employees by age, 2022



Source: IDB-OECD (2022), Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments.

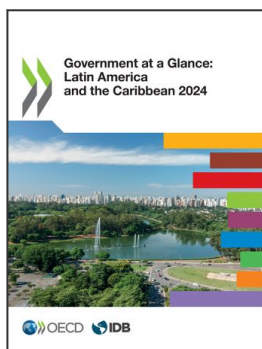
StatLink <https://stat.link/exco0z>

Figure 12.4. Distribution of central government employees by position and age, 2022



Source: IDB-OECD (2022), Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments.

StatLink <https://stat.link/fsuop6>



From:

Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2024

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/4abdba16-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2024), "Age profile of the central government workforce", in *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2024*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/2c103482-en>

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