

12.3 Diversity in public sector employment

A diverse workforce is essential for promoting representation and inclusion of underrepresented and vulnerable groups. It strengthens government performance by driving innovation and contributing to tailor services to meet the community's needs. Diversity in the public workforce creates a more inclusive culture that reduces biases and enhances the brainpower, ideas and approaches to identifying and solving problems considering all interests and perspectives. It should consider the participation of people with disabilities as well as gender equality in employment opportunities and in representation at different levels of the administration to allow for a wide plural perspective closer to the needs of these groups both.

On average, women make up 51.5% of the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) public sector workforce. In 10 out of 15 LAC countries, women account for more than half of public sector employees, with Brazil and Chile leading (56%), but by a very small margin over the rest. The share of female public servants increased by 2 percentage points (p.p.) on average in LAC countries between 2011 and 2021. In Trinidad and Tobago there was a 6 p.p. increase over the period, while in Costa Rica, there was a 5 p.p. increase. This over-representation of women in the public sector may relate to greater job stability and the existence of equal pay and benefits. In contrast, women are under-represented in total employment, which combines both public and private employment. On average in LAC countries, women made up only 42% of the workforce in 2021, compared to 57% on average across OECD countries (Figure 12.5).

Despite being over-represented in the public sector workforce, the picture is different in senior management, where women in LAC hold only 43% of positions on average. The Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Honduras have the largest share of women in senior positions (57-63%). In Belize (67%) and Uruguay (67%), women hold a larger share of secretarial positions than management positions. On average, in LAC countries women hold 54% of professional positions and 55% of secretarial ones, indicating difficulties in reaching gender equality in leadership positions (Figure 12.6).

Lastly, in LAC countries with available information, public servants with disabilities make up only 1.1% of the workforce, lagging behind the region's average disability quota of 4%. Some LAC countries have established legally binding fixed quotas, and others allow greater flexibility; for example, in Colombia, the quota ranges from 0.5 to 4% depending on the total number of jobs in each entity. It is also the only country that, on average, has fulfilled its quota, with 3.6% of its public servants having disabilities (Figure 12.7). Chile gathers data and publishes a yearly report on public administrations' compliance with their 1% legal quota. However, most LAC governments do not regularly record information on this topic, which hinders the enforcement of legislation or the collection of good data on its implementation for its improvement.

Methodology and definitions

Data on public sector employment are derived from the (ILO) ILOSTAT database. Public sector employment covers employment in the government sector plus employment in publicly owned resident enterprises and companies. Data represent the total number of persons employed directly by these institutions regardless the employment contract. Data on diversity in central government were collected through the IDB-OECD Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments survey and are from 1 April 2022 in 13 LAC countries. Respondents are senior officials in central government human resources management (HRM) departments.

Disability refers to the person's physical and/or mental impairments, the functional limitations arising from them and interaction with society and the environment.

For definitions of the occupation levels used to distribute the workforce gender groups see Annex D.

Further reading

Naranjo Bautista, S. et al. (2022), *Women Leaders in the Public Sector of Latin America and the Caribbean: Gaps and Opportunities*, Inter-American Development Bank, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0004597>.

Nolan-Flecha, N. (2019), "Next generation diversity and inclusion policies in the public service: Ensuring public services reflect the societies they serve", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 34, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/51691451-en>.

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

OECD (2018), *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality*, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/gender/governance/toolkit/toolkit-for-mainstreaming-and-implementing-gender-equality.pdf.

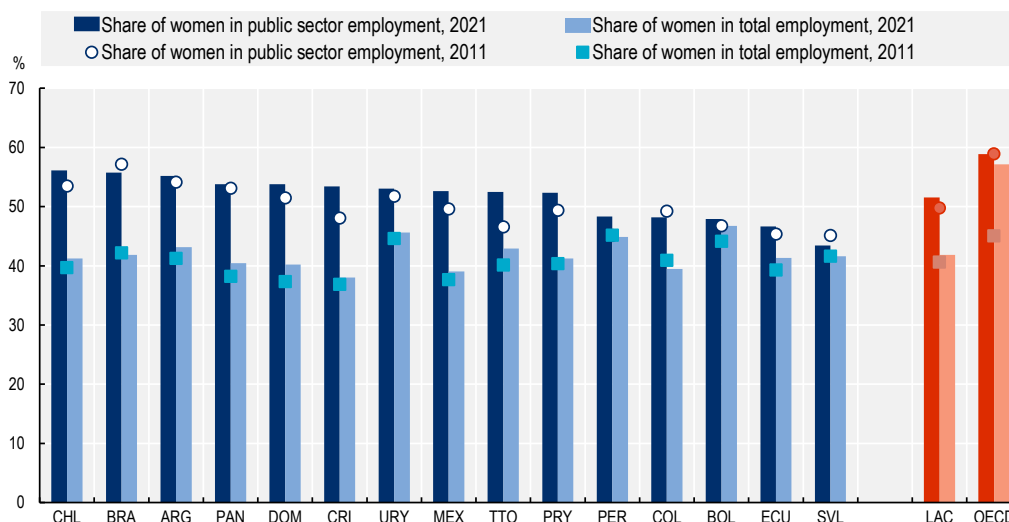
Figure notes

Figure 12.5. OECD average is for 2020.

Figure 12.6. Data for Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Trinidad and Tobago are not available. Data for Honduras and Guatemala for professional and secretarial positions are not available. Chile has only one category for managers.

Figure 12.7. Data for public servants with disabilities are not available for the Dominican Republic. Data for Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay are not available.

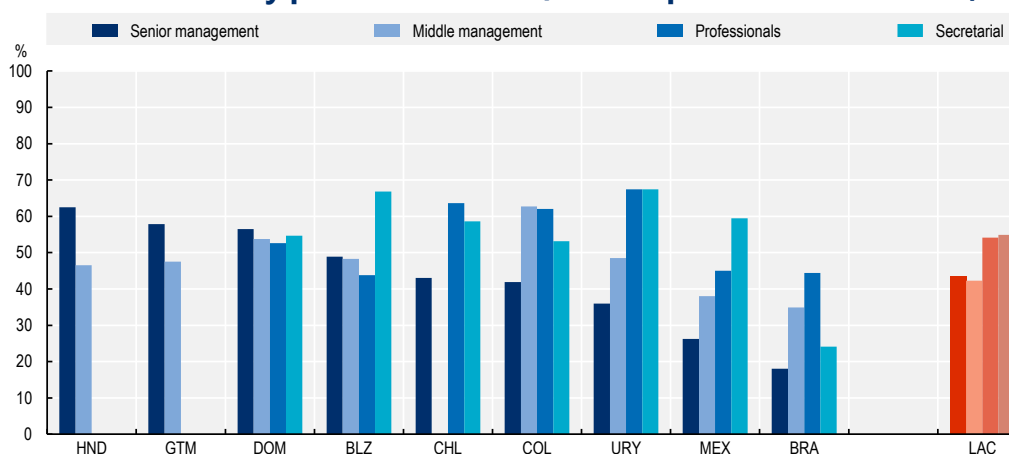
Figure 12.5. Gender equality in public sector employment and in total employment, 2011 and 2021



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT (database), Employment by sex and institutional sector.

StatLink <https://stat.link/z8k2bc>

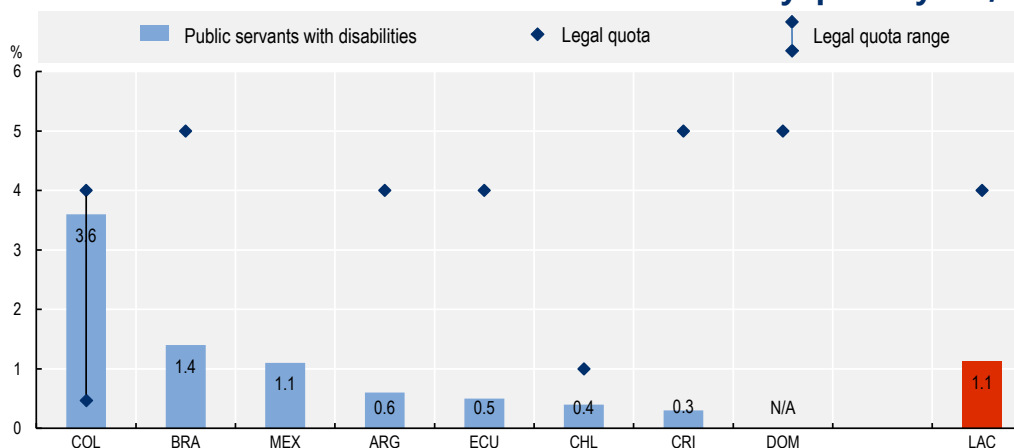
Figure 12.6. Share of women by position in central/federal public administration, 2022



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

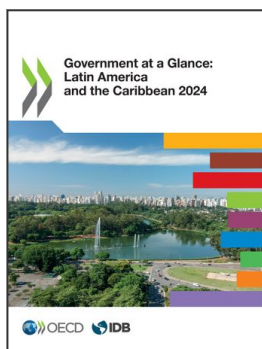
StatLink <https://stat.link/rhfwqb>

Figure 12.7. Public servants with disabilities and minimum disability quota by law, 2022



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

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



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