

## 2.1 Trust in government

Trust is defined as a person's belief that another person or institution will act consistently with their expectations of positive behaviour. Trust in government is a multidimensional concept that provides a general measure of how people perceive the performance and values of public institutions in democratic countries (OECD, 2022; Brezzi et al., 2021). Trust in each other and toward public institutions can enhance social cohesion, nurture political engagement and fuel economic growth both directly, by reducing transaction costs, and indirectly by, for example, creating a reliable environment for investment (OECD, 2022; Keefer and Scartascini 2022; Brezzi et al., 2021). Conversely, lack of trust was found, for instance, to reduce collaboration and innovation inside private and public sector organisations. As such, it is important for countries to understand what drives trust in public institutions (OECD, 2022). Despite a general lack of sound data on the drivers of trust in public institutions in Latin America, recent research by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) finds that people's trust in government and government resilience in the face of crises could both be positively affected by making it clearer what citizens can expect from governments, public sector reforms that enable governments to keep their promises, and institutional reforms that strengthen the commitments that citizens make to each other (Keefer and Scartascini, 2022).

On average, 36.3% of the population in the 16 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries with available data reported trusting their national government in 2022, which is 3.9 percentage points (p.p.) lower than in 2008 and 11 p.p. below the OECD average (47.5%), according to Gallup World Poll. Trust in public institutions varies across countries due to cultural, socio-economic and institutional factors. The percentage of the population that trust their government varies in the region, with Costa Rica (60%) and Mexico (53%) having high levels of trust in 2022. Between 2008 and 2022, trust increased the most in Costa Rica (24 p.p.), and Mexico (12 p.p.) (Figure 2.1).

Trust also varies across age groups in LAC; on average young people tend to trust the government less than older population. In 2022, on average 34.5% of the population aged 15-29 in LAC countries trusted the national government, compared to 43.1% of those aged 50 and over. In 2022, the largest differences in trust between the oldest and youngest cohorts were in the Dominican Republic (26 p.p.), Mexico (17 p.p.) and Colombia (14 p.p.) (Figure 2.2).

Trust is an important indicator for measuring how people perceive the quality of government institutions in democratic

countries and how they relate to them. While trust it is not in itself a necessary outcome of democratic governance, a certain level of trust is required for governments to successfully carry out public sector reforms. Better evidence on the levels and drivers of trust in LAC is required to disentangle its multidimensionality and enable governments to propose and adjust their actions with the goal of earning their citizens' trust.

### Methodology and definitions

Data are from the Gallup World Poll (GWP), which is a cross-national and longitudinal survey based on a nationally representative and probability sample of about 1 000 individuals per country. In some countries, data refer exclusively to the capital or largest cities. The GWP includes questions on confidence in the national government. The questions on confidence in the national government allow for a binary response (yes or no). For more information on the survey methodology please consult: [www.gallup.com/178667/gallupworld-poll-work.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/178667/gallupworld-poll-work.aspx). Updated trust data for Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico will be available in June 2024 from the OECD survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions.

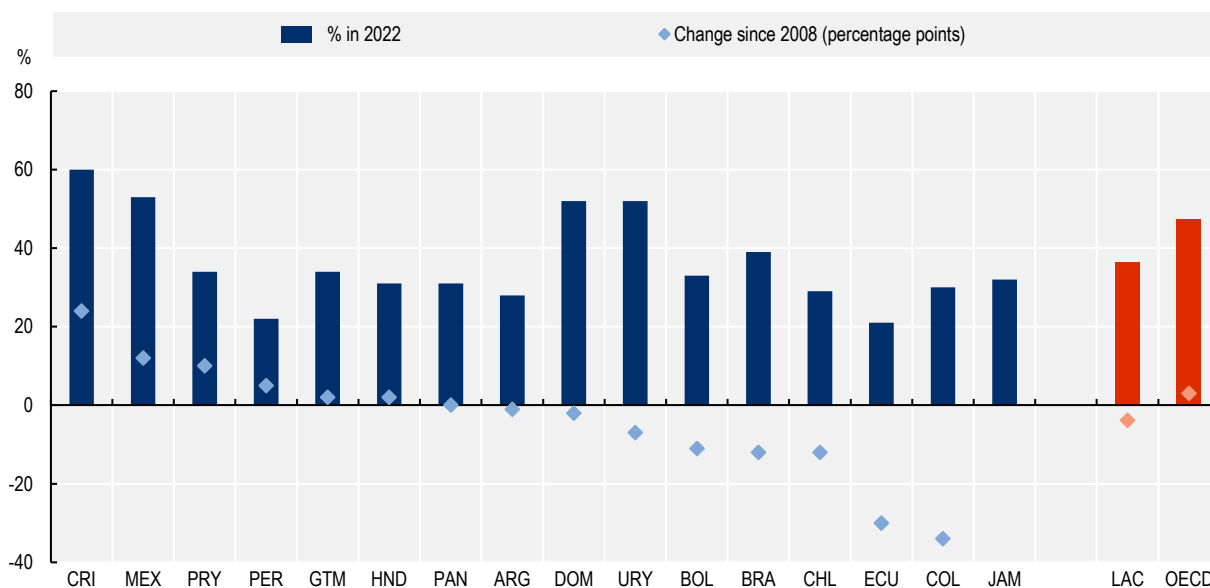
### Further reading

- Brezzi, M., et al. (2021), "An updated OECD framework on drivers of trust in public institutions to meet current and future challenges", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 48, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b6c5478c-en>.
- Keefer, P. and C. Scartascini (2022), *Trust: The Key to Social Cohesion and Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0003911>.
- OECD (2022), *Building Trust to Reinforce Democracy: Main Findings from the 2021 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions*, Building Trust in Public Institutions, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b407f99c-en>.


### Figure notes

- Figure 2.1. Average for the OECD is from 2007 instead of 2008.
- Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2. Refer to the share of respondents who answered "yes" to the question "Do you have confidence in your national government?"

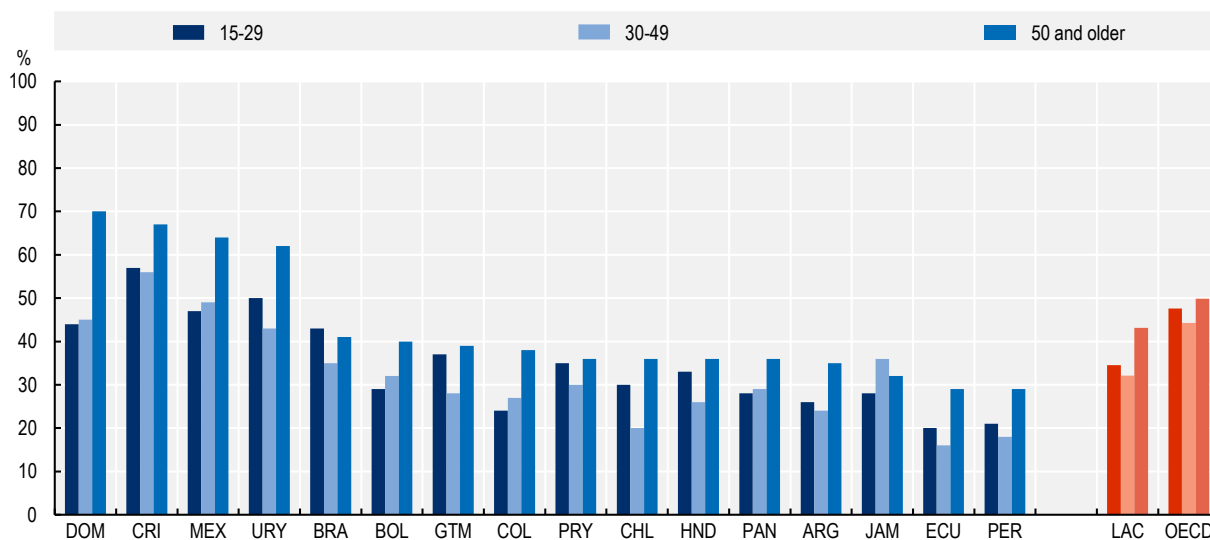
**Figure 2.1. Trust in national government, 2022 and its change since 2008**



Source: Gallup World Poll 2023 (database).

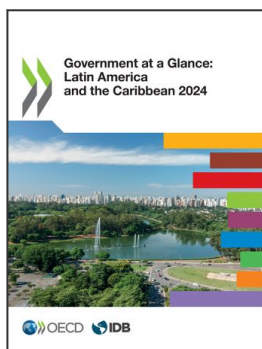
StatLink  <https://stat.link/3kxebv>

**Figure 2.2. Trust in national government by age group, 2022**



Source: Gallup World Poll 2023 (database).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/5r4tbx>



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