

3.3 Communication functions of the centre of government

The communication functions of centres of government (CoGs) are vital for ensuring effective dissemination of government objectives and to foster transparency, accountability and public engagement (OECD, 2021). Moreover, as digital technology fuels the demand for instant information, CoGs are responsible for ensuring the accurate and timely dissemination of government messages to all segments of society. The digital transformation has also allowed ministries and officials to engage with citizens in real time. Against this backdrop, a co-ordinated and comprehensive communication strategy is essential for fostering trust in the government's integrity and approach (Shostak et al., 2023).

Handling media engagement is one of the most common communication functions for CoGs in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, assigned to CoGs in six out of the nine surveyed countries (67%). CoGs also lead their governments' communication strategy in five of those countries (56%), a similar share as in OECD countries, and play a leading role in communications during crises in six (67%, compared to 58% of OECD countries). Government websites, email marketing, social networks, online video and online advertising, known as digital communication, are part of the functions of four out of nine CoGs (44%). A large majority of OECD countries recognise evaluation as a core communication competency, however many of them consider it to be one of the top three most challenging competencies for CoGs (OECD, 2021). Only the CoGs in El Salvador and Paraguay evaluate communication activities to determine their relevance, effectiveness and whether they are achieving their objectives, and to inform future communication activities. Some countries have a whole-of-government approach to communication, with the CoG co-ordinating strategies and executing them in collaboration with other government institutions. This is the case for seven of the surveyed LAC countries. For instance, in Colombia and Peru, each line ministry has its own press or social communication chief responsible for media engagement who operates within a whole-of-government public communication network and co-ordinates with or adheres to guidelines set by their CoGs (OECD, 2021 and Figure 3.5).

Having clear objectives for the CoG's communication activities is essential to their effectiveness. The most common objectives across surveyed LAC countries are defining strategies for communicating government policy priorities and promoting transparency (in seven out of nine countries each, 78%). Other less common objectives of communication activities in the LAC region are increasing public knowledge about policies or services, handling crises or emergencies (four out of nine in both, 44%) and gauging and evaluating public sentiment (three out of nine, 33%) (Figure 3.6).

The role of public communication is not limited to informing; it can also play a central role in strengthening transparency and accountability. By raising awareness of shortcomings in policy delivery and helping to explain the challenges faced it can help to improve the design and implementation of policies and services. To achieve this, governments must have adequate tools for communicating with citizens. Eight out of nine LAC countries (89%) use speeches by the head of government or other government leaders to disseminate information about the government's progress. Three countries complement the speeches by publishing regular accountability reports and two with dashboards for the public to consult. Public communication can also help strengthen trust by improving governments' responsiveness and, in turn, citizens' perception of fairness. One way to achieve this is through Q&A sessions with citizens, where the government responds to citizens' concerns. These are only used Colombia and Honduras (Figure 3.7).

Methodology and definitions

Data are from the OECD-IBD Centres of Government Survey 2022, conducted during May-July 2022 in nine LAC countries. Respondents were senior officials who provided direct support and advice to heads of government and the council of ministers or cabinet.

Public communication is understood as any communication activity led by public institutions for the public good. It is distinct from political communication – political parties, debates or elections – to the extent possible. Media engagement is the management of relationships with journalists to promote government policy or defend the reputation of the government in the news. This includes proactive engagement through press releases and organising radio and TV interviews as well as reactive engagement, such as responding to negative news stories.

Further reading

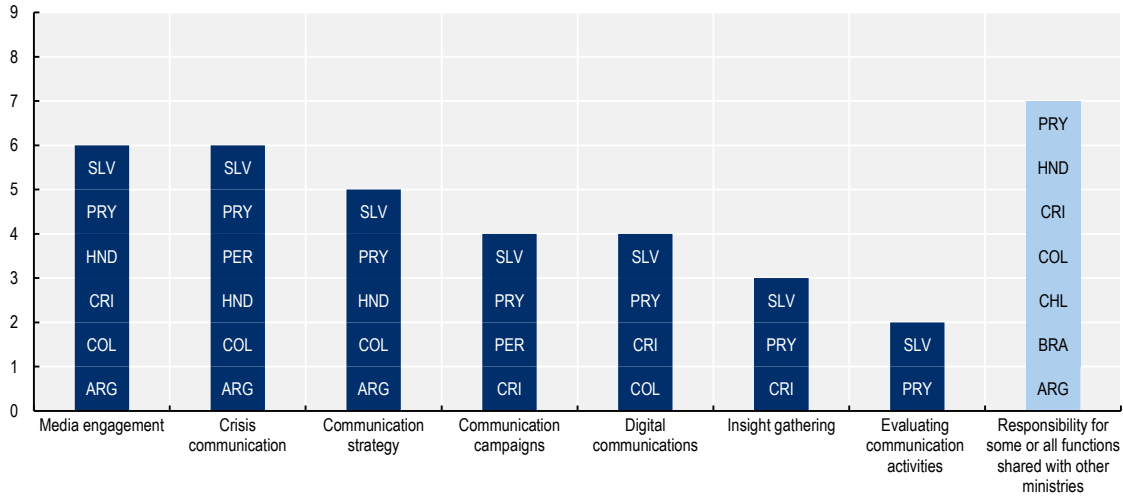
OECD (2021), *OECD Report on Public Communication: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/22f8031c-en>.

Shostak, R. et al. (2023), *The Center of Government, Revisited: A Decade of Global Reforms*, Inter-American Development Bank, <https://doi.org/10.18235/0004994>.

Figure notes

Figure 3.7. Argentina is not included since it does not use any of the listed communication tools.

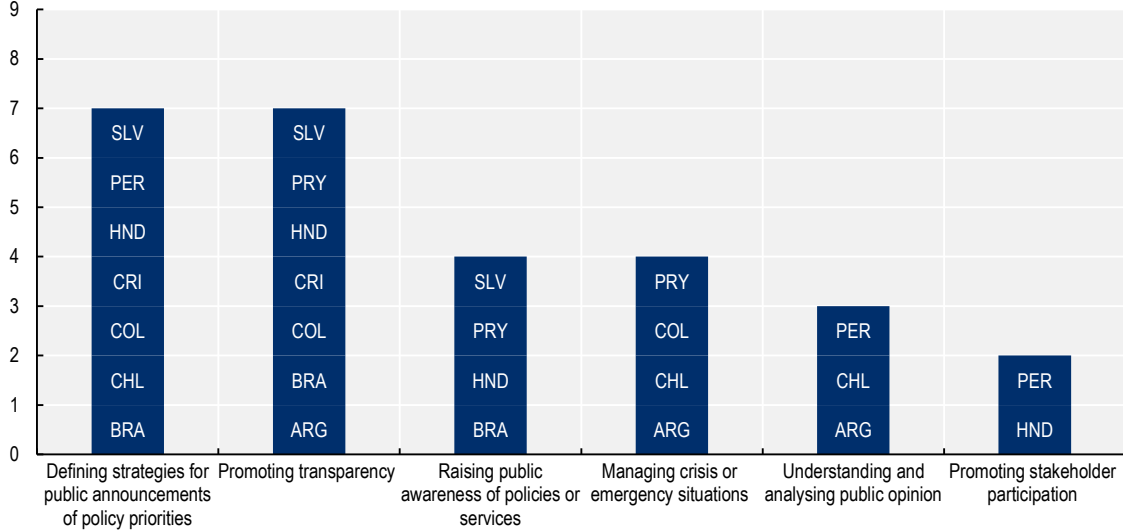
Figure 3.5. Centre of government communication functions, 2022



Source: OECD-IDB Centres of Government Survey 2022.

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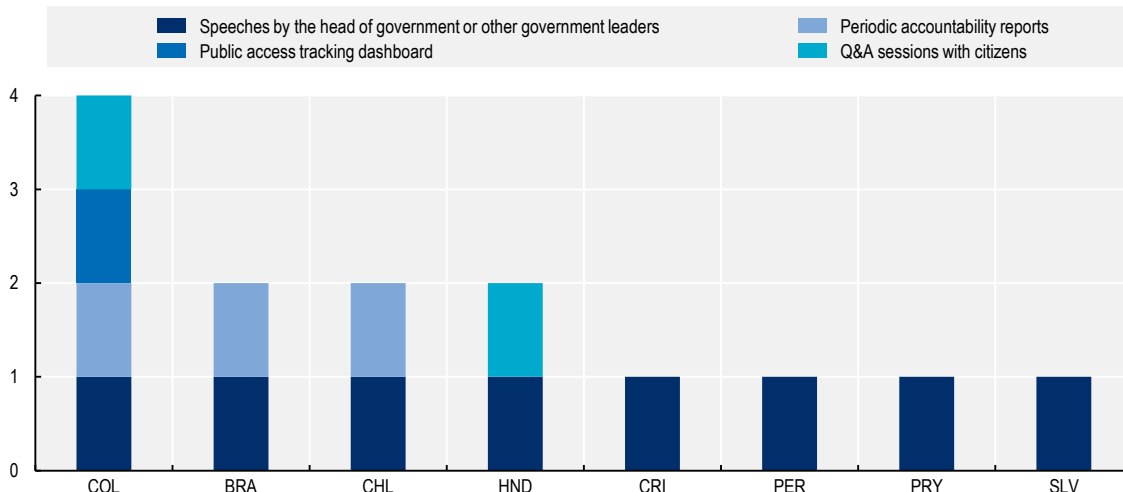
Figure 3.6. Objectives of the centre of government’s communication activities, 2022



Source: OECD-IDB Centres of Government Survey 2022.

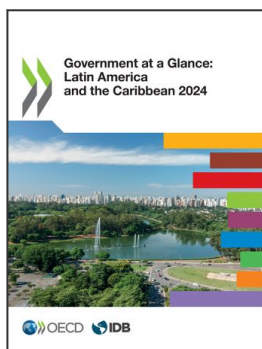
StatLink <https://stat.link/q4pfnq>

Figure 3.7. Forms for communicating progress in government objectives, 2022



Source: OECD-IDB Centres of Government Survey 2022.

StatLink <https://stat.link/8ryzbi>



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