

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN? GENDER EQUALITY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



University of
Pittsburgh



United Nations Development Programme

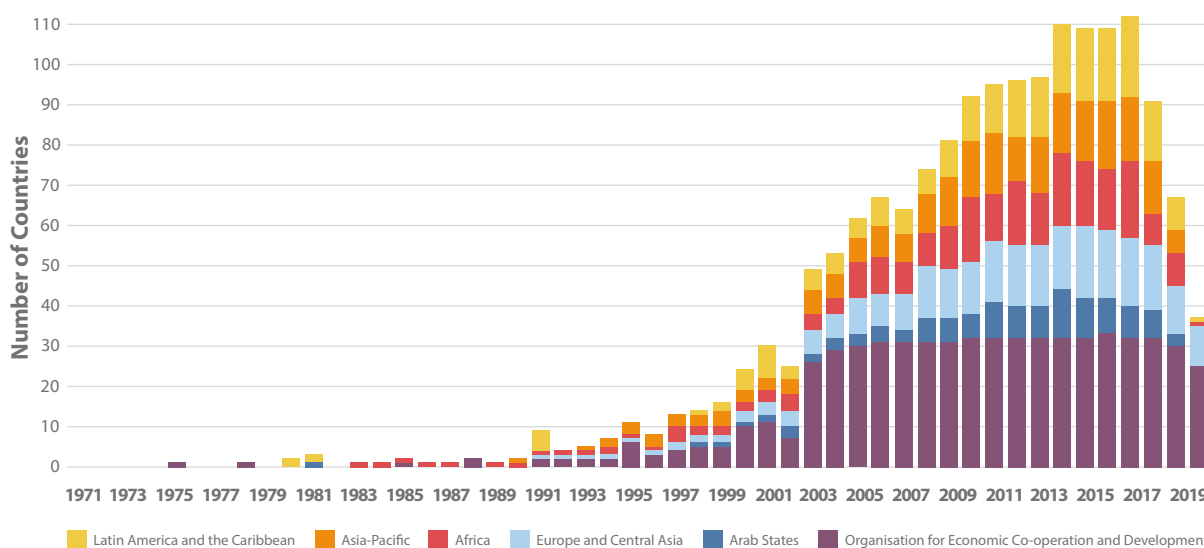


Women's participation in the civil service approaches parity with 46 percent on average across 139 countries and territories.¹ Yet, significant variation across countries and regions means that only one-third (33 percent) of countries have reached this goal. At decision-making levels of the civil service, women make up only 31 percent of top leadership positions on average. Women are also missing from COVID-19 policy decision-making spaces. Even though women make up 58 percent of employees in health ministries worldwide,² they average just 24 percent of COVID-19 task force positions and make up only 18 percent of task force leadership globally.³

This brief provides an overview on women's participation and leadership in public administration in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), as well as on the gendered dimensions of the COVID-19 policy response. While women in LAC reach parity in the civil service overall, they remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of decision-making, including in COVID-19 response.

Gender Equality in Public Administration in LAC

FIGURE 1
Availability of gender-disaggregated data on public administration employment between 1970 and 2020.



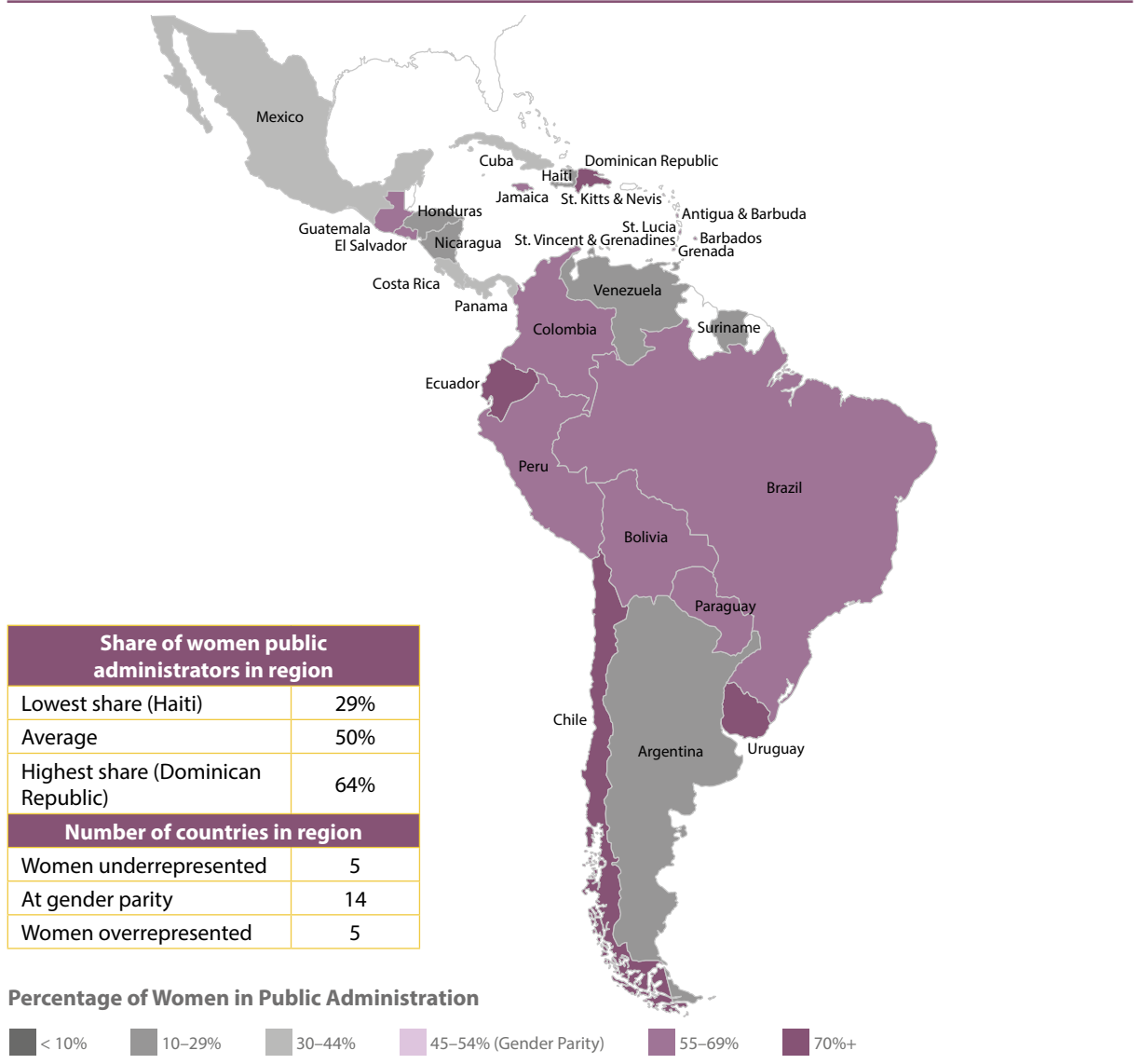
Source: Gender Parity in Civil Service (Gen-PaCS) dataset, December 2020.

1 Hughes, Melanie M., Müge Kökten Finkel, and Brianna Howell. 2021. "Gender Parity in Civil Service (Gen-PaCS) Dataset."
 2 Ibid.
 3 UNDP-UN Women-UPITT. 2021. "COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Task Force Dataset." Living database, version 2 (November 11, 2021). Accessible at <https://data.undp.org/gendert Tracker/>.



The availability of gender-disaggregated data has improved over time in every region of the world, including LAC. In this region, there are 29 countries or territories with gender-disaggregated data available on at least one dimension of public administration (see appendix). Twenty-eight countries have data available on overall employment, 15 on decision-making, and eight have ministry-level data. Intersectional data remains a large gap in the region: data on age is available for only seven countries, race/ethnicity in three countries, and disability in three countries. The region stands out for its widespread data availability over time – 16 countries in LAC have four or more years of data publicly available since 2015.

FIGURE 2
Percentage of women’s participation across all levels of public administration



Note: The map indicates the overall share of women in public administration for countries in the region using the most recent year of data available. Data prior to 2015 are excluded. The depiction and use of boundaries, geographic names and related data shown on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations, including UNDP, or UN Member States.

Source: Gender Parity in Civil Service (Gen-PaCS) dataset, December 2020.

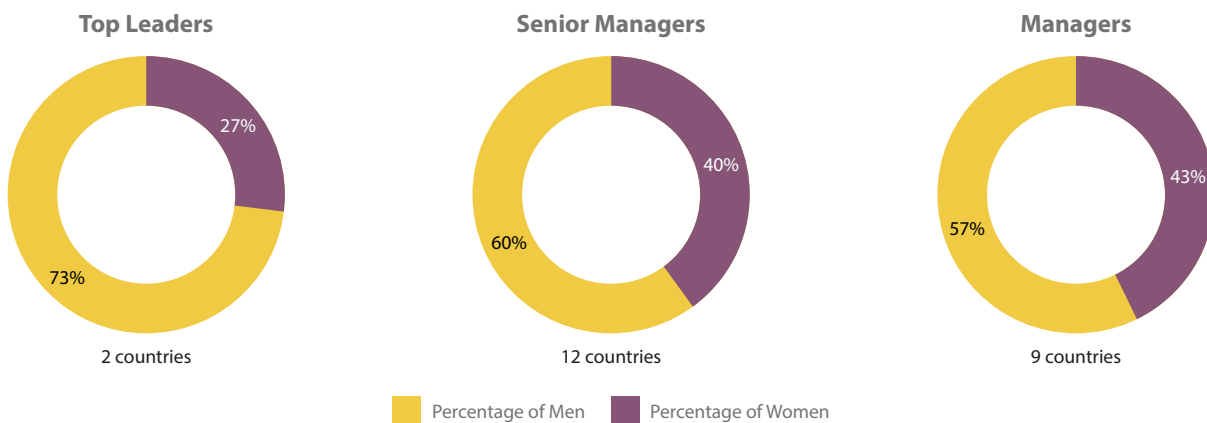


Women's participation in public administration

Of the 24 countries in LAC with recent available data,⁴ women account for exactly half of all civil servants in the region at large, with 14 countries achieving gender parity.⁵ For countries with multiple years of data (Barbados, Brazil, Colombia, Grenada, Guatemala, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, and Saint Lucia), the trend of reaching parity is consistent for all years since 2015. Women are overrepresented in five countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Uruguay. This is a consistent trend for Chile and the Dominican Republic, where women have made up 58 percent or more of public administrators since 2016. On the other end of the spectrum, women are underrepresented in five countries: Costa Rica, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, and Panama. Women are the most underrepresented in Haiti and Mexico, where they make up 30 and 37 percent of public administrators, respectively. Women reached parity in Panama as recently as 2017, but have made up less than 42 percent of public administration employees in Cuba and Costa Rica since 2015.

Women in public administration decision-making positions

FIGURE 3
Share of women among public administration decision-making positions



Note: Data is displayed for most recent year available. Data prior to 2015 is excluded.

Source: Gender Parity in Civil Service (Gen-PaCS) dataset, December 2020.

Decision-making data on women's employment in public administration in LAC is sparse at the top levels. Only Brazil and Uruguay have gender-disaggregated data for top leaders, and women are significantly underrepresented in both countries. Women make up only 21 percent of top leaders in Brazil and only 32 percent in Uruguay. Women fare better at lower levels of decision-making, making up 40 percent of senior managers across 12 countries with such data. Women at the senior manager level are best represented in Uruguay, occupying 52 percent of positions, and most underrepresented in Peru, where they account for only 29 percent of positions. At the manager level, the lowest level of decision-making, women make up 42 percent of these positions across nine countries. Though women's representation is higher at this level, only one-third of countries with relevant data in the region achieve gender parity among managers.

⁴ Countries with data from prior to 2015 were excluded from this analysis. Data points are calculated using the most recent year of data available. See appendix to review which countries are included in this analysis.

⁵ Parity is defined as an equal number of men and women, however small deviations from 50 percent women and men are expected, in some cases simply because of an odd number of positions. This brief therefore considers parity to have been reached once there are 45 percent women, and women's overrepresentation begins at 55 percent.



COVID-19 Leadership and Policy Response in LAC⁶

Women's representation on national COVID-19 task forces⁷

COVID-19 task forces are any executive branch institution that was created by the national government in response to the pandemic. In LAC, there are 102 COVID-19 task forces across 41 countries and territories with available information, including 65 task forces with data on membership and 35 task forces with leadership data. Women's participation on COVID-19 task forces averages 28 percent in the region, which is 5 percent higher than the global average. The share of women in countries' COVID-19 task forces ranges from just 10 percent in Brazil to 71 percent in Guatemala. Three countries in the region with task forces have achieved gender parity (Chile, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia), while women are underrepresented in 86 percent of task forces (56 out of 65). Fifteen countries in LAC have women-led task forces, including Belize, Guatemala, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Turks and Caicos. Notably, Saint Lucia and Chile stand out as two of only eight countries globally with task forces that have achieved gender parity *and* have a woman leader.

Women make up 28 percent of members across 22 task forces in LAC with an economic focus. This is slightly higher than the global average of 25 percent (33 task forces). Two notable economic task forces come from Chile, which were created with an explicit mandate to address women's economic security. The "*Board of Economic Reactivation for Women*" targets sectors that have been impacted by COVID-19 and promotes women's entrepreneurship. This task force is led by a woman and reaches gender parity. The "*Technical Working Group on Women and Construction*" promotes the integration of women into the construction industry, a historically male-dominated field, as a way to reactivate the Chilean economy.

For task forces with a public health focus, LAC is 5 percent below the global average of 32 percent (121 task forces), with women making up just 27 percent of members across 30 public health task forces in the region. Combined with the public administration data, this illustrates how women's high participation in health ministries does not necessarily guarantee gender parity in pandemic response decision-making bodies. For example, in Colombia women make up 47 percent of decision-making positions in the Ministry of Health,⁸ yet they average only 29 percent of membership and 0 percent of leadership across five COVID-19 task forces.

Gender sensitive COVID-19 policy response⁹

The UNDP/UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker identifies policy measures taken by governments in response to COVID-19 and analyzes them with a gender lens. 46 countries and territories in LAC have 1,117 measures in the tracker, including 414 gender-sensitive measures across 38 countries. This includes 214 measures tackling gender-based violence (32 countries), 167 measures targeting women's economic security (35 countries), and 33 measures addressing unpaid care work (17 countries).

⁶ For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 task forces and policy responses, visit <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>.

⁷ UNDP-UN Women-UPITT. 2021. "COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Task Force Dataset." Living database, version 2 (November 11, 2021). Accessible at <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>.

⁸ Hughes, Melanie M., Müge Kökten Finkel, and Brianna Howell. 2021. "Gender Parity in Civil Service (Gen-PaCS) Dataset."

⁹ UNDP-UN Women. 2021. "COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Policy Measures Dataset." Living database, version 3 (November 11, 2021). Accessible at <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>.



Although 17 countries in the region have taken at least one measure to address care work, this policy area has received little attention across the globe. Only 7 percent (226 out of 3,099) of all social protection and labour market measures identified in the tracker address rising unpaid care demands. LAC provides some promising examples of efforts on this front. For instance, as part of Argentina’s “National Campaign for Equal Care” (“Campaña Nacional Cuidar en Igualdad”) led by the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity, an interministerial committee on care policies was created to develop localized strategies to help reduce the care burden that women face, which has increased during COVID-19. The Cayman Islands also innovated in this area through the relaunch of its “Ready2Work” programme, which was designed to equip former tourism sector employees who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic with additional skills needed for other industries. The programme offers paid internships and support services, such as childcare, counselling, and career coaching.¹⁰

Peace, sustainable development, and gender equality in public administration in Colombia’s territories¹¹

In 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a historic peace agreement, marking an end to over 50 years of armed conflict. Under the peace agreement, the government pledged to make significant investments in rural areas through a series of territorially focused development plans called “Development Programs with Territorial Approach,” or PDETs. The government selected municipalities with high rates of poverty, a history of illicit economies, institutional weakness, or those most affected by the conflict, with the aim to build sustainable peace through economic development and by fostering a greater sense of citizenship. PDETs are currently in 168 municipalities and the government plans to reach 11,000 villages. Municipalities targeted for PDETs have had fewer women in decision-making positions in public administration across the highest three tiers of Colombia’s civil service (Directors, Advisors, and Professionals) compared to other rural municipalities. In 2020, women accounted for 37 percent of Directors in PDET municipalities compared to 41 percent in non-PDET municipalities. Notably, however, comparing data from 2019 and 2020 suggests that the number of women directors in PDET municipalities is on the rise.

10 UNDP-UN Women. 2021. “COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker: Global Factsheet,” Version 3 (November 11, 2021). Accessible at <https://www.undp.org/publications/covid-19-global-gender-response-tracker-fact-sheets>.

11 Finkel, Müge Kökten, Melanie M. Hughes, and Joanna Hill. 2021. *Gender Equality in Public Administration*. New York, NY: UNDP and University of Pittsburgh. <https://www.undp.org/publications/global-report-gender-equality-public-administration>.



Appendix

Women's participation in public administration in LAC¹²

Country or territory	Percentage of women in public administration overall	Decision-making positions		
		Top leaders (percent)	Senior managers (percent)	Managers (percent)
Antigua and Barbuda	62 (2015)	-	-	-
Bahamas	48 (2000)	-	-	-
Barbados	51 (2018)	-	-	-
Belize	47 (2000)	-	-	-
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	49 (2016)	-	33 (2016)	-
Brazil	46 (2019)	21 (2017)	43 (2019)	-
Chile	60 (2018)	-	42 (2018)	35 (2015)
Colombia	52 (2020)	-	41 (2020)	55 (2015)
Costa Rica	39 (2019)	-	35 (2017)	43 (2017)
Cuba	42 (2018)	-	-	-
Dominica	34 (2001)	-	-	-
Dominican Republic	64 (2019)	-	44 (2017)	43 (2017)
Ecuador	58 (2017)	-	-	40 (2017)
El Salvador	50 (2017)	-	40 (2017)	52 (2017)
Grenada	50 (2018)	-	-	-
Guatemala	50 (2019)	-	-	-
Guyana	46 (2012)	-	-	-
Haiti	29 (2017)	-	-	36 (2017)
Honduras	-	-	49 (2017)	-
Jamaica	47 (2019)	-	-	-
Mexico	37 (2015)	-	24 (2015)	37 (2015)
Nicaragua	44 (2006)	-	-	-
Panama	43 (2019)	-	-	-
Paraguay	54 (2019)	-	48 (2019)	47 (2019)
Peru	48 (2018)	-	29 (2018)	-
Saint Kitts and Nevis	54 (2016)	-	-	-
Saint Lucia	51 (2018)	-	-	-
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	48 (2015)	-	-	-
Uruguay	55 (2018)	32 (2017)	52 (2017)	-

Acknowledgements

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¹² Table displays data for most recent year available.

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