

### 13.3 Management of senior public servants

Senior public management positions require individuals with strong leadership skills who can effectively solve problems and guide their organisations in line with the government's agenda. These positions require adeptly managing the complex interaction between political dynamics and professional operations within public administrations and play a pivotal role in achieving policy outcomes. Given this demanding context, it is crucial for governments to assess and monitor senior public servants' leadership abilities and performance and hold them accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities. It is also relevant to acknowledge the differences between senior roles and those of other public servants, which in some cases may warrant different employment frameworks.

The OECD has developed an analytical index to identify and measure two sets of policies for managing senior public servants: developing leadership capabilities, and managing performance and accountability (Gerson, 2020). Overall, the 15 surveyed Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries score 0.40 on average, slightly lower than the OECD average (0.49). However, LAC countries in the OECD, Chile (0.50), Colombia (0.65), Costa Rica (0.64) and Mexico (0.65), along with El Salvador (0.58), positively stand out for the use of such policies. On average, LAC countries score slightly more for their use of performance and accountability tools (0.21) than for those to develop leadership capabilities (0.19). Colombia is the top scorer (0.44) for performance and accountability tools with policies on measuring individual performance goals, collective or institutional goals and efficiency and quality performance, among others. Costa Rica scores highest in the use of tools to develop leadership capabilities (0.31), due to a well-developed competency framework for recruitment (Figure 13.5). This includes a Dictionary of Competencies of the Civil Service Regime, and performance assessments. The Costa Rican government also provides continuous professional development to its senior level public servants through the Modular Programme for Public Managers.

In some LAC countries, the employment framework for senior public servants differs in some respects from that of other public servant positions. The most common difference – in 10 of the 15 surveyed LAC countries (67%) – is that senior public servants can be dismissed or demoted more easily than other public servants, similar to OECD countries (62%). Likewise, in 40% of LAC countries, senior public servants are recruited through a more centralised process than other public servants (Table 13.2). However, most LAC countries do not use a different framework for many aspects of managing senior public positions. In 14 of the 15 LAC countries (93%) potential senior public servants are not identified early on so that more attention can be paid to the

management of their careers, nor is more career mobility encouraged (Table 13.2). Strengthening and reinforcing the employment framework can help develop a high-performing senior level public service.

#### Methodology and definitions

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

The composite index is made up of the following aspects of senior public service management: 1) the development of leadership capabilities; and 2) the use of performance and accountability tools. Each dimension is built from answers to several related questions. The index ranges from 0 (no policies to manage the senior public service) to 1 (high level of use of policies to manage the senior public service). Further details on the composite index are available in Annex E.

#### Further reading

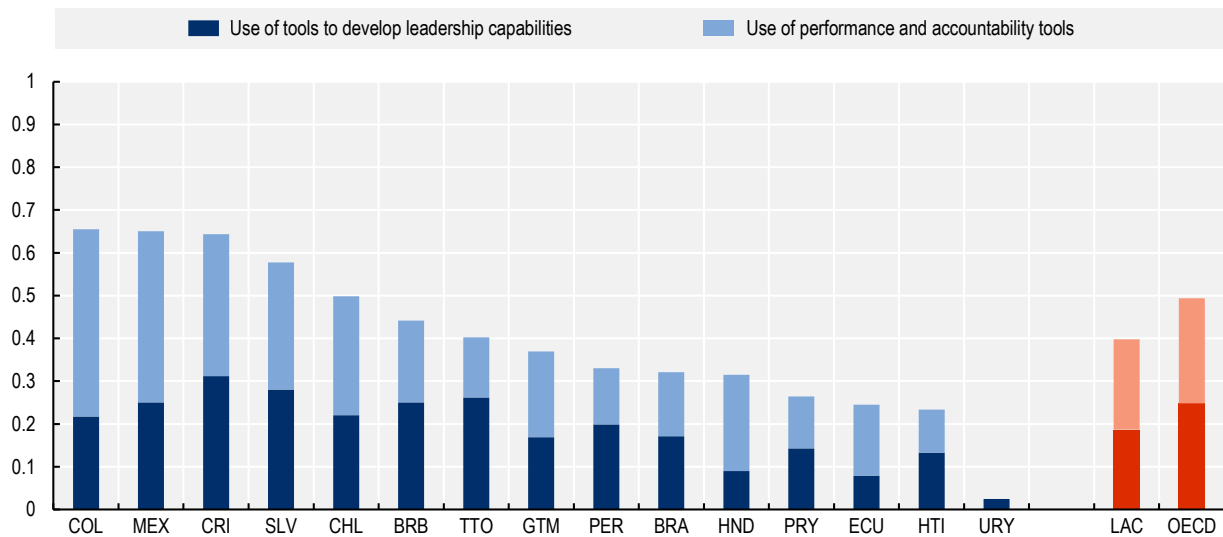
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- Gerson, D. (2020), "Leadership for a high performing civil service: Towards senior civil service systems in OECD countries", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 40, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ed8235c8-en>.
- OECD (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>.
- Weber, A. and M. Lafuente (2017), "¿Cómo diseñar e implementar un segmento directivo profesionalizado?: Opciones para una gerencia pública "a la carta?", *Technical Note IDB-TN-1240*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0000603>.

#### Figure notes

Figure 13.5 and Table 13.2. Data for the OECD average refer to 2020.

Table 13.2. OECD total is based on 34 countries.

**Figure 13.5. Index: Managing the senior level public service, 2022**



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

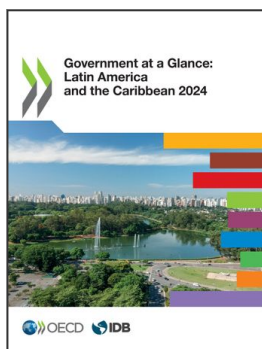
StatLink <https://stat.link/y7ve5l>

**Table 13.2. Characteristics of the employment framework for senior public servants, 2022**

	Differences between senior level public servants compared to other public servants:									
	They are recruited with a more centralised process	They are identified early on in their careers and more attention is paid to the management of their careers	More emphasis is put into avoiding conflicts of interest	More emphasis is put into the management of their performance	They are encouraged to have more career mobility	The part of their pay that is performance-related is higher	Their appointment into a post is shorter (e.g. in case of fixed term contracts)	They can be dismissed or demoted more easily than other public servants	There are no differences, all public servants are under the same employment framework	
Barbados	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
Brazil	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	●	○	○
Chile	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Colombia	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○
Costa Rica	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	○	○
Ecuador	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
El Salvador	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Guatemala	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Haiti	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Honduras	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Mexico	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Paraguay	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	○
Peru	○	○	●	●	○	●	○	●	○	○
Tobago	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
Uruguay	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
<b>LAC Total</b>										
● Yes	6	1	5	4	1	4	4	10	3	
○ No	9	14	10	11	14	11	11	5	12	
<b>OECD Total</b>										
● Yes	21	2	17	17	11	9	15	21	2	
○ No	13	32	17	17	23	25	19	13	32	

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

StatLink <https://stat.link/mk1lby>



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