

## 13.2 Assessment and selection practices in the public service

Enhanced public sector recruitment practices are essential for selecting candidates with profiles aligned with government needs, ensuring effective policy governance and service delivery. Competitive and meritocratic processes are good selection strategies and also safeguard against arbitrary decisions. Depending on the role, governments use direct recruitment, appointment processes or competitive group selections for multiple positions. To assess candidates and choose the right one for each role, governments employ techniques like interviews and competency and integrity tests, and review candidates' references. Although traditionally conducted face-to-face, governments are increasingly using technology to conduct some of their recruitment processes remotely, promoting a broader talent pool, reducing logistical burdens, saving costs, and increasing flexibility for both candidates and recruiters.

In the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, recruitment tends to be less open to general competition as the seniority of the position increases. In 2022, 11 of the 15 surveyed LAC countries (73%) directly appointed senior management positions without a competitive recruitment process. Only five countries (33%) have candidates competing for specific positions at this level. General competition is more widely used to appoint public servants at non-managerial levels, used by 10 out of 15 countries (67%), while in 5 countries the recruitment process depends on the position being recruited (Figure 13.4).

After attracting potential candidates for a public service position, most LAC countries (11 of 15, 73%) assess applicants' motivations to join the public administration, their analytical and cognitive skills, and their behavioural competencies through a range of complementary mechanisms (e.g., interviews, tests and cv screening). Most LAC countries use interviews to assess candidates' motivation for joining (14 out of 15, 93%), similar to OECD countries (81%). Out of the 15 surveyed countries, 13 (86%) evaluate candidates' analytical and cognitive skills. These assessed through interviews in most countries (11 out of 15, 73%), although 53% use standardised tests, less commonly than OECD countries (59%). LAC countries also consider the behavioural competencies of potential public servants (10 out of 15, 67%). Again, most countries do this is through interviews (67%, compared to 75% of OECD countries). Heavy reliance on interviews requires highly skilled interviewers who are alert to potential recruitment biases. Only five LAC countries (33%) test cognitive or behavioural competencies using more structured assessment centres which may allow for a more detailed examination in practice (Table 13.1).

Conducting all or part of the recruitment process remotely can increase efficiency and ultimately assist in attracting and selecting candidates from different regions of a country. This includes conducting interviews or assessing candidates remotely, which facilitates the process for both applicants

and the administration. The use of technology to support remote recruitment processes in the public administration varies considerably across LAC countries. Only in Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru is it possible for recruitment to take place entirely online (Online Figure F.9.1).

### Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the 2022 OECD-IDA Public Service Leadership and Capability Survey, completed by 15 LAC countries. The survey gathered data on public employment and human resource management (HRM). Most respondents were senior officials in central government HRM departments, and the data refer to HRM practices in central government.

Public servants are all government employees who work in the public service, who may be employed through various contractual mechanisms (e.g. civil servant statutes, collective agreements or labour law contracts), on indeterminate or fixed-term employment contracts, but not normally including employees in the wider public sector who are usually regulated under alternative employment frameworks (e.g. most doctors, teachers, police, the military, the judiciary or elected officials).

A competitive process is a recruitment process in which candidates apply to a position and are assessed based on objective criteria.

Behavioural competencies are personality traits which have been used to predict workplace behaviour with varying reliability depending on the measures.

### Further reading

IDB (2014), *Serving Citizens: A Decade of Civil Service Reforms in Latin America (2004-2013)*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, <https://publications.iadb.org/en/serving-citizens-decade-civil-service-reforms-latin-america-2004-13>.

OECD (2021), *Public Employment and Management 2021: The Future of the Public Service*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/938f0d65-en>.

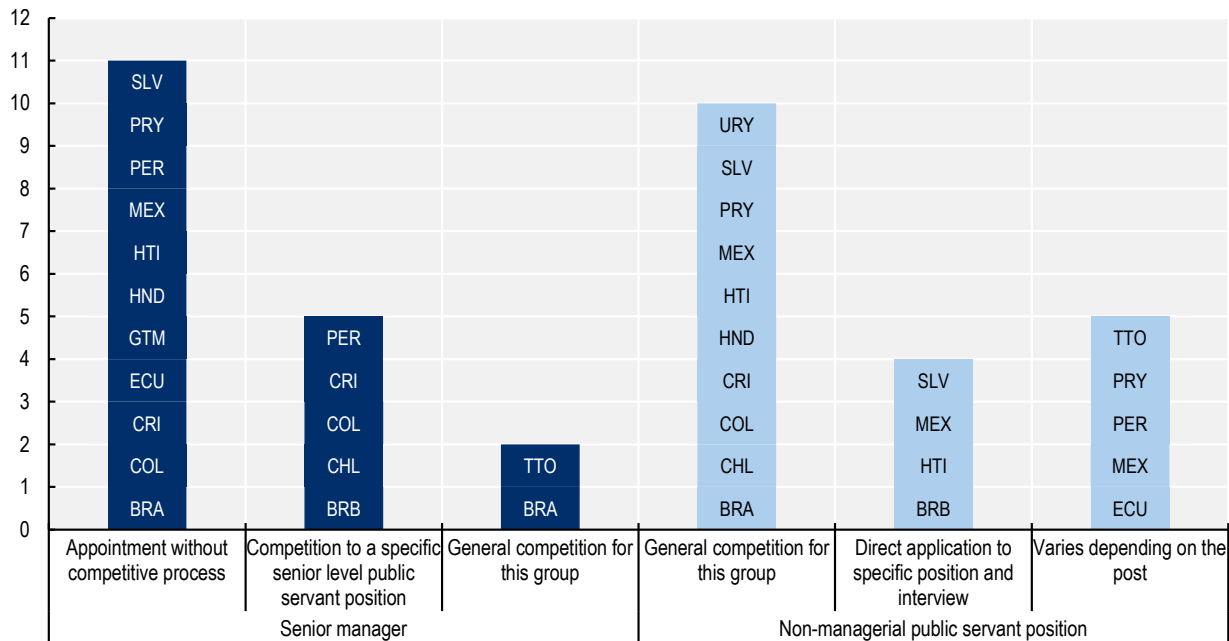
OECD (2019), "Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability", *OECD Legal Instruments*, OECD, Paris, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/%20en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0445>.

### Figure notes

Table 13.1. Data for OECD are from 2020 instead of 2022 and are based on 32 OECD countries.

F.9.1 (Recruitment process stages that can be completed remotely, 2022) is available online in Annex F.

**Figure 13.4. Application and appointment processes for senior and non-senior level public servants, 2022**



Source: OECD-IDB (2022), Public Service Leadership and Capability Survey.

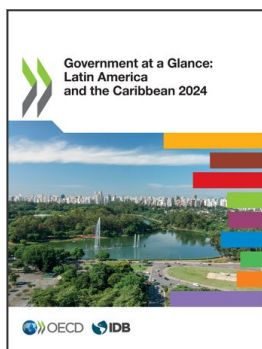
StatLink <https://stat.link/lgpn4v>

**Table 13.1. Methods for assessing competencies and motivation during recruitment, 2022**

	CV screening	Standard exams	Interviews	Assessment centre	Reference check
Barbados			•		
Brazil		■			
Chile	■♦		■♦		♦
Colombia		■♦	■♦	■	
Costa Rica		■♦	■♦		
Ecuador	■♦		•		
El Salvador	■	■♦	■♦	■♦	
Guatemala	■♦	■	■♦	■♦	•
Haiti	•	•	•		
Honduras			■♦		
Mexico		■	■♦		
Paraguay			■♦		
Peru		■♦	■♦	■♦	
Trinidad and Tobago			■♦	■♦	
Uruguay		■♦	■♦		
<b>LAC Total</b>					
■ Analytical/cognitive competencies	4	8	11	5	0
♦ Behavioural competencies	2	5	10	3	1
• Motivation	3	2	14	2	1
<b>OECD Total</b>					
■ Analytical/cognitive competencies	4	19	20	13	1
♦ Behavioural competencies	6	7	24	13	6
• Motivation	8	3	26	8	4

Source: OECD-IDB (2022), Public Service Leadership and Capability Survey; OECD (2020), Public Service Leadership and Capability Survey.

StatLink <https://stat.link/dosj6r>



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