Promoting equality

The contribution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean

Simone Cecchini, Raúl Holz
and Humberto Soto de la Rosa

Coordinators

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A TOOLKIT FOR

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Contents

Foreword

In 2015, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 193 Member States of the United Nations committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), based on a transformative vision that puts the reduction of inequality in all its dimensions at the centre. This commitment was embodied in SDG 10 ("reduce inequality within and among countries"), as well as in the call to "leave no one behind" on the development path and to strive to "reach the furthest behind first".

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the role of equality as a pillar of development, which can only be achieved by acknowledging and effectively closing the social and economic gaps that pervade the different countries. This entails promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) considers equality to be a key goal of development and has emphasized the importance of achieving greater equality as part of States' responsibility to guarantee the exercise of the rights of all people. Since 2010, in the position documents presented at its sessions, ECLAC has stressed that equality is an ethical imperative that must be consolidated in institutions, structures and policies that help to close gaps.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated the wide structural gaps in the region and highlighted the effects of inequality. The axes of the social inequality matrix —such as socioeconomic stratum, gender, stage of the life cycle, ethnicity and race, disability, migration status and territory— give rise to multiple simultaneous situations of exclusion and discrimination which, combined with high levels of labour informality and poverty and a widespread lack of social protection, lead to greater vulnerability to the health, social and economic effects of the pandemic. Therefore, considering that different population groups have unequal opportunities to achieve well-being, we must aspire to attain equality and sustainability and to create a true welfare state.

Hence, it is important to close inequality gaps existing across the different axes and in the different areas of human rights they affect, such as income, decent work, social protection and access to care, education, health, pension systems, nutrition and basic services. The key is to pursue greater equality of means, by increasing the availability of income and productive resources as well as through more equal opportunities and more egalitarian capacity development, with a view to effective economic, political and social inclusion.

This "toolkit" aims to strengthen capacity-building in the field of pro-equality public social policies. It therefore provides readers with resources that help identify key international commitments on human rights and equality, facilitate diagnosis and analysis of prevailing socioeconomic inequalities, and enhance the design, prioritization and implementation of policies to respond to challenges. The various examples provided herein demonstrate that policies such as those on social protection, care, health, education and labour play a key role in tackling inequality.

With its ultimate goal of facilitating identification, design and implementation of equality-oriented social policies, this "toolkit" is an important contribution towards achieving the overarching objective of closing the region's pervasive inequality gaps.

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for Latin America
and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Abstract

The main purposes of this toolkit are to facilitate the assessment of the multiple dimensions of social inequality found in Latin America and the Caribbean and to provide relevant information on social policies in different countries in the region that have proven to be effective in reducing those inequalities.

In 2016, ECLAC published *The Social Inequality Matrix in Latin America*, which presents an in-depth analysis of inequality in the region. This toolkit operationalizes that analysis. It is structured around the social inequality matrix because that matrix offers a flexible analytical framework for exploring the many different facets of social inequality in the region. The matrix is composed of a number of different axes, the first of which is socioeconomic strata. That axis intersects with and reinforces gender and ethnic/racial inequalities and the inequalities associated with the different stages of the human life cycle, disability, migration status and territorial factors.

This analysis demonstrates that the axes making up the social inequality matrix are an essential frame of reference for identifying and understanding current trends in inequality, with one of the most conspicuous of those trends being the divergent dynamics of different population groups. The analysis also underscores the ways in which inequalities give rise to gaps in the exercise of rights and in some of the main areas of social development, such as education, health and social protection.

An exploration of these trends also draws attention to the challenges that need to be taken up by social policymakers in order to improve the living conditions of the population groups that have been left the furthest behind. Information is provided on what the experiences of many different countries in the region indicate should be high-priority policies for addressing these social inequalities. The descriptions of these policies are not intended to be blueprints to be followed but rather to be a starting point for exploring and expanding upon the array of possible responses and solutions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on the reduction of inequality as an end in itself and as an essential cross-cutting element in the achievement of sustainable development. This toolkit offers a methodology for assessing and identifying priority policies for reducing inequality and thus helping to ensure that no one is left behind.

Introduction
The regional context and objectives[1]

The 2030 Agenda, the persistence of social inequality and the commitment of ECLAC

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) reflects a consensus around the need for a sustainable, inclusive development model in which well-being is the central focus. It is a transformative agenda in which the core element is the reduction of all aspects of inequality. Its call to "leave no one behind" and to "reach the furthest behind first" articulates the priority embodied in Sustainable Development Goal 10, which is to reduce inequality within and among countries. However, the aim of attaining greater equality is interwoven throughout the 2030 Agenda. It is inherent in the search for greater gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5). The quest for greater equality is also reflected in the search for a life free of extreme deprivation, for a way to end poverty in all its forms (Goal 1), to end hunger (Goal 2), to gain equal access to basic living conditions for all by ensuring healthy lives (Goal 3), to achieve inclusive and quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities (Goal 4), to ensure access to clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), to affordable, clean energy (Goal 7) and to decent work (goal 8) and to access to justice for all (Goal 16). The 2030 Agenda thus recognizes equality as a fundamental element that can only be achieved by means of a clear recognition of the gaps that exist between levels of social development in different countries and communities and the effective elimination of those gaps (United Nations, 2015).

The world's predominant development model has generated sharp economic, social and environmental

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imbalances that have led to a striking degree of inequality. Although the extent of that inequality has diminished over the past decade, the Latin American and Caribbean region is still the most unequal of all the world regions in terms of income levels. These imbalances have historically been paired with a structurally heterogeneous production matrix which, in large part, underlies the region's extreme social inequality.

In order to address these problems, for at least as far back as 2010, ECLAC has been focusing on equality as a core value and an overriding ethical principle to guide the search for a way to further a development process that is grounded in a rights-based approach. This has been reflected in successive ECLAC documents, including *Time for Equality: Closing Gaps, Opening Trails* (ECLAC, 2010); *Structural Change for Equality: an Integrated Approach to Development* (ECLAC, 2012); *Compacts for Equality: Towards a Sustainable Future* (ECLAC, 2014); *Horizons 2030: Equality at the Centre of Sustainable Development* (ECLAC, 2016a); *The Social Inequality Matrix in Latin America* (ECLAC, 2016b); *The Inefficiency of Inequality* (ECLAC, 2018); and *Building a New Future: Transformative Recovery with Equality and Sustainability* (ECLAC, 2020b). Attaining greater equality is also one of the chief objectives of the *Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development* (ECLAC, 2020c), a technical policy paper adopted by the countries of the region when they gathered at the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in their search for ways to support the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda in the region.

Inequality and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The crisis brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has swept over the region at a particularly difficult point in time, one that, since 2014, has been marked by a halting reduction in income inequality coupled with rising levels of poverty and extreme poverty, sluggish growth and environmental imbalances induced by an unsustainable development style. The pandemic has laid bare and widened the region's broad structural gaps, including those associated with high levels of inequality, while its various social and economic impacts reflect the region's social inequality matrix. The members of the most vulnerable groups in the population and persons working in the informal sector of the economy have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 crisis (ECLAC, 2020a). In order to make a recovery under these conditions, the countries of the region will have to rebuild and to take action in the short term, but they will also need to maintain a medium- and long-term perspective. The recovery and the development process need to be shaped in such a way that they will lead the region towards an inclusive welfare State and an equality-enhancing transformation of production patterns (ECLAC, 2020b).[2]

The objectives of this toolkit are:

(i)   To supply information on key international standards that, starting from a rights-based approach, will facilitate the formulation and implementation of social policies that will reduce inequality.

(ii)   To facilitate an assessment that will both identify and analyse issues relating to the prevailing types of social inequality.

(iii)   To advance social policies that regional experience has shown to be effective in reducing inequalities and paving the way for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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[2]   In the diagnostic section of each chapter, text boxes are included on the impacts of the pandemic and the policies adopted in response to it. A detailed accounting exceeds the bounds of this study, however.

The concept of tool in this kit focus on three main areas: social policy norms, an assessment of inequalities and the implementation of social policies.[3] The aim, insofar as possible, is to single out public policies whose positive impact in reducing some of the many different dimensions of inequality has been accurately measured and evaluated. Because there is such a wide range of issues to be dealt with, the individual chapters also provide a gateway to specific sources and links that can provide more detailed information about the many dimensions of inequality.

Who are the intended users of this toolkit?

This toolkit is intended for use by social policymakers. Yet while the main target audience is presumably government officials who are in charge of designing, implementing and evaluating these policies, it is hoped that civil society organizations and cooperation agencies will also find these concepts and experiences helpful in identifying relevant national and international regulatory standards and in assessing, prioritizing, designing and implementing public policies that will help to lessen social inequalities. The toolkit may also be useful for students doing research on social and economic development issues.

DIAGRAM I.1
Contents of the toolkit
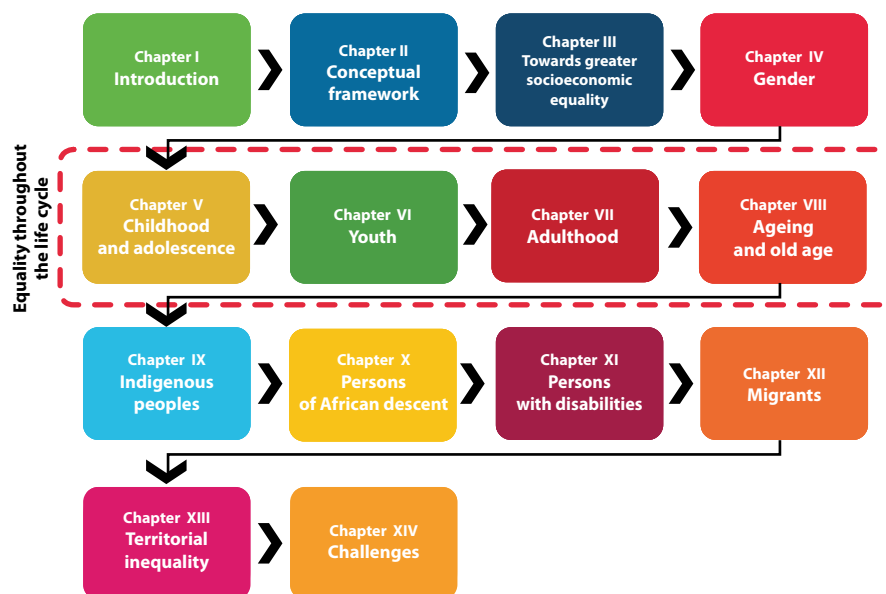
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Chapter format

The chapters on the different axes of social inequality (chapters III–XIII) all have a similar structure. The first section in each of these chapters identifies some key rights-based international social policy norms. This is followed by a section that presents an assessment of the relevant dimension of inequality which clarifies some central concepts and outlines

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3   Such tools are designed to assist in the formulation and management of social policy and will be discussed in a separate document on the analysis of social policy institutions.

the types of gaps that exist in specific areas, such as income, labour and employment, social protection and care, education, health and nutrition, basic services, public safety and freedom from violence, and participation and decision-making.

A third section focuses on high-priority public policies for reducing inequalities as illustrated by relevant success stories in the countries of the region. Each of these chapters concludes with a reading list and a set of questions that can serve as a basis for training workshops at which participants can explore and discuss these issues with a view to arriving at a fuller understanding of the contents of the toolkit itself.

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Conceptual framework
Equality: the what and the why[1]

A. Equality viewed from a rights-based perspective

ECLAC regards equality as a normative principle and as a strategic development horizon (Bárcena and Prado, 2016). Viewed from a rights-based perspective, the emphasis is on understanding equality in terms of:

- **Means:** of attaining a more equitable distribution of income, productive and financial assets, and property.

- **Opportunities:** for ending all forms of discrimination in access to social, economic or political positions.

- **Capacities:** for each person to live their life in a way that they see as being valuable.

- **Mutual recognition:** for promoting autonomy and mitigating vulnerabilities, fostering equality in the cross-generational distribution of social, economic and political roles and in the affirmation of collective identities.

- **The importance of closing gaps** should be the guiding principle of public action aimed at achieving substantive equality. This principle should not be reduced to a search for equality of opportunity but should instead also encompass the equality of rights, means, capacities and outcomes.

ECLAC (2010, 2012, 2014, 2018a, 2018b) sees equality as a normative principle and as a strategic development horizon. It also calls for social policies, in general, and pro-equality policies, more specifically, to be designed and administered from a rights-based perspective. An understanding of equality that is grounded in a rights-based perspective necessarily draws inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), which establishes that:

- Art. 22 Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and

[1] This chapter was prepared by Raúl Holz, a consultant with the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

- Art. 25: 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

A rights-based approach serves as a basis for linking the design and implementation of pro-equality policies with binding national and international agreements. Viewed in these terms, policies and programmes are not for "people with needs who require help", but for those who "possess rights which are binding on the State" (Abramovich, 2006, p. 34). In other words, it places people, as subjects of rights, at the heart of public policy and seeks to guarantee the full enjoyment of their rights for all members of the population. The rights-based approach thus provides a normative framework along with guiding principles and directions for pro-equality policies. The proposition that human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals are indivisible and universal necessarily entails the promotion of comprehensive, interlinked and intersectoral social policies based on universal education and health systems and the expansion of social protection systems.

Economic, social and cultural rights are of pivotal importance in policies designed to reduce inequality[2] There are a range of criteria for determining whether States are meeting their obligations in upholding people's rights. One of those criteria is whether a State is taking the necessary steps "to the maximum of its available resources" to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, to avert any deterioration of the existing system for the protection of those rights, to progressively achieve the realization of those rights, to ensure non-discrimination, to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of those rights and to meet the minimum essential requirements for the enjoyment of each such right (United Nations, 1966).

Based on this global rights-based framework, ECLAC places priority on understanding equality in terms of means, opportunities, capacities and recognition. In other words, in order to achieve equality, people must be regarded as rights holders rather than simply as beneficiaries of social policies, and they are therefore entitled to certain guarantees and have certain responsibilities. Equality of means is equated with a more equitable distribution of income, productive and financial assets, and property and with a structure in which wages account for a larger share of total income in the economy. Equality of opportunity entails the absence of any form of discrimination in access to social, economic or political positions. Equality of capacity refers to the skills, knowledge and proficiencies that people can acquire and can put to use in order to live their lives in a way that they deem to be valuable. Finally, equality in terms of mutual recognition translates into the participation of different people in providing care, working and exercising power, in the distribution of costs and benefits across present and future generations, and in the visibility and affirmation of collective identities.

Along these same lines, ECLAC (2018a and 2018b) reaffirms the need to transition from a culture of privilege to a culture of equal rights. A culture of privilege has three main hallmarks. The first has to do with the normalization of difference as inequality. In this case, ascriptive or semi-ascriptive characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, country or place of origin, culture, language and religion (Calderón, Hopenhayn and Ottone, 1994 and 1996), are used as a device for justifying inequalities in terms of power, living conditions and access to assets, influential

Rights-based pro-equality policies and programmes should treat all persons as rights holders who are to be respected by the State.

[2] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly, is a treaty of particular importance for the Americas, as all the Latin American countries have become parties to it through either ratification or accession.

circles, citizenship and so forth. Its strength lies in the fact that it manages to make inequality appear to be a natural, immutable condition, thus concealing its existence as a historical construct. The second hallmark is that the persons capable of establishing these hierarchical differences are the ones who enjoy the resulting privileges. Finally, in order to maintain these privileges, the hierarchy is operationalized by social actors, institutions, rules and practices.

In the realm of social policy, the rights-based approach and the effort to attain substantive equality are cross-cutting features of all policies and initiatives aimed at furthering development with equality. Public action should be focused on narrowing existing gaps as a means of moving towards substantive equality, with equality being understood as not simply equality of opportunity but also equality of rights, means, capacities and outcomes.

B. Inequality as an analytical framework: the matrix of inequality

ECLAC (2016) has proposed the use of the social inequality matrix as an analytical framework for studying inequality and gaining a fuller understanding of it.

- The matrix of inequality is founded upon theoretical approaches that underscore the structural heterogeneity of the production matrix, the culture of privilege and a broad concept of equality that includes equality of means, rights and capacities.

- Socioeconomic strata are the first and most basic determinant of inequality, with the main factors defining a person's position within those strata being the ownership structure and the distribution of power, resources and productive assets.

- Other structural determinants include gender inequalities and the inequalities associated with different stages of the life cycle, ethnic/racial identity, disability status, migration status and territorial factors.

- These various factors intersect, overlap, augment one another and link up in different ways throughout people's lives to generate a wide range of factors of inequality that are simultaneously subject to interactions and to accretion over time.

- The inequality matrix can be used as an analytical framework for examining the main areas of social development and ways in which people exercise their rights and for studying the stratification of access to such assets as productive resources, education, health, decent work and social protection.

ECLAC (2016a) is proposing the use of a social inequality matrix as an analytical framework for exploring some of the structural underpinnings of social inequality in the region (see table II.1). The social inequality matrix is heavily influenced by the production matrix, which is marked by a high degree of structural heterogeneity, i.e. by sharp inter- and intrasectoral productivity differentials and, along with them, an assemblage of high- and low-productivity forms of employment. This is why socioeconomic strata are the first and most basic determinant of inequality, with the main features of those strata being determined by the ownership structure and the distribution of power, resources and productive assets. One of the most evident manifestations of this is income inequality, which is both a cause and an effect of other inequalities in such areas as health, education and the labour market.

Although socioeconomic strata are the most basic determinant of the social inequality matrix, that matrix is also underpinned by such axes of inequality as gender, ethnic/racial identity, the different stages of the human life cycle and territorial factors. These different axes overlap, augment one another and link up in different ways throughout people's lives to generate a wide range of types of inequality that are simultaneously subject to interactions and accretion over time.

The constitutive weight and decisive importance of these axes in production for the market and in the reproduction of human society are what endows them with the ability to shape these social inequalities. People's individual experiences in terms of their development prospects and the possibility of exercising their rights are determined by such factors as their socioeconomic position in the social structure, their sex, ethnic or racial origin and/or the geographic area in which they live and work.

The ways and means by which the inequality matrix is reproduced and persists over time can be understood by examining the main areas of social development and the manner in which people avail themselves of their rights. The end result is a stratified form of access to such assets as productive resources, education, health, decent work and social protection (ECLAC, 2016a).

TABLE II.1
The social inequality matrix

| THEORETICAL APPROACHES | SOCIAL INEQUALITY MATRIX | |
	AXES	AREAS IN WHICH RIGHTS ARE IMPACTED

• Based on the production matrix (structural heterogeneity)
• Culture of privilege
• Concept of equality:
  - Equality of means (income and production resources)
  - Equality of rights
  - Equality of capacity
  - Autonomy and reciprocal recognition
	• Socioeconomic level
	• Gender
	• Ethnicity and race
	• Age
	• Territory
	
	Other manifestations of inequality:
	• Disability status
	• Migration status
	• Sexual orientation and gender identity
		• Income
		• Work and employment
		• Social protection and care
		• Education
		• Health and nutrition
		• Basic services (water, sanitation, electricity, housing, transportation, and information and communications technology)
		• Public safety and a life free of violence
		• Participation and decision-making

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Towards a regional agenda for inclusive social development: bases and initial proposal* (LC/MDS.2/2), Santiago, 2018.

One of the manifestations of structural heterogeneity is a high concentration of jobs in low-productivity sectors. ECLAC has reported (2021) that, around 2019, 49.7% of all jobs were in low-productivity sectors. These jobs tend to be poorly paid and to provide little or no access to social protection coverage, and many of them are informal in nature. A disproportionate number of these jobs are held by women, young people, indigenous persons and persons of African descent. This gives rise to a stratified form of access to social security that more or less matches up with the axes of the social inequality matrix. Thus, for example, an indigenous campesina is more likely to have to overcome greater obstacles to fully develop her potential and to exercise her rights than a white man living in an urban area will.

An analysis of social inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean needs to take account of the different axes of this matrix. Each of these axes is dealt with individually for ease of analysis but, in terms of the situation in which each person finds himself or herself, they cannot actually be separated from one another; they overlap and reinforce each other. This approach makes it possible to visualize situations involving numerous kinds of inequality

and/or discrimination that often underlie the persistent hardcore poverty, vulnerability and inequality that continue to be reproduced in the region. Without it, the structural gaps that are the signposts of inequality would be illegible, and efforts to design and implement policies to help close these gaps would be futile.

In order to analyse existing inequalities thoroughly and then to develop the ability to design and implement policies to lessen those inequalities, the axes of social inequality must first be matched up with the types of rights that they impact (see table II.1). The analytical framework based on the inequality matrix is thus intended to do more than simply treat inequality as a measurable topic of research. Instead, it serves as the platform for an approach in which inequality is viewed through the lens of structural heterogeneity, the culture of privilege and various different concepts of equality and can thus be analysed on the basis of its different axes and matched up with the different kinds of rights that are influenced by it.

It should be noted before proceeding any further that, while it is true that the various dimensions of inequality intersect and reinforce one another throughout the human life cycle, there are policies that are capable of addressing a number of these different dimensions at one and the same time. For example, a care policy that focuses on preschool education can help to reduce gender inequality and inequality among children, which will have an impact on those children for the rest of their lives. This toolkit obviously cannot cover all the possible policy options and their impacts on all the relevant factors, which is why a limited number of noteworthy policies that focus on each axis and are based on successful experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean have been singled out.

Another cautionary note is called for regarding the linkage of different aspects of equality with the narrowing of gaps along each of these axes. Along the same lines as the point made in the preceding paragraph, a specific policy may lead to greater substantive equality by addressing various forms of equality (of opportunity, of means, of outcomes, etc.) simultaneously. For example, a care policy may promote progress towards greater substantive equality for women by connecting up greater equality of opportunity with greater equality of outcomes and mutual recognition. For this reason, the baseline assessment of inequalities associated with each axis and the identification of policy and programmatic priorities will not, in most cases, make reference to a specific type of equality as being the objective of a given policy, as it is understood that policies tend to be interconnected and to build on one another in seeking to achieve greater substantive equality. Table II.2 provides an overview of the different axes of inequality and policy directions.

An analytical framework based on the inequality matrix can be used to examine the axes of inequality and link them up to the different types of rights that they impact.

TABLE II.2
The social inequality matrix and public policy directions

AXES OF INEQUALITY	PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTIONS
Socioeconomic inequality	Reduce income and labour-market disparities in a context of structural heterogeneity.
Gender	Ensure women's economic, physical and decision-making autonomy.
Childhood and adolescence	Guarantee people's rights and well-being throughout their lives.
Youth	
Adulthood	
Ageing and old age	
Indigenous people	Guarantee the rights, recognition and well-being of groups that have historically been discriminated against because of their ethnic/racial identity.
Persons of African descent	
Persons with disabilities	Provide orientation for an individual's interaction and relationship with his/her physical and social environment, differentiated by type and degree of disability.
Migrants	Recognize migrants as rights holders.
Territorial inequality	Mitigate territorial disparities that have an impact on people's enjoyment of their rights and their well-being.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations, "Promoting equality: an interregional perspective", Project Documents (LC/TS.2018/50/Rev.1), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2018.

C.   The benefits of equality and the inefficiency of inequality

The empirical evidence shows that more egalitarian societies tend to:
• Be more efficient and be able to sustain more and faster economic growth.
• Be happier.
• Be healthier and more cohesive.
• Be more environmentally resilient.
• Have more robust and more democratic institutions.

In recent years, more and more empirical studies have been published that provide scientific arguments in support of aspirations for greater equality. This evidence furnishes at least five main reasons why societies should seek to become more egalitarian. The first has to do with the relationship between inequality and economic efficiency. One of the most common arguments that people use to defend the existence of inequality is that it is necessary in order to achieve more growth.[3] In recent years, however, researchers have gathered a growing body of evidence that refutes that line of reasoning based on Okun's equality-efficiency trade-off (1975). Quite early on, Kuttner (1987) had already shown that equality and economic growth are not mutually exclusive pursuits and that public policies on such matters as capital formation and investment, protectionism in international trade, wages and labour, taxes and the welfare State can have good or bad outcomes in terms of both efficiency and equity. The same empirical emphasis on the effects of redistribution on growth is to be seen in studies by Bénabou (2000 and 2002) and Bleaney, Gemmell and Kneller (2001), which also contend that this kind of trade-off is not inevitable.

Recent studies by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Berg and Ostry, 2011; Ostry, Bird and Tsangarides, 2014) have offered evidence that more egalitarian countries can sustain more and faster growth and that, except in extreme cases,[4] the impact of redistribution on levels of inequality actually spurs growth. Finally, ECLAC (2018b) has furnished additional evidence that inequality is negatively related to productivity. ECLAC is therefore arguing that greater equality can act as a driver of economic efficiency, which will in turn support the expansion of effective demand.

A second argument has to do with the relationship between greater equality and greater happiness. Lifting people out of extreme poverty surely results in greater happiness, but additional increases in income do not necessarily equate with additional happiness. Once extreme poverty has been eliminated, investing in more egalitarian societies could constitute

Inequality has a corrosive effect on institutions. Economic elites' power over a nation's institutions tends to weaken the capacity of the State.

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[3]   This argument has been championed at least since the mid-1970s in the more advanced countries during times of economic stagnation and high unemployment —conditions that were being experienced during that period, which some economists blamed on social policies and the welfare State. This view was backed up by the theory espoused by Okun (1975), who contended that there was a "big trade-off" between equality and efficiency. He reasoned that an egalitarian, universal distribution of social and political rights carried costs in terms of economic efficiency. In other words, societies could not aspire to both at the same time and would therefore have to place priority on one while sacrificing the other. The economic policy proposals that grew out of this position call for cutting investment in social policies on the grounds that they will push up the fiscal deficit and lower savings and will consequently dampen long-term growth rates. The proponents of these policies therefore assert that the best course of action is to curb government spending, cut back on redistributive policies and lower taxes, especially on the rich, because the resulting higher growth rates will benefit everyone.

[4]   Defined as the 25% of the countries in the sample where the degree of redistribution is very high (more than about 13 points on the Gini inequality index).

a higher policy objective. This argument is backed up by evidence that levels of happiness in different countries are more closely correlated with greater income equality than with average income levels (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018). As indicated by one study conducted in the United States, this inverse relationship between income inequality and happiness may be accounted for by an increased perception of unfairness and a lack of trust (Oishi, Kesebir and Diener, 2011). This reaffirms the recurrent argument that increases in per capita income do not necessarily translate into greater happiness.

A third argument in favour of greater equality is supported by a growing body of evidence that more egalitarian societies tend to be healthier and more cohesive. International studies have shown that greater degrees of economic inequality are associated with a greater number of social problems, including higher rates of violence, murders and drug abuse, higher incarceration rates, higher teenage pregnancy rates, and more psychological and mental problems. More egalitarian societies tend to exhibit better health indicators and longer life expectancies (Marmot, 2015; Patel and others, 2018; Wilkinson y Pickett, 2010 and 2018).

A fourth argument stems from the growing evidence that inequality is a contributing factor in environmental deterioration, both on the part of those who damage the environment and on the part of those who are impacted by that damage, and that it impairs the ability to respond to the challenges posed by natural disasters and environmental degradation. Climate change, for example, is closely interlinked with inequality. The poorest half of the world's population accounts for around 10% of global carbon dioxide emissions but lives in the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. By contrast, the richest 10% of the world's population accounts for 50% of global emissions (Gore, 2015). Evidence gathered in the most affluent countries indicates that countries where inequality is the greatest produce more garbage, tend to consume more meat, consume more water for personal use and drive more motor vehicles (Dorling, 2017).[5] The impact of inequality within individual countries has also been measured. A study on the United States has turned up evidence that levels of inequality will rise as a result of the unequally distributed economic effects of climate change (Hsiang and others, 2017). It has also been estimated that the economic losses sustained by poor sectors of the population will be two to three times greater than the losses of the non-poor (Cecchini, Sunkel and Barrantes, 2017), both because of the vulnerability of their assets (Hallegatte and others, 2017) and because of their limited access to disaster risk management tools (Vakis, 2006).[6]

A fifth and final argument focuses on the positive impacts on political institutions in more egalitarian societies. This line of reasoning underscores the tension that exists between economies that are organized around the market, where each person's degree of influence depends on the size of his or her "monetary vote", and the political system, where each person has one (electoral) vote. Inequality then fuels *rent-seeking* behaviour whereby the richest members of society use their power to ward off competitive market forces in order to reap higher profits. Economic inequality will therefore have a corrosive effect on political institutions (Stiglitz, 2012). A supporting argument emphasizes the weakness of the State in unequal societies, which is partly attributable to the power wielded by economic elites over State institutions. This kind of power is manifested, for example, in the continued existence of regressive tax systems with very limited redistributive potential (Blofield, 2011; Savoia, Easaw and Mckay, 2010).

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[5]   Foodstuffs account for 25% of the planet's total emissions. More than half of that amount is generated by animal products, and half of the livestock-generated emissions come from cattle and sheep herds. Beef consumption is a large source of emissions because of the methane that is released and the deforestation caused by the clearing of land for pasturage (Poore and Nemecek, 2018).

[6]   Mention should be made in this connection of the Escazú Agreement, which has been open for signature by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean since September 2018. This is the region's first environmental treaty and the only one of its type in the world, as it contains specific provisions on environmental human rights defenders. It is also the first legal instrument to emerge from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and, as of the end of July 2020, had been signed by 24 countries. For further information, see [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement.

D. Suggested references

SUGGESTIONS

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E. Questions

- In your area of work, can you think of a social policy that reduces more than one type of inequality (e.g. inequalities of opportunity, capacity, outcomes, rights or other) at the same time? Please explain.

- Drawing on your work experience, do you know of a social policy that acts upon more than one axis of inequality (e.g. gender, different stages of the life cycle, persons of African descent, indigenous peoples)? How could the impact of this policy be improved?

- Based on your experience, which do you think is the best way to increase equality: a universal social policy or a policy targeting the most underprivileged groups? Explain why. Can you give an example of a targeted policy in your field of work that could be expanded to include the rest of the population? What obstacles would have to be overcome in order to do so?

- Provide an example of a social policy in your field of work that has been specifically designed to reduce inequalities. Has it achieved its objective? Why or why not?

- Name a policy in your field of work that is explicitly founded upon a rights-based approach.

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Chapter

III

Towards greater socioeconomic equality[1]

A.   Normative framework[2]

A number of human rights principles could have important implications for social policies aimed at reducing social and economic inequalities. There are a series of treaties, covenants, conventions, declarations, recommendations and other types of norms that have shaped a human rights framework and define how different types of social policies fit into that framework. Viewed from a human rights perspective, the ratification of pacts, conventions and covenants dealing with economic and social rights can be expected, in principle, to pave the way for the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at reducing socioeconomic inequalities. At least four pacts and conventions with overlapping economic and social implications are worthy of mention in this connection.

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[3] adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 16 December 1966, is an especially important instrument because it has been acceded to or ratified by all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Under the Covenant, signatory States are obligated to take the necessary steps "to the maximum of [their] available resources" to advance towards the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights, avoid any reversal of the existing system for the protection of those rights, work towards the progressive realization of those rights, guarantee non-discrimination, ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the Covenant and ensure that the essential minimum level of each right is respected.

- Labour market policies founded upon the right to decent work and human rights in employment are of central importance in reducing inequality. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention of 1958 (No. 111),[4] which has been ratified or acceded to by 31 Latin American and Caribbean countries, makes a valuable contribution (along with numerous other ILO conventions and

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the International Covenant mentioned above) to the effort to achieve greater socioeconomic equality through employment. Article 1 of that convention calls for the promotion of legislation to prohibit any form of discrimination or exclusion of any type, including "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation" (ILO, 1958).

- The ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention of 1952 (No. 102),[5] which has been ratified or acceded to by 10 countries of the region, outlines the minimum standards for social security benefits and the conditions for their application. It specifies nine main categories of social security benefits that are protected under its provisions: medical care; monetary benefits in the case of illness, old age, occupational accidents or occupational illness; family benefits; maternity benefits; disability benefits; and survivors' benefits (ILO, 1952).

- Finally, the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the "Protocol of San Salvador")[6] was opened for signature in 1988 and has been ratified or acceded to by 16 countries in the region. The States parties of the Organization of American States (OAS) undertake to adopt the necessary measures, to the extent allowed by their available resources and taking into account their degree of development, to achieve the full observance of the rights recognized in the Protocol, which include: the right to work; the right to just, equitable and satisfactory conditions of work; trade union rights; and the right to social security (OAS, 1988).

B. Assessment of social and economic inequalities

ASSESSMENT

- Socioeconomic strata are the first and most basic axis of inequality.

- These inequalities are derived from the social structure and agents' positions within that structure.

- The social structure is heavily influenced by the economic and production matrix.

- An accurate assessment should include an examination of the structure of ownership and the distribution of power, resources and production assets.

- There are various ways of identifying or defining socioeconomic inequality, but one of the most clear-cut and easily measurable manifestations of this phenomenon is income inequality.

- The Latin American and Caribbean region is the most unequal region in the world in terms of income distribution.

- The highest income quintile (quintile V) accounts for between 46% and 58% of total income, while the poorest (quintile I) represents between 3% and 6% of the total.

ECLAC (2016a) characterizes socioeconomic strata as "the first and most basic axis of inequality" (p. 16). This construct is derived from the social structure and agents' positions within that structure, which is in turn heavily influenced by the economic and production matrix. The disparities that arise and that are perpetuated within the region's highly heterogeneous production structure feed into the labour market and social areas and become interlinked with other axes of inequality such as gender, ethnic and racial identity, relationships and how they evolve through the life cycle, unequal levels of territorial development and so forth (Bárcena and Prado, 2016). This description as the "first and most

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5   For further information, see ILO (1952).
6   For further information, see OAS (1988).

basic axis" does not mean that socioeconomic strata are the definitive frame of reference or that they represent the ultimate summation of the other axes, but rather that socioeconomic strata are the cornerstone for the many other forms of social inequality that together constitute the matrix of inequality and that they help to shape the ways in which other forms of inequality intersect, link up and overlap one another. In other words, in an examination of social inequality, socioeconomic strata do not provide an explanation for all the various forms of inequality, but an analysis that does not take those strata into account will fall short of the mark.

The "key elements" of socioeconomic strata are "how ownership is structured and how power, resources and productive assets are distributed" (ECLAC, 2016a, p. 16). The data needed in order to probe these elements and analyse socioeconomic inequality are not readily available. In addition, these elements are manifested in many different yet interconnected ways. One of the most clear-cut and easily measurable manifestations is income inequality, which is, in turn, both "the cause and effect of other inequalities in such areas as education, health care and the job market" (ECLAC, 2016a, p. 16). Data from the most recent household surveys indicate that the Gini coefficient for personal income in 2019 averages out to 0.46 for 15 Latin American countries (ECLAC, 2021a).[7] Inequality in income distribution can also be readily discerned by comparing how much of total income is received by households in the different quintiles. The highest income quintile (quintile V) concentrates between 46% and 58% of total income, while the poorest quintile (quintile I) receives a scant 3%–6% of the total[8] (see figure III.1) (ECLAC, 2021a).

FIGURE III.1
Latin America (15 countries): share of total income,
by income quintile, around 2019[a]
(Percentages)
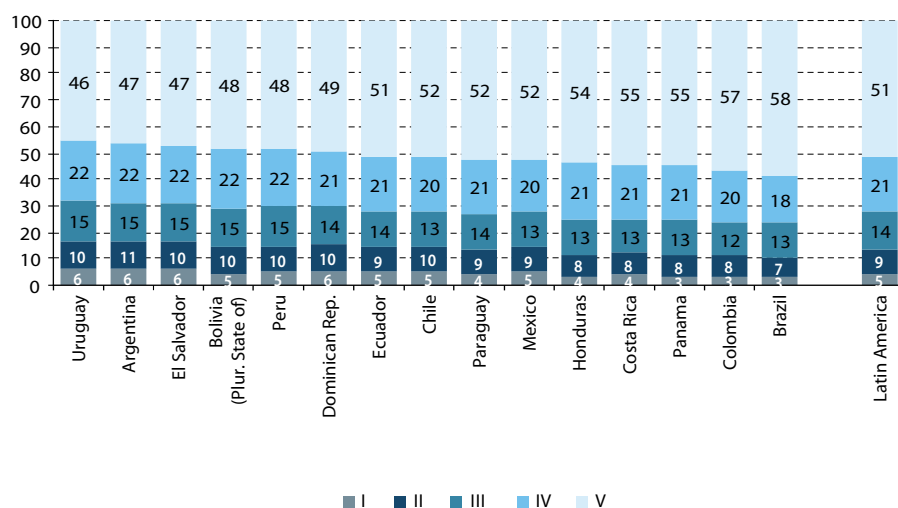
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
a   Quintiles of per capita income. Countries are listed in order of the fifth quintile's share of total income. The information on which this graph is based is for 2019 or the most recent year available.

Income inequality has changed over time (see figure III.2) and, as will be shown here, it can be reduced if the right policies are put in place.

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7   The Gini coefficient is a statistical dispersion metric that is commonly used to describe the distribution of income, wealth or consumption in the population of a given country. A coefficient of 0 equates to the absence of inequality, while a coefficient of 1 denotes a perfectly unequal distribution. The Latin American and Caribbean region is the most unequal region in the world regardless of whether these variables are measured before or after direct taxes and cash transfers (United Nations, 2018). The use of the Palma ratio, which is the ratio between the richest 10% and the poorest 40% of the population, has been steadily gaining ground because it can capture systemic patterns of inequality in the distribution that are not picked up by the Gini Index. There are also approaches that relate the idea of social stratification to the concept of occupationally based inequality. Filgueira and Geneletti (1981) were among the first in a long line of researchers to study social stratification and mobility in Latin America.

8   The information used to measure distributional inequality is drawn from the household surveys used by the countries of the region to measure income levels, which may be employment, multipurpose or income/expenditure surveys. These survey data are compiled and harmonized on a regular basis by ECLAC and are then uploaded into the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).

INCOME CONCENTRATION BY QUINTILE

QUINTILE V

ACCOUNTS FOR BETWEEN
46% and 58%
OF TOTAL INCOME

QUINTILE I

ACCOUNTS FOR BETWEEN
3% and 6%
OF TOTAL INCOME

FIGURE III.2
Latin America (15 countries): Gini inequality index,
2002–2019[a]
(Scale from 0 to 1)
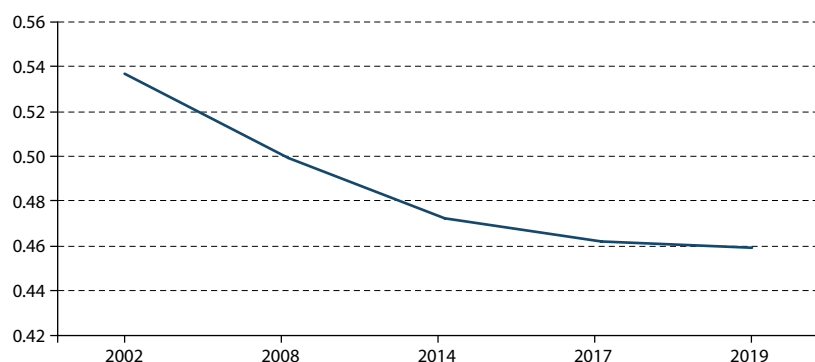
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data
Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] Simple average based on data for the closest available year for each of 15 countries.

An inspection of the sources of each quintile's income provides some pertinent information about socioeconomic inequality. On average, the largest share of household income comes from gainful employment either as an employee (47%) or as an own-account worker (23%). In the first quintile, 59% of total income comes from gainful employment and is divided nearly evenly between wage labour and own-account work. Government transfers and transfers from other households each represent around 10% of the total, while contributory pensions and receipts from the ownership of assets together make up a scant 3% of the first quintile's total income. In the fifth quintile, 70% of total income comes from employment, with about two thirds of that sum being accounted for by employee earnings. Private transfers (4%) and government transfers (less than 1%) account for a smaller share than contributory pensions (10%). Receipts from asset ownership represent 4% of the total according to household survey data, but this is an underestimate.[9] At 12%, imputed rent is also a significant source of income for members of the fifth quintile (see figure III.3).

Socioeconomic inequality is very clearly reflected in the economic and production matrix. For example, Latin American labour markets are marked by high degrees of informality and wide gaps in job quality, access to social protection and labour income. Unskilled own-account work is a very important source of jobs and income in the region's labour markets, and it is one of the types of employment that provides the least access to social protection; 32.7% of all employed persons and over 60% of employed persons in the first income quintile are unskilled own-account workers (see figure III.4).

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[9] Household surveys are the chief source of information for the analysis of income distribution, but these data do not accurately reflect the income of wealthier respondents and seriously undercount the income from asset ownership. As a point of reference, the property income reported on the household account of national accounts of some countries of the region can be as much as 10 times higher than the amount recorded in household surveys (ECLAC, 2021a, p. 69).

Latin America (15 countries): income distribution,
by source and quintile, 2019[a]
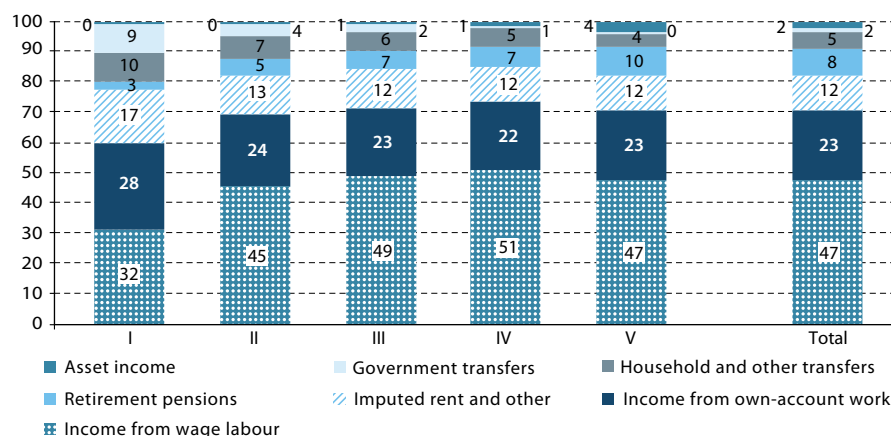
- Asset income
- Government transfers
- Household and other transfers
- Retirement pensions
- Imputed rent and other
- Income from own-account work
- Income from wage labour

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] Individual income quintiles based on per capita income; simple average for 15 countries based on information for 2019 or the most recent year available.

Latin America (simple average for 18 countries): unskilled
own-account workers aged 15 and over,
by income quintile, around 2016
(Percentages)
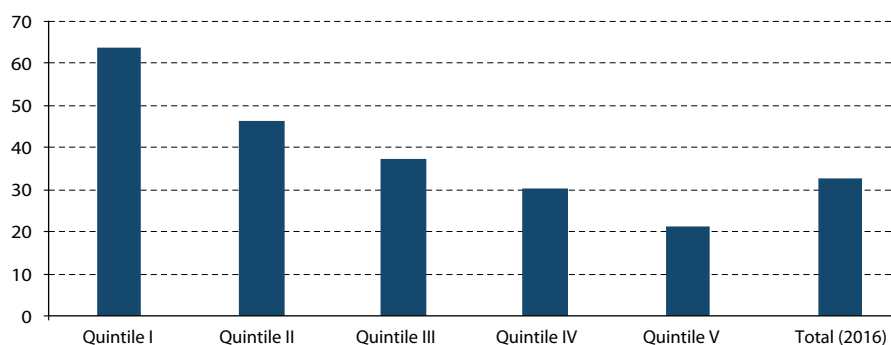
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).

In addition, an average of 42% of employed persons earn less than the minimum wage. This is partly because of the low average incomes of own-account workers who are not covered by minimum wage laws; the percentage is even higher for young people, persons over the age of 65 years and women (ECLAC, 2019).

As noted earlier, inequalities in the region also run along the lines of gender, race and ethnic origin, place of residence and stages of the life cycle. Accordingly, social, economic and geographic differences are co-constituents that cut across various elements of the matrix. The inequalities arising along these different axes thus intersect, augment one another and link up in complex ways. Figure III.5 provides a breakdown of the data by sex and by ethnicity or race that illustrates how different types of income inequality overlap, build up and exacerbate one another in the labour market.

UNSKILLED OWN-ACCOUNT WORKERS, BY INCOME QUINTILE

FIFTH QUINTILE
21.3%

FIRST QUINTILE
63.9%
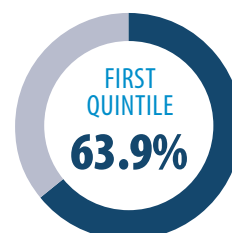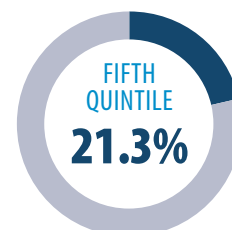
FIGURE III.5
Latin America (9 countries): hourly labour income
of wage earners aged 15 and over, by sex
and level of education, around 2019
(Expressed in poverty lines)

A. By ethnicity

B. By race
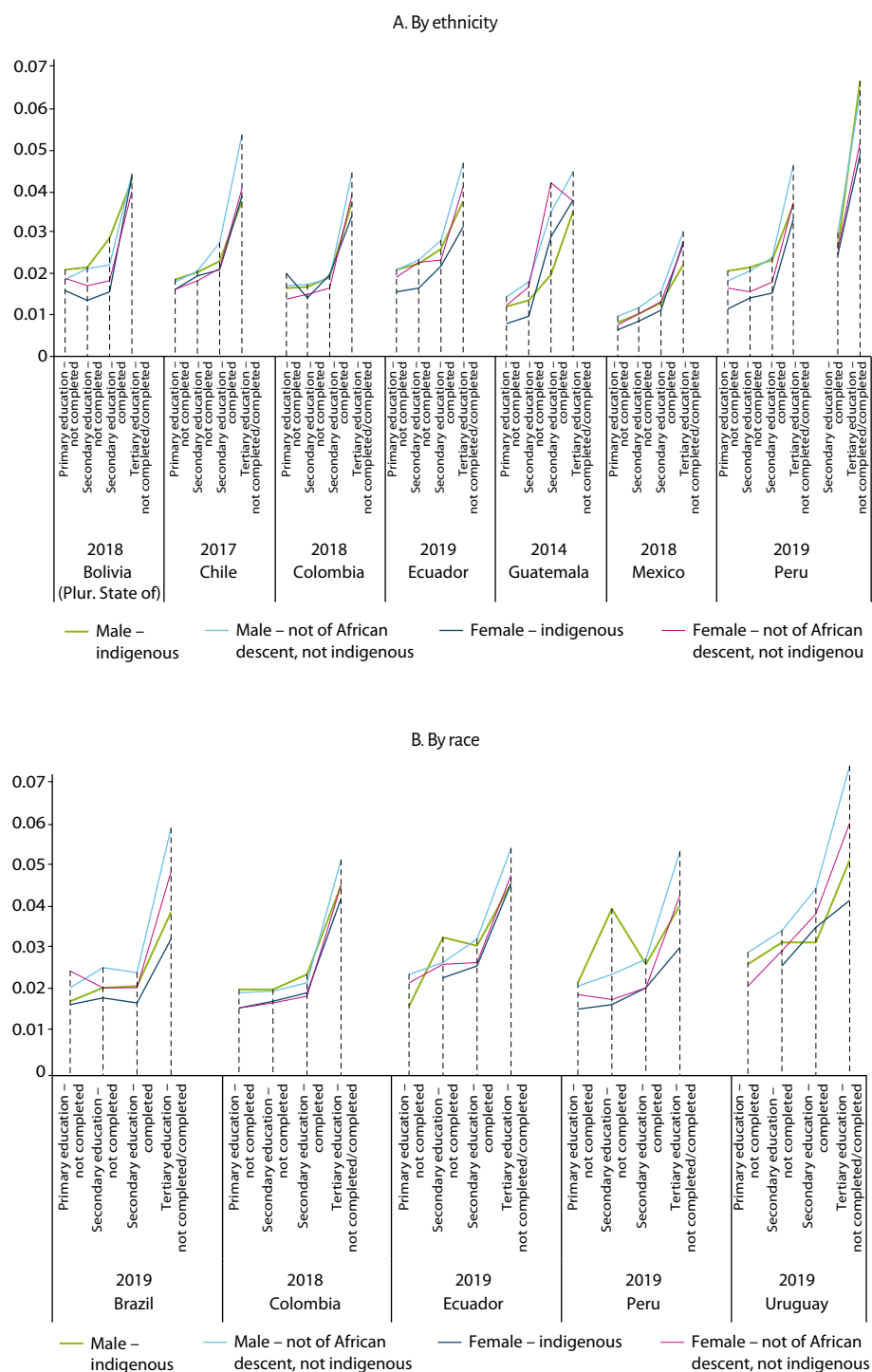
The intersection
of gender and
ethnicity/race
tends to result
in lower incomes
for indigenous
and Afrodescendent
women.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data
Bank (BADEHOG).

The adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's incomes is expected to lead to a deterioration in income distribution in most countries. The loss of labour income as businesses have closed their doors is one major factor. An analysis of the pandemic's initial impact on employment indicates that women, informal workers, young people, less educated people, persons of African descent and migrants have been hit the hardest. The decline in the labour incomes of people who have kept their jobs during the pandemic is another. The sharp downturn in demand and in opportunities for people to engage in their usual lines of work appears to have caused an 11% drop in employed persons' labour incomes, on average. For persons in the first quintile, the decrease is estimated at 40%, whereas the projected reduction for persons in the fifth quintile averages around 5%. As a result, total per capita income inequality is expected to have risen in 2020, pushing up the average Gini coefficient by 5% over its 2019 level.

If estimated transfers in the form government relief packages primarily targeting middle- and lower-income groups are factored in, then the upswing in the Gini coefficient for the region is estimated at about 3%.

These estimates do not incorporate some other factors that have a strong influence on income distribution, however. For example, trends in remittances from abroad were not as expected. Information for the early months of 2020 shows that remittances to Mexico were higher than they were in 2019, which suggests that the level of remittances for the Central American countries may be similar to their 2019 level.

Another factor that influences income distribution is income from the ownership of physical and financial assets. The region's stock markets witnessed steep downturns in the second quarter of 2020 but then bounced back, with the result that there may have been a net increase in this type of income; if so, that increase will have been concentrated in wealthier households.

The most common types of measures used by the countries to soften the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, especially for poor and vulnerable sectors of the population, include cash transfers, in-kind transfers (food, medicine, cleaning supplies), wage subsidies, unemployment insurance, pension advances, support for the health-care sector, tax exemptions, and subsidies and grace periods for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises.[a]

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2020* (LC/PUB.2021/2-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2021a; COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021b [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19, and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/International Labour Organization (ILO), "Employment trends in an unprecedented crisis: policy challenges", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 23 (LC/TS.2020/128), Santiago, 2020.
[a] For further information on the measures being taken by the countries of the region, see the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19.

C.   Priority policies for reducing socioeconomic inequality[10]

POLICY PROPOSALS

Public policies can be identified that can play a key role in narrowing socioeconomic gaps in areas of the inequality matrix such as income and employment, social protection, health and nutrition.

- Policies that promote labour and productive inclusion can create opportunities for independent forms of income-generating employment for the more vulnerable young people and adults of working age. In addition, in order to support entry into the workforce, many countries in the region are implementing technical and vocational training and remedial education policies.

- Labour market policies and institutions, such as minimum wages, collective bargaining mechanisms, labour inspections and forums for social dialogue are of crucial importance, since a majority of the population relies on labour income. Experiences in Latin America indicate that setting a minimum wage at an appropriate level can be a valuable public policy tool for reducing inequality.

- The rapid and widespread increase in conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes attest to their important role in reducing poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Health and nutrition policies can be a good way to narrow socioeconomic gaps by boosting productivity, employment and incomes.

1. Labour and productive inclusion policies[11]

In order to transform the labour market into a sphere of activity that can help to shape a more egalitarian society, one critical line of action is the promotion of decent work, which is understood as the recognition that "men and women all over the world aspire to obtaining productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and dignity" (ILO, 2006, p. 6). ECLAC has characterized work as the "master key" for reducing poverty and inequality. Labour income accounts for 80% of total household income in Latin America (74% for poor households and 64% for households living in extreme poverty) (ECLAC, 2016b). Labour policies and labour market institutions, such as those dealing with minimum wages, collective bargaining, labour inspections and social dialogue, are of crucial importance. This includes policies for shifting jobs and businesses into the formal sector of the economy and increasing access to social protection. Policies that promote labour and productive inclusion are part of this effort, and they are being applied on an increasingly broad scale in the region as a way of strengthening the labour inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society and of helping to create autonomous income-generating opportunities for them.

Labour and productive inclusion programmes targeting working-age youth and adults living in poverty or under conditions of vulnerability generally fall into one of three categories. The challenges to be addressed by these programmes tend to be even more formidable in the case of women, members of indigenous peoples, persons of African descent and persons with disabilities. First, there are supply-side technical and vocational training programmes and remedial primary and secondary education programmes. A second category is made up of demand-side labour

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[10] Policies that can have an impact in reducing socioeconomic inequality and, more specifically, in boosting income include, for example, tax policies, basic income policies, policies that guide technological change, policies that strengthen trade unions and policies on the establishment of a sovereign fund for financing other public policies (Atkinson, 2015). This section will focus on social policies not discussed in other chapters of this document. Issues relating to education, care, and housing and basic services will be dealt with in the sections on the life cycle, gender and territorial inequality, respectively. This is not to say, of course, that policies on each of these issues cannot play a part in reducing socioeconomic inequalities.

[11] This section is based on chapter III of the *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2015* (ECLAC, 2016c). Available at [online] http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/39965/4/S1600175_en.pdf.

support programmes, such as those that assist independent workers with microfinance and promote self-employment, entrepreneurship, and direct and indirect job creation programmes. A third category is made up of job placement services (see diagram III.1).[12,13]

LABOUR AND PRODUCTIVE INCLUSION

SUPPLY-SIDE SUPPORT

DEMAND-SIDE SUPPORT

| Technical and vocational training | Remedial education | Job placement services | Support for independent employment | Direct job creation | Indirect job creation |
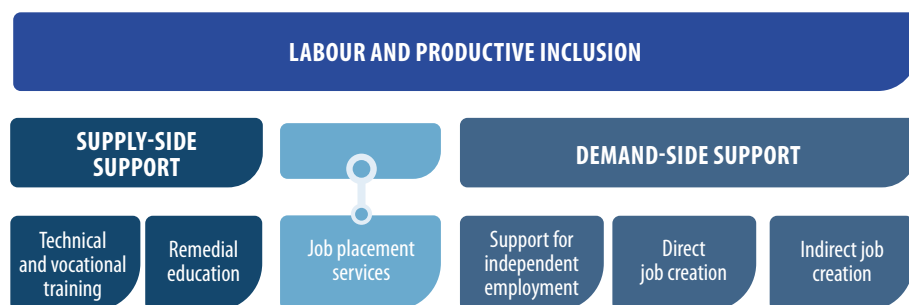
Source: L. Abramo, S. Cecchini and B. Morales, *Social programmes, poverty eradication and labour inclusion: lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean*, ECLAC Books, No. 155 (LC/PUB.2019/5-P), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2019.
[a] Programmes that provide support for independent forms of employment often incorporate supply-side training components.

The most common types of supply-side employment support programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean are technical and vocational training programmes and remedial education programmes that seek to help people to avoid dropping out of school. As of 2017, 45 of the 68 programmes that were reviewed were technical and vocational training programmes targeting people between the ages of 18 and 35 and especially women in that age group. When these types of programmes are targeting women, they often also provide childcare services so that the women who are mothers will be able to attend the courses.[14] The evaluations of these programmes tend to show that they have enhanced the participants' employability, helped them to obtain better wages and increased their chances of finding work in the formal sector of the economy (Abramo, Cecchini and Morales, 2019).

Remedial education programmes that seek to address the low levels of education that generally exist in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially among the vulnerable and indigent or poor members of the population, are one example. In order to tackle this problem, nine countries in the region are running a total of 15 scholarship programmes to help students in secondary school to stay in school and to give young adults who have already dropped out an opportunity to go back to school and complete their secondary educations. These programmes make use of a range of different economic incentives, such as: (i) conditional cash transfers subject to school attendance and performance (e.g. the school attendance allowance and the scholastic achievement bonus provided under the Ethical Family Income Programme in Chile, the transfers provided under Support for Argentina's Students Programme (PROG.R.ES.AR) and the basic cash transfers awarded under the Youth with More and Better Jobs Programme, also of Argentina); (ii) scholarships (Uruguay's Commitment to Education Programme); and (iii) transportation subsidies such as those provided by the +Capaz (+Capable) Programme in Chile.[15]

The **minimum wage** rose in real terms between **2000** and **2016** in most Latin American countries.

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[12]   ECLAC has a database on labour and productive inclusion programmes that forms part of its larger Non-Contributory Social Protection Programmes Database – Latin America and the Caribbean (see ECLAC, 2020). The programmes in this database are arranged by country and by type. This database is maintained pursuant to a mandate issued by the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

[13]   A fourth category that could be added corresponds to "passive policies", i.e. policies on the provision of income assistance for persons who are unemployed or who were obliged to take early retirement. For a more in-depth discussion of the various systems for classifying labour policies, see ECLAC (2019).

[14]   There are programmes of this type in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. For a more thorough discussion of this subject, see ECLAC (2016c) box III.6.

[15]   For further information on some of these programmes that are not in the Non-Contributory Social Protection Programmes Database, see the Ministry of Social Development (n/d); National University at Cordoba (n/d); Argentina (n/d); and National Public Education Administration (n/d).

Most of the resources being invested in demand-side employment initiatives are being channelled into programmes that provide support (mainly training and access to capital) for independent forms of employment. There are 29 of these programmes in 14 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The training programmes tend to cover subjects like saving and finance, microentrepreneurship and economic planning. Most of the initiatives that provide access to capital are supplying seed capital or microfinance for new start-ups or for the improvement of existing small businesses. Making the transition to the formal sector of the economy is an ongoing challenge. The evidence on this is positive and indicates that formalization initiatives tend to be most successful when the participants are motivated and are relatively more educated (Farné, 2009).

Direct and indirect job creation are two other demand-side approaches being used in the region. Direct job creation initiatives usually involve making temporary public-sector jobs available, mostly in service positions that can be filled by unskilled labour, public works and local and community infrastructure projects. Examples include Argentina's Community Employment Programme and Mexico's Temporary Employment Programme. Indirect job creation is usually powered by State subsidies. These are often seasonal programmes aimed at encouraging private businesses to take on young people and adults who are living in poverty or who belong to vulnerable groups by providing these companies with subsidies that cover part of the workers' wages in order to lower the cost of hiring them. PROEMPLEAR in Argentina and the Youth Employment Subsidy and Women At Work bonus in Chile are two examples (ECLAC, 2016c). Other types of subsidies cover employers' social security contributions or tax liabilities (ECLAC/ILO, 2014). The evaluations of these programmes have found that their benefits tend to fade once the programmes end, however (Abramo, Cecchini and Morales, 2019).

Finally, job placement services work to match up labour demand and supply by providing participants in labour and productive inclusion programmes with information about job opportunities in private businesses and public organizations. The fairly scant evidence that is available on the impact of these services is mixed, as there are positive evaluations of initiatives in Mexico (Van Gameren, 2010) but negative ones on programmes in Brazil (Soares and Sátyro, 2010).

2. Minimum wages

Strengthening minimum wage systems has been an important tool for reducing poverty and inequality in the region since this provides a way of raising the earnings of workers in the lower part of the income distribution pyramid (ECLAC, 2014 and 2016b). Most of the Latin American countries witnessed an increase in the real minimum wage between 2000 and 2016. Paraguay was the exception, but its real wage declined only slightly.[16] Brazil's minimum wage jumped by 108.7% during that same period in real terms, although 21.3% of workers were receiving a wage below the minimum floor as of 2014 (ECLAC, 2017a).[17]

In Latin America, experience has shown that, when a minimum wage is set at an appropriate level, it can be a valuable public policy tool for reducing inequalities. In order for it to be effective in combating poverty, however, it must be coupled with the actual enforcement of labour laws and a long-term strategy linked to economic policies and labour institutions that are aligned with macroeconomic and production policies (ECLAC, 2016b; Weller and Roethlisberger, 2011). Brazil's experience indicates that raising the minimum wage at a time of falling unemployment and robust economic growth can help to reduce inequality among wage earners (Maurizio, 2014).

[16] The available data indicate that the percentage of persons whose labour income falls below the level of the minimum wage ranges from 30% in Mexico to 17% in Chile (ECLAC, 2017a).
[17] Figures on the changes in real minimum wage levels in Latin American countries between 2000 and 2016 are taken from the CEPALSTAT database (ECLAC, 2021b).

There are various ways in which a minimum wage policy can affect levels of inequality. At least five of those ways merit discussion here. First, an increase in the minimum wage can lead to an improvement in social protection benefits such as pensions, since these benefits are linked to wage levels or use them as a point of reference, as in the case of Brazil and Uruguay (ECLAC, 2014). Second, a minimum wage will primarily benefit the less privileged groups that are overrepresented at the base of the wage pyramid and can dovetail quite neatly with policies aimed at reducing other types of inequalities, since it may be particularly beneficial for women of African descent, members of indigenous groups, young people and residents of areas where wage levels are low (ECLAC, 2016b). Guimarães (2013) has shown that the increase of the minimum wage in Brazil between 2004 and 2011 contributed to a significant narrowing of the pay gap between men and women and between Caucasians and persons of African descent. During that period, average labour income from the principal form of employment of people aged 16 and over climbed by 29% for men, 36% for women, 28% for Caucasians, 44% for persons of African descent as a whole and 47% for Afrodescendent women. Third, minimum wages raise the floor of the wage pyramid in the formal labour market and serve as a reference point for wages in the informal sector in what has come to be known as the "lighthouse effect". Fourth, the establishment of a minimum wage reflects how power is distributed and what kind of value is attributed to work in terms of its place in society and role in generating wealth. Finally, legal coverage and enforcement are fundamental (ILO, 2020).

3. Conditional cash transfer programmes[18]

The rapid spread of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes attests to their critical role in "reaching the furthest behind first", which is essential for the success of efforts to narrow socioeconomic gaps (United Nations, 2015, p. 3). This concern ties in with the CCT objective of reducing poverty and extreme poverty by increasing the monetary resources available to poor households while at the same time building the capacities of their members. Households with children that participate in these programmes must fulfil commitments in various areas targeted by the Sustainable Development Goals, such as education (primary and secondary school enrolment and attendance), health (complying with infant vaccination schedules and women's attendance at prenatal and postnatal check-ups) and nutrition.

CCTs have played a valuable role in reducing poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean. A large number of impact assessments have found that CCTs have improved income poverty indicators and indicators in the areas of education, health and nutrition (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011; ECLAC, 2016b). Since these transfers are generally targeted at the poorest groups but are not always very large, their greatest impact is reflected in indicators focusing on the lowest levels of the income distribution pyramid, such as the poverty gap and the severity of poverty (Cruces and Gasparini, 2013; Veras Soares, 2009). This means that their chief impact in terms of the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities is to bring household incomes that were below the poverty line or extreme poverty line closer to those lines but not necessarily above them. The evidence that CCTs have lowered the percentages of people living in poverty or extreme poverty comes from countries where these programmes are in wide use and where the size of these transfers is substantial (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011; ECLAC, 2016b). Although the results of the CCTs implemented in the region have not always been the same, they have generally had a positive impact in building people's capacity, providing children with access to education, increasing health service coverage and the frequency of medical check-ups to monitor children's growth and provide preventive care and, in some cases, improving child nutrition (Cecchini and Atuesta, 2017).

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[18]   For regionally specific information on CCTs, see the Non-Contributory Social Protection Programmes Database – Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2020).
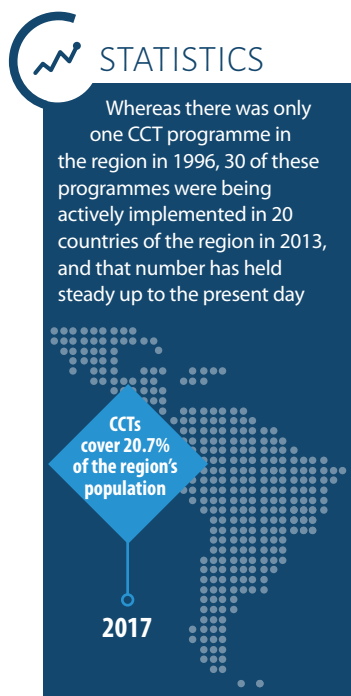
The importance that CCTs have taken on in Latin America and the Caribbean is reflected in the number and scope of such programmes. Whereas there was only one CCT programme in the region in 1996, there were 30 being actively implemented in 20 countries of the region in 2013 and that number has held steady up to the present day. The sharpest increase in these programmes was seen in the 2000s, when they expanded rapidly in terms of both coverage and disbursements. Their scope and funding then began to level off in 2010 and have been on the decline since 2014. In 2017, CCTs were reaching 20.7% of the region's population (133.5 million people and 30.2 million households) and were disbursing the equivalent of 0.37% of the region's GDP and US$ 148 per capita. The recent slippage in the coverage and disbursements of these programmes is a cause of concern, since they actually need to increase the amounts and scope of their benefits if they are to continue to help to eliminate poverty (Abramo, Cecchini and Morales, 2019).

4. Moving towards universal health service coverage and access and the elimination of malnutrition

Health-care systems in Latin America are generally composed of three subsystems: (i) public-sector services for persons living in poverty; (ii) health coverage under the social security system for formal-sector workers; and (iii) private health care for persons who can afford it (Titelman, Cetrángolo and Acosta, 2015). The coverage, access and quality of health care are thus all highly segmented by social and economic status and perpetuate existing inequalities. A segmented health-care system of this type is the exact opposite of a universal, equitable health system (Hernández-Lozada and Bejarano-Daza, 2017).

The evidence on the relationship between health and socioeconomic conditions tends to support the view that health has a significantly positive effect on productivity, employment and income. Research findings also underscore the importance of child nutrition as a determinant of adult health status and income (Strauss and Thomas, 1998; Bloom and Fink, 2013; Jamison and others, 2013).

In view of the highly segmented nature of the region's health-care systems and the evidence that child nutrition and health conditions have considerable impacts on productivity, employment and income levels, efforts should be made to promote universal, difference-sensitive health policies. Thus, policies aligned with the inequality matrix should be focused on universal health and the elimination of malnutrition. These policies should take a rights-based approach and use targeted, selective or affirmative action mechanisms to benefit the most vulnerable and excluded groups in the population and those that are subject to discrimination.

Before moving on to a discussion of some of the specific kinds of policies that are needed, it should be noted that over the last 15 years, Latin America has succeeded in expanding the health-care system's coverage and making access more equitable. These improvements have gone hand in hand with a steady increase in spending on health, which climbed from 2.5% of GDP in 2000 to 3.4% in 2015 (ECLAC, 2017a). This process has been highly variable in the region, however, largely because of the widely varying characteristics of the countries' health-care systems in terms of investment, out-of-pocket expenses, the degree of integration between the public health system and the social security system, health-care coverage and health outcome indicators. An exploration of the more fundamental factors underlying this diversity reveals more structural aspects of these health systems that reflect differing attitudes and beliefs about the welfare State. These attitudes and beliefs are then given expression in actual policies that are influenced by economic, social, demographic and political factors that are specific to each country (Acosta and Cecchini, 2016).

Three types of policies that are considered to be of pivotal importance in making headway in the effort to eliminate malnutrition and achieve the universalization of difference-sensitive health systems are policies designed to put an end to all forms of malnutrition,[19] combat child mortality and reorient health policies in the light of current epidemiological changes.

Measures for the prevention of malnutrition have to be applied at all stages of the life cycle, and social protection systems can help to lower the risk of malnutrition (stemming either from a lack of sufficient food or from excessive food consumption) for people of all ages. The region's social protection systems have a range of tools that they can employ in order to attain this objective while placing priority on the most vulnerable members of the population. This line of policy has been reinforced by the statement made by the High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (2012) when it affirmed that: "The fact that access to food and to social protection are universal human rights, recognised by most states, provides the basis for a more effective and equitable approach to implementation..." (p. 12).

As part of an emerging global trend, malnutrition as a result of excess weight, as well as underweight, is becoming increasingly common. This has come to be known as the "double burden of malnutrition". Children are one of the main groups to be affected by this problem. Given the multicausal nature of nutritional problems, action will have to be taken by a number of different sectors in order to address this issue. Generally speaking, there are two main types of policies in this area. First, there are targeted policies for addressing the immediate causes of undernutrition, such as food consumption and disease management, as well as intermediate causes such as the diets of children in their first years of life and caregiving practices. Second, there are difference-sensitive policy interventions designed to complement the policies that are more specific in scope (Martínez and Palma, 2017). This second kind of policy focuses on underlying causes such as socioeconomic, environmental and political or institutional factors and deals with nutrient absorption and the quantity and quality of people's dietary intake (Martínez and Fernández, 2007).

School meal programmes are one example of the more specific types of nutrition policy interventions for children. These programmes have undergone changes over time as they have shifted away from an emphasis on supplementing the food supply of children from poor homes and towards the inclusion of policies aimed at delivering nutritional meals and promoting healthy eating habits in countries where a large portion of the population is overweight or obese. Policies that address the problems of excess weight and obesity should take into account such factors as prices, foodstuff production and marketing, and the availability and affordability of different products (PAHO, 2015). Examples of these types of policies can be found in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico, which have the highest obesity rates in the region.[20]

Another very important type of policy focuses on reducing infant mortality. Between 2000 and 2015, infant mortality fell in all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2021b) thanks to the coordination of a well-designed policy mix. These policy interventions included: (i) advances in high-impact, low-cost primary health care, such as mass vaccination campaigns, oral rehydration therapy and wellness check-ups for children; (ii) the expansion of basic service coverage, especially drinking water and sanitation; (iii) increased prenatal care for pregnant women; (iii) improvements in nutrition; (iv) increases in education levels, particularly among women; and (v) reductions in fertility.[21]

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[19] This target is part of Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote agriculture (United Nations, 2015, p. 14).

[20] For more detailed information, see FAO and WFP (2019).

[21] Some of the success stories involving one or more of these types of policies are: *Chile Crece Contigo* ("Chile Grows with You"), (Ministry of Social Development, 2020) the Mother and Child Programme in Cuba (Ministry of Public Health, 2021), the *Bono Madre Niña-Niño Juana Azurduy* ("Juana Azurduy Mother-and-Child Grant") of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, available at [online] https://www.bja.gob.bo/index.php/el-bono/a-quienes-esta-dirigido-el-bono; *Las Casas de Espera Materna* ("Homes for Expectant Mothers") in Peru (Ministry of Health, 2006), and *El Parto Vertical con Adecuación Intercultural* ("Interculturally Adapted Vertical Birth") programme in Peru (see Liendo Cáceres, 2017). For further information on policies and programmes for newborns whose scope is not necessarily limited to the region, see WHO (2021). For further information on child health in the region, see PAHO (2021). Regarding the infant mortality database, see Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (2020).

POLICIES

In order to combat malnutrition and achieve the universalization of difference-sensitive health systems, three crucial policy objectives are:

- Elimination of all forms of malnutrition

- Elimination of infant mortality

- Reorientation of health policies in line with the epidemiological transition

Finally, a third type of policy focuses on initiatives relating to the transitioning epidemiological profile of the Latin American and Caribbean population as the relative frequency of communicable diseases declines and the relative frequency of chronic, noncommunicable diseases increases. In order to meet the challenges posed by this fairly recent change, the countries will need to rethink and reorient their health systems and put greater priority on the prevention of noncommunicable diseases that affect people at different stages of the life cycle. This task is even more challenging for countries that have to cope with the increasing pressure that noncommunicable diseases are putting on their health systems while at the same time continuing to combat persistent communicable diseases such as cholera, dengue fever and chagas disease, as well as the emerging threats posed by new diseases such as those caused by the zika and chikungunya viruses (ECLAC, 2018b).[22]

D. Suggested references
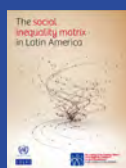
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[22] Some examples of programmes in the region are the National Zika Virus Disease Preparedness and Response Plan in Peru (Ministry of Health, 2016); Paraguay's national Salvá Vidas Sin Criaderos ("Save Lives by Doing Away with [mosquito] Breeding Grounds") campaign (Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, 2019); and the regionwide Vaccination Week in the Americas (PAHO, 2020).

E. Questions

- Is technical and vocational training an effective strategy for helping young people to gain entry to the labour market? Why?

- Does your country have a minimum wage? In your opinion, is the minimum wage an effective tool for reducing economic inequalities? Why? If not, what could be done to help reduce inequality and why isn't it being done?

- Name a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme in your country and determine how well it is following the guidelines for States set out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights regarding progressivity, non-regression and non-discrimination.

- Name a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme in your country and analyse its role in promoting social policies for the universalization of health or education services.

- Describe a policy for combating malnutrition in your country. How successful has it been? What could be done to make it better?

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Chapter IV

Gender[1]

A. Normative framework

The inequalities existing between women and men have been of concern to the United Nations since its founding. Ever since the first meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women was held in February 1947, the legal basis for the struggle for gender equality and for efforts to combat discrimination against women[2] has been expounded in international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women[3] (United Nations, 1979) and its optional protocol (United Nations, 1999), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations, 1996) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

There are also regional instruments such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (commonly known as the Convention of Belém do Pará) of the Organization of American States (OAS, 1994) and the Regional Gender Agenda (ECLAC, 2017a) adopted by the member governments at the Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean,[4] a subsidiary organ of ECLAC.

The Regional Gender Agenda identifies multiple dimensions of the discrimination experienced by women and sets out the human rights commitments assumed by signatory governments with a view to promoting gender quality and guaranteeing the rights of women in all their diversity (ECLAC, 2017a).

The Montevideo Strategy adopted at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is a regional accord that is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also a technical policy instrument for the implementation and reinforcement of cross-cutting and sectoral public policies designed to guarantee human rights and women's autonomy.

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[2] The Convention for the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women defines discrimination against women as: "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (United Nations, 1979).

[3] The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is a milestone international agreement because it proposes concrete action and is the only universally recognized instrument in the struggle to uphold women's rights and freedoms. Furthermore, pursuant to its optional protocol, the Convention is legally binding upon the States that sign and ratify it.

[4] The Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean is charged with identifying the situation with respect to women's autonomy and rights at the regional and subregional levels, presenting public policy recommendations for gender equality, undertaking periodic assessments of the activities carried out in fulfilment of regional and international plans and agreements on the subject, and serving as a forum for debates on gender equality. For further information, see [online] https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/14/en.

B. Assessment of gender inequalities

Economic autonomy

- There is a significant gap between women's and men's labour participation rates in Latin America. As of 2019, that differential amounted to 23.6 percentage points.

- Women spend substantially more time than men do performing unpaid domestic and caregiving tasks. In some countries, they spend an average of twice or three times as many hours per week on these tasks or even more.

Physical autonomy

- The issue of teenage pregnancy continues to pose a challenge in the region, and the teenage pregnancy rate is higher among lower-income women, less educated women and women who belong to a minority ethnic group. In some countries of the region, the teenage pregnancy rate among indigenous adolescents residing in rural areas is over 20%.

- Feminicides continue to be committed in Latin America at an alarming rate. In 2019, 4,640 women were killed in Latin America and in four Caribbean countries simply because they were women.

Autonomy in decision-making

- Fewer women than men occupy elective posts in political parties and management positions in the public and private sectors in Latin America. Although there are a few exceptions, in most cases only 30% of such positions, at the most, are held by women.

STATISTICS

In Latin America, women devote nearly three times more hours to unpaid work than men do.
See [online] https://oig.cepal.org/es

A number of barriers hinder women from fully exercising their human rights. These obstacles, which ECLAC has characterized as the structural constraints associated with gender inequality, include: (i) socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty; (ii) discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege; (iii) the sexual division of labour and the unfair social organization of care; and (iv) the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere (ECLAC, 2017a, p. 14).

Guarantees for the human rights of women are closely linked to the three dimensions of women's autonomy: (i) the physical dimension (the freedom to make decisions about their own bodies, their sexuality and reproduction and the ability to exercise their right to a life free of violence); (ii) the economic dimension (the opportunity to access and control their own assets and resources); and (iii) the dimension of decision-making (full participation in making decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families, their communities and society as a whole).

Women's economic autonomy is restricted by the fact that, even though the labour participation rate of women aged 15 and over in Latin America has climbed by 11 percentage points in the last 30 years (ECLAC/ILO, 2019), it was still 23.6 percentage points lower than the male participation rate in 2019. One of the main reasons for this inequality is the fact that women spend more time on unpaid domestic tasks and caregiving, which leaves them less time to devote to paid work (see figure IV.1). This hampers women from gaining access to advantageous positions in the labour market and makes them more likely to engage in part-time work or informal forms of employment. This, in turn, translates into lower earnings and a lack of employment benefits.

Latin America (16 countries): average amount of time spent on paid
and unpaid work by the population aged 15 and over, by sex, during
the most recent year for which data are available (2009–2017)[a]
(Average number of hours per week
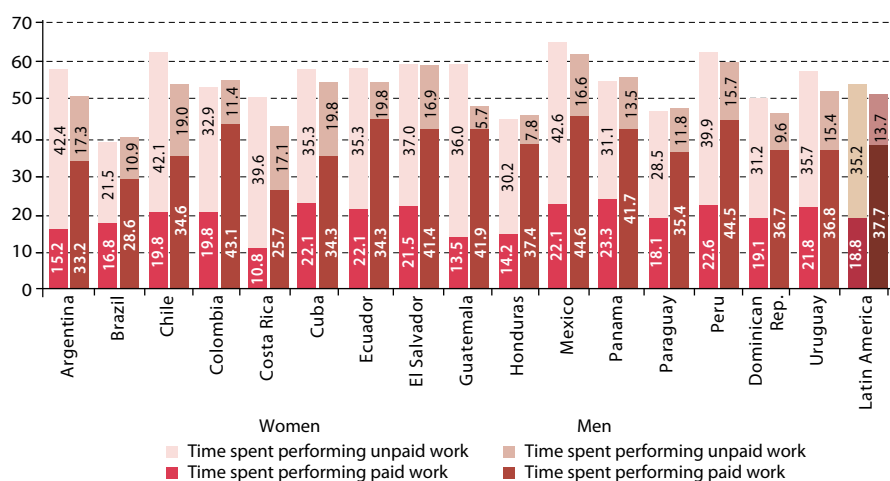
Women
- Time spent performing unpaid work
- Time spent performing paid work

Men
- Time spent performing unpaid work
- Time spent performing paid work

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for
Latin America and the Caribbean [online] https://oig.cepal.org/en.
[a] These data are for the following years: Honduras, 2009; Peru, 2010; Panama, 2011; Ecuador, 2012; Argentina and
Uruguay, 2013; Mexico, 2014; Chile, 2015; Cuba, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic, 2016; and Brazil, Colombia,
Costa Rica, El Salvador and Guatemala, 2017. The figures shown for Latin America are simple averages.

Data compiled by ECLAC indicate that more women than men lack incomes of their
own in all of the Latin American countries. Around 2018, 29% of women versus 10.5% of
men at the regional level lacked their own incomes. In the best of cases, the differential was
7.4 percentage points (Uruguay) and, at the other end of the spectrum, it was 37 percentage
points (Guatemala) (see figure IV.2).

Latin America (14 countries): population without
own income, by sex, around 2018[a]
(Percentages)
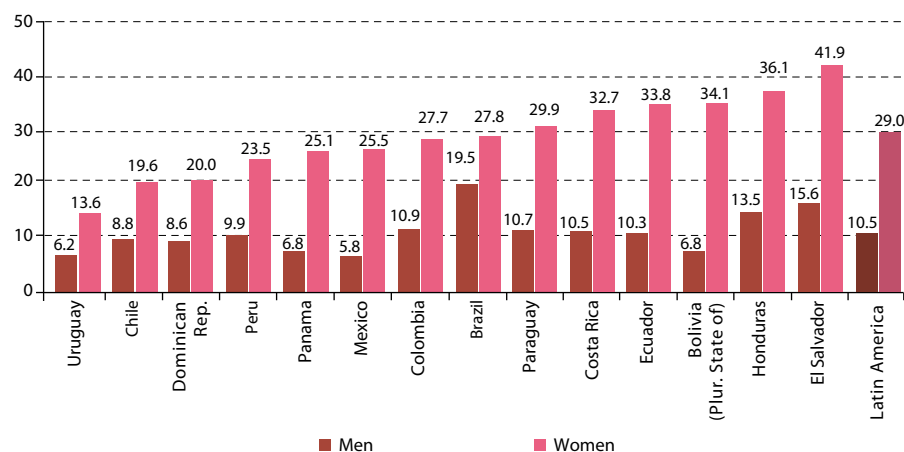
- Men
- Women

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT [online] https://estadisticas.
cepal.org/cepalstat/WEB_CEPALSTAT/estadisticasIndicadores.asp?idioma=i.
[a] The data for Chile are from 2017. The data for the rest of the countries, as well as the simple averages for Latin America
as a whole, are from 2018.

There is also a pay gap between working women and their male counterparts, with women receiving lower wages even when they are performing work of equal value that involves similar responsibilities and working conditions. CEPALSTAT data (ECLAC, 2019g) indicate that men's earnings were 12.8 percentage points higher than women's in Latin America's urban areas in 2018.[5] When the findings are controlled for years of education, the differentials are sharpest at the two ends of the spectrum. The pay gap for women and men with between 0 and 5 years of education was 19.9 percentage points, and it was 22.9 percentage points for women and men with between 10 and 12 years of schooling. These gaps are generally even greater when they are cross-referenced with other axes of inequality, such as age, ethnicity[6], race[7] and migrant status (ECLAC, 2016a and 2020a).

Wage levels are not the only metric of inequality between women and men in the labour market. For example, one of the occupational areas in which working conditions are the poorest for women is paid domestic work. This type of work has traditionally been an important source of jobs for women, particularly those from poor households and those who belong to indigenous and/or Afrodescendent groups, and it has been an increasingly important source of employment for migrant women as well. Slightly more than 11 million women are employed as paid domestic workers in Latin America today (ECLAC, 2019a). These regional averages mask widely differing figures for the individual countries, however: Costa Rica is currently the country in which paid domestic work accounts for the largest share of female employment (18%), while the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is at the other end of the spectrum (3.4% in 2013). Domestic employment is generally informal in nature, pays poorly (as of 2017, wages were the equivalent of 62% of what women in other sorts of occupations were earning) and, for the most part, does not provide social benefits.

One of the consequences of the substandard working conditions associated with the jobs that many women hold is a lack of social protection, and this is reflected in the fact that fewer women than men have pensions or access to health-care systems, upon reaching old age. Of the persons who were paying into pension systems in Latin America in 2017, 56.6% were men and 43.4% were women (Arenas de Mesa, 2019).

In addition, while the attainment of a higher level of education has traditionally enabled people to obtain better jobs, this is not always as true for women as it is for men. Even more highly educated women often end up in positions where they are subordinate to men and in which they are not doing the kind of work for which their education qualifies them.[8] They often find themselves performing administrative or caretaking activities or receiving less pay than men for the same work (ECLAC, 2019a).

Major challenges in terms of women's physical autonomy include the lack of guarantees for their sexual and reproductive rights and for their right to a life free of violence. This is reflected in a lack of quality sexual and reproductive health services, the greater economic responsibility borne by women in reproductive matters, high pregnancy rates among girls and teenagers, forced motherhood and sexual violence (ECLAC, 2016b).

In the area of sexual and reproductive health, one of the factors that may interfere with women's ability to make decisions about their own bodies, including whether or not to become pregnant, how many children they want to have and at what age they want to become mothers, is the lack of access to contraceptives. CEPALSTAT data (ECLAC, 2019g) indicate that, although the extent of unmet demand for family planning services has diminished in recent decades in most of the countries, falling from 17.2% in 1990 to 10.6% in 2013, gaining access to such services remains a challenge in countries such as Haiti,

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[5]   CEPALSTAT, weighted average. The data are updated to December 2019.
[6]   For further information, see ECLAC (2013 and 2014).
[7]   For further information, see ECLAC (2018).
[8]   Women have a higher enrolment rate at the tertiary level than men do. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the gross enrolment rate, disaggregated by sex, was 45.1% for men and 58.6% for women in 2018.

where 35.3% of the demand for family planning services goes unmet (which means that nearly 4 out of 10 women do not have access to contraceptives), or Guyana, where the figure is 28.5%.

Teenage pregnancy is a continuing problem in the region even though the fertility rate is trending downward. The persistence of this problem is accounted for by limitations on access to contraceptives, difficulties in overcoming uneven power dynamics between a man and a woman within a relationship (ECLAC, 2016b), sexual abuse and violence and, in some cases, a lack of the necessary knowledge or information. Figures drawn from the CEPALSTAT database (ECLAC, 2019g) indicate that the fertility rate among adolescents remains high at over 50 per 1,000 adolescents in most of the countries (see figure IV.3).

FIGURE IV.3
Latin America and the Caribbean (21 countries): fertility rates among girls between 15 and 19 years of age for the most recent year for which information is availablea
(Per 1,000 persons)
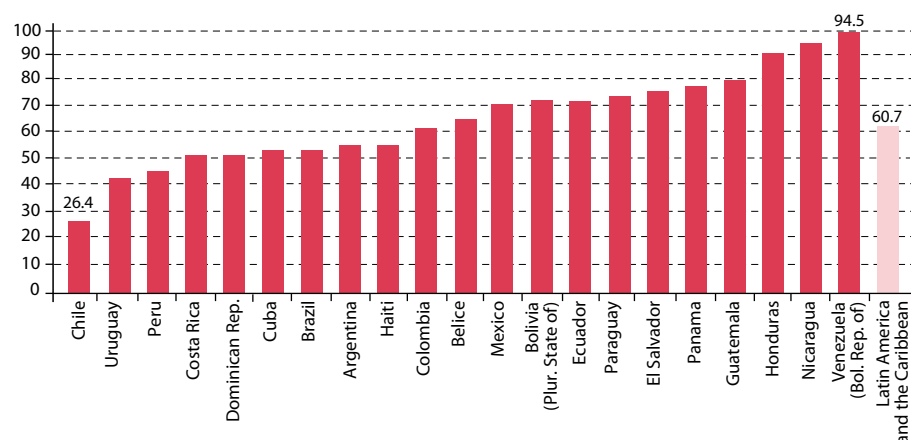
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations, "World Population Prospects 2019", 2019 [online] https://population.un.org/wpp/.

a The data correspond to 2017 for Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Uruguay; 2012 for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; 2015 for Haiti, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia; 2018 for Costa Rica and Mexico; 2013 for El Salvador; 2016 for Guatemala; 2014 for Honduras; 2009 for Nicaragua. The average for Latin America and the Caribbean is a projection for the year 2020.

Teenage pregnancy rates tend to be higher among lower-income, less educated and indigenous groups. The pregnancy rate for teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 years who are members of indigenous peoples living in rural areas of Panama, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Colombia is over 20%.

Forms of violence perpetrated against women in the region include sexual harassment; the smuggling and trafficking of women; obstetric, domestic, economic and psychological violence; violence suffered by women deprived of their liberty; lesbophobia and transphobia; and feminicide —the most extreme form of violence against women of all. The official information for 20 Latin American countries and 4 Caribbean countries that has been made available by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC. 2019h) indicates that, in 2019, over 4,640 women were killed simply because they were women. According to the data compiled by the Observatory, the largest number of feminicides for that year occurred in Brazil and Mexico (1,941 and 983, respectively), but the highest rate in the region was that of Honduras, with 6.2 feminicides per 100,000 women.

The third dimension of autonomy —decision-making— involves the right to gain access to elective posts in political parties and to management positions in the public and private sectors, in civil society organizations and in academia.

Major strides towards gender equality have been made in the region. Policies aimed at promoting women's political participation have succeeded in increasing the percentage of women who hold public positions. Most of the initiatives launched in this area have taken the form of normative frameworks that recognize and apply the principle of gender parity and, to that end, mandate quotas in political elections. For example, Guyana has passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Act 2000 to establish a quota whereby at least one third of the candidates on the lists for national and local elections must be women (Guyana, 2000). National plans or strategies have also been devised to promote women's participation in various public and private decision-making forums, and measures have been introduced to promote civic participation, communication activities and gender-related capacity- and institution-building. Mexico, for example, reformed its Constitution in 2019 in order to guarantee gender parity in all public posts in the three branches and three levels of government (ECLAC, 2019b).

Despite the passage of parity laws and quotas for elections and political parties in a number of Latin American countries in recent years, the goal of having women make up 50% of the three branches of government has yet to be achieved. In the region as a whole, women occupy at most around 30% of the positions, on average, in the three branches of government. Generally speaking, local government is the level at which women account for the smallest percentages (see figure IV.4).

FIGURE IV.4.
Latin America (33 countries): overall average shares
of decision-making posts, around 2018[a]
(Percentages)
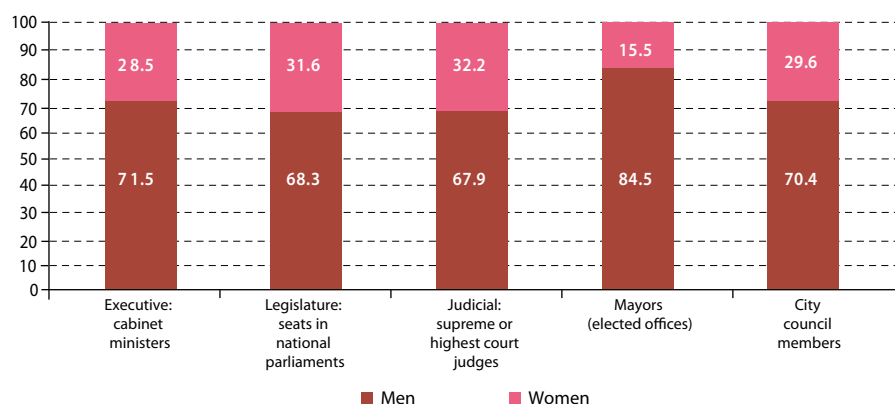
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [online] https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies/autonomy-decision-making.
a The data for the legislative branch on the number of seats held in national parliaments correspond to 2019.

The extent of women's political participation varies not only across countries of the region but also across different groups of women in each country. The fact that few Afrodescendent, indigenous and young women are represented demonstrates that these groups are largely excluded from the political arena. Consequently, their experiences, interests and needs do not find their way onto governments' political agendas or, if they do, are given no more than cursory attention and are underfunded.

According to data compiled by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019), during the period from 1991 to 2018, 65.9% of management posts were held by men and just 34.1% by women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Women had a 3.7% greater chance, on average, of occupying a management position in a national firm than in an international one and a 10% greater chance of holding such a position in a gender-balanced workforce.

Social distancing measures and the closure of schools and workplaces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have caused job and income losses, but they have also increased the caregiving burden borne by women, since they are the ones who do most of the housework and caregiving and, if children cannot go to school, the ones who provide most of the educational support. Children, adolescents, older adults, persons with disabilities and persons who are ill are all at home and in need of more attention and care, which is primarily provided by women.

The health crisis has pointed up the unjust nature of the social structure of care in Latin America and the Caribbean and has highlighted the inequality of women's and men's roles. It has also, however, deepened existing socioeconomic inequalities. This heavier caregiving burden has been shouldered disproportionately by women in the lower-income quintiles. These women often have to continue working outside the home because they cannot afford to forego their wages, and many of them are performing domestic service and caregiving work in other people's homes while lacking the economic means to shift any part of the increased caregiving burden in their own homes to others.

The lockdowns have left women who were already faced with violence in the home, often at the hands of their intimate partner or former partner, closed in with their aggressors and unable to turn to health centres, seek psychological help or go to shelters for women victims of violence. Women who are attacked and are able to get to a health centre often find that the centres are swamped with people suffering from COVID-19 or that shelters or psychological support centres have been closed because their funding has been diverted to emergency services.

In the Economic Commission's view, mounting an effective response to violence against women and the care economy is of key importance in order to get through the pandemic and, once it is over, embark on a sustainable and just economic recovery. The Santiago Commitment is a useful guide for the implementation of public policies for driving a sustainable reactivation in which caregiving issues are a core element.

The Santiago Commitment declares that, in order to accomplish this, the following steps must be taken: (i) move towards a fiscal and gender compact that takes into account the needs of women in order to mitigate the emergency and promote a sustainable and fair recovery; (ii) strengthen the financing of policies focused on women during and after the pandemic (comprehensive services in gender violence, sexual and reproductive health and care) and guarantee a basic emergency income to women in poverty; (iii) invest in the care economy as a catalyst for economic recovery with equality, including the formalization, remuneration and social security of all workers; (iv) redistribute the responsibilities of care, advance in the transformation of labour markets and achieve greater co-responsibility between the State, households, the market and communities; and (v) expand coverage of employment and social protection programmes to guarantee the rights of migrant, Afrodescendent, indigenous and rural women, women at the grassroots community level and women with disabilities.

Even as the pandemic continues, the Latin American and Caribbean countries have been implementing public policies regarding such issues as violence against women, the care economy, women's employment and income-generating activities, social protection and women's participation in the digital area. Information on these measures is available from the Commission's COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean", COVID-19 Reports, Santiago, April 2020; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-Women/ECLAC), "Santiago Commitment: a regional instrument to respond to the COVID-19 crisis with gender equality", February 2021 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46659-santiago-commitment-regional-instrument-respond-covid-19-crisis-gender-equality; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-Women/ECLAC), "Care in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19: towards comprehensive systems to strengthen response and recovery", August 2020 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/documents/care-latin-america-and-caribbean-during-covid-19.

C. Priority policies for reducing gender inequalities

POLICY PROPOSALS

High-priority policies for narrowing gender gaps include:

- To enable women to achieve economic autonomy, steps have to be taken to ensure the more widespread application of the types of labour laws and policies that the countries of the region have been adopting in such areas as land ownership, access and control; social protection for paid domestic workers; and care systems.

- To ensure women's physical autonomy, laws and public policies on violence, harassment and women's sexual and reproductive rights have to be reinforced and broadened in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Headway has been made in strengthening women's decision-making autonomy, especially in terms of legislation for boosting women's participation in political affairs, but implementation of related actions still needs to be stepped up.

- In addition to bolstering women's autonomy, further gender mainstreaming is needed so that the implications for men and women of any planned initiative, whether in the form of legislation, policies or programmes, can be assessed in all areas and at all levels.

Within the conceptual framework of these various forms of autonomy, this section will review and provide examples of replicable advances made in the formulation of laws, plans, strategies, public policies and programmes for achieving equality between women and men in Latin America and the Caribbean in keeping with the 2030 Agenda, the Montevideo Strategy[9] and the main international and regional standards on the human rights of women.[10]

Before looking at specific public policies that fit within this conceptual framework, it is important to emphasize that the countries of the region have made important inroads in the area of gender equality, especially in terms of legislation and the formulation of plans for supporting equality. For example, between 2016 and 2019, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic developed equality plans that incorporate the approaches, pillars and measures of the Montevideo Strategy, and at least six other countries defined 2030 as their policy horizon, thereby aligning their plans with the 2030 Agenda for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (ECLAC, 2020b).[11] Progress in the area of public policy for gender equality in the region has been more uneven, however, as will be seen in the following sections.

1. Women's **economic** autonomy

In order to enable women to achieve economic autonomy, action has to be taken to promote women's involvement in gainful employment, narrow gender pay gaps in the labour market,

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9   The Montevideo Strategy (ECLAC, 2017a) sets out 5 interrelated approaches based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination which serve to guide public policy and 10 pillars for policy implementation that establish the conditions and provide the means for their full, effective application.

10   For examples of the three dimensions of autonomy presented in this section, along with other examples of public policies that have been designed and implemented for the purpose of closing the equality gaps separating women from men, see ECLAC (2019b and 2019c).

11   See the report on the Montevideo Strategy presented at the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2020c).

provide protection for motherhood and breastfeeding rights, regulate the labour market for paid domestic work and create integrated care systems, financial services and land ownership for rural women. This will entail efforts to do the following:

- Ensure *that businesses do not discriminate against women*. For example, article 151 of the Guatemalan Labour Code prohibits employers from stating that candidates for a job opening must be of a particular sex or of differentiating between single women and married women or women with family responsibilities. Argentina's Employment Contract Act (1976) establishes the presumption, unless proven otherwise, that the dismissal of a woman employee within seven and one-half months before or after she gives birth has been motivated by her pregnancy and makes employers subject to a very stiff penalty for unjustified termination of employment.[12]

- *Guarantee maternity (and paternity) leave in line with the international standards established by ILO (2021) (a minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave and at least 2 breastfeeding breaks per day or a reduced workday for 6 months after a woman gives birth)*. For example, in Cuba[13] maternity leave can be extended up 18 weeks, and in Ecuador[14] a *reduced workday for 12 months is guaranteed after a woman gives birth*. In addition, depending on the number of female employees, employers must either provide a space for breastfeeding at the workplace or allow women to leave the premises to breastfeed their babies.

- *Strengthen policies on mandatory social security coverage for persons engaged in paid domestic work*, most of whom are women. For example, Argentina's 2013 Act No. 26.844, which deals with the special employment contract regime for workers employed in private homes,[15] sets out the system for counting workdays for the purpose of domestic workers' coverage by the social security system regardless of whether they have more than one employer. Both workers and employers pay into the social security system. Most of the Latin American countries are moving towards mandatory social security registration, although in some cases, such as in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, registration is voluntary or there are special regimes for domestic workers that afford less coverage than to other formal-sector workers (ILO, 2016).

- *Promote the creation of public care systems*. For example, in order to overcome the sexual division of labour and the imbalanced way in which society organizes its care systems, Uruguay established the Integrated National Care System by Act No. 19.353 as the fourth pillar of its rights-based social protection system (Uruguay, 2015). Under this system, if care centres are full or there is none near a person's place of work, special allowances are provided to pay for access to private care centres.[16] In Costa Rica, National Childcare and Child Development Network Act No. 9.220 links up a number of different facilities that provide comprehensive childcare so that women can enter the labour market (Costa Rica, 2014). This system also includes the Progressive Integrated Care Network for Older Adults.[17]

- *Increase access to credit and promote women's entrepreneurship*. One of the vanguard initiatives in this area is the Women Who Lead Programme of the Banco de Inversión y Comercio Exterior. This programme, which was launched in 2018 in Argentina, grants loans to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in which at least 51% of the stock is held by women or in which at least 25% of the

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Economic autonomy is fostered by ensuring that labour practices are non-discriminatory and that they are coupled with public care systems.

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[12]   Chapter II, art. 178.
[13]   Decree Law No. 339, art. 10 (see Cuba, 2016).
[14]   Labour Law, art. 155 (see Ecuador, 2013).
[15]   See Argentina (2013).
[16]   See Uruguay (2021).
[17]   For further information, see IMAS (2021).

equity is held by women and at least one woman is on the board of directors or in a senior management position. In Mexico, Nacional Financiera S.N.C. has developed a credit product called *Crezcamos Juntas* ("Let's Growth Together")[18] for women entrepreneurs who are signed up with the Fiscal Inclusion Regime (RIF). There is a ceiling on these loans, which carry market interest rates, but they do not have to be secured by real property and no joint and several co-signer is required. A total of 1,691 loans were granted between November 2015 and December 2018.

- *Strengthen job skills training programmes for women.* In Chile, for example, the *Chile Solidario* ("Chile in Solidarity") programme provides women with job skills training, vocational training and training for microentrepreneurs in the production and services sectors. In Uruguay,[19] the Integrated National Care System includes four training modules involving more than 180 instruction hours that award graduates with certification as caregivers. The first of these courses provides 90 hours of instruction in how to care for persons who are unable to live independently. The second provides 90 hours of training in childcare for children between the ages of 0 and 3. The third is designed for people who already have five or more years of documented caregiving experience and provides professional skills certification. The fourth module is intended for people with professional caregiving training and furnishes credentialing verification services. This training programme enables many women to improve their caregiving skills and to be paid for their work.

- *Set up programmes to encourage more girls and young women to secure degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics* (STEM subjects). One example of an initiative in this area is the *Más Mujeres en Ciencias* ("More Women in the Sciences")[20] campaign being run by the Government of Chile. This intersectoral effort to ensure that more young women receive professional training in STEM fields is being carried out by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity and the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation.

- *Promote land ownership by women.* In Nicaragua, for example, Act No. 717 authorizes the creation of a gender equity fund to finance the purchase of land by rural women, while Honduras passed a law establishing a national solidarity credit programme for rural women,[21] along with its accompanying implementing regulations,[22] in 2018. Meanwhile, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Institución Financiera de Desarrollo (IFD) runs a rural education and credit programme known as *Crecer* ("Grow")[23] which furnishes financial services, including loans, and integrated educational development support aimed at empowering rural women and improving their quality of life in six key areas of daily life: economic activity, food and diet, health, education, housing and social security (ECLAC, 2019b).

2. Women's physical autonomy

In order to combat gender-based violence against women, progress has to be made on two different fronts at the same time: the development of comprehensive laws for the eradication of violence against women, and the establishment of mechanisms for preventing such violence, furnishing the necessary treatment and assistance, punishing perpetrators and providing redress. Coordination across sectors within each country is clearly necessary, but so is international cooperation in cases involving, for example, the trafficking of women and girls.

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[18] See [online] http://m.sat.gob.mx/RegimenDeIncorporacionFiscal/crezcamosjuntas.htm.
[19] See Uruguay (2021).
[20] See Ministry of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity (n/d).
[21] Decree No. 110-2015, Honduras (2016).
[22] Executive Order No. 014-2018, Honduras (2018).
[23] See *Crecer* IFD (2021).

(i) The right to a life free of violence and discrimination

Important lines of action in this area include:

- Developing stronger *legislation to eradicate violence and put a stop to the harassment of women.*[24] In Ecuador, for example, the issue of violence against women is now addressed in the Constitution and will therefore figure on the government's agenda on an ongoing basis regardless of which party is in office.[25] In Mexico, all 31 states and the Federal District have a general law on the access of women to a life free of violence (and 29 of them have already promulgated the associated implementing regulations) and have set up their offices of the National System for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women.[26] In Peru, the Act for the Prevention and Punishment of Sexual Harassment in Public Places[27] provides for prison sentences of up to five years in the most serious cases of this type of violence. Femicide has been defined as a specific criminal offence, and sexual harassment and the dissemination of images and audiovisual materials having a sexual content are an offence under the Criminal Code (ECLAC, 2019b). Argentina also has a comprehensive law on the protection of women which covers harassment in the streets and other public places, violence and discrimination, and the defence of their physical, psychological and sexual integrity and their economic and financial well-being.[28]

- *Strengthening the institutional framework for the advancement of women.* Antigua and Barbuda, for example, have a Sexual Offences Model Court, while Grenada's Division of Gender and Family Affairs runs a Gender-Based Violence Unit. In June 2017, the Ministry of Justice and Police of Suriname established the National Council on Domestic Violence, which has been given a three-year mandate (ECLAC, 2019b).

- *Promoting intersectoral coordination mechanisms for programmes designed to assist victims of violence and set up specialized investigation and justice systems and units to tackle gender-based violence and the trafficking of women.* These mechanisms should include redress for women victims of violence and their families. In Chile, for example, a protocol for providing preferential access to housing for victims/survivors of violence is in place that is administered as a cooperative effort by the National Service for Women and Gender Equity and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. In Uruguay, pursuant to Act No. 18.850 of 2011, the State provides a non-contributory pension and special family allowance to the children of persons who have died as a result of domestic violence (Uruguay, 2011).

(ii) Sexual and reproductive rights

These rights include access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, comprehensive sex education, guaranteed access to a safe abortion in cases where abortions are allowed by law and the deterrence of child marriage. Important lines of action in this area include:

- *Moving toward the elimination of penalties for the voluntary termination of pregnancies.* In Chile, for example, Act No. 21.030 of 2017 does away with penalties for the voluntary termination of a pregnancy on any one of three legal grounds and provides for institutional assistance and support services for the mother (Chile, 2017). Mexico

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[24] Since October 2016, 10 countries have passed at least 28 laws on the prevention and eradication of gender-based violence against women, in addition to other laws that define the criminal offences of feminicide, sexual abuse and harassment, and human trafficking, among others.

[25] Article 66 of the Constitution guarantees women's right to physical, psychological, moral and sexual integrity and to the enjoyment of a life free of violence in both public and private affairs. Article 155 defines violence as any and all forms of physical, psychological or sexual ill-treatment. (National Council of the Judiciary, n/d).

[26] See Secretariat of the Interior (2020).

[27] Act No. 30.314, Peru (2015).

[28] Act No. 26.485, Argentina (2009).

modified its Official Mexican Standard on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Violence against Women in 2016 to give rape victims the right to a legal termination of pregnancy (ECLAC, 2019b). In order to remove obstacles to women's access to abortion services, directives have been issued that require health-care providers not to delay the provision of these services.

- *Deterring the harmful practice of child marriage.* In Mexico, for example, amendments to the Federal Civil Code entered into effect in June 2019 that set the minimum age for marriage at 18 years and that repealed various dispensations and exceptions that had allowed local authorities and family members to permit people to enter into marriage before reaching that age.[29] In Honduras, people must be 21 years of age to marry unless they have the consent of their parents, guardians or a public authority, in which case they may marry upon reaching 18 years of age (*Criterio.hn*, 2017).

- *Designing or strengthening plans, programmes and strategies, ideally on an intersectoral basis, for the prevention of unwanted teenage pregnancies and establishing or reinforcing agencies to deal with this issue.* Argentina, for example, has developed its National Plan for the Prevention of Unwanted Teenage Pregnancy, while El Salvador has the National Intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Child and Adolescent Pregnancy 2017-2027. Guatemala has the National Plan for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy 2018-2022.

- *Putting in place institutional practices, plans and public policies with a focus on sexual diversity, non-discrimination and inclusion.* The National Sexual Diversity Plan of Uruguay is aimed at incorporating a sexual diversity, equality and non-discrimination perspective into public policies and institutional practices (Ministry of Social Development, 2018). This plan is underpinned by various laws, some of which are at the leading edge of legal developments in Latin America, such as the Child and Adolescent Code (Act No. 18.590 of 2009), which provides for the adoption of children by cohabiting homosexual couples in consensual unions, and Act No. 18.620 of 2009 on the right to a gender identity and to have one's name and sex designation changed on identity documents, which enables transgender persons to obtain documents that are in accord with their gender identity whether or not they have undergone surgical or hormonal interventions.

- *Modifying and strengthening sex education in the regular curricula of the public school system using an approach based on scientific knowledge and human rights.* The Government of Argentina, for example, has established that all students have the right to receive comprehensive sex education in public, government-run and private educational establishments at all administrative levels of the State, thereby doing away with the provision under which each school was allowed to adapt the content of sex education courses to conform to its "institutional ideology".

Physical autonomy should be promoted by regulatory means. Laws need to be enforced, and action has to be taken to ensure their enforcement.

3. Autonomy in decision-making

Measures to promote women's autonomy in decision-making include high-priority public policies for supporting women's autonomy that call for the passage of laws, the adoption of policy measures and the establishment of programmes to promote their entry into decision-making positions in the political arena (through the use of parity regulations or representational quotas), in the private and public labour markets, in academia, in trade unions and in community organizations at all levels. Some of the options are as follows:

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[29]   See Secretariat of the Interior (2019).

- Using *affirmative action to increase women's participation in political parties, election campaigns and the three branches of government.* In Chile, Act No. 20.840[30] has replaced the binominal electoral system with a flexible parity system under which, starting with the parliamentary elections of 2017 and continuing on until 2029, at least 40% of the candidates from each political party who stand for election must be men and at least 40% must be women. In Argentina, a national law on gender parity in political representation (Act No. 27.412)[31] was passed in 2017 that affirms the country's commitment to the concept of parity in democracy. The National Women's Institute (INAM) and the Association of Argentine Ombudspersons (ADPRA) have undertaken to monitor the law's enforcement. Meanwhile, Mexico amended its Constitution in 2019 to guarantee gender parity in public posts of all types in all three branches and all three levels of government (ECLAC, 2019b).

- *Incorporating mechanisms into labour laws to ensure greater access for women and greater participation by them in State institutions, organizations and associations.* In Chile, for example, Act No. 20.940[32] modernizes the labour relations system and requires organizations to incorporate mechanisms into their bylaws to ensure that women will have seats on their boards of directors, while Act No. 20.881[33] ensures the representative composition of the membership.

- Taking steps to build a robust institutional structure for gender affairs. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate have set up gender affairs committees; local governments now have gender affairs offices; and gender equality policy committees are in place in the Central Electoral Board and the Supreme Electoral Court. The country also has the Women's Political Participation Observatory, which is run by the Central Electoral Board.

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Affirmative action to promote women's participation in all spheres of activity is essential.

4. Tools for gender mainstreaming[34]

In addition to measures aimed specifically at promoting gender equality, it is also important to mainstream gender equality in other sectors and spheres by means of such measures as the following:

- *Setting up mechanisms for providing information and guidance and rolling out programmes to raise the awareness and build the capacity of civil servants whose duties involve dealing with women victims of violence or women who are seeking to exercise their sexual or reproductive rights.* In Chile, for example, the judicial branch of government has worked to make judges more aware of the different types of violence perpetrated upon women so that the courts will be in a position to provide appropriate assistance to victims. In Mexico, the Comprehensive Model for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Care of the Ministry of Health (2016) provides for the development of training workshops designed to ensure that all health-care institutions in the country base their work on a conceptually and operationally standardized model for sexual and reproductive health care.

- *Continuing to develop and refine national and subnational budgets that incorporate a gender perspective and undertaking analyses and assessments to bolster these efforts* (ECLAC, 2019c). For example, El Salvador's Legislative Assembly approved a 13.6%

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[30] See Chile (2015b).
[31] See Argentina (2017).
[32] See Chile (2016).
[33] See Chile (2015a).
[34] In the words of the Economic and Social Council: "mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels [...] The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality" (ECOSOC, 1997, cited in ILO, 2017.

increase in the budget of the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women (ISDEMU) for fiscal 2019. An effort should be made, however, to lock in these budgets as much as possible because, in times of crisis of any sort, such as the present COVID-19 health emergency, the tendency is to cut back the budgets of gender affairs agencies, as has recently occurred with the budget of the National Women's Institute in Mexico.

D. Suggested references

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E. Questions

- Assess the availability of gender-related data in your country, region or district and, if appropriate, propose a public policy for addressing the situation.

- Determine the extent to which the obligations relating to women's human rights set forth in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are being honoured in your country, region or district.

- Which public policies exist in your country with respect to labour equality between women and men? Propose one that is missing.

- Identify a public policy that is in effect in your country, region or district that interferes with or limits women's physical autonomy; analyse why and how it does so and propose a way of rectifying the situation.

- Looking above and beyond the existing laws in your country, region or district regarding women's participation in politics, suggest a feasible public policy for promoting women's participation in the three branches of government and explain how you would implement it.

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Chapter **V**

Childhood
and adolescence[1]

A.   Normative framework

The various international instruments that establish generally agreed standards and guarantees for the rights of children and adolescents include the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),[2] the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989),[3] the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (ILO Convention No. 138, 1973), the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children (1990), the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No. 182, 1999) and the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2000, 2000 and 2011).[4] In addition, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development all call for progress towards the full protection of these rights and their ultimate realization.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a "child" as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (United Nations, 1989, p. 2).

While the above definition gives a precise age range, there is no clear consensus around the age ranges for the different developmental stages included in this portion of the life cycle. Yet the definition of these stages is important because differentiated needs are associated with early childhood, childhood and adolescence.

The laws of most of the countries in the region set the age of 12 as the dividing line between childhood and adolescence. They vary, however, in their definitions of early childhood (which the Committee on the Rights of the Child defines as starting at birth and ending when a child

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[1]   This chapter was prepared by Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Unit of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico; Elsa Gutiérrez, Research Assistant with the Social Development Unit; and Citlalli Lamotte, a consultant with the Social Development Unit.

[2]   Article 25 states that children are "entitled to special care and assistance" (United Nations, 1948).

[3]   The Convention has 54 articles on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

[4]   Many international treaties refer specifically to the rights of children and adolescents, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

begins to attend school),[5] but most of them tacitly (but not in writing) set the threshold at 6 years of age. In this chapter, early childhood will be defined as referring to children between 0 and 5 years of age, the term "childhood" will refer to children between ages 6 and 11, and adolescence will be understood as starting at age 12 and ending at age 18.

These international instruments and the available studies on childhood serve as a basis for identifying[6] the most important issues pertaining to this stage of the life cycle. These issues include child development and care during early childhood, the use of technology and child protection.[7] The 2030 Agenda underscores the importance of looking at the situation of children and adolescents in terms of such issues as poverty (Goal 1), malnutrition (Goal 2), the lack of health care (Goal 3), poor-quality education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), access to water and sanitation services (Goal 6), access to decent work (after a child reaches 14 years of age) and the eradication of child labour (before a child reaches 14 years of age)[8] (Goal 8), a safe environment (associated with the right to protection) (Goal 11), the reduction of inequalities (Goal 10) and the possibility of living a life free of violence (Goal 16) (United Nations, 2015).

B. Assessment of inequalities affecting children and adolescents[9]

- Childhood spans the period between birth and 18 years of age according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most countries divide childhood into three stages: early childhood (0 to 5 years), childhood (6 to 12 years) and adolescence (13 to 18 years).

- As of 2020, 3 out of every 10 persons in Latin America and the Caribbean was under 18 years of age (a total of some 200 million children and adolescents).

- More of the region's children are poor (46.2%) than any other age group, and children are one of the population groups that suffer from the greatest inequality gaps. Poverty, in all its manifestations, and inequality during childhood have effects that last throughout the entire life cycle.

- Children and adolescents in low-income sectors of the population have less access to social protection, education, health, housing and basic services.

- Other structural elements that deepen inequalities during childhood are child labour (according to ILO, 10.5 million children and adolescents are engaged in child labour), early pregnancy, bullying and violence.

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[5]   The Committee on the Rights of the Child proposes defining early childhood as corresponding to the period between 0 and 8 years of age (United Nations, 2006).

[6]   See Pautassi and Royo (2012).

[7]   The term "child protection" refers to the measures involved in preventing violence, exploitation and abuse directed at children and adolescents and the action taken in response to those forms of aggression as provided for in international human rights instruments.

[8]   The term "child labour" refers to labour performed by children in contravention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards set forth in the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It includes all labour performed in any economic activity by children under 12 years of age, heavy labour performed by children between the ages of 12 and 14 and all of the worst forms of child labour (UNICEF, 2020).

[9]   Documents prepared by ECLAC that deal with this subject include: "Health-care expenditures, economic growth and infant mortality: evidence from developed and developing countries" (Dhrifi, 2018), "Latin America and Caribbean children's right to nutritious food" (ECLAC/UNICEF, 2018b), "Medición multidimensional de la pobreza infantil: una revisión de sus principales componentes teóricos, metodológicos y estadísticos" (Espíndola and others, 2017) and "Niñas y adolescentes en América Latina y el Caribe: deudas de igualdad" (Céspedes and Robles, 2016). See [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/list.

According to ECLAC (2021) population estimates, nearly 200 million persons between the ages of 0 and 18 (3 out of every 10 inhabitants) were living in Latin America and the Caribbean[10] in 2020. The sex distribution of that population group was roughly even (51% males and 49% females).[11]

These children are more likely to be poor than members of other age groups are. While the figures compiled by ECLAC (2018) indicate that poverty declined in all age groups in 2002–2016, poverty levels dropped comparatively less among children and adolescents between the ages of 0 and 14. As of 2018, that age group was the poorest of all in Latin America, with a poverty rate of 46.2% (see figure V.1).[12] Recent trends are not promising, either, as the monetary poverty rate among children of up to 14 years of age climbed by almost three percentage points between 2012 and 2017 (ECLAC, 2018). This situation jeopardizes the personal development of these boys and girls and, hence, the future development of the countries and the region as a whole.[13]

FIGURE V.1
Latin America (18 countries): poverty,
by age group, 2018[a]
(Percentages)
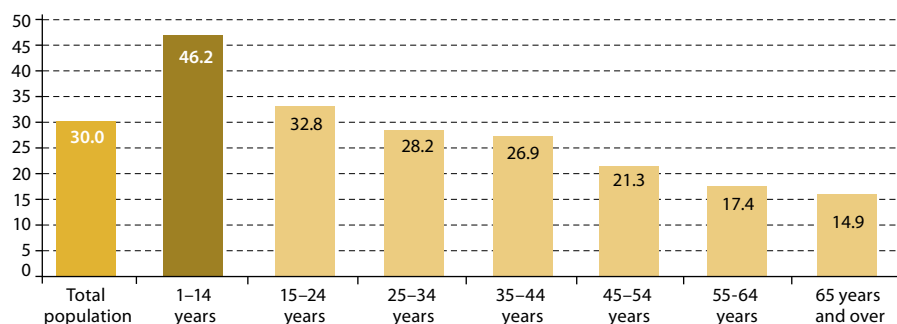
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and CEPALSTAT [online] https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english.
[a] Weighted average for the following countries: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

STATISTICS

2017
ILO FIGURES

450.000

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

5 - 17 YEARS OF AGE

were performing dangerous work

http://www.oit.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--es/index.htm

In addition to poverty, child labour is a common problem in the region. According to ILO estimates, in 2016 there were 10.5 million children and adolescents (7.3% of the inhabitants of the region between the ages of 5 and 17 years) engaged in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 4.4% of those children and adolescents were doing dangerous work (ILO, 2017). While the situation varies across countries, the largest percentage of children and adolescents engaged in child labour work in agricultural activities in the informal sector, many of them as unpaid family workers (ILO/ECLAC, 2018). Apart from constituting a

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[10]   Includes 48 countries and territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten (French part), Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands and Uruguay.

[11]   This overall figure needs to be viewed within the context of the vast demographic diversity of the region, however. In some Central American countries and in Haiti, the percentage of the population under 18 years of age is far above the regional average, whereas in the countries of the Southern Cone and in Cuba, this group accounts for less than 25% of the total population.

[12]   For further information on child poverty, see Espíndola and others (2017).

[13]   Reducing child poverty is one of the targets (target 1.2) for Sustainable Development Goal 1.

grave human rights violation, child labour leaves marks on these children that are passed on from one generation to the next, thereby contributing to the intergenerational reproduction of poverty and, in particular, the persistence of inequality[14] (ECLAC, 2017a).

In the field of education, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2019a), 61% of children between 36 and 59 months of age were attending an early childhood programme in Latin America in 2017. The gross preschool enrolment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean was 78.1% in 2019 (ECLAC, 2021). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) has reported that there are 2.8 million children (1.2 million girls and 1.6 million boys) of primary school age who are not attending school in Latin America. School attendance declines as children move on to upper secondary school, although the enrolment rate at that grade level is marginally higher for females than for males (see figure V.2).

FIGURE V.2
Latin America (41 countries): net primary, lower secondary and upper secondary enrolment rates, by sex, 2018-2019[a]
(*Percentages*)
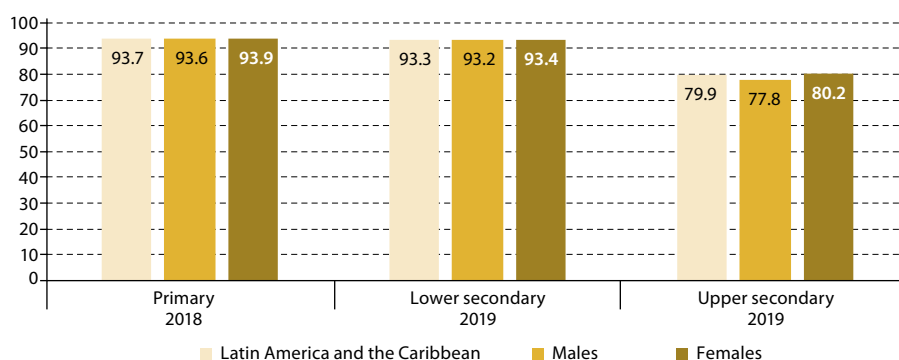
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "UIS.Stat", 2021 [online database] http://data.uis.unesco.org/.
[a] Includes 41 countries and territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and Uruguay.

Identifying the gaps that limit access to an inclusive, equitable and quality education for all children and adolescents is a priority.

Another important issue is the need to guarantee the right to a quality education for all —a goal that has yet to be reached in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the results of an assessment of the performance of third- and sixth-grade primary school students from 15 countries in the region in writing, reading, mathematics and the natural sciences that were presented at the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE) of the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education of UNESCO, held in 2015,[15] the countries fell into three broad groups. There was one group of five countries whose students performed above the regional average and another group of four countries in which the students ranged from above-average to average, depending on the area and the grade level. There was one country where the students' performance was generally around the average but below average in one category (sixth grade reading). Finally, there was a third group of six countries in which the students' performance was consistently below average (UNESCO, 2016).

Another issue confronting children in the region is *bullying*. According to figures drawn from the UNESCO database,[16] over the preceding 12-month period, 31.6% of students in Honduras (2012), 24.5% in Argentina (2012) and 24.3% in the Dominican Republic (2016) had been bullied

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[14] The elimination of child labour is one of the targets (target 8.7) for Sustainable Development Goal 8.
[15] Includes 15 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
[16] See [online] http://uis.unesco.org/.

at school. In addition to physical and/or psychological aggression, school violence can also take a digital form, as in the posting of photos or messages. This is an emerging issue for this group of the population. A UNICEF study (2018) on school violence indicates that most of the victims are members of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, persons who are overweight, students who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, transgender or intersex persons, or persons of indigenous or African descent. The study also indicates that school violence usually takes a physical form among males and a psychological one among females. According to UNESCO (2019), 26% of male students and 24.3% of female students in Central America have been victims of bullying. The figures are even where physical violence is involved (33.9% of male students). In South America, the corresponding figure for male students encountering physical violence at school rises to 45.3% and, for the Caribbean, it climbs even further to 46.4%.

The gross mortality rate in the region in 2015–2020 was 6 per 1,000 persons, with the infant mortality rate standing at 16.1 for every 1,000 live births and the under-5 mortality rate coming to 20.8 per 1,000 live births.[17] The under-5 mortality rate reflects a gender gap, with the rate being higher for boys than for girls (22 per 1,000 live births for boys as opposed to 17 per 1,000 live births for girls) (ECLAC, 2021). The chances of a child dying are greater in rural zones than in urban areas, in large part because of the lack of access to infrastructure in rural areas. The non-governmental organization Save the Children has reported that, in Honduras in 2012, "a child born in Islas de Bahia region was three and a half times more likely to die than a child born in the most advantaged regions of the country" (Roche and others, 2015, p. 10). There is also evidence that infant and child mortality rates are higher among Afrodescendent and indigenous children than among other groups (ECLAC, 2017b).

UNICEF (2015) has also reported that children and adolescents living in low-income households are, on average, at nearly twice as much risk of dying before their fifth birthday than children in higher-income households. At the global level, children born in rural areas and those whose mothers did not attend school are also more likely to die before reaching 5 years of age than those who are born in urban areas or whose mothers went to school.

On the subject of mental health, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) estimates that, worldwide, one out of every five adolescents is suffering from a mental disorder in any given year. Self-harm is the third-most common cause of death among adolescents, with depression being one of the main causes of disability and, in some cases, suicide.[18] Mental health problems among adolescents are a major problem but one which is often ignored, and the data on these problems in Latin America and the Caribbean are scarce. What information there is suggests that mental health problems may be concentrated among adolescents who belong to lower-income groups (Steptoe and others, 2007), indigenous or other minority ethnic groups (Caldas de Almeida and Horvitz-Lennon, 2010), groups with low levels of education (Gaviria and Rondon, 2010) and people who live in areas where there is a great deal of violence (Espinola-Nadurille and others, 2010) and in areas or settings where there are few job opportunities (Gaviria and Rondon, 2010).[19]

The rate of child undernutrition (underweight) for under-5s in Latin America and the Caribbean was 2.7% in 2017. Poverty is associated with an inequality gap in this connection: a study of 10 countries of the region found that poor children (who make up 20% of the child population) are three times more likely to suffer from chronic undernutrition and that food insecurity is greater among indigenous and rural children than among their non-indigenous

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[17] Includes 48 countries and territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten (French part), Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands and Uruguay.

[18] For an interactive map showing age-standardized suicide rates around the world, see WHO [online] http://gamapserver.who.int/gho/interactive_charts/mental_health/suicide_rates/atlas.html.

[19] See UNICEF (2016).

and urban counterparts (FAO and others, 2018). UNICEF (2016) has observed that the birthweights of newborns whose mothers belong to the richer quintiles, live in urban areas and have completed a secondary or higher education are higher than those of other newborns.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), the prevalence of obesity almost trebled between 1975 and 2016, primarily as a consequence of higher caloric intake and more sedentary lifestyles. Obesity is a risk factor for such noncommunicable disorders as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, disorders of the musculoskeletal system and some types of cancers. According to ECLAC/UNICEF (2018a), 7.3% of children under 5 years of age in Latin America and the Caribbean are overweight, which means that almost 4 million children in that age group are overweight or obese. The three countries of the region with the highest rates of overweight/obesity are Paraguay, with a rate of 12.4% (2016), Barbados, with 12.2% (2012), and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, with a rate of 10% (2016).

Another manifestation of inequality in the area of health is the prevalence of teenage pregnancies. While it is true that the number of teenage pregnancies fell from 73 per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19 in 2008 to 64 in 2017, this situation continues to pose a formidable challenge for the region, which has the second-highest fertility rate for women in that age group in the world. In Ecuador, for example, 79 out of every 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19 bore a child in 2017 (UNFPA, 2020). According to PAHO/UNFPA/UNICEF (2017), a teenage girl who did not attend school or who has no more than a primary education is as much as four times more likely to become pregnant than one who has attended secondary school. By the same token, teenage girls from households in the lowest-income quintile are between three and four times more likely to become pregnant than those who come from households in the highest-income quintile. In some countries, the chances of an early pregnancy are also above average for indigenous adolescents and particularly those who live in rural areas.

Very little information is available about the impact of early pregnancy on adolescents under the age of 15. In 2015, Planned Parenthood Global published a report based on a multinational study on the health effects of forced motherhood on girls between the ages of 9 and 14 years. That report indicated that a large percentage of the study participants had some type of complication during pregnancy (anaemia, pre-eclampsia), gave birth prematurely or suffered from some type of mental health problem. It also documented the fact that a majority of the participants came from poor or extremely poor families and that most of them lived on the outskirts of a city or in rural or semi-rural areas (Planned Parenthood Global, 2015).

In the area of housing and basic services, the lack of access to water and sanitation services and the poor quality of those services bear a direct relationship to infant mortality, morbidity and undernutrition (ECLAC/UNICEF, 2010). According to ECLAC/UNICEF (2018), 96% of urban households in Latin America and the Caribbean had access to improved drinking water sources in 2002, and that figure had risen to 98% by 2015, whereas the corresponding figures for rural zones were 73% in 2002 and 84% in 2015, with the latter group therefore having a higher risk of contracting diseases associated with polluted or contaminated water or improper waste management. Children between the ages of 0 and 4 years are the ones who are at the greatest risk of contracting infectious diseases and dying as a result of diarrhoea, dehydration or undernutrition, and children of those ages who live in rural zones are at an even higher risk (ECLAC/UNICEF, 2010).

Although statistics on domestic violence do not include specific data for each of the countries of the region on the use of violent forms of disciplining children (psychological aggression or corporal punishment), there is evidence that children are sometimes at risk of violence at the hands of their caregivers or other family members. UNICEF (2017) has noted that children who are not cared for properly, particularly during the first year of life and often by mothers who were themselves abandoned or mistreated, are more sensitive to the effects of stress and exhibit more behaviour problems than children who have been well cared for.[20]

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[20] Estimates of child behaviour for Latin America and the Caribbean based on the results of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), 2010-2015. See UNICEF (2021) [online] http://mics.unicef.org/surveys.

There are a number of methodological tools for developing diagnostic inputs relating to specific issues relevant to this age group, including a methodology for estimating child poverty,[21] a guide prepared by ECLAC for constructing indicators on the realization of children's rights (Pautassi and Royo, 2012), the ILO Manual on Child Labour Rapid Assessment Methodology (ILO, 2005) and a methodology developed by the Colombian government for identifying adolescents who are at a high risk of early pregnancy (Ministry of Health/UNFPA, 2014).

BOX V.1
COVID-19 and its impact on children and adolescents

The negative short-, medium- and long-term impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on children are considerable. Relatively few children and adolescents have contracted COVID-19, and most of those who have come down with the disease have experienced no more than mild symptoms (PAHO, 2020). The indirect effects of the pandemic may be quite significant, however. For example, children may fail to receive other vaccines (especially those administered at school, which they may not be attending because of social distancing measures) or to attend their regular check-ups. Another possible effect may be an increase in teenage pregnancies. The United Nations Population fund (UNFPA, 2020) has estimated that there may have been as many as a half million additional early pregnancies in 2020 owing to difficulties in obtaining contraceptives or gaining access to sexual and reproductive health services and to the fact that lockdowns may have increased girls' and adolescents' exposure to domestic sexual violence and abuse.

It is also having an impact on children's educations. According to Human Rights Watch (2020), more than 91% of the world's students did not attend school during much of the first half of 2020 and, according to ECLAC/UNESCO (2020), as of mid-May 2020, more than 160 million students at all grade levels in Latin America and the Caribbean had ceased to attend in-person classes. Information on 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries up to 7 July 2020 confirms that most of them suspended in-person classes at all levels of education. With the advent of the pandemic, online learning platforms have come to the fore, but sizeable gaps in actual access to digital forms of communication remain. In 2016, around 42%, on average, of urban residents in 14 Latin American countries had Internet access in the home, but only 14% of rural residents did (ECLAC, 2019, quoted in ECLAC/UNESCO, 2020). Inequality in access to online learning opportunities will only widen existing gaps in access to information and knowledge (ECLAC/UNESCO, 2020).

In addition, the loss of so many jobs and sources of income, together with the associated economic insecurity, heightens the risk of child labour, sexual exploitation and child marriage. The pressure being felt by family members, especially in households subject to quarantines or lockdowns, may also result in an increase in domestic violence. Another risk is that, as the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 rises, more children will be orphaned and will become more vulnerable than before to trafficking and other types of exploitation, such as sexual exploitation and child labour.

Measures that governments can adopt to address these situations include providing cash transfers as a means of averting child labour, supporting the continuity of remote learning, strengthening safety nets for children who have been orphaned, tracking and addressing incidents of domestic violence and ensuring the continuity of child and adolescent health services.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2018* (LC/PUB.2019/3-P), Santiago, 2019; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/International Labour Organization (ECLAC/ILO), "The COVID-19 pandemic could increase child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean", *Technical Note*, No. 1, 11 June 2020 [online] https://www.ilo.org/americas/publicaciones/WCMS_747662/lang--en/index.htm; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ECLAC/UNESCO), "Education in the time of COVID-19", *COVID-19 Report*, Santiago, August 2020; Human Rights Watch, "COVID-19's Devastating Impact on Children", 9 April 2020 [online] https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/09/covid-19s-devastating-impact-children; Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), "Seminario virtual: COVID-19 y el síndrome inflamatorio multisistémico en niños y adolescentes", 28 May 2020 [online] https://www.paho.org/es/eventos/seminario-virtual-covid-19-sindrome-inflamatorio-multisistemico-ninos-adolescentes; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Socioeconomic Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy in Six Latin American countries: Implementation of the MILENA Methodology in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Paraguay*, Panama City, 2020.

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[21]   See [online] at http://equityforchildren.org/2012/12/unicef-and-eclac-present-guide-to-estimating-child-poverty/.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities among children and adolescents

Priority policies for reducing inequalities among the child and adolescent population include:

- Promotion of well-being and social inclusion during all stages of childhood based on policies aimed at achieving universal quality health care and education and at putting in place social protection systems that include cash transfers, and policies on childcare and early childhood development that guarantee access to social services and address emerging problems.

- Child protection as a means of preventing and addressing violations of chidren's and adolescents' rights to grow and learn in a safe environment free of violence.

1. Well-being and social inclusion

Public policies on the eradication of child poverty should be the top priority. In order to achieve this aim, cash transfer programmes will need to be strengthened, expanded and continued within the framework of universal, comprehensive social protection systems of proven effectiveness, along with measures for interrupting the vicious circle of poverty by upholding the right to education and health through the progressive, systematic expansion of service coverage and improvement of service quality.

An integrated, long-term approach is called for that will provide guarantees for the right to well-being and social inclusion in all areas of health and education, housing and basic services, along with guaranteed incomes during all three stages of development of this sector of the population: early childhood, childhood and adolescence.

Policies on early childhood development and care are essential for children under 5 years of age.

i. Early childhood (0-5 years)

Special attention needs to be devoted to the stage of early childhood as one of the most important phases of human development. As observed by UNICEF (2010), a proper diet and developmental stimulation, protection and care are crucial during early childhood in order for children to survive, progress, learn and participate during that stage as well as during future developmental stages. Measures focusing on this stage should include:

- *Ensuring appropriate care during gestation by providing health and nutrition support to the expectant mother and ensuring the availability of prenatal care,*[22] starting with early pregnancy detection and including proper care for the newborn. Brazil's Happy Child Programme, for example, prepares pregnant women for childbirth and promotes the strengthening of family ties in caring for, protecting and raising the child. Another example is the *Chile Crece Contigo* ("Chile Grows with You") programme, which makes use of the Biopsychosocial Development Support Programme as a gateway for monitoring and supporting the health and integral development of children starting while they are still in the womb and continuing on until they reach 9 years of age. This initiative provides prenatal workshops to help prepare expectant mothers and their partners during gestation and childbirth, promotes active fatherhood with the help of its Guide for Active Fatherhood and Shared Responsibility for Raising Children, health check-ups for the children and the provision of training, opportunities for play and other early childhood stimulation activities.[23]

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[22] See Facts for Life (UNICEF, 2010).
[23] See [online] http://www.crececontigo.gob.cl/.

- *Reinforcing efforts to promote breastfeeding[24] during at least the first six months of life and promoting healthful nutrition programmes through parent training, food transfers and/or school meal arrangements.* For example, Brazil has launched a breastfeeding and complementary feeding strategy[25] which offers five-hour workshops aimed at promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding and healthful complementary feeding practices.

- *Ensuring universal access to quality preventive and curative health services for children during their first five years of life.* These services should include regular check-ups to track children's growth and development and to ensure the timely administration of vaccines based on WHO international standards. Argentina's National Early Childhood Plan[26] serves children between 45 days and 4 years of age and offers workshops and training courses as part of its health-care and health promotion efforts. In Ecuador, the National Intersectoral Strategy for Early Childhood[27] is designed to provide access to services for children between 0 and 5 years of age and to ensure the coverage and quality of those services. It focuses on coordinating prenatal and postnatal health checks, wellness visits, neonatal screening and immunizations.

- *Promoting early childhood development through programmes in which health professionals specialized in early childhood provide stimulation and help to support the development of psychomotor skills and provide training to parents and guardians.* The Chile Crece Contigo programme, for example, includes a module entitled "Nobody's Perfect"[28] that runs parenting workshops for mothers and fathers of children between the ages of 0 and 5 years.

- *Expanding the coverage of health-care services with a view to the provision of universal access[29]* by setting up more paediatric health-care centres in line with minimum international guidelines.[30] One example of a cross-sectoral policy initiative in this area is the National Network for Childcare and Child Development (REDCUDI)[31] in Costa Rica, whose chief aim is to increase the coverage and quality of comprehensive health-care services for children in their first months of life and continuing on up to 6 years of age. To this end, public and private social actors are advancing policies to guarantee protection, care and integral developmental support for children in this age group.

- *Implementing policies on awareness-raising and training for parents and caregivers of young children aimed at ensuring quality care and a stimulating environment for them.* Chile's Newborn Support Programme,[32] for example, provides a set of basic supplies for newborns. It also educates families about how to raise and care for young children and provides information about how to strengthen the parent-child bond.

ii. Childhood (6-12 years)

Although primary education coverage has increased, it is still not universal, and this is also true of food security and health-care coverage for this age group. In order to turn this situation around, action needs to be taken in the following areas:

- *Guaranteeing universal school attendance while combating child labour by implementing conditional cash transfers and other special-purpose programmes.* Brazil's Child Labour Eradication Programme (PETI),[33] for example, focuses on enforcing labour laws as they apply to children and adolescents. In Brazil, children under 14 years of age are prohibited from working; between the ages of 14 and 16, they may only work as apprentices. Adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 who wish to work may do

POLICIES

Policies on prenatal care, breastfeeding, preventive and curative health care and early stimulation for children during their first five years of life are of pivotal importance.

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[24] See the WHO Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (WHO, 2003).
[25] See [online] https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/bdnp/1377/portaria-1920-5-setembro-2013.
[26] See [online] https://www.argentina.gob.ar/desarrollosocial/primerainfancia.
[27] See [online] https://www.todaunavida.gob.ec/primera-infancia/.
[28] See [online] http://www.crececontigo.gob.cl/beneficios/talleres-nadie-es-perfecto/.
[29] For further information, see the Global Report (UNICEF, 2019).
[30] For further information, see Griesbasch Guizar (2013) and Marco (2014).
[31] See the Technical Secretariat of the National Network for Child Care and Development (2018).
[32] See [online] http://www.crececontigo.gob.cl/beneficios/programa-de-apoyo-al-recien-nacido/.
[33] See Ministry of Citizenship (2020).

so only if they have been issued an employment card, but certain restrictions still apply. They are not allowed to work at night or to work in locations or in services classified as dangerous or unhealthful. Anyone who learns of the use of child labour can report it to one of the country's Guardianship Councils or to the Specialized Social Assistance Referral Centre (CREAS) or can call a special number to report the situation to the government's social services network.

- *Making use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to provide children in remote areas with access to a basic education.* For example, the government of the State of Amazonas has set up the Centre for Media Education in Amazonas,[34] which has been providing instruction via satellite television to children and young people living in remote areas since 2007. A team of teachers give classes in Manaus, the state capital, and those classes are then broadcast to classrooms in rural communities (UNICEF, 2017). Another example is the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project, which provides each child with a laptop so that they can take advantage of information and self-guided instruction technologies.

- *Preventing undernutrition and malnutrition by mounting information and awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits of a balanced diet and its contribution to children's growth and development.* Along these lines, Panama's National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2017-2021[35] focuses on reducing the extent of undernourishment by increasing the food supply and improving food and nutrition security in indigenous regions. Peru has a law on the promotion of healthful diets for children and adolescents (Act No. 30.021)[36] which provides for educational initiatives dealing with healthy eating habits, the establishment of the Observatory for Nutrition and the Study of Overweight and Obesity,[37] the introduction of stands in schools that offer healthy foods and meals, the promotion of physical activity and the regulation of advertising of unhealthy food products. Other countries are also implementing food labelling strategies. Chile, for example, has passed the Nutritional Composition of Food and Advertising Act (No. 20.606),[38] which provides for highly visible nutrition labelling and warnings so that consumers will know what they are buying.

- *Detecting and treating undernutrition.* Visits to primary schools in order to check children's height and weight should be coordinated by the education and health sectors. These initiatives should also include monitoring arrangements and the provision of health care where necessary. For example, Mexico's National Weight and Height Registry (RNPT)[39] is maintained as a joint effort by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the National System for Integral Family Development and the System's state offices, with coordination and technical support services from the Salvador Zubirán National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition (INCMNSZ).

- *Incorporating emerging issues in the education system, such as the promotion of culture and peace, sex education and sustainable development.* Examples include progress in making sex education a part of the regular primary and secondary school curricula in such countries as Argentina,[40] Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where sex education is now mandatory in the formal education system. An example of steps being taken to promote a culture of peace is provided by the guide prepared by UNESCO in conjunction with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) entitled *Strengthening the Rule of Law through Education: a Guide for Policymakers* (UNESCO/UNODC, 2019), which advocates the approach taken by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

POLICIES

Policies on equality in access to education and to the use of technologies during childhood are of fundamental importance.

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34   See [online] https://www.centrodemidias.am.gov.br/.
35   See Panama (2017).
36   See Peru (2013).
37   See [online] https://observateperu.ins.gob.pe/.
38   See Chile (2012) and Ministry of Health (2016).
39   See [online] http://rnpt.sivne.org.mx/pagina_/.
40   Initiatives in this area in the region include Argentina's National Programme for Comprehensive Sex Education, which promotes healthy habits and provides information about personal care, interpersonal relations, sexuality and children's rights, and Cuba's Syllabus on Sex Education from a Gender and Sexual Rights Perspective, which is intended to help ensure that sex education is an integral part of the education process (Argentina, 2006; Ministry of Education of Cuba, 2011).

iii. Adolescence (13-17 years)

Limited coverage of the secondary educational system and high grade repetition and dropout rates, combined with a lack of access to appropriate health services for people at this stage in their development, can jeopardize adolescents' future. This stage is one that often has a strong influence on young people's chances of gaining access to the combined gateways for inclusion represented by vocational or higher education and employment opportunities that will enable them to obtain better-quality employment down the road. Steps that can be taken to help reverse exclusionary processes at this stage include the following:

- *Keeping young people in school by providing scholarships and cash transfers so that they do not have to drop out of school for economic reasons.* The cash transfer programmes used in Brazil (e.g. the *Bolsa Família* family grants[41]) is one example. Another is Mexico's Benito Juárez Scholarships for Well-being,[42] which are granted to children and adolescents in early, primary and secondary education in order to support school enrolment and school completion.

- *Preventing early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases by rolling out sensitization campaigns that will help to dispel the stigma and taboos surrounding contraceptive use and promote comprehensive sex education for families, communities and school populations, as called for in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (ECLAC, 2013).* For example, Argentina's National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Parenthood[43] focuses on distributing information over the web and its helpline. It thus provides an avenue for people to consult with experts in sexual and reproductive health on a confidential basis and without cost regarding a wide range of topics, such as methods of contraception, sexual and reproductive rights, sexual violence, the legal termination of pregnancy and others. In addition, public hospitals and clinics provide contraceptives free of charge. Another example is the handbook entitled *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: an Evidence-Informed Approach*, which was prepared in 2018 by UNESCO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) secretariat, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WHO. This handbook is a tool that can be used by education, health and other authorities in the development and implementation of comprehensive sex education programmes and materials in school and non-school settings (UNESCO, 2018).

- *Providing support to teenage mothers and fathers so that they can continue their education, have an adequate income and have access to care services. They should also be provided with information that will help them avoid a second unwanted pregnancy.* The *Chile Crece Contigo* programme includes a school retention support subprogramme to help pregnant teenagers and young mothers and fathers[44] complete the Chilean system's 12 years of compulsory education.

- *Preventing gender violence by implementing sensitization campaigns aimed at empowering adolescent girls. The idea here is to promote their self-esteem and enable them to protect themselves by resisting attempts to subject them to gender-based violence.* For example, Brazil's Programme "H" community workshops[45] consist of 14 two-hour group sessions held over a six-month period and a community-based campaign in the favelas targeting boys and men between the ages of 14 and 25.

- *Promoting leadership and participation among adolescents.*[46] The aim here is for adolescents to acquire skills and knowledge that will help them to make wise decisions about their lives, their families and their communities and to become active members of

The combined use of traditional policies (scholarships, transfers) and emerging policies (sex education) for adolescents is of key importance.

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[41] See [online] http://mds.gov.br/assuntos/bolsa-familia.

[42] See [online] https://www.gob.mx/becasbenitojuarez.

[43] See [online] https://www.argentina.gob.ar/salud/saludsexual.

[44] See [online] https://www.junaeb.cl/programa-de-retencion-escolar-de-madres-padres-y-embarazadas-adolescentes?lang=en.

[45] See PAHO (2010).

[46] For further information, see UNFPA (2019a).

society. One example of initiatives in this area is the Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER)[47] funded by UNFPA, which is a network of over 500 non-profit organizations and government institutions that are working to build a partnership between young people and adults to advocate for policies and services associated with national youth development strategies, improved access to sexual and reproductive health information, knowledge and services, and the sharing of lessons learned in different countries and cultures. Another example is the *Unidas Crecemos* ("United We Grow") initiative promoted by UNFPA Mexico in collaboration with a number of strategic partners in an effort to help teenage girls to exercise their rights and duties as citizens and assist them in gaining access to education and health services. The girls are organized into clubs that meet in public community venues where they attend training workshops dealing with such topics as human rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of violence.[48]

- *Providing mental health support services[49] for adolescents based on strategies for preventing and treating mental health conditions.[50]* In Chile, for example, the National Suicide Prevention Programme (Ministry of Health, 2017) runs cross-sectoral initiatives aimed at reducing the number of deaths by suicide. It focuses on early risk detection and assistance and therapeutic treatment for persons in crisis. It also runs prevention campaigns in schools to reach the child as well as the adolescent population.

2. Child protection

The principle of the *best interests of the child is* established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and should be upheld in all public policy actions targeting children and adolescents.[51] Some of the options in this field are as follows:

- *Promoting action to prevent and/or eradicate sexual exploitation and trafficking and to punish persons perpetrating these crimes.* As one example, Chile's specialized programmes to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents[52] work at the national and subnational levels to secure the physical and psychological recuperation and rehabilitation of child and adolescent victims of sexual exploitation. Another example is Argentina's "Equipo Niñ@s" Team Campaign against Sexual Exploitation and Grooming,[53] which provides professional counselling and advisory services on victim's rights when victims of sexual exploitation are giving their depositions or testifying. These kinds of measures can be brought together under a national plan such as the Dominican Republic's Action Plan to Eradicate the Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys, Girls and Adolescents 2006-2016. This plan included four main lines of action: (i) strengthening the family for development; (ii) strengthening citizens' responsibilities in reporting exploitation and general knowledge about child abuse and exploitation; (iii) reviewing and improving regulations, laws and protection programmes; and (iv) strengthening laws and justice systems to ensure the effective apprehension and prosecution of perpetrators of child abuse and exploitation.

- *Promoting measures for preventing and eradicating child labour and for punishing persons making use of child labour by developing strategies for ensuring that the regulations and laws on child labour are enforced.* The Child Labour Risk Identification Model developed by ILO and ECLAC (ILO/ECLAC, 2018), for example, can be used to gather empirical evidence

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[47] See Hinrichsen and Jensen (2006).
[48] See UNFPA (2019b).
[49] WHO (2005) has a manual on the implementation of mental health policies.
[50] For statistics on mental health facilities in each country, see WHO (2016) [online] http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.MHFAC?lang=en.
[51] See general comment No. 14 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the application of the principle of the best interests of the child.
[52] See Ministry of Justice (2009).
[53] See [online] http://www.jus.gob.ar/atencion-al-ciudadano/atencion-a-las-victimas/brigada-nin@s.aspx.

for use in establishing national and subnational policy priorities for the prevention and elimination of child labour. Mexico has rolled out two initiatives aimed at promoting the eradication of child labour. The first provides labels that read "agricultural enterprise free of child labour" to companies that demonstrate that they observe the relevant regulations and laws and that institute a child protection policy (Secretariat of Labour and Social Security, 2019). The other provides badges or certificates that read "For a Mexico without child labour" to public, private and civil society organizations that have put in place procedures, policies, programmes and measures for preventing and eradicating child labour (Secretariat of Labour and Social Security, 2017).

- *Taking action to put an end to bullying in schools, emotional assault and cyberbullying through awareness-raising efforts and the strengthening of reporting and redress mechanisms.* For example, the Fundación ANAR in Peru has a *Buentrato* ("Kindness") programme that works to counter violence in schools by inculcating fundamental values and basic skills in secondary school student volunteers who can then become "trainers" for younger students and can model ways of dealing with other people that engender good relations among peers. Other examples around the world include the "Safe to Learn"[54] programme, whose objective is to eliminate violence from schools by 2024. Participating organizations include UNESCO and UNICEF. Yet another example is the NGO "No Bully" initiative which, with support from Scholastic and UNESCO, is running the "Power of Zero"[55] campaign. Schools and households around the world are provided with learning resources and materials to help small children to learn how to use the Internet properly and to understand the importance of digital citizenship so that they will be prepared to prosper in a digital world. This initiative is indirectly associated with the drive to reduce cyberbullying.

- *Taking steps to prevent and address cases of domestic violence56 and to foster the creation of a healthy environment.* As one example, the Chile Acoge ("Chile Embraces") programme[57] seeks to put an end to domestic violence and violence against women by employing preventive measures, assisting and protecting victims, re-educating men who use violence, training key stakeholders and promoting cross-sectoral coordination.

3. Special assistance for vulnerable groups of children

Another highly important issue to be taken into consideration in the formulation of social policies and programmes is the social exclusion of vulnerable groups of children. The following types of action should therefore be taken:

- *Implementing measures to ensure the social inclusion of excluded groups and those in particularly vulnerable situations, such as children and adolescents with disabilities, those belonging to indigenous groups or who are of African descent, migrant children and adolescents, those living in rural or marginalized urban areas, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and adolescents.* One example is the Indigenous Education Support Programme[58] in Mexico, which works to make sure that children and young people enrolled in public schools continue to pursue their education. It provides five different kinds of support to indigenous students: lodging at what are called Indigenous Children's Homes; a balanced and culturally appropriate diet; scholarships for higher education and assistance for participation in degree programmes; accident insurance; and socially, linguistically and culturally relevant complementary activities. Another example is Costa Rica's National Policy on Disability (PONADIS),[59] which establishes

In order to close the inequality gaps among children, special emphasis needs to be placed on policies targeting the most vulnerable groups.

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[54] See [online] https://www.end-violence.org/safe-to-learn.
[55] See [online] https://www.powerof0.org/.
[56] See UNICEF (2014).
[57] See [online] https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/siteal_chile_0642.pdf.
[58] For further information, see INPI (2015).
[59]   See CNREE (2011).

a long-term framework for efforts to promote, guarantee and ensure respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. A special component of this programme for children is directed specifically at providing support and technical assistance services to students with special educational needs, providing inclusive education and making learning opportunities in the areas of music and drama available to children and adolescents with disabilities. A third example is Mexico's Education Without Borders programme,[60] which provides advisory assistance and guidance to returnees, migrants and refugees regarding the options available to them for beginning, continuing, completing or certifying their primary and secondary educations.

D. Suggested references

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[60] See National Institute for Adult Education (2019).

E. Questions

- Identify the biggest gaps in well-being in the areas of health, diet and care among children between the ages of 0 and 5 years in your country/region/district and analyse the public policies being implemented in an effort to increase the coverage and quality of educational, health-care and childcare services.

- Undertake an assessment of the existing situation in your country/region/district with regard to child labour and identify the public policies now in place for its eradication. Are they sufficient? Are they sustainable?

- Identify and analyse the public policies on education in effect in your country/region/district and answer the following questions:

    - Are these policies based on an inclusive approach to education?
    - Do the preschool education policies and policies on instruction for new mothers, place priority on children living in rural zones or marginalized areas on the outskirts of urban areas?
    - Do these policies incorporate gender equality strategies?

- Undertake an assessment of school dropout rates and practices among adolescents in your country/region/district and identify policies that are intended to tackle that problem.

- To what extent do you think that an unconditional cash transfer programme would be a viable means of ensuring an adequate standard of living for children and adolescents? Please provide a reasoned response.

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Chapter **VI**

Youth[1]

A. Normative framework

As young people transition to adulthood, individual autonomy takes on more and more importance. Unlike the situation for children, there is no globally accepted international legal instrument that refers specifically to this age group. There is however, a regional instrument on the human rights of young people, the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth, which sets forth the commitment of the States parties to that treaty to recognize the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of young people. The Convention also serves as a guidepost for the design and implementation of policies, programmes, projects and other types of initiatives.[2]

A number of different studies are also available that provide a variety of perspectives on the nature and issues facing this segment of the population. For example, the Ibero-American Youth Organization (OIJ) has carried out studies in conjunction with ECLAC on such subjects as gender differences, identities and attitudes around discrimination and tolerance, and the right to a quality education. Other organizations, such as the Ibero-American Youth Observatory,[3] have also done work in similar areas on the basis of the studies carried out by the Fundación SM with a view to fostering further research on youth, education and culture in the region.[4]

The work undertaken by ECLAC[5] in this field has been based on its definition of the young population as persons between the ages of 15 and 29 years,[6] which differs from the definition used in the Iber-American Convention.[7] While the concept of youth is a social construct that is influenced by the prevailing historical context and is not necessarily bounded by a set age range (Trucco and Ullmann, 2016), since the average age at which people complete higher education and enter the labour market is 23 or 24 years, the Commission feels that it is important to look at young people up to the age of 29 years in order to be able to analyse how they position themselves within the labour force.

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[1] This chapter was prepared by Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Unit of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico; Elsa Gutiérrez, Research Assistant with the Social Development Unit; and Citlalli Lamotte, a consultant with the Social Development Unit.

[2] All the countries of the region also have national policy instruments for safeguarding and promoting the rights of young people that draw on elements of the Convention to varying degrees.

[3] See [online] https://www.observatoriodelajuventud.org/.

[4] See [online] https://www.observatoriodelajuventud.org/categoria/nuestros-estudios/.

[5] See, for example, Trucco and Ullmann, (2016) and Muñoz and Rojas (2019).

[6] The chapter on childhood defines that stage of the life cycle as encompassing persons between the ages of 0 and 18 years; therefore, the recommendations made there that apply to people between the ages of 15 and 18 also apply to the adolescents included in the age bracket dealt with in this chapter.

[7] The Ibero-American Youth Organization (OIJ) and the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth define young people as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years.

B. Assessment of inequalities among young people

- Youth is a stage of the life cycle during which the family ties that were all-important during childhood begin to become less so as the individual autonomy that is characteristic of adult life takes on greater and greater importance for them.

- The social inclusion of young people should be based on a multidimensional and integrated perspective that encompasses the existing gaps in education, employment, health, culture, violence and political participation. For example, in 2019 the gross enrolment rate for higher education, which reflects the gap in education, was 52.7%; in other words, half of the population does not reach that level of education. Universal access to education is therefore a goal that remains to be achieved.

- A significant portion of the young population is excluded and marginalized from economic, political and social processes. In 2018, 17.3% of the people between 15 and 24 years of age was neither studying nor working.

ECLAC views youth as a period during which a series of events generally occur that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood (withdrawal from the education system, entry into the labour market, departure from the family home, commencement of life as a member of a couple and the commencement of the reproductive stage), although these events do not follow any set pattern and are frequently non-linear. During this period, the family ceases to play its formerly central protective role, while the market, the State and young persons themselves begin to play a greater part in meeting their needs and upholding their rights (Rossel and Filgueira, 2015).

The approach taken by ECLAC to understanding the issues inherent in this stage of life entails analysing the realities and challenges faced by young people through the lens of social inclusion. Viewed from a rights-based perspective, this concept goes beyond inclusion in (relevant and quality) education and (worthy and decent) employment, which have traditionally been regarded as the main elements involved in the process of inclusion. ECLAC, however, proposes considering other dimensions that are also of pivotal importance if young people are to make headway not only as measured by objective parameters of inclusion (access to education, health, participation and so forth) but also in terms of subjective parameters that make them feel that they are part of a society that they are working with others to shape and build.[8]

Within this framework, a multidimensional, integrated perspective affords a more solid basis for analysing the gaps experienced by young people in the areas of education, employment, health, culture, violence and participation (Trucco and Ullmann, 2016; Soto, Trucco and Ullman, 2015). This focus provides a scaffolding for the following baseline assessment of the realities faced by this sector of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Today, young people are one of the largest segments of the population in the region, as persons between 15 and 29 years of age represent one fourth of the total population. This fact underscores the need to invest in young people as one of the fundamental pillars for the drive to achieve sustainable development with equality and to match their capacities with commensurate opportunities within the framework of a rights-based approach. The available evidence indicates, however, that young people in the region are often excluded from education and employment, from traditional political spheres of activity, decision-making circles and socioeconomic, political and environmental forums.

Universal access to secondary and tertiary levels of education is a goal that has yet to be achieved. Although progress has been made in opening up access to a secondary education, rural areas still lag far behind, and the gaps are even wider in higher education. In 2019, the region's gross

[8]   As part of the project entitled "Social inclusion of youth in the context of increasing violence and insecurity with a focus on Central America", ECLAC developed a toolkit for the analysis and design of policies for the promotion of the social inclusion of young people. See Soto, Trucco and Ullmann (2015).

tertiary education enrolment rate was 52.7%. There is also a gender gap in this connection, with the gross enrolment rate for women (59.7%) being considerably higher than the corresponding rate for men (45.9%) (ECLAC, 2021b). Despite women's higher overall enrolment rate in higher education, however, many fewer women are pursuing studies in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM subjects), which has implications over the long run for their position in the labour market and their pay levels.

It is often difficult for young people to make the transition from school to the workplace, and a considerable number of them have left school but have not succeeded in becoming part of the workforce. In 2018, approximately 17.3% of persons between 15 and 24 years of age in the region (12.6% in urban areas and 17.2% in rural areas) were neither studying nor working (ECLAC, 2021b).

There is also a gender gap within this latter group, as 8.8% of young men were in this category in 2018 whereas 25.9% of young women were (ECLAC, 2021b). For young women, this situation is chiefly associated with the need to perform unpaid domestic and caregiving work, whereas most of the young men in this situation are either unemployed or first-time jobseekers (Espejo and Espíndola, 2016; Soto, Trucco and Ullmann, 2015).

Even among those young people who do manage to enter the labour market, most are confronted by various obstacles in their search for a decent form of employment, whether because they had difficulties earlier in acquiring the necessary job skills or because the labour market offers few opportunities for people without prior job experience.

One of the indicators of these kinds of difficulties is the percentage of the employed young population that belong to a pension plan, which is smaller, especially for those under 25 years of age. This is one illustration of the fact that, as young people have access to fewer social benefits, they are in a more vulnerable position and have less job security (see figure VI.1).

FIGURE VI.1
Latin America (17 countries):[a] affiliation to pension systems among employed persons,[b] by age group, around 2002 and 2015
(Percentages)
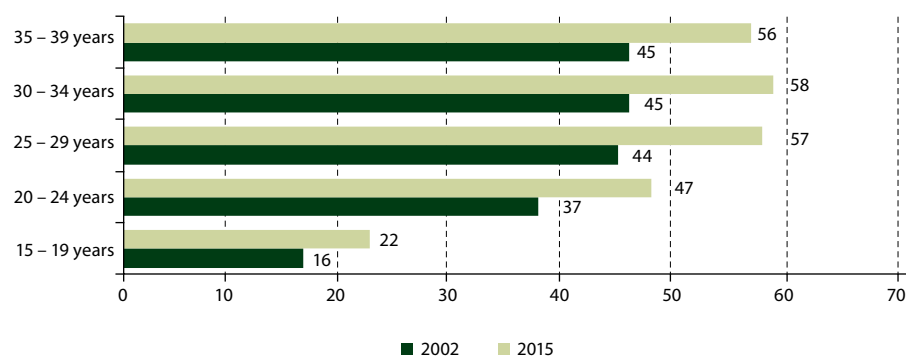
■ 2002   ■ 2015

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2017* (LC/PUB.2018/1-P), Santiago, 2018.

[a] Argentina (urban areas), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay (urban areas).

[b] The figures for Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Guatemala include wage earners only.

Low percentages of pension coverage are associated with a trend in labour laws and practices towards greater flexibility in employment contracts, the growing use of outsourcing and a tendency for people to change jobs more often. This shift has not, however, been coupled with a reconfiguration of social security systems, which are still based on traditional forms of employment. As a result, fewer young people are able to obtain a pension plan.[9] In Mexico,

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[9]   It is important for all the countries to ratify the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181).

Young people are confronted with gaps in education, employment, health, participation, culture and violence.

for example, the 2012 labour reform[10] introduced more flexible recruitment and contracting provisions. This may well be a positive development for the labour market, but it also means that young people have less of a chance of obtaining social security coverage (loss of labour rights), since the reform was not paired with alternative social security schemes.[11]

The available data on health care indicate that young people residing in rural areas, along with people in low-income groups, have much less access to preventive and curative care. This type of inequality exists not only in access to health-care services but also in health outcomes in such cases as teenage pregnancies. Young women in the lowest income quintiles, those who live in rural areas and those who belong to indigenous groups or are of African descent are more likely to become mothers while they are still adolescents. This is yet another reflection of how the axes of inequality intersect and overlap and how they deepen the exclusion of vulnerable groups (Trucco and Ullmann, 2016; Rossel and Filgueira, 2015; Soto, Trucco and Ullman, 2015). This situation, for which there are various explanations, places young rural, low-income mothers in a position that makes it harder than ever for them to position themselves as a full member of society by obtaining work or remaining in school, all of which has an impact on their future.

Suicide is another health-related issue for young people. It was already discussed in the section on adolescents but is raised again here because it is a very serious problem in this age group. According to data compiled by WHO (2021), suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people worldwide, after accidents and homicide. There are many different and multi-faceted reasons why young people self-harm or commit suicide, including school bullying and cyberbullying, traumatic events such as domestic violence, armed violence, accidents, assaults and natural disasters, which, even if they do not result in suicide, may mark young people either temporarily or for life. Genetic and/or biological factors may also play a role. In most of the countries of the region, suicide rates are highest in the 20–24 age group (see figure VI.2). In addition to suicide, a considerable number of young people suffer from mental, emotional, food-related or behavioural disorders, all of which are mental health issues that need to be dealt with, especially in areas where young people have limited access to health-care providers. One factor to be taken into account is that the suicide rate among young men is much higher than it is among young women. In El Salvador, for example, in 2016 the suicide rate among males between 15 and 29 years of age was 42.5 per 100,000 whereas the corresponding rate for females was 9.7 per 100,000.

FIGURE VI.2
Latin America (11 countries): suicide rates, by age group, 2016
(Per 100,000 persons)
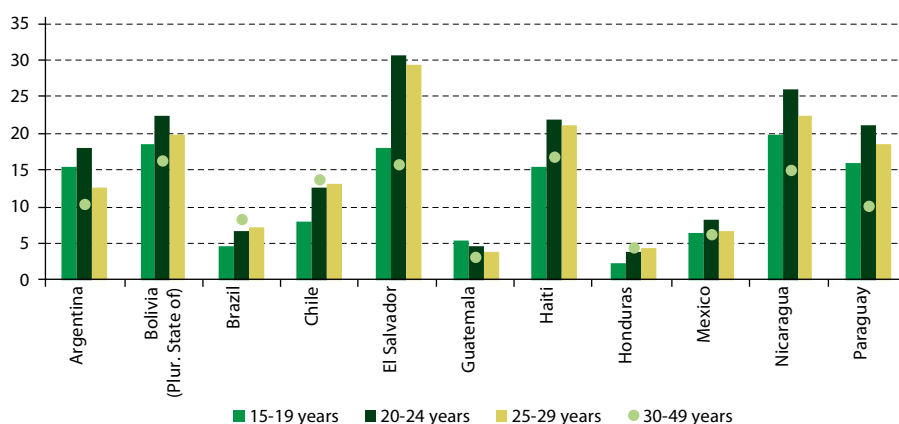
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of data from the World Health Organization (WHO), The Global Health Observatory [online] https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/suicide-mortality-rate-(per-100-000-population).

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[10]   See Mexico (2012).
[11]   For further information on the labour market transition and how it is affecting young people, see ECLAC/ILO (2017).

In many countries, young people are also exposed to a great deal of violence. Death by violence or intentional injury is more common among young men, while young women are at greater risk of being victims of sexual abuse or rape, kidnapping or violence at the hands of their partner; they are also more exposed to verbal or psychological violence.

Persons between 16 and 25 years of age report that the kinds of violence that they are exposed to the most are street violence (34.1%), gang violence (26.9%), harassment, intimidation or bullying at school[12] (23.2%) and, especially in the case of girls and women, domestic violence[13] (25.4%) (Latinobarómetro, 2018) (see figure VI.3). When these forms of violence are intertwined with geographic and ethnic gaps, they take the form, for example, of racist biases against young people of African descent, who are often dealt with more severely than others if they are suspected of having committed a violent act.

FIGURE VI.3
Latin America and the Caribbean (18 countries): most common types
of violence encountered, by age group, 2018
(Percentages)
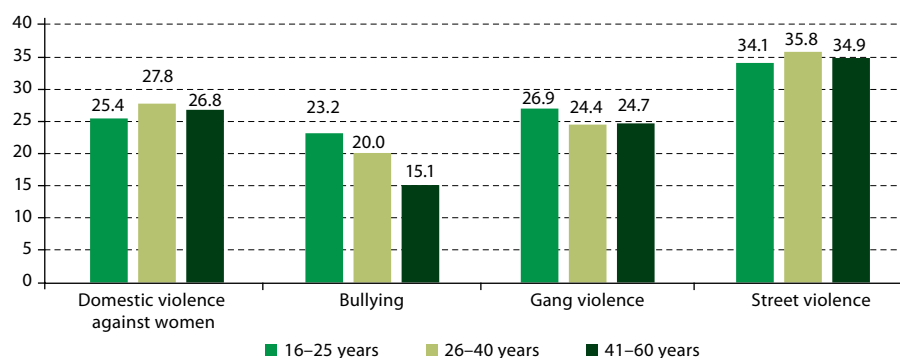
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of data from Latinobarómetro, "Latinobarómetro Análisis de datos", 2018 [online] https://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp.
ª Argentina, Brazil, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

One of the areas in which intergenerational gaps work in the young population's favour is access to cultural activities and the use of cultural assets. Young people have more access to cultural goods and services than adults do. The extent of their access varies across countries and socioeconomic strata, however. Central American youth have less access to these types of goods and activities than their peers in the other subregions of Latin America (Sunkel, 2016; Soto, Trucco and Ullman, 2015). The degree of digital inclusion is also lower among low-income youth as a consequence of the fact that they have fewer opportunities to use or gain access to the associated technology. This results in less use of the Internet as a cultural channel, as well as interfering with their development of computer skills and reducing their opportunities for cultural integration.

Young people's participation in social affairs and their performance of their role as citizens are key factors in their inclusion in society, since these kinds of activities enable them to take part in making decisions that will influence their own development and in working as a team to achieve a shared goal. This kind of engagement is not universal, however (ECLAC/OIJ, 2004). At the regional level, many young people remain uninvolved in conventional politics and distrust that kind of political activity (see figure VI.4),[14] preferring instead to engage in social movements as their main avenue for political participation and for voicing their demands (Maldonado Valera, 2016; Soto, Trucco and Ullman, 2015).

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[12]   The term "*bullying*" refers to various types of intimidation, harassment, abuse, persecution and victimization that are repeatedly inflicted by some students on others.
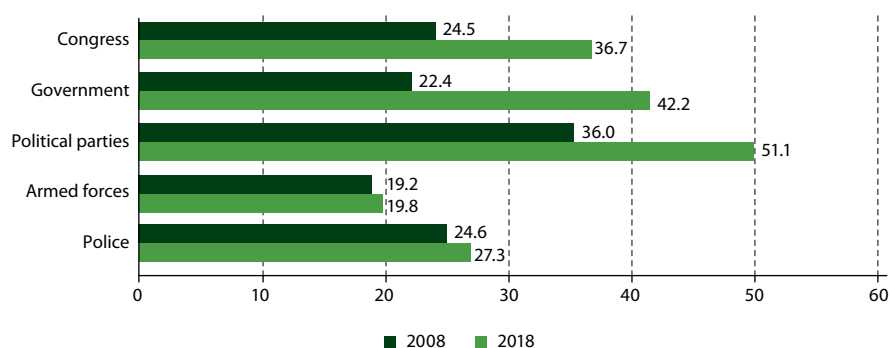[13]   This is the most common type of violence in the home.
[14]   Young people are not the only ones who view conventional politics with mistrust. The figures shown in the graph for persons between 16 and 25 years of age are very similar to the averages for the population as a whole, which reflect widespread distrust among the general population.

FIGURE VI.4
Latin America (18 countries):[a] persons between 16 and 25 years of age
who say that they do not trust selected institutions, 2008-2018
(Percentages)

	2008	2018
Congress	24.5	36.7
Government	22.4	42.2
Political parties	36.0	51.1
Armed forces	19.2	19.8
Police	24.6	27.3

■ 2008   ■ 2018

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of data from Latinobarómetro, "Latinobarómetro Análisis de datos", 2018 [online] https://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp.
[a] Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

BOX VI.1
COVID-19 and its impact on young people

Although the available evidence indicates that young people are less vulnerable than middle-aged adults and older adults to the serious health problems that can be caused by COVID-19, the measures adopted to contain the pandemic have had a strong impact on their surroundings and their development. According to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, the interruption in young people's educations, the reduction in available jobs, lockdowns, the alteration of social protection structures and the economic and health-related burdens that families have had to shoulder have all triggered concern, frustration, feelings of isolation and, in many cases, anxiety and depression among young people. This is all in addition to the limitation of their opportunities to engage in physical exercise, which may lead to increased tobacco, alcohol and drug use that will have long-term effects on their health.

According to ILO, the impact of COVID-19 on employment has been disproportionately severe in the case of young workers. One out of every six is currently unemployed. The pandemic has made what was already a grim job outlook for young people before the pandemic (forcing most of them into the informal economy) even worse. The *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work*, fourth edition, discusses the sharp and substantial rise in unemployment among young people (and especially young women) seen since February 2020.

Adolescents and young people have also been more exposed to domestic violence as a consequence of the lockdowns and, particularly in the case of women, to sexual violence, along with its serious physical and emotional consequences.

Vulnerable groups of young people, such as migrants, refugees, those who are living in the streets, those in detention facilities or prison and those who live in poor or marginal districts, are at an even greater risk. Young people living in crowded conditions and lacking access to clean water and health-care services are more likely to become infected. They also have less access to technology and therefore less or belated access to information about how to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19.

In order to turn this situation around, the following types of policy and programmatic actions are recommended:

• Ensuring that young people's educational and vocational training opportunities continue to be offered and to be accessible.

• Identifying and supporting sectors that offer the greatest job opportunities for the young people who have been impacted the most.

• Ensuring that young people have access to health-care systems for the treatment of COVID-19 even if they are not covered by contributory health insurance systems.

INSTITUTIONS

Various institutions are doing research on the inequality gaps found among young people, including UNFPA, OIJ and ECLAC.

- Introducing new counselling systems, mental health and addiction treatment services, and support for victims of violence during lockdowns.

- Expanding Internet service and access to new technologies for young people living in poverty and/or in marginalized or excluded settlements.

Once the pandemic has subsided, it will also be important to direct recovery efforts towards the sectors that are most able to create decent and higher-productivity jobs over the long term and to support the development of skills for which there will be a demand in the future.

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of *Infosalus*, "OMS avisa de que los efectos secundarios del Covid-19 en mujeres y menores pueden ser mayores que las muertes", 12 June 2020 [online] https://www.infosalus.com/salud-investigacion/noticia-oms-avisa-efectos-secundarios-covid-19-mujeres-menores-pueden-ser-mayores-muertes-20200612175729.html; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) preparedness and response", *Technical Briefs*, 24 March 2020 [online] https://www.unfpa.org/resources/adolescents-and-young-people-coronavirus-disease-covid-19?page=6%2C0%2C0; International Labour Organization (ILO), "ILO: More than one in six young people out of work due to COVID-19", 27 May 2020 [online] https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_745879/lang--en/index.htm.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities among young people

Priority policy objectives for narrowing the gaps between young people and the rest of the population include:

- Helping young people to stay in school and to go on to higher levels of education, along with a broadening of the curricula, by providing support measures such a scholarships and promoting financial, digital and citizenship education.

- Providing vocational training and job placement support via internships and first-job assistance programmes, cross-cutting job skills training and the use of dual training models.

- Providing access to comprehensive health services by putting in place guaranteed mechanisms for furnishing access to health services and promoting healthful habits, pregnancy prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health.

- Reducing the incidence of violence and promoting cultural development with the help of strategies for fostering a culture of peace, preventing violence in schools and sexual violence, and promoting access to cultural activities and participation in decision-making.

POLICY PROPOSALS

In order to include young people in a meaningful and lasting manner, comprehensive policies that mainstream a generational perspective will need to be consolidated. ECLAC recommends that these kinds of comprehensive policies should incorporate three key dimensions of social inclusion: (i) building institutions capable of promoting the social inclusion of the young population and of maintaining the ground gained in that respect; (ii) taking an equality- and rights-based approach to the task of closing the social inclusion gaps existing in the areas discussed earlier; and (iii) incorporating the needs and visions of young people with respect to their own social inclusion into the design and implementation of these policies (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015).

In crafting policies for closing or narrowing these gaps, attention should be devoted, as a matter of priority, to expanding the education system, keeping young people in school and improving the quality of the education that they receive as a means of strengthening one of the central elements contributing to their inclusion. This will involve using a number of different tools, one of which should be monetary transfers designed to help young people attain economic autonomy. Steps also need to be taken to reinforce training and facilitate entry into the workforce by improving labour laws and regulations, among other things, in order to

ensure access to decent forms of employment (Rossel and Figueira, 2015). Action also has to be taken to promote and provide access to health care, including sexual, reproductive and mental health care. The following sections will outline more specific recommendations focusing on the expansion of the scope of education and measures for helping young people to stay in school, training and entry into the workforce, the promotion and expansion of access to health care, and the reduction of violence and promotion of cultural activity and participation.

1. Attainment of a higher level of education and expansion of curricula

The education system is one of the main avenues for the social inclusion of young people. Continued attendance until the completion of secondary school—and, ideally, higher education as well—is of key importance because it facilitates young people's entry into the workforce. In addition, the education system's curricula need to be broadened to include financial education, digital skills, citizenship education and a whole series of other soft skills that are in demand in the labour market. The following policy actions are proposed:

- *Providing monetary transfers (scholarships) to help low-income youth to continue to attend school.* The aim here is to provide a level playing field for access to a higher education that will better prepare young people to make the transition into employment. Some of the expenses that could be covered by scholarships include registration fees and tuition, materials, meals, transport and lodging. At the secondary school level, for example, Mexico has its Benito Juárez Scholarships for Well-being Programme,[15] which provides a monetary transfer once every two months throughout the 10-month school year as a means of helping to ensure that students will not drop out of school. Other examples include the national *Jóvenes Escribiendo el Futuro* ("Young People Writing the Future")[16] programme for Mexican university students, which provides funds to cover their living expenses, social services and internships, and the National Scholarship Fund (FONABE)[17] for university students in Costa Rica. Uruguay's *Programa Compromise Educativo* ("Educational Commitment Programme")[18] helps young people to remain in the public education system and to complete their upper secondary studies. To this end, it uses three different types of measures: (i) an agreement is signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian and the school's director or principal that sets forth commitments regarding goals and measures to be taken to support the student's education; (ii) mentoring opportunities whereby university students can accompany students in upper secondary school to class at least once per week; and (iii) scholarships for students in economic difficulties.

- *Promoting financial education so that young people can learn how to use their money wisely.* Family members and teachers also need to receive instruction in financial matters so that they can encourage young people to save and to use their money efficiently. As one example, Costa Rica has launched the National Strategy for Financial Education,[19] whose target group includes young people. This strategy focuses on working with the government and the private sector to reduce the population's debt load. In Peru, the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (Multisectoral Commission for Financial Inclusion, 2015) includes a national financial education plan[20] that includes young students among the target groups for its financial management skills module.

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[15] See National Coordination of Benito Juárez Scholarships for the Well-being (2021).
[16] See [online] https://www.gob.mx/becasbenitojuarez/articulos/beca-jovenes-escribiendo-el-futuro-de-educacion-superior.
[17] See [online] https://www.mep.go.cr/programas-y-proyectos/programa-de-becas-fonabe.
[18] See [online] http://www.compromisoeducativo.edu.uy/sitio/.
[19] See Costa Rica (2019).
[20] See [online] https://www.bn.com.pe/inclusion-financiera/archivos/ENIF/plan-nacional-educacion-financiera-junio2017.pdf.

- *Promoting digital education.* The Dominican Republic, for example, has a number of projects that are working to integrate information and communications technologies (ICTs) into the education system.[21] Projects focusing on young people include the Human Capital Software Development Training Programme (BECASOFT), which is aimed at training young software developers as a means of building up that industry in the country, as well as opening up more job opportunities for young people. The country also has the *Internet Sano – Navegando Seguro* ("A Healthy Internet – Safe Browsing") initiative, which provides guidance to parents, children, adolescents and young people for the ethical and responsible use of the Internet at the individual, household and community levels. The Dominican Republic is also working to provide each student in institutions of higher learning with a laptop or tablet and to offer in-person and virtual workshops for the development of ICT skills with a view to training up competitive professional personnel in this industry.

- *Promoting citizenship education.* Since 2019 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have been partnering on the development of inputs for global citizenship education curricula at the basic and intermediate educational levels to serve as a basis for skills and knowledge acquisition and the formation of a sense of responsibility and commitment to society.[22]

2. Training and entry into the workforce

Stepping up the implementation of strategies for expanding access to postsecondary education and boosting enrolment at that level of education —in conjunction with vocational and job skills training and intensified strategies for helping young people to secure their first job and for enforcing labour laws that facilitate young people's entry into decent forms of employment— are essential steps towards closing up gaps in access and fortifying the education-employment linkage for this segment of the population. This line of action is an important one for helping young people to meet the challenges they will encounter in the workplaces of the future, where workers will need to be more flexible and innovative and to acquire new skills. Measures for accomplishing this include:

POLICIES

Strengthening policies that will help people to stay in school will be of key importance in fostering a more advanced level of training that will translate into better-quality jobs for young people.

- *Monetary transfers to supplement the low wages earned by young people when they first enter the labour market.* One example of this type of programme is Mexico's *Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro* ("Youth Building the Future") initiative,[23] which provides a monetary transfer over a one-year period to help young people obtain training in companies, public institutions and/or civic organizations.

- *Internships as a means of gaining the work experience required in order to enter the labour market.* The *Mi Primer Empleo* ("My First Job")[24] programme in Ecuador provides internships in the private and public sectors for young people attending institutions of higher learning. The *Yo Estudio y Trabajo* ("I Study and Work")[25] programme in Uruguay offers an initial opportunity to gain work experience in the formal sector of the economy to students between 16 and 20 years of age so that they can develop the skills and competencies they will need to deploy in the labour market. The Plurinational State of Bolivia's *Mi Primer Empleo Digno* ("My First Decent Job")[26] initiative offers training and internships to young people who have completed their second year of secondary school.

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[21] See [online] https://republicadigital.gob.do/eje/educacion/N.
[22] See [online] https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/rule-law.
[23] See [online] https://jovenesconstruyendoelfuturo.stps.gob.mx/.
[24] See [online] https://www.trabajo.gob.ec/mi-primer-empleo/.
[25] See Ministry of Social Development (2019).
[26] See [online] https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/programme?id=66.

- *Cross-cutting skills in education and technical/professional training that will facilitate young people's integration into the labour market.* In Mexico, the Council for Standardization and Certification of Labour Competence (CONOCER) offers a skills-based human resources training programme[27] whose chief objective is to increase the employability of graduates of the country's upper secondary schools. The focus is on upgrading the professional training and skills of teachers and preparing them to apply that training in their work. Other examples are the work being done in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay to identify technical and general training needs.[28]

- *Promotion of job skills training based on dual education models that combine vocational or professional training and work experience.* For example, under the Mexican Dual Training Model,[29] candidates for degrees in technology studies, or in technical/professional courses of study in upper secondary public schools (IPEMS), study and receive on-the-job training at the same time. Starting in the third semester, students join companies where they follow an individualized training plan. They then alternate between the classroom and the workplace for at least one or two years, depending on their course of study or specialization. As another example, Guatemala's Technical Institute for Training and Production (INTECAP) has a training programme for young people 16 years of age and over and adults[30] that provides initial and supplementary instruction to help students acquire operational and mid-level job skills. Successful graduates of the programme receive a professional certificate.

- *Training and job skills programmes outside school settings. Both theoretical and practical instruction can be provided in connection with job placement services, internships and support services for business start-ups.* This kind of initiative can be coupled with monetary transfers that enable students to attend professional or vocational training courses. The PROGRESAR student assistance programme[31] is one example. This programme is intended for persons between the ages of 18 and 24 who have not completed their primary or secondary education and who are unemployed, working in the informal sector or earning less than the minimum wage. Participants are all paid the same flat rate per month while receiving job training, guidance and job placement support, along with childcare assistance. Brazil has a similar initiative: the *ProJovem* national youth inclusion programme[32] targets young people between 15 and 29 years of age and has four different components: (i) *Projovem Trabalhador* ("ProJovem workers") provides training to persons between 18 and 29 years of age who are unemployed or who earn less than the minimum wage; (ii) *ProJovem Urbano* ("Urban ProJovem") furnishes economic support to persons between 18 and 29 years of age who have not completed their secondary education so that they can go back to school; (iii) *ProJovem Campo* ("Rural ProJovem") is similar to the second component but targets young people working in the agricultural sector; and (iv) *ProJovem Adolescente* ("Teen ProJovem") is for persons between the ages of 15 and 17 who are in the *Bolsa Família* family grants programme. Chile's *Yo Trabajo Jóvenes* ("Young People at Work") programme[33] assists persons between 18 and 24 years of age (and, on an exceptional basis, 17-year-olds and persons up to 29 years of age) who are jobless or employed under a casual or informal arrangement, belong to the poorest 40% of the population and live in a district where the programme is available. Its objective is to help

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Implementing policies that equip young people with more and better job skills is an increasingly important line of action in today's changing employment environment.

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27   See Secretariat of Public Education (2020).
28   See [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/educacion-tecnico-profesional/technical-assistance.
29   See Secretariat of Public Education (2014).
30   See [online] https://intecap.edu.gt/formacion-de-jovenes-y-adultos-forja/.
31   See [online] https://www.argentina.gob.ar/ingresar-al-programa-estudiantil-progresar.
32   See Ministry of Education (2017).
33   See [online] https://www.fosis.gob.cl/es/programas/trabajo/yo-trabajo-joven/.

these young people find a stable job either as an employee or an independent worker. Participants are provided with funds to buy work clothes, tools and inputs; assistance in drawing up a curriculum vitae and preparing for interviews; childcare services during group activities; and a transportation allowance.

- *Job training for underprivileged young women who did not attend school.*[34] Instruction designed to help young women increase their knowledge, broaden their skill set and acquire new abilities provides them with a path to economic autonomy. For example, the Mujer Emprende ("Women Starting Out") programme[35] in Chile gives a boost to businesses run by women over 18 years of age. It employs two strategies for strengthening their skills and building their capacity. The first, called the Mujer Emprende School, is aimed at helping them to professionalize their businesses by reinforcing their self-confidence, competencies, talents, and people and business skills. The second one, Fomento de Redes y Asociatividad ("Networking and Partnering"), works to help women entrepreneurs to network with each other so that they can share know-how, experiences and advice. In Costa Rica, the Avanzamos Mujeres ("Women Moving Forward") programme[36] targets women living in poverty. In addition to job training, it deals with socialization, gender roles, the issue of violence, organization and leadership, and sexual and reproductive health. Another example is the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay, which runs a programme called Uruguay Trabaja ("Uruguay Works") to help participants find employment. One of its target groups is socioeconomically vulnerable young women who have not completed three years of the basic education cycle and who have been jobless for over two years.

3. Promotion of and access to comprehensive health care[37]

Even though a number of countries have made headway in expanding the coverage of health care for the young segments of their populations, they still face the challenge of guaranteeing and promoting young people's right to health, including in such important areas as sexual and reproductive health. Priority lines of action include encouraging young people to adopt healthy habits and to avoid of the use and abuse of harmful substances; ensuring that they are free to choose the point in their lives where they wish to become part of a couple, the number of children they want to have and when they want to have them; and enabling them to avoid contracting sexually transmitted diseases. A rights-based, non-discriminatory and inclusive approach needs to be taken to all of these issues. Consideration could be given to the following strategies in these areas:

- *Guaranteeing young people's access to health-care coverage.* Young people's access to health care is in some cases contingent upon their status as a dependent of an adult or their formal employment in a job that affords them social security coverage. If the right to health is guaranteed for everyone, then access can be provided by membership in optional health-care plans that are not subject to dependency status or formal employment. In Mexico, students are covered by the Mexican Social Security Institute. It is also important to ensure that young people can obtain health care without being accompanied by an adult. The National Programme for Comprehensive Adolescent Health in Argentina promotes and publicizes the right of adolescents to use the health-care system on their own on a confidential basis, without having to be accompanied by an adult.

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Policy actions must be directed towards closing the gaps in young people's access to physical and mental health care.

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[34]   See [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/projects/technical-and-vocational-education.
[35]   [online] https://www.chileatiende.gob.cl/fichas/13045-programa-mujer-asociatividad-y-emprendimiento.
[36]   See [online] https://www.inamu.go.cr/web/inamu/programas-de-formacion.
[37]   See the recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and mental health made in the chapter on children and adolescents.

- *Supporting and promoting young people's adoption of healthy habits.* In Mexico City, for example, the Mexican Institute for Youth lends out bicycles[38] free of charge during festivals and recreational events such as the Sunday *Muévete en Bici* ("Ride Your Bike")[39] and Ciclotón (Cycle-a-thon)[40] bike rides.

- *Strengthening the coverage of sexual and reproductive issues in the education system.* Policies, regulations and laws in this area should embrace the incorporation of these subjects into the education system and their inclusion in teacher training. In such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, sex education is a mandatory subject in the formal school system. In Uruguay, the Ministry of Public Health has launched a mobile phone application called El Gurú del Sexo ("The Sex Guru").[41] The aim of this initiative (one of whose objectives is to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies) is for young people to become better informed about sexual and reproductive health.

- *Strengthening policies for the prevention of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.* These policies complement policies on sex education and tie in with measures for changing procedures and developing special health-care protocols for young people that take their particular disease-prevention and sexual and reproductive health needs (e.g. provision of free or subsidized access to contraceptives) into consideration. The National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Parenthood in Argentina provides information and advice about contraceptive use with a view to ensuring that young people will have access to these and other means of allowing them to decide when to have children and how many to have. As another example, in Uruguay anyone (including young people) registered with the Integration National Health Care System (SNIS)[42] can ask for and receive 12 coupons that are good for 15 condoms each month simply by showing their SNIS membership card at the pharmacy associated with their health provider.

- *Increasing young people's access to preventive and curative mental health services.*[43] The objectives of the comprehensive mental health action plan for the period 2013-2020 of WHO and its member countries are to strengthen leadership and governance for mental health; provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services; design strategies for mental health promotion and the prevention of mental health disorders; and strengthen information systems and research for mental health. In Chile, the National Mental Health Plan 2017-2025 includes sectoral and intersectoral strategies for promoting mental health, preventing mental disorders and guaranteeing socially inclusive mental health care in line with a model for the provision of comprehensive care in family and community settings. Chile also has a management model for mental health care focused on the specific objectives of implementing promotional, preventive and detection strategies for improving people's mental health status; ensuring timely access, effective treatment and continuity in care for the general population; and formulating guidelines for the development of a mental health information system (Ministry of Health, 2018).

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[38] See Mexican Institute for Youth (2020a).
[39] Every Sunday, Mexico City closes off streets between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to provide a 55-km route for cyclists and others.
[40] On the last Sunday of every month, Mexico City closes off streets between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to provide an 83-km route for cyclists.
[41] See [online] https://guru.msp.gub.uy/.
[42] See [online] https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-salud-publica/sistema-nacional-integrado-salud.
[43] The same recommendations regarding policies on mental health as those made in the chapter on children are applicable here.

4. Reduction of violence and promotion of culture and participation

Public policies for young people need to incorporate the objective of reducing the violence to which they are exposed. Starting with the expansion of opportunities for social inclusion by, among other things, increasing young people's access to education and to the labour market, they should also incorporate law enforcement mechanisms into the actions recommended in the preceding section. Possible lines of action in this area include the following:

- *Sensitizing the entire population to the need for a culture of peace.*[44] The main objective of the *Convivencia y Espacios Seguros para Jóvenes* ("Living Together and Making Places Safe for Young People") (CONVIVIR) programme in Honduras, for example, is primary violence prevention and the promotion of peace in a community setting. The Dominican Republic's Youth Development and Violence Prevention Programme,[45] which is being implemented in collaboration with UNESCO, is seeking to reduce the current levels of violence by working on preventive measures with young leaders working for peace and progress, dispute mediators, entpreneurs and communicators. In Honduras, an inter-community football tournament is being organized under the aegis of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children as a tool for disrupting the vicious cycle of violence by bringing together young people from rival groups on the same playing field (Villars, 2019).

- *Running sensitization and integration campaigns targeting young people who are or were gang members.* For example, the National Institute for Youth of El Salvador has carried out a programme focused on building institutional capacity for crime control, skill development and tattoo removal.[46] Its main thrust is to improve the quality of life of persons who are stigmatized and discriminated against because of their tattoos by providing medical services for their removal, along with psychological consultations and the purchase of medicines and medical supplies.

- *Developing strategies for dealing with bullying in schools and cyberbullying.* Under the National School Medication Programme[47] in Argentina, for example, teachers, parents and students serve as mediators to help settle disputes that arise at school. In Mexico, the Federal Criminal Code[48] has been amended to set the penalty for cyberbullying and sexual harassment of persons under 18 years of age or persons who are unable to understand the significance of such acts at from 2 to 6 years in prison and a fine equivalent to between 400 and 600 days' wages at the minimum wage. Chile has passed what is informally known as the "Pack Law",[49] which makes it a crime to post images, audio files or videos with explicit sexual content on the Internet or social media without the consent of the person(s) involved.

- *Preventing violence and sexual harassment by undertaking sensitization initiatives in schools, universities and communities.* The *Ciudad Mujer* ("Women's City") programme[50] in El Salvador provides women with comprehensive services to address gender-based violence, to meet sexual and reproductive health needs and to support women's economic empowerment. These services, which are provided free of charge, focus on group learning, sexual and reproductive health, childcare, economic autonomy, and preventing and addressing violence. Another example is the initiative taken by the

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Policies on education, health and workforce inclusion should be coupled with strategies for ensuring young people's access to culture, participation and a life free of violence.

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[44] A culture of peace comes about through the espousal of a set of values, attitudes and modes of behaviour that reject violence and ward off conflicts by addressing their root causes so that problems can be resolved through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.
[45] See [online] https://dds.cepal.org/juvelac/politica?id=57.
[46] See National Institute for Youth (2014).
[47] See García Costoya (2014).
[48] See Mexico (2021).
[49] Bulletins Nos. 12164-07 and 11923-25.
[50] See [online] http://inclusionsocial.egob.sv/ciudad-mujer/.

University of Chile in developing a policy for putting an end to sexual harassment[51] and reducing gender violence within the university. This initiative entails preventive action based on workshops, colloquiums, seminars and campaigns; courses on human rights and gender-based violence; protocols for the introduction and modification of university regulations and standards concerning the identification and investigation of cases of sexual harassment and the punishment of perpetrators; advisory services, assistance and support for persons targeted by such actions; and training for teachers and other staff members.

5. Promotion of culture

Youth policies should also be aimed at promoting cultural expression and development by introducing strategies for overcoming the limitations on access stemming from a lack of resources or dispersed settlement patterns. The objective should be to create the necessary conditions for guaranteeing young people's cultural rights in terms of appreciation (concerts, exhibits or other cultural events) and creativity (accessible art workshops). Measures in the following areas are proposed:

- *Developing programmes to provide young people with access to cultural activities.* The Institute for Youth of Mexico City has, for example, organized workshops, talks, films and concerts during Youth Week every year since 2013.[52] The Ministry of Culture, the Arts and Heritage of Chile runs a programme that offers courses in rock music[53] to provide training for musicians. The schools that offer these courses work together as a national network to organize music festivals and to stage other events to promote the country's cultural heritage.

6. Political participation by young people

Last but not least, steps have to be taken to guarantee young people's right to political participation. Young people's perception of their country's institutions and democratic system are reflected in the in-person and virtual youth rallies that they participate in,[54] and opportunities therefore need to be provided for young people to be involved as participants in democratic institutions, elections and, of course, public policymaking, especially in areas that directly concern youth. Scope needs to be provided for unconventional forms of participation and for the use of electronic platforms and other technologies for interacting through social and other media. For example:

- The Youth Agenda of the Organization of American States (OAS) is aimed at encouraging young people to participate in government. It rests on three main pillars: (i) institutionalization of a dialogue with young people; (ii) capacity-building; and (iii) strengthening the institutional framework of States members and OAS for the consideration of youth issues. As another example, Mexico's Youth Delegates Programme[55] promotes and finances young people's participation in the Youth Delegate Programme of the General Assembly of the United Nations during the three-week event that it holds each year. There are three categories for participants: youth delegates, indigenous youth delegates and youth delegates who reside in the United States.

Closing the gaps confronting young people promotes their autonomy, their identity and their participation in the development process.

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[51]   See [online] https://www.uchile.cl/portal/presentacion/rectoria/direccion-de-igualdad-de-genero/142805/politica-de-prevencion-del-acoso-sexual.
[52]   See Mexican Institute for Youth (2020b).
[53]   See [online] https://www.cultura.gob.cl/programas/escuelas-de-rock/.
[54]   Virtual rallies are organized and carried out on electronic (usually social) media.
[55]   See Mexican Institute for Youth (2019).

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SUGGESTIONS

E. Questions

- Undertake an assessment of the current situation with respect to the main youth issues in your country/region/district and rank them in terms of how urgently they need to be addressed.

- Undertake an assessment of what percentage of young people in your country/region/district belong to a social security system of some kind. Do the young people who are not covered by any such plan have some non-contributory form of social protection?

- Analyse the current suicide rate in your country/region/district and determine if there are public policies on suicide prevention and on the provision of counselling and mentoring in this area. How could these policies be improved?

- Among the young people in the region who are enrolled in an institution of higher learning, young women outnumber young men. Undertake an assessment of this situation in your country/region/district and determine if there are public policies for encouraging people to go on to post-secondary studies. How could this policy be improved or what alternative policy would you propose?

- Entry into the formal labour market is one of the main hurdles that young people face. Undertake an assessment of the current situation faced by young people in your country/region/district who are neither studying nor part of the workforce. What are the main barriers to their entry into the labour market? How would you remedy this situation?

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Chapter VII

Adulthood[1,2]

A. Normative framework

Labour market and income are the principal topics addressed in this chapter. Accordingly, the international conventions, agreements and compacts mentioned are mainly to do with these topics.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights refers specifically to the rights to just and favourable conditions of work, social security, an adequate standard of living (including food, clothing and housing), the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and education, including enjoyment of the benefits of scientific progress and cultural freedom (United Nations, 1966a).

Although these rights encompass the whole population, they have particular connotations for the adult age group. For one thing, some rights, such as labour rights, are directly associated with the working-age adult population. For another, adults are allocated the function of providing income to meet the needs of their dependent primary social nucleus.

It is accordingly established that, within the family, children, young people[3] and older persons are in a relationship of dependency vis-à-vis adults who provide the income to pay for goods (food, clothing) and services (such as housing, water and sanitation, electricity, health care, education, culture and recreation, and information and communications technologies), that in turn enable all members of the household to exercise their economic, social and cultural rights. All these topics are addressed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as the instrument that sets forth the normative framework in these spheres.

This interpretation affords a dual role to the adult population in terms of their dependent household members. First, as providers of income for procuring those goods and services that are not fully or partly financed by the State, such as food and clothing, or complementary goods relating to education (school supplies, uniform, meals and transport) and health (mainly in relation to preventive health), and dwelling services (water, electricity, gas and refuse collection).

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[1] This chapter was prepared by Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Unit of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico; and Mustafa Al Gamal, Associate Social Affairs Officer, Elsa Gutiérrez, Research Assistant, and Citlalli Lamotte, Consultant, with the Social Development Unit.

[2] The approach taken in this chapter is not entirely comparable with that taken in the other chapters, because many of the gaps that affect this age group are dealt with in greater depth in other chapters on specific population groups, who have particular characteristics regardless of their adult status, such as women, indigenous persons, Afrodescendants, rural-dwellers or others. For that reason, this chapter deals exclusively with inequalities within the adult age groups that are not included in other chapters.

[3] From a demographic perspective, only those aged under 15 or over 65 are considered dependants, but from a sociological point of view, young people over age 15 can also be considered dependants, especially if they are in education. In fact, many national legislations treat the under-25s as dependants if they are still in education. For the purposes of this chapter, a person is considered an adult when they take on the responsibilities and roles of this stage of the life cycle, so the adult group cannot be determined on the basis of age alone.

With respect to this first role, the normative framework includes some of the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the labour market and income. Among these are the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

The second role envisaged for the adult population shifts to a non-economic sphere in which adults ensure that dependent persons are guaranteed their rights. These include civil and political rights, with a particular emphasis on children and older persons, and especially when they have a disability or limitation that could affect the fulfilment of these rights. This role confers upon adults the responsibility to ensure that dependants are guaranteed the rights to safety (freedom from violence and mistreatment) and to non-discrimination, for example, all without neglecting the fulfilment of their own rights. In this case, the normative framework is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 1966b).

Beyond the role mentioned above, there are other rights that are important for the adult population, such as sovereignty over their time. The time adults spend on work (including unpaid care work) and travel time can sometimes limit their access to recreation or even to physical activity; this is related to the right to health, especially preventive health, given that this stage of the life cycle is when adequate food, exercise and rest can avert or delay the onset of chronic and degenerative diseases. Mention is also warranted of the right to a life free from violence, as this population group suffers greater levels of exposure, along with the youth population. These rights are set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948).

B. Assessment of inequalities affecting adults

- In 2020, 43% of the population was aged between 30 and 64 years and some countries of the region are currently experiencing a "demographic dividend".

- Income distribution is highly unequal, with very low labour income in the first quintile. The richest quintile in the region captures around half of disposable income, compared with less than 4% captured by the poorest quintile.

- High levels of informality generate gaps in access to social security, especially in rural areas. According to ILO, the average rate of informality in the region is around 54%.

- With respect to access to social protection, in 2016 only 48.1% of those employed in the region were affiliated or contributing to a pension system. One of the most disadvantaged forms of employment is unskilled own-account work, which represents 64% of the region's employed in quintile I.

1. The "demographic dividend"

In 2000, 34.7% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean was aged between 30 and 64. Ten years later, this figure had increased to 38.8%, and by 2020 was around 43%. This proportion is projected to continue rising to reach 44.7% by 2030.[4] This rise, which

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[4]   According to estimates, this percentage will peak at 45% around 2040 and decline thereafter (see ECLAC, 2021b).

reflects population dynamics, results in what is known as the "demographic dividend", where the economically active population —most of it made up of adults capable of generating income— is larger than the rest of the population. This yields a positive scenario, in which dependency represents a smaller burden for the adult population. However, demographic dividends are limited in time and are not a foregone conclusion, as they depend on the ability of the economies of the region to generate productive and decent employment.

This demographic trend will benefit the population in general only if the lighter burden is accompanied by enabling conditions for decent work, so that adults can participate in the labour market in adequate conditions and earn a decent income in order to perform their dual role; however, this is not always the case in the region.

A first restriction is finding work. Not everyone in Latin America and the Caribbean has access to decent work with adequate pay and social security. The labour market is characterized by highly informal conditions, as well as the personal limitations associated with poor preparation and training at earlier stages of the life cycle, as will be seen below.

Unemployment rates have remained in single digits in most of the countries, showing no major variations over the past few years. The average rate for Latin America rose by 1.1 percentage point between 2010 and 2019 (see figure VII.1).

FIGURE VII.1
Latina America (18 countries):[a] unemployment rate, 2010 and 2019[b]
(Percentages)
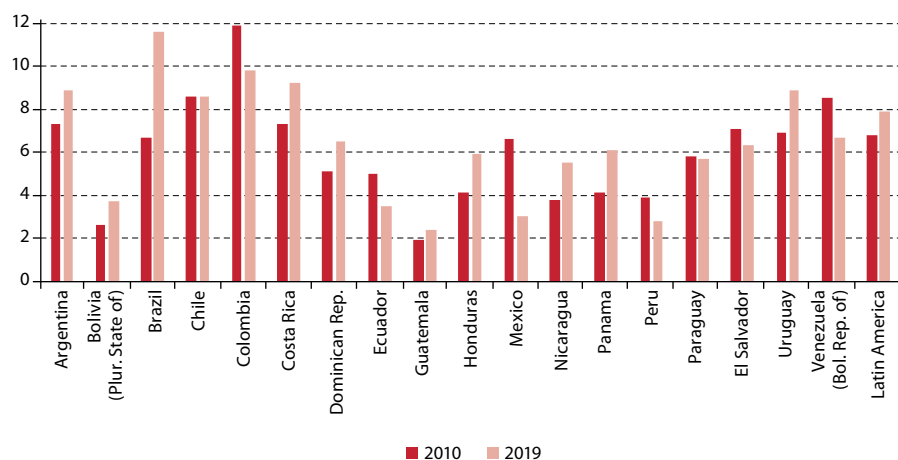
■ 2010   ■ 2019

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] Weighted average for Argentina (urban areas), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.
[b] Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (2014), Brazil (2011), Chile (2011 and 2017), Colombia (2018), Guatemala (2006 and 2014), Mexico (2018), Nicaragua (2005 and 2014), and Plurinational State of Bolivia (2011 and 2018).

Even with low levels of open unemployment,[5] the lower income strata show the highest level of unemployment (see figure VII.2), which may party explain their low income. In particular, women are overrepresented among the unemployed.

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[5]   Open unemployment is a measurement of people who are in the workforce and have been unemployed for the past seven days, who are available to work immediately and have actively looked for a paid job or independent employment during the past seven days.

Latin America (18 countries): open unemployment rate
by sex and per capita income quintile, 2018[a]
(Percentages)

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC),
CEPALSTAT [online] https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english [accessed in 2020].
[a]   Simple average.

> Gaps in access to sufficient income in the adult population have consequences for the rest of the population who depend on this age group.

However, having a job does not ensure its stability. In a survey conducted by Latinobarómetro (2018)[6] of people between 41 and 60 years of age, 23.3% said that they were very worried about becoming unemployed in the next 12 months, while only 14.2% reported no concern on this score. What is more, having a job does not equate to having decent work. The labour market in Latin America is characterized by low income, high levels of informality and persisting unpaid work in the case of women.[7] These disadvantageous labour conditions accumulate throughout life, given that those working in informal conditions or outside the labour market have little possibility of having their own income in old age, either directly or through contributory pensions.

2. Low income levels

The most direct way of adequately meeting basic needs is to have a secure and sufficient income from work. The levels of income obtained by the adult population are highly unequal in Latin America, owing to poor income distribution whereby a large proportion of people receive very low income, as seen in the chapter on socioeconomic inequality. In the ECLAC data for 2018 (ECLAC, 2021b), the highest-earning 20% of the employed population captured almost half of all disposable income in the region, while the lowest-earning 20% accrued less than 4%.

Close to 40% of the employed adult population receives income below the minimum wage, and among women aged 45–64 this percentage rises to almost 50%, betraying the existence of gender wage gaps (see figure VII.3).

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6   Samples selected: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.
7   In the case of Mexico, for example, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, n/d), if unpaid work had been included in GDP in 2017, it would have represented 23.3% of GDP. According to ECLAC (2016), the economic value of unpaid work amounted to 18.8% of GDP in Guatemala in 2014, 15.2% in Ecuador in 2012, 20.4% in Colombia in 2012, and 22.9% in the metropolitan area of Uruguay in 2013.

Latin America (18 countries): employed population with labour
income below the national minimum wage,
by sex and age group, around 2016
(Percentages)
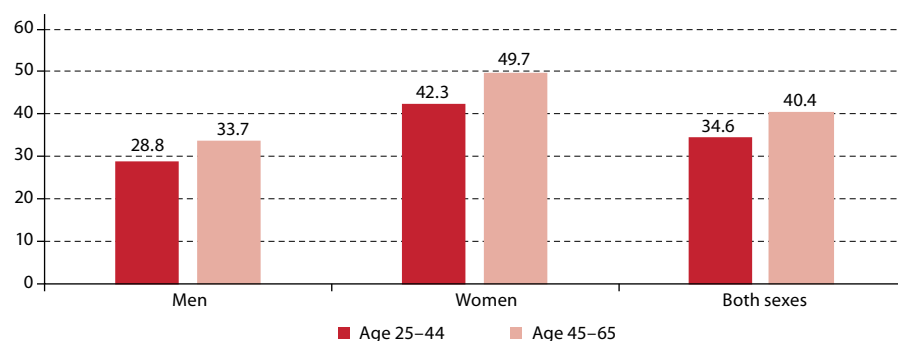
	Men	Women	Both sexes
Age 25–44	28.8	42.3	34.6
Age 45–65	33.7	49.7	40.4

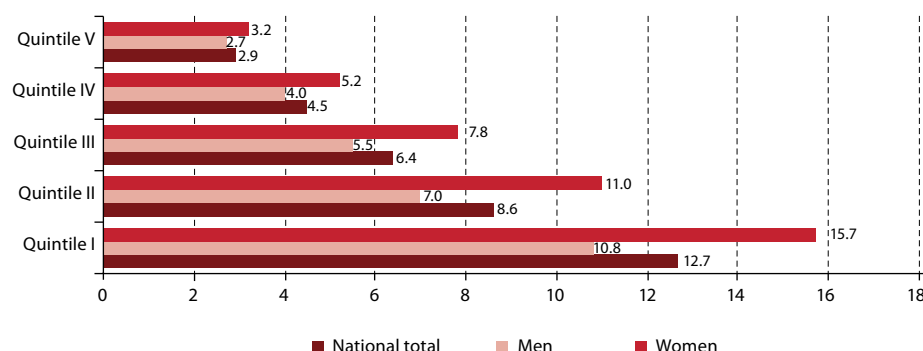**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Social Panorama of Latin America, 2018 (LC/PUB.2019/3-P), Santiago, 2019.

Low wages reflect the precarious work that is available to much of the adult population, a scenario that has shown no sign of changing in recent years. In part, it reflects the limited capacity of collective bargaining and the low rate of unionization in the region, which lack the power to achieve pay levels adequate to cover at least basic needs. The unionization rate[8] in 2016 averaged around 15% in Latin America and the Caribbean and exceeded 30% only in Argentina and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (ILO, 2020).

In the 2018 Latinobarómetro survey,[9] 50% of those surveyed between the ages of 41 and 60 said that their family's total income was not enough to adequately cover their needs, and another 38.2% said that it was only just enough. Only 8.5% of the population reported having enough income and even being able to save.

In some cases, the lack of sufficient income forces people to work excessive hours, sometimes in a second job, to obtain labour income above the level of the poverty line. In 2016, around 20% of those employed, on average, worked more than 44 hours per week and received labour income below the relative poverty line.[10] This proportion is much higher in rural than in urban areas (35% and 16%, respectively) and there is also a major gender gap. In 2016 the percentage of the employed who were underemployed with excessive working hours was 26.9% for women and 19.1% for men (ECLAC, 2019).

3. Labour informality

Low income is not the only disadvantageous characteristic for the adult population. The region's labour markets typically exhibit a high level of informality. Taking employment in informal conditions is a survival strategy in countries that lack social security nets, such as unemployment insurance, or where wages and pensions are low. Informal work produces large gaps in access to social protection, especially in quintiles with fewer resources.

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[8] The unionization or trade union density rate measures the number of workers affiliated to a trade union as a percentage of all workers. For more information, see [online] https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer56/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=ILR_TUMT_NOC_RT_A).

[9] The survey covers the following countries: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

[10] If those employed worked 44 or fewer hours per week, their monthly income would fall short of the country's relative poverty line. Relative poverty is defined as 50% of the median value of per capita income, not considering equivalence scales.

Informality is the situation of the majority in the region, with an average informality rate of around 54%, according to estimates by ILO (2020). A complementary approach shows the large proportion of those employed in low-productivity sectors (see figure VII.4).[11] Notably, in most of the countries, with the exception of the Dominican Republic, a higher percentage of women than men are employed in low-productivity sectors.

FIGURE VII.4
Latin America (selected countries): urban employed
in low-productivity sectors of the labour market,
by sex, around 2019[a]
(Percentages)
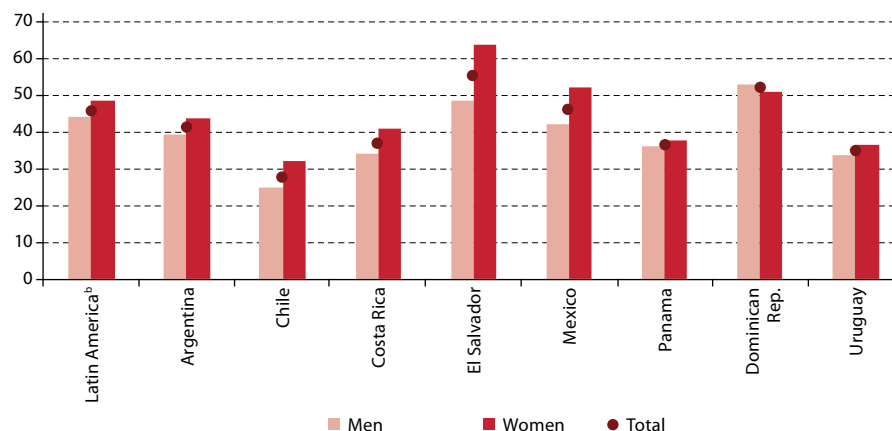
■ Men   ■ Women   ● Total

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT [online] https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english [accessed in 2020].
[a] Persons aged 15 and over. Data refer to 2017 for Chile, to 2018 for Mexico, and to 2019 for the other countries.
[b] Weighted average for Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

4. Lack of access to social protection

In 2016, only 48.1% of employed workers were affiliated or contributing to a pension system (over half were not) (ECLAC, 2019). For example, in 2017 18% of those employed in the Plurinational State of Bolivia were affiliated to a pension system, compared with 87.8% in Chile that same year (data from 2020, ECLAC, 2021b). This is important in both the present and the future, since those who are not paying into a pension system today will not be entitled to a contributory pension in their old age nor, in many cases, to health services provided through contributory social security (ECLAC, 2016). Pension amounts are also low, either because not enough payments have been made into defined benefit systems or because too little has been contributed to individual capitalization accounts.

INSTITUTIONS

ECLAC and ILO have partnered to study labour markets, with a particular emphasis on income and social protection issues.

https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/type/eclac-ilo-report.

5. The importance of education for labour integration

The possibilities of entering the labour market and obtaining better income are directly related to the capacities and skills people acquire at earlier ages. Thus, the higher the level of education, the less the entry into low-productivity sectors (see figure VII.5).

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[11] Refers to the proportion of non-agricultural employment; a proxy for informal employment.

FIGURE VII.5
Latin America (15 countries)[a] : percentage of employed
aged 15 and over in low-productivity sectors,
by education level, around 2010, 2014 and 2019
(Percentages)
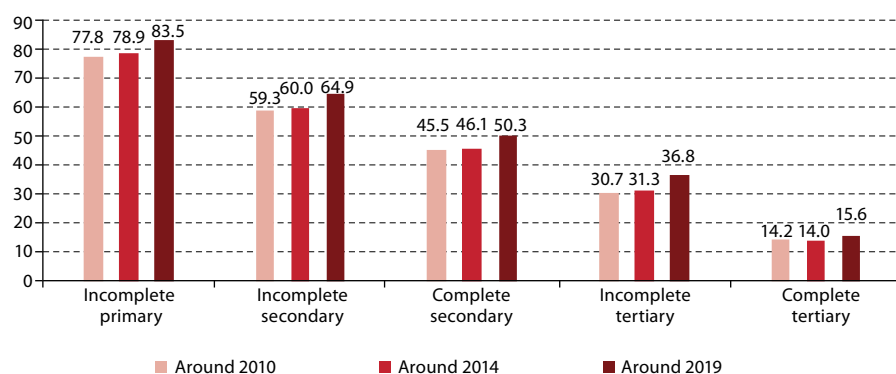
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] Weighted average for Argentina (urban areas), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

In many cases, on-the-job training can make up for gaps in qualifications and skills from earlier stages, but access to this type of facility is also highly uneven and often exacerbates equality gaps.

6. Emerging challenges

Ongoing technological changes are transforming the world of work. Up till now, employment destruction and creation processes have not reduced employment levels, but there is nothing to say that these effects could not be more drastic in the future. There is a fairly broad consensus that many jobs existing today will disappear as a result of new technologies, that even more jobs will be changed and that new ones will emerge that cannot be anticipated today (Weller, Gontero and Campbell, 2019).

Technological changes will have a different impact on the labour market in the region than in Europe or the United States, owing to the higher prevalence of informality and low wages. Introducing new technologies also entails the costs of acquiring it, making adjustments, installing it, training people to use it and making workplace modifications, as well as the cost of maintaining and updating it. These costs, which are moreover higher in the region than in advanced countries (owing to import costs, for example), prevent productivity gains from being transferred to wages in the short run.

According to some estimates, this means that the risk of technological substitution is small, especially in worse quality jobs (Weller, Gontero and Campbell, 2019). Accordingly, in less advantaged social sectors, such as first nation peoples, wages in the first income quintile and among the less educated are likely to suffer more than they gain from automation (Katz, 2018).

Forty-nine per cent of the employed in the region work in jobs that are at potential risk of automation and just under 33% of all occupations are at high risk. This percentage falls to under 22% in the primary sector and rises to 35.4% and 34.1% in the secondary and tertiary sectors. These variations are due to the degree of structural heterogeneity of the activity sectors in each country, including level of informality, the size of the low-productivity segment, the number of self-employed and the prevalence of micro- and small enterprises, among others (ECLAC/OEI, 2020) (see table VII.1 for estimates by country).

STATISTICS

Less than half of those of adult age pay into pension systems.

48.1%
OF ADULTS
pay into
pension systems

TABLE VII.1
Latin America (17 countries): percentage of employed
in jobs at risk of automation, total
and high-risk occupations
(Percentages)

COUNTRY	YEAR	TOTAL POTENTIAL	OCCUPATION AT HIGH POTENTIAL RISK OF BEING AUTOMATED			
			TOTAL	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY
Argentina	2018	39.0	32.9	58.0	38.4	30.4
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2018	31.5	15.7	4.8	26.1	18.6
Brazil	2018	62.9	44.0	39.6	46.0	44.1
Chile	2017	39.5	34.3	30.0	32.7	35.1
Colombia	2018	52.4	22.7	20.1	30.9	21.0
Costa Rica	2018	59.6	47.5	59.1	46.5	45.9
Dominican Republic	2018	56.6	34.5	19.8	39.6	35.0
Ecuador	2018	34.3	21.4	12.7	31.2	22.8
El Salvador	2018	38.5	29.3	20.7	38.1	28.4
Honduras	2018	62.2	32.2	32.3	38.0	29.8
Mexico	2018	38.2	27.0	12.3	29.1	29.7
Nicaragua	2014	44.7	31.0	37.2	30.9	27.0
Panama	2018	50.6	36.0	25.0	27.6	40.7
Peru	2018	34.9	19.0	5.0	29.5	22.9
Paraguay	2018	39.3	22.3	10.5	33.7	22.6
Uruguay	2018	46.6	37.9	36.6	37.4	38.2
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2014	40.4	24.1	36.2	10.8	26.2
Latin America		49.0	32.6	21.6	35.4	34.1

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (ECLAC/OEI), "Educación, juventud y trabajo: habilidades y competencias necesarias en un contexto cambiante", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2020/116), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020.

Technological progress and the modifications it produces in value chains, together with diverse short-term events, lead to the creation of new types of jobs and the destruction of others. This raises challenges, on the one hand, of certain skills becoming obsolete and new capabilities being needed and, on the other, of some labour regulations becoming unable to fulfil their purpose of ensuring decent work in all spheres.

At the same time, in terms of the need to adopt a development sustainability perspective, recently the idea has gained strength that more effort should be devoted to creating jobs related to environmental protection under the "green job" concept. This refers to decent jobs that contribute to preserving and restoring the environment either in traditional sectors such as manufacturing or construction or in new emerging sectors such as renewable energies and energy efficiency. Like in the case of jobs based on new technologies, this requires a transition process that in turn entails training and skills transfer.

New employment modalities

Changes in the world of work have ushered in what is known as the "*gig economy*", where work tends to be project-based and sought for short periods. It is very common among the younger generations and those who lack the skills necessary to participate in the formal economy.

The new forms of employment arising from this process include figures such as remote workers, especially those known as "digital day labourers", who have relatively flexible working hours bound by employers' open availability requirements, and often have to use their own capital equipment. These correspond to a group of occupations that sit on the boundary between wage and independent work, often highly informal and falling outside any regulations that could ensure labour rights (ECLAC/ILO, 2019).

With close links to the digital economy, one of the greatest advantages of this type of work is the flexibility it affords the worker, as it can be performed anywhere there is an Internet connection, provided the worker has the necessary tools, e.g. a bicycle or a car.

However, this type of work also has major disadvantages associated with the lack of regulation, resulting in a lack of social protection, precisely for one of the groups that most need it given the instability of the work. This adds new layers of informality to those already existing, and in some cases generates a new form of invisible work in remotely performed digital tasks, for example, in software programming for gig economy platforms. In other cases, it worsens precarious labour conditions, since people doing this kind of work often put in excessive hours in order to secure sufficient income, or they are exposed to higher risk, for example, those working in delivery of online purchases.

It is increasingly important how enabling technologies are managed in a world tending towards automation, particularly in relation to information and communications technologies (ICTs) and Internet use as a baseline, as major access gaps exist in these areas. In Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2017 only one in two households had access to the Internet (2020 data, ECLAC, 2021b). One possibility for improving this situation is to close skills gaps and foster transferable skills through on-the-job training.

The risks of automation and job loss are heightened in situations of crisis. For example, in the context of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that 42.4% of jobs in the region are at high risk and 16.5% are at medium-high risk (ECLAC/ILO, 2020). Although this risk becomes more evident in times of crisis, the fact remains that it is also a function of the changing situation of the labour market. The two aspects exacerbate each other and make skills acquisition all the more important.

STATISTICS

One in every three people works in a job at risk of automation.
The new employment modalities can widen gaps in the adult population.

1/3

RISK OF AUTOMATION
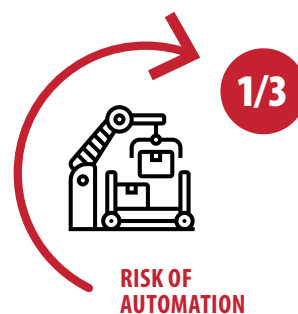
BOX VII.1
COVID-19 and its impact on the adult population

Virtually all the Latin American and Caribbean countries were forced to implement social distancing measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The world of world was particularly impacted by these measures. ILO (2020) estimates that, compared with pre-COVID-19 levels, working hours in the region fell by 1.7% in the first quarter of 2020, and by 13.3% in the second quarter. These data were equivalent to 4 million lost jobs in the first quarter (calculated on the basis of a 48-hour working week) and 26 million jobs in the second quarter of 2020. This scenario was worse in countries where the services sector has gown in importance, as this sector was the worst affected in this regard. Among the adult population, women are worse affected by job losses, partly because they are overrepresented in the services sector—in all the countries, over two thirds of employed women work in the services economy, a much higher proportion than men.

The labour-market responses to the COVID-19 pandemic included an accelerated trend towards teleworking, especially in large and medium-sized companies and corporations. This transition to teleworking showed up the gap in access to technology and technological knowledge, which is more obvious in the lower-income population. Given the heterogeneity of the region, teleworking is not an option for small firms and for the informal economy, which make up most of the region's economy.

In this scenario, a high proportion of adults are at risk of losing (or have already lost) their source of income and, given the limited access to social protection, have no possibility of receiving social protection assistance. This has further widened the equality gaps between those who can and those who cannot easily make the shift to teleworking.

The trends of job generation, transformation and destruction seen before the pandemic are expected to continue and even increase from now on. Online sales, goods delivery and remote digital services, among other activities that have increased their share of the economy, are expected to continue to expand.

One group that has experienced mixed repercussions (with both positive and negative effects) from the pandemic is that of people engaged in areas of employment that have emerged recently as a result of the technological revolution, in (often poorly paid) work linked to the digital economy, such as those engaged in private passenger transport (for example, Uber, Cabify, DiDi and others) or home delivery of food or packages (for example, Rappi, SinDelantal and others). The increase in these activities as a result of the pandemic may reduce the risk of job loss for those involved, but it also increases other types of risk insofar as they are unlikely to have access to medical insurance—but they also have the greatest exposure to risk of contagion after doctors, nurses and other health workers, and they have thus been one of the groups most affected both directly and indirectly by COVID-19.

COVID-19 has had a differentiated impact on adult women, who form a majority in the front line of direct response, as doctors and nurses in the health sector most exposed to risk, or as teachers facing the challenges of adapting to communications technologies with little opportunity for training and reskilling (ECLAC/UN-Women, 2020).

The measures taken by most of the countries in the region in response to the COVID-19 crisis have been geared chiefly towards benefiting the adult population group and particularly towards avoiding harm that would prevent them from performing their dual role as providers of income and co-guarantors of other rights within the family. These measures have included the introduction of benefits for workers and/or dependants, the increase of credits or other budget allocations, the flexibilization or suspension of eligibility criteria or conditionalities, the expansion of coverage, the increase of assistance amounts, the introduction of wage subsidies, access or administration improvements, and the introduction of new entitlements or increase of existing ones.

Given the scale of the effects of the pandemic, which have made informality unviable as an option, the measures that continue to be implemented in the recovery phase must include support for the informal sector, which has tended to fall outside the scope of public policy.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of International Labour Organization (ILO), *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work, Fifth Edition*, 30 June 2020 [online] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749399.pdf; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/International Labour Organization (ILO), "Employment trends in an unprecedented crisis: policy challenges", *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean*, No. 23 (LC/TS.2020/128), Santiago, November 2020; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Universalizing access to digital technologies to address the consequences of COVID-19", *COVID-19 Special Report*, No. 7, Santiago, 26 August 2020; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Care in Latin America and the Caribbean during the COVID-19: towards comprehensive systems to strengthen response and recovery", Santiago, 2020 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/45917-care-latin-america-and-caribbean-during-covid-19-towards-comprehensive-systems; J. Weller, "La pandemia del COVID-19 y su efecto en las tendencias de los mercados laborales", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2020/67), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities among adults

POLICY PROPOSALS

The priority policies for reducing social inequality among the adult population include:

- Basic income security, such as policies on employability with guarantee of sufficient income, basic income and unemployment insurance.

- Decent working conditions, including access to social protection and protection of labour rights.

- Training in the framework of changes in the world of work, including dual education policies.

- Care services and preventive programmes for health, access to culture, sport and a life free from violence.

The assessment given reflects the need to implement measures to close equality gaps in terms of participation in the world of work with a view to a gender equality, ensuring work in decent conditions with secure and adequate income and free from vulnerabilities. In addition, steps must be taken to avoid informality, provide certainty in the event of economic risk or natural or health disasters, recognize unpaid work and move towards public care systems, regulating the new modalities of work and planning for adult training and updating needs.

Several of the aspects mentioned above are addressed in other chapters, so the following section looks in particular at measures to ensure work with decent income taking into account diverse risks, labour conditions for achieving decent work with social protection, on-the-job training and public care systems.[12]

1. Security of work and of decent income

Having a continuous, uninterrupted stream of income is key to well-being for this population group and extends to the other groups who are economically dependent on it. Is it therefore important to promote basic income security through:

- *Policies for employability and employment generation*,[13] as Costa Rica did, for example, during the 2014–2018 period through its "National Employment and Production Strategy" and its *Empléate* programme, aimed at broadening opportunities for men and women in poverty through training for employability, and employment promotion in the framework of the social and solidarity economy.[14] Chile is another example, with *ProEmpleo,* a public policy on employment administered by the Under-Secretariat for Labour, aimed at improving employability for those in vulnerable situations. This policy has five programmes; one provides emergency employment and the other four are employability support programmes.[15]

- *Wage policies aimed at ensuring sufficient income.* In this sphere, ILO (2016) has produced a guide on minimum wage policies, which provides information on effective practices for implementing these. Brazil, for example, made increasing the minimum wage a key public policy for years and was able to raise it from 2000 to at least 2017.[16] Minimum wage policy is addressed greater detail in the chapter on socioeconomic inequality.

- *Unemployment insurance and subsidies.* For example, in the case of Uruguay, the Social Insurance Bank provides formal workers with an unemployment subsidy lasting 72 working days —i.e. six months— subject to having worked at least six months before employment separation.[17] In the case of Mexico, at the subnational level, Mexico City has implemented an unemployment insurance programme for wage workers who have become involuntarily jobless, aimed mainly at women fired owing to pregnancy, repatriated or returned Mexican migrants or temporary residents in Mexico City, persons released from detention in Mexico City and unemployed persons from indigenous communities.[18]

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[12] The chapter on socioeconomic inequality examines policies on social and labour inclusion in greater detail.

[13] See ILO (2012).

[14] See Costa Rica (2014).

[15] See Under-Secretariat for Labour (2014).

[16] This point is discussed in greater detail in the chapter on socioeconomic stratification.

[17] See Social Insurance Bank (2017).

[18] See [online] http://www.segurodedesempleo.cdmx.gob.mx/.

- *Basic income:* In the context of the pandemic, ECLAC has proposed providing an emergency basic income for crisis situations in which the continuity of labour income is in jeopardy. This proposal also opens the way to reflection about the implementation of basic income across the board in the future.

ILO also draws attention to the importance of policies that have an indirect impact on wages and wage distribution as important elements in the overall response to structural and short-term labour market challenges. These policies, which have been mentioned in greater detail in previous sections, include quality education, ongoing programmes to build up the skills of the economically active population and better matching between jobseekers and the jobs available. But they also include measures to resolve wage differences affecting those working in non-traditional forms of employment (in particular, seasonal workers and workers provided by *outsourcing and crowdsourcing agencies*), whose numbers are increasing in the industrialized countries, as well as in developing countries in segments of the labour market that used to be associated with more standard jobs. The proposals for addressing the challenges of the future of work in this area include the promotion of investments in key areas for decent and sustainable work, and the reshaping of business incentive structures to encourage long-term investments that in turn lead to more secure employment (ILO, 2019).

2. Decent working conditions and social and labour protection

Social protection and the protection of labour rights are fundamental pieces in ensuring well-being and guaranteeing human rights. This topic is covered by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 8. Measures to achieve social and labour protection may include:

- *Ensure the protection of the labour rights of the entire population, but especially of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; and indigenous persons, among others.*[19] An example is the effort by the National Council for Disability Equality jointly with the Labour Integration Service for Persons with Disabilities of Ecuador to coordinate a programme jointly with the Chamber of Industry of Guayaquil to increase the number of quality jobs available for persons with disabilities, in order to obtain skilled employees for members of the Chamber on the one hand, and to increase access to employment for persons with disabilities, on the other.[20] The programme has an impact on decision-making and disability sensitization in the working environment. It also contributes to fostering autonomous income generation for employees with disabilities, and to building their self-confidence.

- *Increase access to social security in particularly excluded occupations, such as informal jobs or sectors, or new employment modalities that are not sufficiently regulated.* Examples are paid domestic workers, workers in the gig economy and those in the digital economy. It is important to include all these workers in social security systems and to fulfil other rights by means of effective policies on minimum wages and on limitations on usually excessive working hours. For example, Mexico has recently launched a pilot programme to ensure access to social security for paid female domestic workers.[21,22] This subject is addressed in greater depth in the chapter on gender inequalities.

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[19]   There are more specific examples for each of the vulnerable groups in the corresponding chapters.
[20]   The gaps found show that persons with disabilities lacked the skills and capacities required by the respective jobs, so a free training programme was launched for persons with disabilities in 2010, then broadened to include the possibility of job placement.
[21]   See [online] http://www.imss.gob.mx/personas-trabajadoras-hogar.
[22]   In 2018 ECLAC published a document with proposals for principles and elements of a household labour contract in Mexico. See Arcos García (2018).

- Egalitarian labour protection for men and women through, for example, similar maternity/paternity leave payments to promote responsible fatherhood. An important reference in this regard is Sweden, where men and women have the same number of days' leave. These aspects are also addressed in greater detail in the chapter on gender inequalities.

- Regulation of the new forms of work (gig economy). The recommendations put forward by the Global Commission on the Future of Work in this area include the establishment of universal labour guarantees with a minimum social protection floor, ensuring an adequate living wage, maximum limits on working hours, protection of safety and health at work, time sovereignty, dialogue (to afford a greater role to unionization) and the use of information technologies to promote decent work for the whole population (ILO, 2019).

> **POLICIES**
> Social protection policies are key to closing gaps in adulthood: from efforts to increase access to social security to measures to ensure labour rights and decent income.

3. Training for employment in the framework of changes in the world of work

- *Implement work training programmes* to ensure that changes in skills needs do not require a change in staff, but rather open the opportunity for existing workers to acquire new skills or capacities to continue working and meeting the challenges of the labour market. Progress in this direction has been made for a number of years now with the promotion of technical and vocational training, where national training services have been set up separately from ministries of education, in order to promote the acquisition of work skills among youth and adults with lags in that area. Examples are institutions such as the National Industrial Apprenticeship Service (SENAI) in Brazil, the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) in Colombia, the National Apprenticeship Service (INA) in Costa Rica and the National Technical and Professional Training Institute (INFOTEP) in the Dominican Republic. Technological support plans in schools help to support this effort. For example, the Basic Computer Connectivity for Online Learning (Ceibal) Plan in Uruguay is aimed at aligning educational content with digital content from primary through to secondary school (Rodríguez, 2020).

- *Promote dual adult education programmes,* in other words, strengthen strategies of training for work, mainly bringing skills and capacities up to date in line with the evolution of the labour market. An example is the programme that the State of Mexico has been running at the subnational level for almost 20 years, which focuses on skills training in a combined classroom-workplace format, in areas such as production, technologies, transport and tourism.[23]

The ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work emphasizes investment in people's capabilities with lifelong learning as a right that supports the entry of young people into work, but also supports adult workers through labour market transitions as occupation changes, with an emphasis on gender equality (ILO, 2019).

4. Care services

It is imperative to broaden public care services to provide the opportunity for decent work in the performance of these services and to eliminate gender gaps to enable the female population to enter the paid labour market. This is, in fact, one of the emerging areas that can offer opportunities for reskilling in the context of the future of work and demographic trends.

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[23]   For further information, see CONALEP (2018).

Changes in the world of work and the care economy pose the need to regear policies aimed at the adult population.

Most of the countries of the region have policies on care services, with varying degree of progress and scope; however, they generally do not form part of an integrated system. In this regard, Uruguay is benchmark, as the only country in the region identified by ILO (2018) as having an integrated national care system.[24] Other important initiatives exist, for example in Costa Rica, which established a National Network for Child Care and Development,[25] and Chile, which has a National Support and Care System.[26] This type of care network fosters the re-entry into the labour market, especially for women and preferably in conditions of decent work, with social security and adequate income. This topic is addressed in greater depth in the chapter on gender inequalities.

The implementation of public policies that provide care services also promotes the creation of jobs in care for the child population, as well as for persons with disabilities and older persons, for example, through policies that support care training. In this regard, it is important to give consideration to professional training for caregivers, in order to increase the professionalization of this activity and, therefore, the associated income and benefits.

5. Other aspects (violence, preventive health, culture)

Although the foregoing considerations are priorities for building a milieu in which the adult population has secure income through the possibility of decent work with fair working conditions, there are additional aspects which are important for fulfilling the right to a decent life. These include preventive health, a life free from violence, and access to culture, sport and recreation, among other topics that support adults' realization and fulfilment beyond their role as providers. Measures for this include:

- *Implement preventive health programmes* involving aspects such as adequate nutrition, physical activity and prevention of substance abuse, with a view to maintaining a state of physical health that minimizes the risk of premature onset of chronic or degenerative disease. At the regional level, the Wellness Week, a campaign by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), is focused on promoting preventive psychological health.[27]

- *Ensure a life free from violence* making a priority of prevention policies that foster a culture of peace and ensuring justice especially for the most disadvantaged populations. An example is the global citizenship education model developed in partnership by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which seeks to form new generations in a culture of legality and respect for the rule of law, through formal education.[28]

- *Implement programmes of free access to culture and sport,* and the performance of these activities, including in work settings, as a way of fostering physical health. An example is the Arts and Trades Factory (Faro) project in Mexico City, an arena for arts and trades that promotes cultural activities open to the public.[29]

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[24]   See [online] http://www.sistemadecuidados.gub.uy/.
[25]   See [online] https://redcuidoinfantil.go.cr/.
[26]   See [online] http://www.chilecuida.gob.cl/.
[27]   See PAHO (2020).
[28]   See UNODC (n/d).
[29]   See [online] https://www.cultura.cdmx.gob.mx/recintos/faro-oriente.

D. Suggested references

SUGGESTIONS

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E. Questions

- What are the largest gaps as regards the guarantee of labour rights for the adult population in your country /region/district?

- Analyse what labour policies your country, region or district has for groups that are in a vulnerable position and identify which groups are unprotected.

- Propose a public policy that your country, region or district can feasibly implement to protect the labour rights of one of the groups in a vulnerable position.

- Identify the main challenges of the future of work in your country. In particular, analyse the gaps in labour rights produced by the increase in the gig economy and the digital economy, and in relation to the prevalence of informality and unpaid domestic work.

- Given the emerging challenges of the work of work in your country /region/district, what type of training is a priority? How should that training policy be implemented?

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Chapter **VIII**

Ageing and old age[1]

A. Normative framework

There is no global treaty that expressly guarantees the rights of older adults, but the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons has recently been adopted. This regional human rights instrument is the only binding standard in the Americas that focuses on promoting, respecting and guaranteeing the rights of older persons.

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the recognition, full enjoyment and exercise, on an equal basis, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of older persons in order to contribute to their full inclusion, integration and participation in society (OAS, 2015).

The Convention's 27 articles identify areas for policy action aimed at narrowing the gaps that exist in terms of the exercise of this population's group's human rights. The rights protected by the Inter-American Convention can be classified as emerging rights, existing rights and extended rights (see diagram VIII.1).

- Emerging rights can be defined as rights that are beginning to be demanded and/or rights that are partially recognized in existing international and/or national instruments.

- Existing rights are those that are already covered in international instruments but that need to be adapted to conform to the specific needs of a given group either by interpreting them in a new way or by expanding upon them.

- Extended rights are those that are specifically being extended to groups that have not been able to avail themselves of those rights in the past owing to omissions or discrimination (Dussel, 2010).

This treaty can also be used as a framework for emphasizing the rights of older persons in the course of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on a basis of equality and non-discrimination. This approach is especially useful for implementing actions and tracking progress towards target 1.3 (universal social protection), target 3.8 (universal health coverage), target 5.4 (recognition and valuing of care work) and target 17.18 (availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by age, among other factors).

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[1] This chapter was prepared by Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Unit of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico; Sandra Huenchuan, Research Assistant with the Social Development Unit; Elsa Gutiérrez, Research Assistant with the Social Development Unit; and Citlalli Lamotte, a consultant with the Social Development Unit.

DIAGRAM VIII.1
Inter-American Convention on Protecting
the Human Rights of Older Persons

Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons

THREE DIMENSIONS

1 EMERGING RIGHTS
- Right to life and dignity in old age (art. 6)
- Right to independence and autonomy (art. 7)
- Rights of older persons receiving long-term care

2 EXISTING RIGHTS

NEW INTERPRETATIONS
- Equality and non-discrimination for reasons of age (art. 5)
- Right to give free and informed consent on health matters (art. 11)
- Right to safety and a life free of violence (arts. 9 and 10)

EXPANDED RIGHTS
- Right to work (art. 18)
- Right to health (art. 19)
- Access to justice (art. 31)
- Right to education (art. 20) and to culture (art. 21)
- Right to a healthy environment (art. 25)
- Right to recreation, leisure and sports (art. 22)

3 EXTENDED RIGHTS
- Right to accessibility and personal mobility (art. 26)
- Rights in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (art. 29)

Source: S. Huenchuan (ed.), *Envejecimiento, personas mayores y Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: perspectiva regional y de derechos humanos* (LC/PUB.2018/24-P), ECLAC Books, No. 154, Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2018.

B. Assessment of inequalities facing older persons

ASSESSMENT

- The number of people aged 60 or over and the longevity of the population are on the rise in all countries. The number of people in this age group in Latin America and the Caribbean will climb from 85 million in 2020 to nearly 200 million by 2050.

- There are income inequality gaps in the older population because many older adults do not have pensions as a consequence of constraints that hindered their access to the formal labour market when they were younger. One out of every two persons over 60 years of age in the lowest income quintile has no pension coverage –not even from a non-contributory plan.

- Constraints on access to health are compounded by a gradual increase in the frequency of various types of conditions associated, for the most part, with diseases that result in disability and chronic degenerative disorders. The average life expectancy of people in the region after they reach 60 years of age is 21.2 years and, during 5.1 of those years (again, on average), they will not be healthy.

- The available long-term care services fall short of demand, and families (particularly women family members) continue to be the main caregivers.

Based on the provisions of the Inter-American Convention, an assessment of the equality gaps affecting this population group can be focused on three broad areas:

- Economic security: the ability to have access to and use a sufficient amount of economic resources independently on a regular basis to ensure a good quality of life during old age (Huenchuan and Guzmán, 2006). The assessment of the degree of economic security can focus on participation in the economy (employment and income), social security (retirement and other pensions and benefits) and poverty.

- Health and well-being: the ability to maintain functional autonomy for as long as possible. This is a relevant consideration for all persons over 60 years of age, not only those who are ill at the present time (WHO, 2016). The analysis of health and well-being can focus on health status (self-perceived status, cognitive condition and chronic diseases), access to health services (barriers, frequency of consultations and discrimination) and access to insurance (coverage and out-of-pocket expenses).

- Long-term care: a wide range of services to meet the medical and non-medical needs of persons suffering from a chronic condition or a disability that renders them unable to care for themselves for long periods of time (United Nations, 2011). An analysis of the situation with regard to this type of care can focus on a person's degree of dependency (demand for care) and the available supply of services.
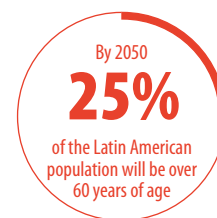
The Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons defines "older persons" as persons aged 60 or older, except where legislation has determined a minimum age that is lesser or greater, provided that it is not over 65 years (OAS, 2016). That definition, together with the provisions of the Convention described above and the findings of various regional studies on this age group, can be used to quantify and describe the older population in a given country or region.

There are approximately 900 million persons over the age of 60 at the present time, and that number is expected to rise to some 1.4 billion by 2030. In 2020, there were about 85 million people over the age of 60 in Latin America and the Caribbean, or 13% of the total population (see figure VIII.1). That number is expected to have climbed to 121 million by 2030 and to 200 million (26% of the total population) by 2050 (see figure VIII.2).

By 2050
25%
of the Latin American population will be over 60 years of age

FIGURE VIII.1
Latin America and the Caribbean (30 countries): persons over 60 years of age, 2020
(Percentages)
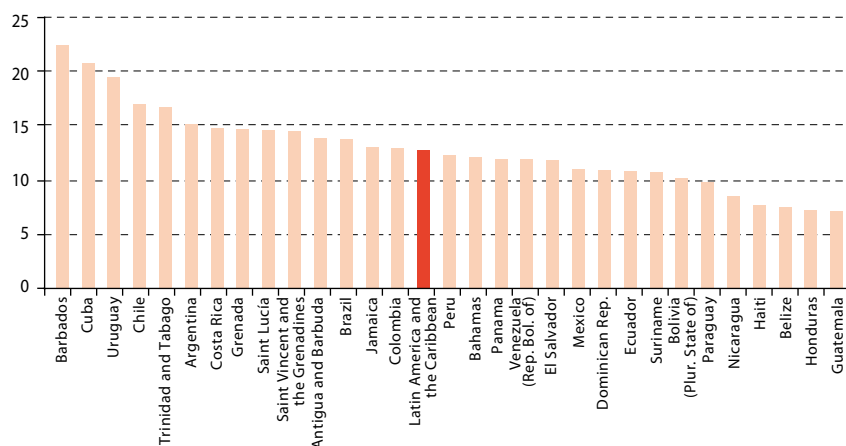
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT [online] https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english.

FIGURE VIII.2
Latin America and the Caribbean (38 countries and territories):[a] number
and percentage of persons over 60 years of age, 2015–2060
(In millions of people and percentages)
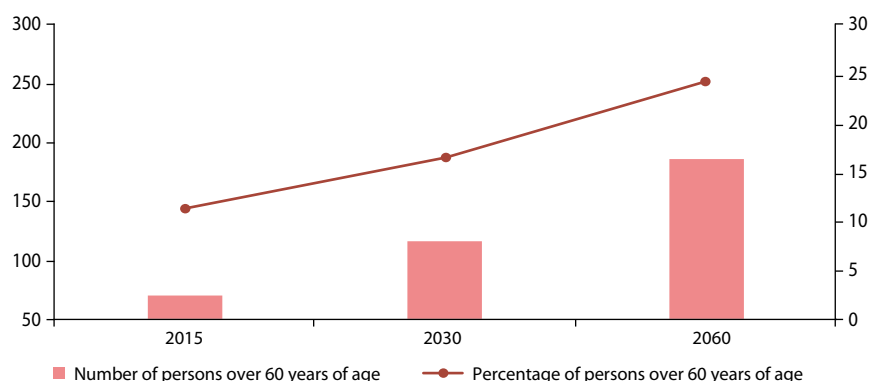
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CEPALSTAT [online] https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/portada.html?idioma=english.

[a] Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

Both the number of persons over 60 years of age and the percentage of the total population that they represent have risen in recent years. As a result of this increase, in combination with the shift in the age structure of the population brought about by the decline in fertility rates and the reduction in mortality rates, the population is ageing.

Population ageing in the region and elsewhere is a heterogeneous process because the demographics in each country are different, and this means that the challenges they face also differ. ECLAC has devised a classification system using the total fertility rate[2] and the percentage of the population over 60 years of age[3] to identify different stages in the ageing process. This system can therefore be used to determine what stage of the process a given country or region has reached. On the basis of these variables, the population ageing process has been divided into five distinct stages:

- Incipient stage
- Moderate stage
- Moderately advanced stage
- Advanced stage
- Very advanced stage[4]

An examination of how the distribution of that classification has changed over time shows just how rapidly the population ageing process is advancing in Latin America and the Caribbean. Around the year 2020, 17 countries were at the incipient stage, 10 at the moderate stage, 3 at a moderately advanced stage and 3 at an advanced stage (see table VIII.1). It is projected that by 2030 the situation will have changed so much that no country in the region will be at the first stage, as all of them will have moved on to more advanced stages of population ageing by then (see table VIII.2).

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[2] The average total fertility rate for the region is slightly below 2.05 children per woman.

[3] These indicators have been chosen because the fertility rate is the most influential factor in reshaping the age structure of the population once it begins to decline, while the percentage of persons over 60 years of age shows what share of the total population this age group represents.

[4] For further details, see Huenchuan (2018).

Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries): classification of countries
by stage of the population ageing process, 2015-2020

INCIPIENT STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	MODERATE STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	MODERATELY ADVANCED STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	ADVANCED STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	VERY ADVANCED STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING
Guatemala	Belize	Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Uruguay
Haiti	Ecuador	Bahamas	Chile	Barbados
Plurinational State of Bolivia	Guyana	Brazil	Trinidad and Tobago	Cuba
	Honduras	Costa Rica		
	Mexico	Colombia		
	Nicaragua	El Salvador		
	Panama	Grenada		
	Paraguay	Jamaica		
	Peru	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		
	Dominican Republic	Saint Lucia		
	Suriname			
	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela			

Source: S. Huenchuan (ed.), Envejecimiento, personas mayores y Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: perspectiva regional y de derechos humanos, ECLAC Books, No. 154 (LC/PUB.2018/24-P), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2018.

Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries): classification of countries
by stage of the population ageing process, 2030-2035

INCIPIENT STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	MODERATE STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	MODERATELY ADVANCED STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	ADVANCED STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING	VERY ADVANCED STAGE OF POPULATION AGEING
	Belize	Ecuador	Argentina	Uruguay
	Plurinational State of Bolivia	Grenada	Antigua and Barbuda	Barbados
	Guatemala	Guyana	Brazil	Cuba
	Haiti	Honduras	Colombia	Bahamas
	Dominican Republic	Nicaragua	El Salvador	Chile
	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	Paraguay	Jamaica	Costa Rica
			Mexico	Trinidad and Tobago
			Panama	
			Peru	
			Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	
			Suriname	
			Saint Lucia	

Source: S. Huenchuan (ed.), *Envejecimiento, personas mayores y Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: perspectiva regional y de derechos humanos*, ECLAC Books, No. 154 (LC/PUB.2018/24-P), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2018.

A turning point in the population ageing process will be reached in 2037, for in that year it is projected that the percentage of the total population that is over 60 years of age will be equal to the percentage of the total population that is under 15 years of age. This also illustrates just how much the countries of the region differ from one another on this score, since this turning point has already been reached by Cuba (2010) and Barbados (2015).

Another interesting development is that the population between the ages of 15 and 59 years will reach its peak size in relative terms. After that, it will begin to shrink as a percentage of the total population and will then converge towards the stabilization of the population in each of the countries of the region, although some of the countries will have reached that point before then.

The following sections will cover the key issues for older persons:

1. Economic security

Many older persons do not have old-age pensions that will shield them from the risks posed by a loss of income when the reach an advanced age. The social security system's coverage of employed persons is also highly uneven, and this increases the likelihood that future generations will be unprotected when they reach pensionable age.

The available results from household surveys indicate that 74.6% of the Latin American population over 65 years of age receives some sort of pension —with this figure tending to rise over time— under a contributory system, a non-contributory system or both. Pension coverage climbed by 10 percentage points between 2010 and 2019. According to the available data from the countries, a large part of that increase was accounted for by the expansion of non-contributory pension systems (ECLAC, 2021).

The sharpest increases in coverage have been seen in Peru (19.6%), Ecuador (22.1%), Mexico (25.6%), Paraguay (27.1%) and Panama (32.2%). However, the situation in some other countries, such as the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Honduras, is a cause for concern, since they had levels of coverage below 15% at the start of the period under study (2008) and had managed to raise those levels by less than 5 percentage points by 2015.

The limited coverage afforded by the social security systems of some countries leaves large sectors of the population unprotected, with a sizeable number of people who are 60 years of age or older without any income of their own. Just 56.3% of older persons in the lowest-income quintile had a pension in 2019, with more women than men having coverage (see figure VIII.3) (ECLAC, 2021).

FIGURE VIII.3
Latin America (15 countries): contributory and non-contributory pension coverage of persons over the age of 65, by income quintile,[a] sex,[a] area of residence[b] and total,[a] around 2010 and 2019
(Percentages)
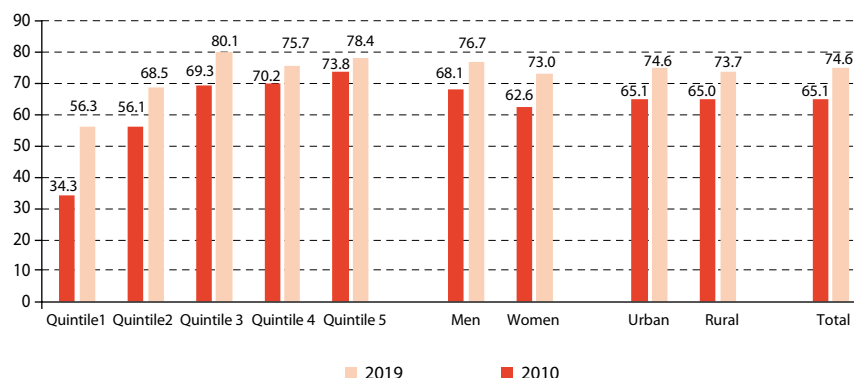
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] Weighted average for 15 countries.
[b] Weighted averages for 14 countries.

2. Health and well-being

A person's chances of reaching an advanced age have increased significantly in recent years. The death rate for persons under 60 years of age has declined in the Americas[5] from 143 deaths per 1,000 persons between the ages of 15 and 60 in the year 2000 to 126 in 2019, according to WHO data (WHO, 2021). A larger number of people are therefore reaching an advanced age, and this is reflected in an increase in life expectancy at birth from 74.1 to 77.1 years between 2000 and 2019.

When a person in the Latin American and Caribbean region reaches 60 years of age, he or she can, on average, expect to live another 21 years, although this average differs sharply across countries. However, it is estimated that these people will be in good health for only two thirds of those 21 years, which paints a somewhat gloomier picture in terms of expectations of well-being in old age.

FIGURE VIII.4
Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries):
expected years of life at the age of 60, 2019[a]

■ Expected years of life in ill health   ■ Expected years of life in good health
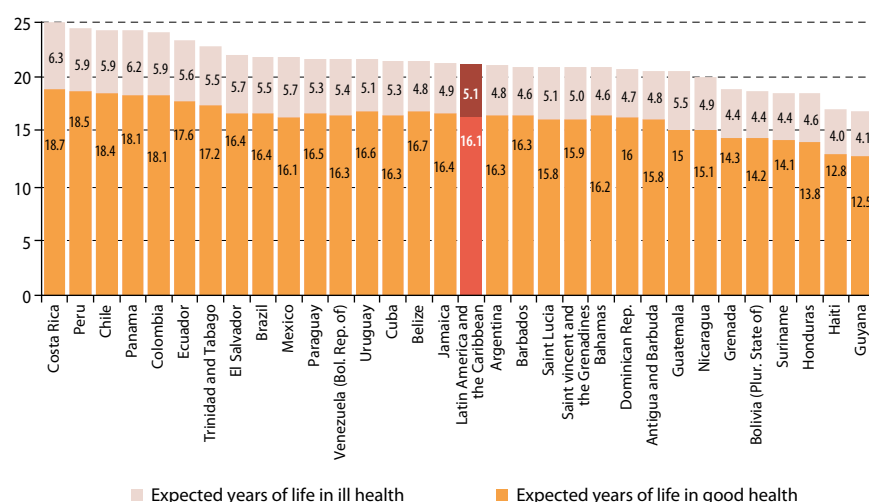
Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Observatory (GHO), 2021 [online] https://www.who.int/data/gho.
[a] The figure shown for the Latin American and Caribbean region is a simple average of the figures for the countries.

This can be accounted for in part by constraints on access to health-care services at this stage of life, but it is also partly attributable to the lack of preventive measures and to constraints on access to health care during earlier stages of a person's life. As the situation varies so much from country to country, a country-specific analysis of national conditions will be needed in each instance in order to determine the nature and extent of the factors at work.

Generally speaking, the evidence shows that, towards the end of the life cycle, noncommunicable diseases have taken the place of communicable ones as the main cause of morbidity, disability and death. Cardiovascular disease, malignant neoplasia, diabetes, respiratory disorders and sensory impairments have become the major reasons for the loss of healthy life-years and premature death. Many of these diseases are associated with the lack of preventive health care during earlier stages of the life cycle.

It is nonetheless true that the loss of healthy life-years and premature death are often caused by communicable diseases associated with poverty and inequality.

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[5]   The WHO classification of world regions includes Canada and the United States in the Americas.

Difficulties in obtaining health care increase as the socioeconomic level of older persons decreases, and people in lower socioeconomic strata are therefore more likely to die from preventable causes.

Mental and neurological diseases —including Alzheimer's disease— are one of the top 10 causes of death and pose one of the greatest health challenges today. The current incidence of dementia in the Americas is estimated at 6.4% and is expected to climb by 67% by 2030 and by 216% by 2050 (WHO, 2015). The availability of geriatric health services falls far short of what those figures indicate is needed. The relevant statistics are not available in most of the countries and, even in those where this information can be obtained, greater attention needs to be devoted to this area. Data from the WHO Global Health Observatory indicate that, as of 2017, Chile had 5 hospital beds in specialized geriatric units for every 1 million people and Costa Rica had 28; in each case this is equivalent to 0.2% of the available hospital beds, which is far from being sufficient to meet the potential demand from people in the corresponding age range.

In addition, health coverage in the region is quite uneven and even older people who do have health insurance may not be able to reach a medical centre when they need one. The possibility of obtaining medicines at an affordable cost and of securing effective, appropriate treatment when needed are issues of concern to older adults, particularly when their autonomy is limited.

Health care is an important aspect of the well-being of the older population, but it is not the only one. Considerations also need to be given to the factors involved in ensuring that they will have a decent living arrangement, given the potential restrictions on their mobility, and be free of poverty. Some of these factors are discussed in greater detail in other chapters and will therefore not be examined in depth here, however.

3. Long-term care

As a consequence of the greater prevalence of noncommunicable diseases among persons over 60 years of age, the number of years during which people live with a disability or are dependent on other persons has increased in the past few years. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) estimates that, as of 2019, more than 12% of persons over 60 years of age in the Americas were dependent as a result of disease or disability and required long-term care, and that figure is expected to rise in the coming years (PAHO, 2019).

A number of countries in the region have established policies on long-term care, but families are still the main providers of this kind of assistance. The results of time-use surveys in some Latin American countries demonstrate the fact that women devote a great deal of time to unpaid work, which includes caring for dependent persons. In Chile, the National Service for Older Adults (SENAMA, 2009) states that one out of every four persons over the age of 60 displays some degree of dependence. In 86% of those cases, the person is cared for by a woman (usually the wife, a daughter or a daughter-in-law) and requires that care for more than 12 hours per day. The information supplied by national studies indicates that many of those unpaid caregivers are older adults themselves who are looking after their partners, other family members or friends.

The situation in the region with respect to long-term care has improved in recent years, but further improvement is called for. An examination of the countries' general and specific normative frameworks and the existing range of social programmes for older adults shows that the challenges involved in caring for older persons are still being met primarily by family members. This heightens the vulnerability of those who need care and those who provide it, as they are being directly impacted by the unequal distribution of resources among households.

COVID-19 death rates correlate with patients' ages. The older a person is, the greater their chance of dying from the disease. The death rate for people over 80 years of age is five times greater than average, and as the virus continues to spread in developing countries and overloads their health-care and social protection systems, the death rate among older people is climbing.

There are various reasons why older persons are more vulnerable. Underlying conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes make it harder for them to recover once they have been infected with the virus. In addition, the ageing process entails wear and tear on the body that usually makes it more difficult to fight off new infections; this is especially true after age 75 because the immune system is less robust than it is in younger persons (Huenchuan, 2020).

Less visible but no less important factors include impacts unrelated to the health status of the older population. These include the loss of social safety nets or support networks; limitations on health care unrelated to COVID-19; the possibility of neglect or abuse in medical institutions or care facilities and by family members in cases where people are being cared for at home; increasing poverty as people lose their livelihoods or become unemployed; the negative impact on mental health and well-being of prolonged isolation and a more limited ability to connect with other people by digital means; and stigmatization and the possibility of discrimination in cases where medical personnel may have to decide whether to administer live-saving therapies or not.

Older women are more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic than older men because they tend to live longer and, by the time that they reach 80 years of age, are more than twice as likely as men of their age to live alone and therefore to need help in the home.

Four top-priority policies and programmes for assisting this sector of the population during the pandemic:

- Strengthening social inclusion and solidarity mechanisms while social distancing measures are in place. Maintaining physical distance is essential in order to protect older persons, but it should be coupled with social support and special attention, along with measures to help older persons make use of digital technologies.

- Integrating attention for older persons into socioeconomic and humanitarian responses to COVID-19. This calls for increased funding for humanitarian actions but also for efforts to address the structural factors that have left older people behind and made them more vulnerable to the crisis.

- Increasing older persons' participation in decision-making on issues that affect them, addressing and combating the stigmatization of old age and upgrading systems for the compilation of statistical data and information that lend greater visibility to this population group and the inequalities that its members face.

- Ensuring that difficult decisions about the health of older persons are guided by a commitment to dignity and to the right to health based on the fact that all lives are of equal value.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations, "The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons", *Policy Brief*, May 2020 [online] https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2020/05/COVID-Older-persons.pdf, and S. Huenchuan, COVID-19: *recomendaciones generales para la atención a personas mayores desde una perspectiva de derechos humanos* (LC/MEX/TS.2020/6/Rev.1), Mexico City, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequality among the older adult population

The countries of the region need to develop and implement public policies underpinned by the following three pillars in order to strengthen social protection for the older adult population and reduce the social inequality to which they are subject:

- Basic income security is especially important in countries where retirement pension coverage is low. Non-contributory pensions can serve as a supplementary source that paves the way towards universal social protection.

- Removal of the barriers that exist in some countries of the region to expanded access to comprehensive public health services for the older adult population that are in line with international human rights standards.

- Reinforcement of long-term care services in order to help to avoid asset drawdowns and thus reduce the vulnerability of the older adult population. Measures of this type will not only improve the availability of care for older adults who need it but can also serve as a source of productive jobs for caregivers that will strengthen the economy.

1. Basic income security

The region's path toward target 1.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 1 on universal social protection is not free of obstacles. While notable headway has been made in expanding public transfers to help mitigate some of the economic risks that arise when people reach an advanced age, mechanisms for increasing protection for older adults —especially for older women, members of indigenous groups and rural residents— need to be consolidated.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are trying to deal with problems in social security coverage in various way, but policies on the expansion of non-contributory pensions seem to be the option that is making the greatest difference. In addition to the expansion of coverage, this change in policy may have important implications over the long term in countries where the population is ageing. This kind of approach is particularly influential in countries where the level of contributions being paid into the system by the working-age population is low in terms of both coverage and density and where the limited coverage of contributory retirement pension plans is being supplemented with non-contributory pensions.

Measures put in place by countries of the region to improve pension coverage include the following:

- Adding an extra year of services when calculating the length of time that payments are made for each live born biological or adopted minor child (or older but with a disability) up to a maximum of five.

- Providing basic retirement benefits for men over the age of 65 and women over 60 years of age who have belonged to the present or previous retirement programme for at least 30 years. In Argentina, for example, the former capitalization system administered by retirement and pension fund management companies (known as AFJPs) paid regular retirement benefits to persons registered with the system in accordance with article 19 of the corresponding law.[6]

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[6]   Act No. 24.241.

- Payment of benefits to men and women over 70 years of age who have belonged to a social security plan for at least 10 years, 5 years of which must have been during the last 8 years. In Argentina, this is backed up by retirement and pension laws.

- Payment of monthly pensions for life that are exempt from distrainment to women of any age and any marital status who have or have had seven children or more (including adopted children). In the event of the death of the primary beneficiary, the disabled partner or widower or minor children or children with disabilities of any age are entitled to the pension. In Argentina,[7] for example, a policy of this nature is applied by the National Social Security Administration to all such persons unless they are in receipt of a retirement or other pension under a contributory or non-contributory plan.

- A special retirement and pension scheme for rural workers that includes a provision for early retirement. Argentina has a pay-as-you-go pension system that offers coverage to rural workers for regular old-age pensions and for non-contributory pensions[8] in the case of workers who do not meet the requirements of the regular plans.

- Recognition of free unions whereby the rights, including vested interests, of widows and widowers are also conferred upon male or female life partners.

One initiative that is being used as a model for the expansion of pension coverage is Mexico's Pension Programme for the Well-Being of Older Persons,[9] which provides monetary transfers to indigenous persons over 65 years of age and to other adults over 68 years of age.

Another example is to be found in Costa Rica, which has a basic non-contributory pension scheme that provides support for older adults and others who are not covered by the Costa Rican social protection system.

Yet a third example is provided by the 2014-2024 Colombian policy on human ageing and old age, which increases the monetary subsidy provided to older adults each year based on the consumer price index and is programmed to expand its pension coverage from 25% to 50% in 2024.[10]

The end goal is to ensure all older adults' economic autonomy by providing them with a secure and sufficient income and thereby also helping to foster greater respect for older adults and to safeguard their other rights while reducing the risk of discrimination and their exposure to violence.

2. Access to comprehensive public health services

Health systems in the region are slowly adapting to changes in demand associated with population dynamics and with epidemiological and technological developments. Unless appropriate decisions are taken when they are needed, the costs and expenses of health-care services may climb in the medium and long terms, and the population may not have sufficient access to suitable, quality health services.

While it is true that health care for older adults has improved with time, there are still very few countries that are fully meeting their obligations under international human rights instruments in this area. The right to health entails certain obligations, and one of them is to guarantee that right by legislative, administrative and budgetary means.

POLICIES

Policies for ensuring the economic autonomy of women over the age of 65 can help to consolidate other rights, such as the right to health, to care and to a life free of violence.

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7   See [online] https://www.argentina.gob.ar/pension-no-contributiva-para-madre-de-7-o-mas-hijos.
8   Decree No. 432/97, 1997.
9   For further information, see Ministry of Health (2015).
10   For further information, see Ministry of Health (2015).

Health policies
for the older adult
population should
be stepped up
in order to get
ahead of the needs
associated with
the ageing process.

As noted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in its 2015 *World Report on Ageing and Health*: "Comprehensive public-health action on ageing is urgently needed. Although there are major knowledge gaps, we have sufficient evidence to act now, and there are things that every country can do, irrespective of their current situation or level of development. The first step will be to focus on optimizing functional ability: the goal of *Healthy Ageing*" (WHO, 2015, p. 211).

Measures put in place by the countries of the region to improve access to health services include the following:

- Providing preventive, curative and rehabilitative health-care services for older persons on an out-patient basis and in hospitals. One example that can serve as a model is Costa Rica's National Strategy for Healthy Ageing 2018–2020.[11]

- Providing subsidies for socially vulnerable older adults who are unable to pay for their prescriptions, with one example of an initiative of this sort being the Comprehensive Medical Care Programme (PAMI) of Argentina.[12]

Act No. 789 de 2002 of Colombia, which provides for a comprehensive social protection scheme, is one example of a system for extending this kind of coverage.

In Honduras, the National Programme for Older Adults offers the following services: free medical coverage for all older adults in both urban and rural areas, preferential treatment, treatment at special geriatric clinics, monitoring and treatment of chronic illnesses at all health-care facilities and flu vaccination drives.

A series of internationally agreed innovative recommendations have also recently been made that have not yet been implemented:

- Elimination of the need for older adults to make a direct payment at the time that they receive treatment and the substitution of those payments by a pooled solidarity funding mechanism.[13]

- Mobile clinics for older adults staffed with a medical team that would provide preventive care, laboratory tests and diagnostic imaging.

- A basic palliative care plan under which each doctor involved in providing cancer treatment would be required to have a basic level of knowledge and skills in the area of palliative care. The creation of an environment in which older persons can receive suitable palliative care within the context of a supportive environment in both the household and the community which would give older adults the option of continuing to receive palliative care in a family setting.

National planners should take emerging needs arising from evolving population dynamics into account. In the short run, those changes call for an increase in coverage and curative treatment for persons over 60 years of age, but there is also a need for increased preventive health care starting at earlier stages of life.

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[11]   For further details, see Ministry of Health (2018a).
[12]   In order for older adults to be eligible for the subsidy or to apply for its continuation under the Comprehensive Medical Care Programme in Argentina, they must have an income less than or equal to 1.5 minimum pension benefits.
[13]   This involves a consolidated fund formed by all the contributing sources (social security system, government budgets, individual contributions and other funds) in which each person pays according to his or her ability and receives whatever services he or she needs. Under this kind of system, the government budget covers the contributions for individuals who are unable to pay into the system (those living in poverty or extreme poverty).

3. Long-term care

Long-term care services need to be reinforced as the third pillar of the social safety net for older persons. As already noted in the section on baseline assessments, the ageing of the population entails an increased risk of dependency, and older persons may need to be cared for by other people owing to a disability, chronic illness or trauma that limits their ability to care for themselves and perform daily tasks.

Thus, population ageing makes the formulation of a public policy on long-term care more necessary than ever. A primary factor in this context is that the demand for such services may become an increasingly important source of employment in many countries' economies. In addition, the fact that social protection systems make almost no provision for this kind of care means that appropriate, affordable services may not be available to older persons when they are in need of them. A sizeable portion of the population may therefore be unable to obtain these types of social services, and those people may therefore have to draw down whatever assets they have and/or spend a considerable part of their income on securing help with basic, day-to-day activities. Unless changes are made in order to adjust to this state of affairs, the chances of providing social protection for all, as called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will clearly be reduced.

Measures that have been introduced in an effort to close the gaps in long-term care services include the following:

- In Uruguay, a monetary allowance is provided for hiring a personal assistant to help people with a severe degree of dependency to perform daily tasks.[14]

- Another example is the National Model for Health Care for Older Adults, which the Ministry of Health of El Salvador launched in 2018. Visits are made to people's homes in order to identify older adults in need of care and to guide and train a family member or other caregiver. The creation of clubs of older persons is also encouraged.

- Mexico's National Institute for Older Adults (INAPAM) uses a geriatric care model that includes residential centres that provide care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to older adults who need long-term residential care for personal and/or family reasons.[15]

- Yet another example can be found in Cuba, where the Ministry of Public Health has established the Corralillo Home for Older Adults. This social institution provides comprehensive daytime care to elderly persons who have no family members to take care of them or whose family members are unable to help them during the day.[16]

- In Chile, SENAMA runs day centres for persons over 60 years of age who have a slight degree of dependency, impaired cognitive functions or slight depression. These centres run workshops tailored to the specific needs of each person in an effort to prevent their degree of dependency from increasing and thus avoid or delay the need for more intensive care.[17]

In addition, there are other measures that have not yet been implemented but that will be of fundamental importance in the near future, such as:

- The provision of subsidized care for persons in need of such services by institutions having various ownership and management profiles.

- The establishment of schools and accreditation mechanisms for family members or other persons who provide partial or full care for older persons suffering from some degree of physical and/or mental disability. Given the complexity of this type of work and the emotional strain that it puts on the caregiver, such persons need information and support in order to be able to provide quality care.

POLICIES

It is important to develop care policies as a public service so that household members (generally women) do not have to shoulder this task.

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[14] See [online] http://ajupena.uy/programa-de-asistentes-personales/.
[15] For further information, see INAPAM (n/d).
[16] See [online] https://www.ecured.cu/Casa_de_Abuelos_Corralillo.
[17] See National Service for Older Adults (n/d).

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E. Questions

- Referring to diagram VIII.1, rank the degree of observance (high – medium – low – none) in your country/region/district of each of the rights set out in the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons.

- Using the ECLAC classification, identify the stage in the population ageing process that has been reached by your country/region/district and analyse the associated public policy design challenges.

- Prepare an assessment of older adults' prevailing degree of economic security in your country/region/district and of the public policies that are being implemented in order to increase their economic security.

- Undertake an assessment of the level of well-being and health status of older persons in your country/region/district and of the public policies that are being implemented to ensure that population group's well-being and health.

- Conduct an assessment of the long-term care needs of older adults in your country/region/district and of the public policies that are being implemented or that should be implemented to ensure that those services are being reliably provided in a way that does not jeopardize the well-being of other groups in the population, such as the women who provide unpaid care services.

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Chapter IX

Indigenous peoples[1]

A. Normative framework

The inequalities affecting indigenous peoples are directly linked to the recognition of their rights. The path towards ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples consisted mainly of seeking their recognition as holders of collective rights and guaranteeing the rights to self-determination, collective ownership of land and political participation. That path is evident in the various international agreements and forums established following the adoption of the first instrument on this topic, the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107) of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017a).

Following this first Convention, recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples has been set forth in various international instruments, among which the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of ILO (2017b) stands out as the first treaty to define indigenous peoples as collective and differentiated subjects of rights, as does the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (adopted on 13 September 2007), which recognizes their right to self-determination. The mechanisms established for putting these instruments into practice include the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples (Del Popolo, 2017).

At the core of collective rights of indigenous peoples in these mechanisms is indigenous territory and the natural resources that lie within it, as well as the culture and identity of the indigenous population. It is very important that indigenous children and adolescents, as well as indigenous women, are included and protected in the framework of these collective rights.

Progress on a specific indigenous agenda has also been set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are closely bound up with the cross-cutting development of indigenous peoples.[2] Over a third of the 169 targets have substantive links with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, the SDGs include four targets that make explicit references to indigenous peoples (2.3, 4.5, 10.2 and 17.18). These refer to their role as agricultural producers, the importance of closing gaps in education and progress towards better economic, social and political inclusion. It is also important to make the challenges in ensuring rights more statistically visible.

These instruments, which make up the global normative framework that underpins implementation of the rights agenda of indigenous peoples, were reaffirmed at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held in New York in September 2014.

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[2] For more information, see ECLAC/FILAC (2020).

At the regional level, the inclusion of a specific chapter on indigenous peoples in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (ECLAC, 2013) reinforced the commitment of the countries of the region to taking action to ensure the fulfilment of the rights of this group.

On the basis of the above-mentioned instruments, two major aspects have been identified that must be taken into account for a conceptual analysis of the situation of indigenous peoples in a given territory. The first is that ensuring the exercise of their rights should be framed in terms of the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples. Certain conditions are necessary to achieve this, such as strengthening their institutions, as well as their possibilities and capacities for relations with the State, respecting existing agreements or accords, as indicated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (article 5): "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State" (United Nations, 2007, p. 4).

The second aspect has to do with *structural discrimination, which*, in practice, has historically excluded indigenous peoples from the development process, regardless of their gender, disability status or age, and is manifested in equality gaps in various spheres. Discrimination against indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups is structural insofar as it is directly related to structures of concentration of resources and power. This concentration of resources and power protects economically and socially privileged groups and acts to their advantage and to the detriment of non-privileged groups, in this case indigenous peoples. It is manifested though the justice system, tax policy, the land ownership regime and norms on treatment between genders, among other things.

Structural discrimination is also explained by a culture of privilege that dates back to the colonial rationale and naturalizes inequality. It is reproduced through actors, institutions, rules and practices. This culture of denial of the other is also embedded in economic, political and social privilege linked to ascriptive differences to the detriment of indigenous populations (Bielschowsky and Torres, 2018).

The right of self-determination of indigenous peoples and structural discrimination are both concepts that must be taken into account in the analysis carried out in order to arrive at an assessment of the situation of indigenous peoples.

B. Assessment of inequalities affecting indigenous peoples

ASSESSMENT

- A major challenge lies in the statistical identification of indigenous peoples, which relies basically on self-identification, following ILO Convention No. 169. Estimates for Latin America in 2018 placed the indigenous population at 58 million.

- The indigenous population is overrepresented in the segments of greatest income poverty. In several of the region's countries, the majority of the indigenous population is poor.

- Access to health services is lower among the indigenous population. This is reflected in higher infant mortality, which is almost double the rate seen in the non-indigenous population.

- Access to education services is also lower, which translates into lower levels of schooling and lower rates of school attendance. Only a minority of the indigenous population enters tertiary education.

- Indigenous peoples are more exposed to different types of violence, including higher rates of gender violence and violence against defenders of the land rights of indigenous peoples.

Analysis of the level of well-being and guarantee of the rights of indigenous peoples and of the equality gaps vis-à-vis the rest of society has been historically difficult, given the difficulty of their statistical identification. Geographical dispersion and a complex definition of indigenous peoples have impeded the compilation of statistical records.

Given the different definitions of what is understood to be an indigenous people, the definition usually employed is that given in ILO Convention No. 169, which indicates that the Convention applies to peoples who "are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions" (ILO, 2017c).

Indigenous organizations themselves have proposed definitions. They include the following, put forward by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, which declares that:

"indigenous peoples are such population groups as we are, who from old-age time have inhabited the lands where we live, who are aware of having a character of our own, with social traditions and means of expression that are linked to the country inherited from our ancestors, with a language of our own, and having certain essential and unique characteristics which confer upon us the strong conviction of belonging to a people, who have an identity in ourselves and should be thus regarded by others (World Council of Indigenous Peoples quoted by Martínez Cobo, 1986, p. 5).

For statistical purposes, and based on the idea of sense of belonging referred to in ILO Convention No. 169, the main method used has been self-identification, i.e. the sense of indigenous belonging.[3] Today, most census processes include identification of the indigenous population, usually based on the criterion of self-identification, albeit with some variation between countries. Importantly, however, self-identification of the indigenous population has not been widely incorporated into sectoral surveys, which hinders its statistical visibility.

Based on the foregoing, it is estimated that the indigenous population of Latin America was around 58 million in 2018, which represents 10% of the regional population. In most of the countries, the indigenous population is characteristically younger than the rest, owing mainly to higher rates of fertility, and retains its rural traits although it has an increasing presence in cities (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

In the framework of the right to self-determination, indigenous peoples have their own well-being reference, or "good living". This concept is underpinned by the idea of mutual dependence between human beings, their natural environmental and ancestral beings, as well as the understanding of cultures as multiple and plural realities. This notion represents a break from Western ideologies and their supposed universalism, and it is not comparable to the Western notion of progress or continuous development—towards a future horizon— as a condition for achieving well-being (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

Accordingly, in order to identify indicators that adequately reflect gaps in states of "well-being" as indigenous persons understand it, it is important to bear in mind that an assessment of equality gaps in the indigenous population should ideally consider the cosmovision of each indigenous people. Such a way of proceeding —which would align with the concept of self-determination referred to above— is complex, however, because cosmovisions are heterogenous and could thus pose many alternative versions of the concept of well-being.

For that reason, gaps are assessed using measurements that are framed within a rights-based approach, with particular reference to economic and social rights (health, education, dignified life, decent work and decent housing, among others). There are certain caveats to

10%
1 in 10 people
in Latin America
self-identifies
as indigenous

[3]   For more information, see ECLAC/UNFPA (2013).

these measurements, however. For example, measuring the monetary poverty of individuals or households does not take into account the collective dimension of indigenous peoples. Or, similarly, when aspects such as access to health services are analysed without considering the knowledge and practice of traditional medicine, or education is analysed without considering its cultural relevance or access to first languages in the transmission of knowledge among the indigenous population. Given the difficulty of incorporating these aspects into measurements, the following sections offer examples of how to conduct an assessment of the well-being of indigenous peoples based on the statistical resources available, attempting to identify aspects of structural discrimination that help to bring in the very important second conceptual element described in the normative framework.

1. Poverty

As in the rest of the world, in Latin America indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the poorest segments. This is the case in Guatemala, where 69.6% of the indigenous population lives in poverty; Nicaragua (60.2%); Mexico (52.2%); the Plurinational State of Bolivia (47.7%); and Ecuador (50.5%) (see figure IX.1).

Positive changes for society overall have not sufficed to overcome the disadvantages faced by indigenous peoples. For example, in Latin America the decrease seen in inequality in the first decade of the twenty-first century did not occur equally for indigenous persons and households. Studies by the World Bank show that, in 2015, the gap separating indigenous persons from other Latin Americans had stopped narrowing and had even widened, and documented that being born to indigenous parents substantially increased the likelihood of growing up in a poor household, given that a household was 13% more likely to be poor if it was headed by an indigenous person, regardless of level of education, gender, place of residence (urban/rural) or number of dependents (World Bank, 2015).

FIGURE IX.1
Latin America (10 countries): poverty rate of the indigenous
and non-indigenous population, around 2018[a]
(Percentages)
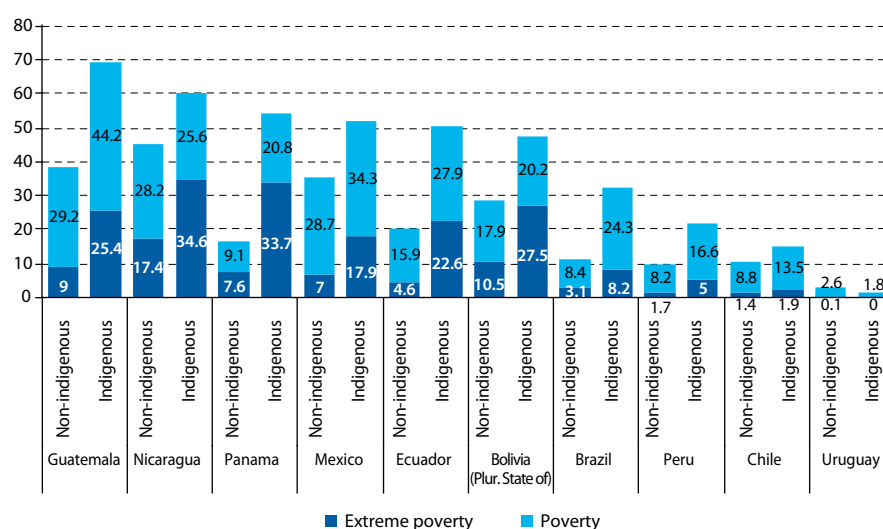
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special processing of household surveys conducted in the respective countries.
[a] The data for Guatemala and Nicaragua refer to 2014; those for Chile and Panama refer to 2017. For the rest of the countries shown, the data are from 2018.

The probability of being poor rises even more for indigenous households that are rural or that are headed by a woman, with children being one of the groups most affected by this situation. In Honduras, for example, 88% of Tolupán, Lenca and Pech children live in extreme poverty (United Nations, 2016). Migration to cities does not change the situation of indigenous people, given that most of them enter precarious and poorly paid jobs, with little access to social protection.

2. Work

Own-account work is the main category of occupation among the indigenous population, although they have gradually been gaining ground in wage work in the agricultural sector, which does not necessarily mean decent employment owing to the precarious conditions in which it is carried out. There is also a large indigenous presence in unpaid work and higher rates of child labour than in the rest of the population. Joint studies by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC) for selected countries in the region have found that the rate of child labour for children aged between 5 and 14 is noticeably higher among the indigenous than the non-indigenous population, with gaps exceeding 20 percentage points in some cases (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020). The prevalence of informal employment exacerbates the precarious conditions of the indigenous workforce, since they make it less likely that workers will receive health and social security benefits and legal entitlements, thereby reducing the possibility of boosting traditional indigenous economies. This is the case of indigenous women, as they participate more in own account work and domestic work than non-indigenous women, proportionally speaking.

In Guatemala, the probability of an indigenous person working in the informal sector rose from 9.3% in 2000 to 14.5% in 2011 (World Bank, 2015). The information available from national censuses also shows that urban indigenous persons are more likely to be in unskilled employment than non-indigenous persons. In the case of Costa Rica, 74% of indigenous persons are in unskilled work, compared with 57% of the non-indigenous population; in Chile the respective figures are 70% and 55%, and in Ecuador, 83% and 66% (World Bank, 2015).

The disadvantage of indigenous persons in the labour market impacts their labour income. In Honduras, the average monthly income of indigenous people amounts to 36.8% of the national average, and much less in the case of the Tolupán, Chortí, Pech and Lenca (United Nations, 2016).

The gaps are also seen in lower access to social protection among the indigenous population, compared with the non-indigenous population. Eight of ten indigenous workers do not contribute or are not affiliated to social security systems (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020). In Mexico, for example, information from the 2016 national household income and expenditure survey shows that 45% of the non-indigenous population contributed to social security, while only 31.8% of those who self-identified as indigenous did so. As noted earlier, this, among other reasons, explains why indigenous persons have fewer opportunities to secure formal employment, which excludes them from the social security system, labour-related entitlements and other benefits (United Nations, 2018a).

STATISTICS

In the indigenous population only 2 of every 10 workers are affiliated or contribute to a social security system.

20%
CONTRIBUTE TO A SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

3. Health

According to data from Latinobarómetro for 18 countries of the region, 46% of those self-identifying as indigenous have no health insurance, compared with 30% of the non-indigenous population, and have to cover health-related costs directly out of pocket (see figure IX.2).

FIGURE IX.2
Latin America (18 countries): coverage of health
expenditure by ethnic ascription, 2011[a]
(Percentages)
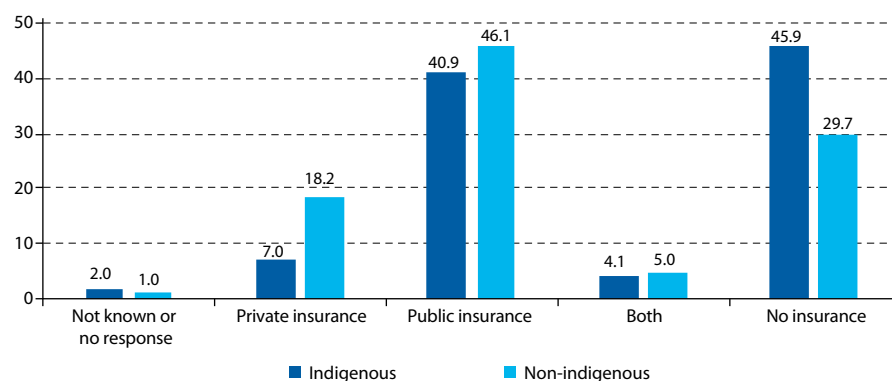
Source: Latinobarómetro, "Latinobarómetro Análisis de datos", 2018 [online] https://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp.
[a] Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador,
Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.
[*] Note: The indigenous and non-indigenous population were identified by means of the question "What race do you
consider yourself?"

Most studies show indigenous peoples at an alarming disadvantage in health across
such varied indicators as infant mortality, diabetes, several types of cancer and mental illness
(Montenegro and Stephens, 2006). The infant and child mortality rates show very significant
gaps in all the countries that have an indigenous presence, and they are particularly wide in
Panama and Ecuador, where the rates in the indigenous population practically double those in
the non-indigenous population (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

Indigenous health is very worrisome among persons of adult age, especially in
communities whose original ways of life, environment and livelihoods have been destroyed,
often giving way to unemployment and deficient housing, among other things.

Their access to health services is limited, especially in rural and remote locations. For
example, in indigenous regions (*comarcas*) and other areas with a large indigenous population
in Panama, the presence of health personnel remains limited. In 2011, the health worker
density at the national level was close to 30 per 10,000 inhabitants, compared with 2.6 in the
comarca of Ngäbe Buglé and 13 in Kuna Yala. A diagnostic study on the health of the indigenous
peoples in Panama showed that 64.2% of indigenous persons interviewed identified distance
as a difficulty in access to health services (United Nations, 2014).

4. Education

There is also evidence of notorious gaps with respect to education. Significant advances have
been made in the region in the last few decades in terms of literacy. According to census data
from 2000 and 2010 (Corbetta and others, 2018), illiteracy decreased significantly among the
indigenous population in all the countries. For example, in Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama, the
drop was over 10 percentage points in the population between 15 and 24 years of age, with the
rate falling below 4% in Mexico and Costa Rica. However, the ethnic gaps remained wide, given
that in the 2010 figures for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil and Panama, illiteracy
remained above 10% in the indigenous population aged 15–24, compared with under 2% in
the non-indigenous population of the same age.

With respect to attendance at educational establishments in the inter-census period, the indigenous child population between the ages of 6 and 11 attending school rose considerably in all the countries (primary education). The largest rises occurred in Costa Rica and Panama (14 percentage points), bringing coverage to 88.2% and 92.3% respectively; however, even after those rises the gap remains, given that school attendance in the overall population exceeds 97% in Costa Rica and 94% in Panama.

In the case of secondary education, school attendance by indigenous adolescents aged between 12 and 17 shows substantially lower rates than in the younger age group. For the six countries analysed (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Panama), around 2010 over 70% of indigenous adolescents were in the school system, a rate not far from the corresponding one in the non-indigenous population, which was around 70% to 80% in these countries.

The rates of attendance in tertiary and/or higher education by indigenous youth between the ages of 18 and 22 do not exceed 40% in any of the countries studied (they ranged from 24% in Mexico to almost 40% in Costa Rica around 2010). In general, those rates are lower than for the non-indigenous population, although not by much, and this age group shows the most lag in terms of educational attendance.

Reflecting the indicators analysed above, the average number of years of schooling of the adult indigenous population is always lower than the average for the non-indigenous population (see figure IX.3), regardless of age group or sex. This sphere, which is key for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and inequality, thus continues to be one of the great axes of inequality for the indigenous population.

FIGURE IX.3
Latin America (4 countries): average years
of schooling of non-indigenous and indigenous
adults, by age group, 2010[a]
(Years of schooling)
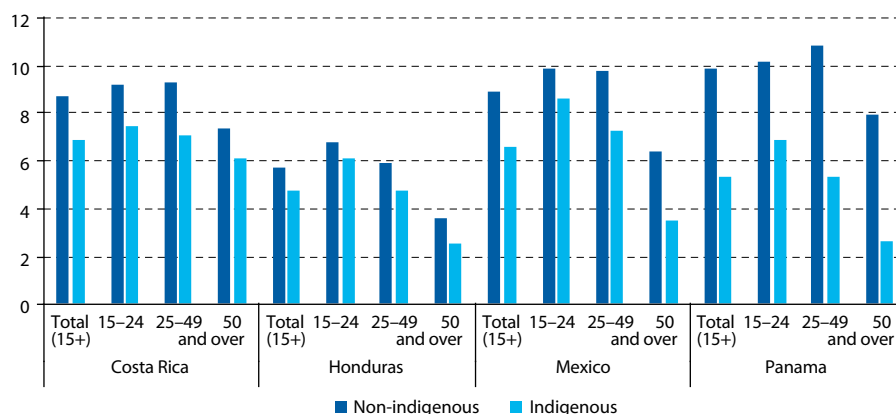
Legend: ■ Non-indigenous   ■ Indigenous

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), System of Sociodemographic Indicators for Indigenous Peoples and Populations of Latin America, 2021 [online] https://redatam.org/redbin/RpWebEngine.exe/Portal?BASE=SISPPI.
[a] Data from 2010 census rounds.

There are several factors that breach the right to education of indigenous children and adolescents: child labour, lack of cultural and linguistic relevance of public policies, lack of educational infrastructure and lack of access to basic services within educational infrastructure (water and sanitation, adequate spaces for teaching and academic activities), among others (Corbetta and others, 2018). Another notable aspect is the gap in access to technology, with differences in access to Internet among the indigenous population (ECLAC, 2014b).

5. Violence

Another relevant aspect for assessing the structural inequalities that indigenous peoples face is violence suffered by defenders of indigenous peoples' rights. The great pressure on indigenous territories as a result of natural resources exploitation, infrastructure-building or armed conflicts over past decades has worsened this situation. The annual report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples expressed concern over "the drastic increase in attacks and acts of violence against, criminalization of and threats aimed at indigenous peoples, particularly those arising in the context of large-scale projects involving extractive industries, agribusiness, infrastructure, hydroelectric dams and logging" (United Nations, 2018b, p. 3).

For example, in the 2018 report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) concern was expressed at "the approval of Law No. 30,723 [of Peru], which declares the construction of highways in border areas and the maintenance of passable unpaved roads in the department of Ucayali, which has a detrimental impact on protected natural areas, indigenous reserves, territorial reserves for peoples in isolation and initial contact" (IACHR, 2018, p. 334). In Colombia, the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for 2019 indicates that "illegal economic activities of criminal groups and other violent groups negatively affected the use of traditional lands", leading also to "the high number of killings of indigenous people in Cauca" (United Nations, 2020, p. 14).

There are also gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous women in aspects such as gender violence and sexual and reproductive health. Contraceptive use is lower among indigenous than non-indigenous women in all the countries (ECLAC, 2014b).

The information set forth thus far reflects the expressions of structural discrimination against indigenous peoples prevailing in the region. There is a pattern that is repeated regardless of the indigenous people in question, their geographical local or sex, age or any other factor of social differentiation. It is a pattern that is independent of individual wills, which generates an accumulation of disadvantages, both over the life cycle of individuals and between generations (Solís, 2017).

Non-indigenous people not only have better outcomes in almost all socioeconomic indicators, but are also able to accumulate intergenerational advantages over time, which concentrate and sustain the differences in the distribution of wealth, power and other indicators of well-being. This does not mean that non-indigenous people do not suffer the effects of poverty or discrimination. Neither does it mean that no individual outside indigenous groups experiences socioeconomic disadvantages. Rather, it means that, as a group, the non-indigenous exert more power and privilege relative to indigenous people (Human Rights Commission, 2012).

For all these reasons, indigenous peoples should be treated as a priority in planning public policies aimed at closing equality gaps. This includes trying to compensate for the lack of statistical data for carrying out more accurate assessment of the equality gap faced by indigenous peoples. The lack of statistical information is both a cause and a consequence of their social invisibility. In this regard, it is necessary to develop the institutional and methodological capacities needed to obtain the data for in-depth study of the ways in which this inequality is manifested and reproduced, so that public policies can be devised to address it.

The risk experienced by indigenous peoples in our region as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is marked by pre-existing morbidities, neglect and limited assistance, lack of access to drinking water and medical services, and growing food insecurity, among other factors (FILAC/FIAY, 2020).

The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO, 2020) also indicates that these groups face institutional barriers, including linguistic ones, in health service access, less access to social safety nets and mistrust caused by a history of racism. Generally speaking, COVID-19 cases among indigenous peoples are virtually invisible in the official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean, even in countries with a large percentage of indigenous population.

The possibility of a global depression could lead to the death of many indigenous people, not only from the virus itself but also from conflicts and violence linked to the scarcity of resources, especially drinking water and food (EMRIP, 2020).

States have a responsibility to meet their obligations to protect the health and lives of indigenous peoples, as set forth in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, as noted by Jesús Amadeo Martínez Guzmán, General Coordinator of the Abya Yala Indigenous Forum (FIAY), little or no humanitarian assistance has reached indigenous territories, and indigenous peoples are dealing with the situation by means of their own knowledge and experience. The General Coordinator emphasized that government assistance is needed in the short term, as well as culturally relevant policies in the medium term (Medina, 2020).

In order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among indigenous and Afrodescendent populations and other ethnic groups, PAHO has published a guide with recommendations aimed at promoting hygiene and social distancing, as well as improving access to basic health services (PAHO, 2020). The guide offers recommendations for indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and other ethnic groups, for community leaders and for government and health workers. Some of these recommendations are listed below:

- Governments should foster participation and dialogue, not only to tackle the effects of COVID-19 in the short run, but also to address the post-emergency phase, when efforts will be needed to support economic and social recovery.

- The pandemic can only be mitigated if these groups participate from the start in any decision that affects their health.

- All household members need to know what to do if any other family member contracts COVID-19 and what specific support they must provide.

- Health authorities must provide information in indigenous languages and in accessible formats, with culturally appropriate messages validated by the community, using symbols and images when possible.

- Measures must be taken to protect territories, such as steps to provide food and drinking water, soap and disinfectant, and other basics.

- With respect to the safe management of dead bodies, national protocols and guidelines should contain specific, safe, dignified and culturally acceptable responses, tailored to the traditions and customs of indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, and other ethnic groups.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC)/Abya Yala Indigenous Forum (FIAY), *Second Regional Report: Communities at Risk and Good Practices*, La Paz, June 2020; W. Medina, "Informe Los pueblos indígenas ante la pandemia COVID 19 'Los esfuerzos que se están haciendo para enfrentar al COVID-19 en las comunidades indígenas son muy pocos': entrevista a Jesús Amadeo Martínez Guzmán, Coordinador General del Foro Indígena de Abya Yala (FIAY)", Plataforma Indígena Regional Frente al COVID-19, 6 May 2020 [online] https://indigenascovid19.red/archivos/10930; Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), "COVID-19 yet another challenge for indigenous peoples", 6 April 2020 [online] https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/04/EMPRIP-English.pdf; Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), "Considerations on indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and other ethnic groups during the COVID-19 pandemic", 4 June 2020 [online] https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52251.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities affecting indigenous peoples

POLICY PROPOSALS

Policies to reduce the social inequality faced by the indigenous population should consider, in a cross-cutting manner, the respective peoples' own forms of understanding well-being ("good living") according to their cosmovision. The policies most needed include:

- Affirmative action as a special measure to compensate for the situation of disadvantage and revert the structural discrimination against indigenous people in terms of work, education, health, housing and access to well-being in general, taking into account their individual and collective rights.

- Reparations for the breach of indigenous populations' rights in specific contexts and measures to ensure that the associated violations and structural discrimination are not repeated.

- Design and implementation of laws, plans, strategies, policies and programmes to ensure the territorial rights of indigenous peoples, with effective implementation to ensure the right to free, prior and informed consent, as well as the right to participation in decision-making.

As noted earlier, the challenges of closing gaps between the indigenous population and the rest of the population, in order to ensure the effective enjoyment of their rights, include the complexity of adopting measures that reflect their construal of well-being according to their cosmovisions. Well-being for the indigenous population is largely associated with land, so ensuring their rights over land and natural resources is a pillar for the exercise of other rights. Their survival, community organization, identity and cultural integrity are based on the exercise of the collective right of access and control over territories which have historically been theirs, including the natural resources that lie within them. This is also where the right to self-determination and autonomy is exercised.

Accordingly, laws, plans, strategies, policies and programmes need to be designed and implemented to ensure the territorial rights of indigenous peoples and, moreover, shift from the individual to the collective to guarantee the integrated *set of collective rights that are essential to "good living"*[4] (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

On this basis and from the rights-based approach enshrined in international and regional instruments concerning indigenous peoples, the following five areas of priority attention may be identified (ECLAC, 2014a):

- The right to development and social well-being

- The right to non-discrimination

- The right to ownership, access, use and control over lands, territories and natural resources, and free, prior and informed consent

- The right to political participation

1. The right to development and social well-being

Ensuring the right to development social well-being of the indigenous population must be based on the guarantee of their political and territorial rights. One of the enablers of such a guarantee is access to a decent job to obtain the resources necessary to ensure other rights

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[4] The notion of "good living" is complex and is underpinned by the idea of mutual dependence between human beings, their natural environment and ancestral beings, as well as the conception of cultures as multiple and plural realities.

associated with well-being, and thereby leave poverty. This is one of the key ways of reducing indigenous poverty. In this regard, policies aim to:

- *Strengthen and promote traditional activities relating to the subsistence economy of indigenous peoples and adopt measures to ensure that they have access to training programmes in tune with their interests.* For example, in Mexico, the National Programme for Indigenous Peoples 2018–2024[5] of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples promotes projects to foster the indigenous economy, with a gender perspective, supporting certification and the trade identity of indigenous value chains with fair trade schemes for products and services, and promoting access to credit and building up enterprise in the indigenous population.

- *Implement development policies to support production, the creation of decent jobs and enterprise in specific areas (such as sustainable tourism) in a context of indigenous control over territories, in order to avoid marginalization and ecocide.* For example, the Indigenous Tourism Network of Mexico (RITA)[6] coordinates a number of indigenous enterprises to promote and strengthen the sustainability of tourism services as effective tools for conserving cultural and environmental heritage, fostering active participation and shared responsibility by the partners (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020). Particular care is required with regard to indigenous workers in urban labour markets, focusing especially on the prevention of wage discrimination in this context.

- *Foster social protection policies that recognize the contribution of indigenous older persons, as well as their greater vulnerability, and afford them special protection.* For example, in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, since 2010 they have been guaranteed access to pensions at younger ages than the rest of the population. The Government of Mexico recently adopted a similar measure, establishing differentiated ages for indigenous and non-indigenous persons to be able to begin drawing a pension (65 and 68, respectively)[7] (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

With regard to education, generally speaking, it is necessary to ensure that educational content is revised with a view to mainstreaming interculturality throughout society, in particular for all children, adolescents and youth. In particular, it is important to:

- *Implement measures to remove the great barriers indigenous people face in access to secondary and tertiary education*, especially in rural areas, with an emphasis on indigenous professional training, fostering the development, extension and consolidation of intercultural higher education institutions and indigenous universities. Examples are seen in Paraguay, where 1% of bursaries offered at the tertiary level are reserved for indigenous persons by law,[8] and Brazil, where Act No. 12.711 (2012) provides for bursaries and reserves places for graduates of State secondary schools who self-identify as indigenous or Afrodescendent.[9]

In the area of health, broadly, it is necessary to have a *robust legal framework and policies to ensure access to health for indigenous population. It is also necessary to:*

- *Foster policies with specific health goals, in order to assess the outcomes of strategies and mechanisms for systematically measuring indicators differentiated by people of belonging.* Brazil's 2016 national plan for reducing indigenous child mortality of is a good example of this, as it includes specific targets for indigenous populations to be achieved by 2019, which were monitored on an ongoing basis with regular reports on the matter. In fact, Brazil has a Single Health System and Indigenous Peoples Health Subsystem (PAHO, 2009).

POLICIES

To ensure that they are relevant, measures aimed at guaranteeing the right to well-being must include a process of participation by indigenous peoples.

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[5] See [online] https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/423227/Programa-Nacional-de-los-Pueblos-Indigenas-2018-2024.pdf.

[6] For further reference, see [online] http://www.rita.com.mx/.

[7] See [online] https://www.gob.mx/pensionpersonasadultasmayores#:~:text=El%20programa%20atiende%20a%20todos,%242%2C550%20pesos%20cada%20dos%20meses.

[8] Act No. 3733 allocating 1% of scholarships for higher education to the indigenous sector (Paraguay, 2009).

[9] See Brazil (2012).

The social development gaps faced by indigenous peoples are structural. It is imperative to close them to bring about an epochal shift towards substantive equality.

- *Consider culturally appropriate services in the framework of general comment No. 14 (2000) of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 2000), i.e. taking into account preventive care, curative practices and traditional medicines in a coordinated manner in order to respect the practices of indigenous peoples.* For example, in Paraguay, Act No. 5469/2015 on Indigenous Health established the National Council for Indigenous Peoples Health and the National Directorate for Indigenous Peoples, as well as health secretariats in several government departments on indigenous affairs.[10] Another case is the Ministry of Health of Colombia, which, by Decree 1848 of 2017, set up "indigenous health provider entities" for the period of transition to the Indigenous System of Own and Intercultural Health (SISPI). These are a temporary arrangement to channel the requirements and procedures identified as a result of the administrative, scientific, technical, cultural and financial conditions needed to ensure access to health services with a differential approach, given the sociocultural and geographical specificities of indigenous peoples (Colombia, 2017).

2. The right to non-discrimination: reparations

As well as measures to close gaps in access to well-being, and where required, one way of reverting structural discrimination is to through reparations policies, based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The aim is to remedy the particular obstacles and structural discrimination that a given indigenous people faces in the enjoyment of its basic rights. In this case it is necessary to:

- *Provide reparations based, among others, on article 63.1 of the American Convention on Human Rights, on the restitution of rights, assets and freedoms, and on the guarantee that breaches will not be repeated, in some cases considering compensation for material and moral damage (OAS, 1969).* These measures focus on cases where rights have been violated. For example, in *Yakye Axa Indigenous Community v. Paraguay* (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2005), the Yakye Axa brought a complaint before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, alleging that the State had failed to guarantee their right to ancestral property, as the Community's territorial claim had been in processing since 1993. This had prevented the Community and its members from enjoying the ownership and possession of their lands, resulting in food, medical and health vulnerability and constantly threatening the survival of the members of the Community and of the Community as such. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2005) ruled that the State, immediately and on a regular and ongoing basis, must take steps to provide sufficient drinking water for consumption and personal hygiene of the members of the Community; regular medical and psychosocial care to protect the health of all persons, especially children and the elderly, respecting their traditions and customs, including vaccination and deworming treatment; special medical care for pregnant women, both pre-partum and during the early post-partum months, as well as for newborns; food of sufficient quantity and quality for proper nourishment; latrines or any other appropriate type of sanitary facilities in the Community's settlement; and the materials and human resources needed to ensure access to basic education for the Community's children in the school, taking particular care that the education provided respect their cultural traditions and ensure the protection of their own language.

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[10]   See Paraguay (2015).

3. The right to ownership, access, use and control over lands, territories and natural resources, and free, prior and informed consent

Ensuring the right to ownership, and in particular to access, use and control of lands and the resources therein, is very important for closing the structural equality gaps faced by indigenous peoples. This must be approached from both the normative and programmatic fronts. Requirements on the normative front include:

- *Constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples and their territorial rights.* Most of the countries (except for Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay) include recognition of indigenous peoples and of their territorial rights in the Constitution.

- *Recognition of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples (collective property) in lower legislation and sector laws so that they can be properly instrumented.* Rules and administrative procedures, as well as State bodies, must recognize common law as a fundamental principle of indigenous property, thereby avoiding the imposition of arbitrary delimitations that impinge on community lands. Bolivian legislation is the longest-standing and the most advanced in terms of recognition of the territorial rights of the indigenous population. Between 1990 and 1992, eight indigenous territories were written into land title, with a total surface area of 2,547,061 hectares (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020). Brazil also has advanced legal guarantees, since the issue in January 1996 of Decree No. 1775, which establishes an administrative mechanism to formalize legal title to land (Brazil, 1996).

- *Recognition of rights to natural resources* in second and third level legislation. To date, there is only a limited recognition in a minority of countries where indigenous peoples retain custodianship of those resources. In the other countries, it is permissible for natural resource concessions to be awarded to private national or transnational corporations (Del Popolo, 2017; ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

On the programmatic front, in order to ensure fulfilment of the normative provision, it is necessary to:

- Implement *policies and mechanisms for conveying land titles to indigenous groups that are genuinely accessible for these groups in terms of cost and of legal, technical and probatory requirements, avoiding excessive red tape.* According to ECLAC/FILAC (2020) some cases even require effective ad hoc mechanisms to *restore the original right to collective property.* For example, in Guatemala during the armed conflict that lasted over three decades, many communities were displaced from the traditional territories and their lands underwent process of "nationalization" and were registered to the State. In the 1980s, the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation (INTA) declared the lands of displaced families "abandoned", which justified their conveyance to new occupants, mainly owners of large estates (*latifundistas*) and military officers (IACHR, 2015b). After the conflict ended with the signing of the Peace Accords (1996), legislation and institutions were created to enable indigenous groups to own their traditional lands again; however, public policies for the recognition, titling, protection, restoration, restitution and compensation have been evaluated as insufficient, which testifies to the need for special mechanisms to restore the right to original land ownership (Counsel for Human Rights, 2018).

- *Ensure the right to free, prior and informed consent, to safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples over the territories, lands and natural resources,*[11] *in both legislation and*

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Stronger action is needed to ensure the fulfilment of rules protecting the ownership rights of indigenous peoples.

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[11] The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) states that prior consultation and consent are required for the adoption of any decision that can affect, modify, reduce or extinguish indigenous property rights (ECLAC/FILAC, 2020).

regulation. Examples are seen in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which enshrine the principle of *free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples in their Constitutions*, although with differing scope and contents. Ecuador, Mexico, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Nicaragua include the principle in related sector laws as well, for example in relation to hydrocarbons, mining and water resources. However, the tendency in most of the countries of the region (9 of 17) is to issue specific legal rules or regulations; however, as consultation is poorly regulated and implementation is inefficient, the mechanism is not effective in avoiding violation of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples.

- *Promote the production of statistical information on the current situation of indigenous land ownership, for example by creating interactive platforms with data on ownership of indigenous lands, from official sources and civil society organizations.* Paraguay offers an example with the interactive platform *Tierras Indígenas*, ("Indigenous Lands") which consolidates data from various official sources (National Institute of Statistics, National Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INDI), National Land Registry Service) and from indigenous organizations.[12]

4. The right to participate in decision-making

Another important element in closing gaps is ensuring the political rights of indigenous groups. This requires States to:

- *Foster affirmative action regarding the right to participation in decision-making, since it impacts indigenous peoples' capacity to influence public policies of all kinds.* Examples of affirmative action in relation to decision-making in the region include the adoption in 2017 by the Council of the National Electoral Institute of Mexico of criteria and affirmative action that national political parties or coalitions must fulfil in their lists of candidatures for lower or upper house seats, in order to safeguard the principle of gender parity and guarantee the inclusion of indigenous candidates (National Electoral Institute, 2017). Another example is in article 171 of the Constitution of Colombia of 1991, which established a special constituency for the election of senators from indigenous communities, and article 246 established special jurisdictions for indigenous peoples' authorities (Colombia, 1991).

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Indigenous peoples must have the possibility to participate throughout the full cycle of public policymaking: design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation.

The proposals presented in relation to closing the well-being and development gaps faced by indigenous peoples, which seek to ensure the rights to non-discrimination, to property and to participation, require efforts on two fronts: the strengthening of statistical capacities to increase the visibility of the indigenous population and the availability of public resources[13] to implement and strengthen the policies mentioned in this section.

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[12] See [online] https://www.tierrasindigenas.org/.
[13] It is important that the budget laws in the countries endow policies and programmes aimed at indigenous people with the necessary financing.

D. Suggested references

SUGGESTIONS

- *Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC), "Los pueblos indígenas de América Latina - Abya Yala y la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: tensiones y desafíos desde una perspectiva territorial", Project Documents (LC/TS.2020/47), Santiago, 2020.*

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E. Questions

- Analyse the concept of self-identification to define indigenous peoples statistically, and review how they are identified in your country, region or district. Compare and comment.

- Identify the main development and well-being gaps between indigenous peoples and the rest of the population in your country, region or district.

- Provide examples of structural discrimination against indigenous peoples in your country, region or district.

- Analyse the concept and implications of reparations to revert problems of (structural) discrimination. Apply that concept to practical examples relating to social protection in your country, region or district.

- Identify three measures, policies or laws focused on strengthening the guarantee of the right to ownership, access, use and control of lands, territories and resources for indigenous peoples in your country, region or district.

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Chapter **X**

Persons of African descent[1]

A. Normative framework

The framework for the development of legal standards on the rights of persons of African descent is grounded in the principles of human rights set forth in instruments applying to the general population and in treaties that refer specifically to Afrodescendants. The main international instruments that refer to ethnic or racial discrimination or to persons of African descent include the following:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

- International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973)

- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)

At the regional level, some of the main instruments are the American Convention on Human Rights, or Pact of San José (1969), and the Andean Charter for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (2002). The latter has a section devoted entirely to "indigenous peoples and communities of African descent" which sets forth various collective[2] and individual rights. In addition, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)[3] instituted the Meeting of Authorities on Afrodescendent Rights in 2015[4] to coordinate policy debates and initiatives relating to people of African descent and their inclusion as important stakeholders in the region's development process.

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[1] This chapter was prepared by Marta Rangel, a consultant with the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

[2] These include their right to an identity, to an intercultural education, to preserve their traditional practices and to be consulted about decisions concerning the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources found on their lands or territories.

[3] This regional integration process was initiated by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay and has since been joined by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (suspended) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (the process of adherence is under way). See MERCOSUR (2021).

[4] The Meeting of Authorities on Afrodescendent Rights is coordinated by mechanisms responsible for promoting racial equality and combating racism in the MERCOSUR countries. See MERCOSUR (2015).

There are also national normative frameworks that vary in specificity regarding the protection of the rights of the Afrodescendent population. Some countries and territories have passed laws that make racial discrimination a crime punishable by incarceration,[5] while others prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, ethnic origin or skin colour, as well as sex and religion.[6] In addition, the Constitutions of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia explicitly accord recognition to the population of African descent.

Ecuador's Constitution (2008) is the one that refers to Afrodescendants the most extensively, as it has an entire chapter devoted to the recognition of Afro-Ecuadorians as one of the peoples who constitute the State of Ecuador and who enjoy guarantees for their human and collective rights.[7] The Constitution of Colombia (1991) recognizes black communities that, along with indigenous peoples, enjoy collective rights (ownership of ancestral lands) and the rights to self-determination and to be consulted about any action impinging on their territories. Brazil's Constitution (1988) does not characterize persons of African descent as a "people", but it does recognize the collective ownership rights of the *quilombolas*[8] of Afrodescendants and establishes racism as a non-bailable crime which carries a prison sentence and to which the statute of limitations does not apply. The Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (Bolivia, 2009) accords recognition to the Afrodescendent population.

Some major legal inroads have been made in recent years: in 2015, Costa Rica amended its Constitution to establish the multi-ethnic and pluricultural identity of the country and to reinforce the recognition of persons of African descent in various public policy instruments (Costa Rica, 2015). In 2019, Chile extended legal recognition to Afrodescendants and to the cultural identity, language, traditions, culture, institutions and world view of Afro-Chileans (BNC, 2019). Cuba (2019) has adopted a new Constitution in which it repudiates any and all manifestations of racism or discrimination, and Mexico's Constitution recognizes Afro-Mexican peoples and communities as part of that nation's pluricultural identity (ECLAC/UNFPA, 2020).

B. Assessment of inequalities affecting the Afrodescendent population

ASSESSMENT

- Around one fifth of Latin America's population is made up of descendants of enslaved Africans.
- The Afrodescendants of Latin America and the Caribbean are primarily urban dwellers and live in almost every part of the region.
- Afrodescendants are subject to racial discrimination that relegates many of them to positions in which they are subject to deeper poverty, vulnerability and other disadvantages.
- Persons of African descent tend to be subject to a greater degree of socioeconomic vulnerability than other people in the region and to have less access to employment, education, health care and housing.

[5]   The countries include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Uruguay (ECLAC, 2017a).

[6]   Examples include the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Puerto Rico (ECLAC, 2017a).

[7]   The right to an identity, to retain (inalienable, exempt from seizure and indivisible) ownership to community lands and the use of renewable natural resources, to be consulted regarding the development of non-renewable resources, to share in the benefits thereof and to compensation.

[8]   *Quilombos* were communities formed by escaped slaves. The Constitution directs that they are to be issued with land titles and that their historical sites and documents are to be protected, thereby implicitly according recognition to these peoples' collective rights.

1. Key traits of the Afrodescendent population

The term "Afrodescendant" refers to people belonging to various "black" cultures who are descendants of African slavery survivors.[9] In the course of the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001), groups engaged in the formation of political identities became interlinked with networks of Afrodescendent organizations in the region, including English-speaking groups and groups located in the United States. This led to the consolidation of the concept of "Afrodescendant,"[10] which goes far beyond skin colour and entails the recognition of this group as an ethnic community that has politicized its identity and whose members consider themselves to constitute a distinct people (Antón and others, 2009).

Roughly one fifth of the Latin American population is composed of persons descended from Africans who were enslaved during the slave trade in the Americas, which lasted almost four centuries. Even today, these people are subject to extreme inequalities, discrimination and structural[11] and institutionalized[12] racism interwoven with a culture and history of privilege. Despite this, the Afrodescendent population has shown itself to be resilient and has succeeded in positioning its historically based demands on international, regional and national agendas. Nevertheless, even though progress has been made in implementing policies to combat racism, promote racial equality and establish institutional mechanisms for working to fulfil those agendas, the structural racism and inequality plaguing the population of African descent continue to manifest themselves in various spheres of development and human rights.

The available census figures indicate that an estimated 134 million people (21% of the total population) in Latin America are of African descent (ECLAC/UNFPA, 2020).[13] Brazil has the largest Afrodescendent population (over 100 million). Persons of African descent make up nearly the entire population of Haiti, half of Brazil's population and a third of Cuba's; in relative terms vis-a-vis the total national population, they are followed by Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and the Dominican Republic (see table X.1).

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[9] Because of increased migration, the term "Afrodescendant" may include African persons and their descendants who were not necessarily involved in the colonial slave trade (ECLAC, 2017a).

[10] "According to Rodríguez (2004), who participated in the Regional Conference of the Americas in preparation for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance (Santiago, 2000), "We went into that conference Black and came out Afrodescendants".

[11] Defined as a set of practices based on legitimized prejudices and stereotypes about a social group because of its members' characteristics (e.g. race, ethnicity, skin colour, nationality, culture). This type of racism is called "structural" because these practices permeate the whole of society and turn racism into a tool of domination that ends up being used to justify the inequality and exclusion of certain groups and the privileged positions of others.

[12] Defined as the incorporation of discriminatory values and practices in social institutions. Examples include the use of an unfamiliar vocabulary (or other language) and the insensitive treatment of employees whose cultures differ from that of the employer, teacher or social superior. Another example would be a situation in which a teacher does not believe that an Afrodescendent student could be intelligent and therefore ignores or does not listen to him/her. Institutionalized discrimination is not solely the outcome of individual actions but instead also stems from deeply rooted practices that perpetuate and reinforce existing discrimination.

[13] It is difficult to determine the exact number of persons of African descent in the population because of the complexities involved in, for example, fashioning relevant questions and operationalizing the concept of Afrodescendency in statistical tools, insufficient training of census-takers, communication problems in multilingual areas and limited participation by persons of African descent in processes that entail self-identification (Del Popolo, 2008; ECLAC, 2009 and 2017b; Del Popolo and Schkolnik, 2013).

TABLE X.1
Latin America (20 countries): Afrodescendent population,
latest census and estimates as of 2020[a]
(Thousands of persons and percentages)

COUNTRY AND YEAR OF CENSUS	AFRODESCENDENT POPULATION COUNTED IN THE CENSUS	AFRODESCENDENT POPULATION AS A % OF TOTAL POPULATION	TOTAL ESITMATED POPULATION AS OF 2020	ESTIMATED AFRODESCENDENT POPULATION AS OF 2020
Argentina, 2010	149.6	0.4	45 195.8	168.5
Bolivia (Plur. State of), 2012	23.3	0.2	11 673.0	27.1
Brazil, 2010	97 171.6	50.9	212 559.4	108 278.4
Chile, 2017	9.9	0.1	19 116.2	11.5
Colombia, 2018	2 982.2	6.8	50 882.9	3 482.9
Costa Rica, 2011	334.4	7.8	5 094.1	396.0
Cuba, 2012	4 006.9	35.9	11 326.6	4 064.1
Ecuador, 2010	1 041.6	7.2	17 643.1	1 268.8
El Salvador, 2007	7.4	0.1	6 486.2	8.4
Guatemala, 2018	47.2	0.3	17 915.6	57.3
Honduras, 2013	115.8	1.4	9 904.6	138.1
Mexico, 2015	1 381.9	1.2	128 932.8	1 490.5
Nicaragua, 2005	23.9	0.5	6 624.6	30.8
Panama, 2010	300.6	8.8	4 314.8	380.8
Paraguay, 2012	3.9	0.1	7 132.5	4.3
Peru, 2017	1 049.9	3.6	32 971.8	1 178.1
Uruguay, 2011	149.7	4.6	3 473.7	159.9
Venezuela (Bol. Rep. of), 2011	936.8	3.4	28 435.9	978.3
Estimates from other sources				
Haiti	---	95.5	11 402.5	10 889.4
Dominican Republic	---	8.6	10 847.9	932.9
TOTAL		20.9	641 934.0	133 946.2

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Demographic Observatory, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/24-P), Santiago, 2020; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: retos para la inclusión", *Project Documents* (LC/PUB.2020/14), Santiago, 2020.
[a] The 2020 estimates are based on demographic statistics from ECLAC (2020a); the percentages of Afrodescendants in national populations were calculated on the basis of the most recent available census or source.

Afrodescendants in Latin America are primarily urban dwellers and live almost everywhere throughout the region. With the exception of Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras, the figures that are available for 15 Latin American countries indicate that the urbanization rate for the Afrodescendent population tends to be over 70%, as the rates range between a low of 59.2% in Honduras and a high of 96.6% in Uruguay (ECLAC/UNFPA, 2020). In a majority of the countries, most persons of African descent reside in large metropolitan areas and major cities, with their geographic distribution reflecting historical patterns reminiscent of the areas where they were settled during the times of slavery. In a number of cases, the areas where these population groups are concentrated are the most depressed or underprivileged zones; in other cases, although the general areas in which they live are not the most underprivileged ones, such as large cities, persons of African descent tend to be concentrated in marginal zones within those larger areas. An analysis of the geographic distribution of the Afrodescendent population is of fundamental importance in order to arrive at an understanding of how ethnic/racial inequalities are perpetuated and how they are combined with other axes of social inequality in Latin America. And a thorough understanding of these factors is, in turn, of key importance for the design of efficient policies for closing those gaps (ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

The demographic transition is also either in full swing or already at an advanced stage in Afrodescendent population groups in the region as their fertility and mortality rates decline and their life expectancies increase. These trends are also reflected in these groups' sex and age structures. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, the Afrodescendent population outnumbers the non-Afrodescendent population but, in most of the countries, the former is relatively younger than the latter (ECLAC/UNFPA, 2020) and has a more favourable demographic dependency rate (the demographic dividend), i.e. there are more working-age people than potentially inactive persons in those population groups. In order to capitalize upon this dividend, policies to promote quality education and deal with inequalities in the area of health are needed, along with policies to smooth out the school-to-work transition, to facilitate young people's access to good-quality, productive forms of employment and to strengthen social protection and care systems. If these kinds of policies are not put in place to deal with the demographic pressures generated by the ageing of the population, the accumulation of associated risk factors will inevitably deepen the inequalities affecting people as they reach old age (ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

2. A brief outline of racial inequalities

One way of gauging the inequalities existing between the Afrodescendent population and the non-Afrodescendent population is to look at poverty levels. In five of the six Latin American countries for which the relevant data are available (see figure X.1), the Afrodescendent population has higher poverty rates (the exception being Panama). In Brazil and Peru, the percentage of Afrodescendants living in poverty is about twice as high as the percentage of non-Afrodescendants and, in Uruguay, it is nearly three times higher.

The Afrodescendent population has higher poverty rates than the non-Afrodescendent population does in five of the six Latin American countries for which the relevant data are available.

FIGURE X.1
Latin America (6 countries): incidence of poverty,
by racial identity, around 2018[a]
(Percentages)
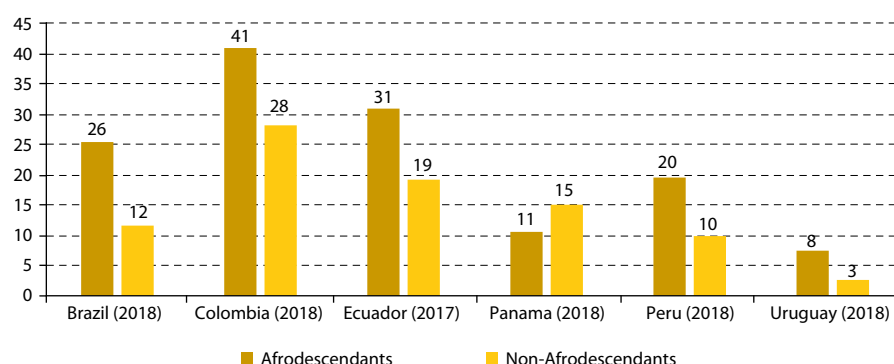
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: retos para la inclusión", *Project Documents* (LC/PUB.2020/14), Santiago, 2020.
[a] The figures for the non-Afrodescendent population do not include people who self-identify as indigenous or those whose ethnic/racial identity is unknown.

Poverty levels are reflected in people's enjoyment of their rights, such as the right to decent housing.[14] A huge number of people live in overcrowded housing, in improvised settlements or under dangerous and unhealthy conditions. Census data for 12 Latin American countries

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[14]   In order for housing to be considered adequate, in addition to meeting the requirements of legal certainty, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural appropriateness, it should have sustainable, non-discriminatory access to basic services. These services include access to drinking water and to sanitation and washing facilities, a means of storing food and disposing of waste and a source of energy for cooking food, heating and lighting (OHCHR, 2009).

indicate that, in percentage terms, more Afrodescendants than non-Afrodescendants are living in overcrowded dwellings and more of them lack access to drinking water and sanitation services (ECLAC, 2017a).

Persons of African descent are also at a disadvantage in the area of health. Census data indicate (see figure X.2) that an Afrodescendent child is at a considerably higher risk of dying before his or her first birthday than a non-Afrodescendent child is in all the countries, in both urban and rural areas (with the exception of Argentina). The widest ethnic/racial gaps are found in the rural areas of Colombia and Uruguay, where the infant mortality rate among Afrodescendants is 40% higher than the rate for non-Afrodescendants (in urban areas the differential is about 30%). In the urban areas of Panama, the infant mortality rate for the population of African descent is around 30% higher than it is among non-Afrodescendants.

FIGURE X.2

Latin America (9 countries): estimated infant mortality rates,
by racial identity, 2010[a]
(Per 1,000 live births)
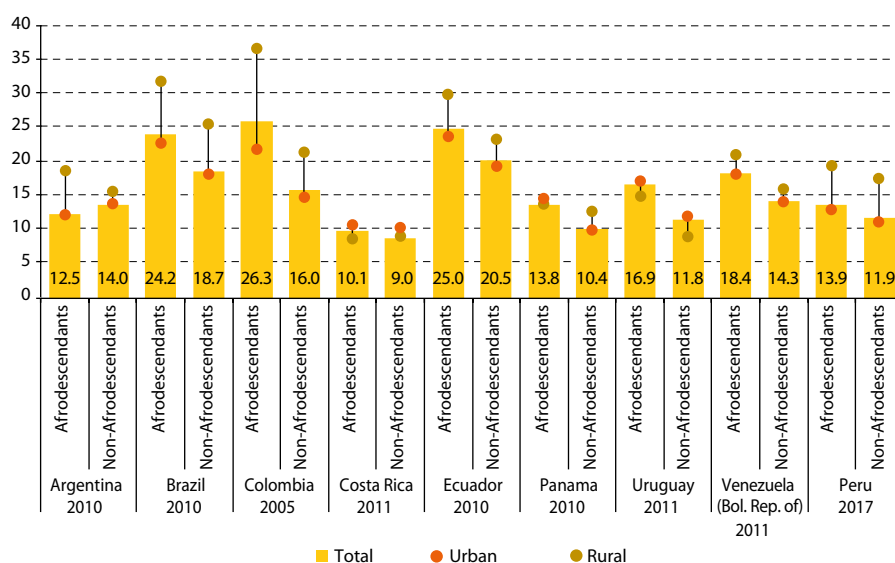
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Situación de las personas afrodescendientes en América Latina y desafíos de políticas para la garantía de sus derechos", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2017/121), Santiago, 2017.
[a] The figures for the non-Afrodescendent population do not include people who self-identify as indigenous or those whose ethnic/racial identity is unknown. The figures include the 2017 census results for Peru, which cover persons aged 12 and over only

When looking at maternal mortality rates,[15] it is important to remember that a vast majority of pregnancy-related deaths could be prevented if the women in question had access to prenatal care and to specialized assistance during childbirth. Women of African descent are in a disadvantageous position in this respect. In Brazil, for example, the Ministry of Health has reported that 55.7% of *preta* ("black") women had said that they had attended seven or more antenatal check-ups in 2012 compared to 54.2% of *parda* ("brown") *women*[16] and 74.5% of white women. Another health-related area in which these inequalities are reflected is that of teenage pregnancies, which are also a nexus for the various axes of inequality that compose the social inequality matrix in

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[15] For example, even though Brazil has already met target 3.1 (reducing the maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births) of the Sustainable Development Goals, the maternal mortality ratio for the population of African descent as of 2011 was 1.4 times higher than the ratio for the non-Afrodescendent population. Colombia (2010–2013) and Ecuador (2010–2013) have also achieved this target in the case of non-Afrodescendent women, but the ratio for women of African descent was nearly four times higher in Ecuador and twice as high in Colombia (ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

[16] In Brazil, for the purposes of censuses and household surveys, persons of African descent are listed as being in either of two out of a total of five categories based on skin colour: preto (black) and pardo (brown or mestizo). The persons represented by the combined totals of these two categories are classified as Afrodescendants.

Latin America (ECLAC, 2016a): life cycle, gender, social stratification and geographic location.[17] In Brazil and Uruguay, for example, the number of pregnancies among young Afrodescendent women are between 35% and 40% higher than in the case of non-Afrodescendants. Even though these countries have been implementing universal, comprehensive health-care policies aimed at, among other things, reducing unwanted early pregnancies, they have not succeeded in putting an end to the racial inequality reflected in this indicator (ECLAC, 2017a).

Finally, death by violence is one of the main causes of death among young people and especially young men (Trucco and Ullmann, 2015).[18] In all, 75.5% of all homicide victims in Brazil in 2017 were Afrodescendants, and 66% of all female murder victims during that year were women of African descent (IPEA/FBSP, 2019).[19] Racial identity introduces yet another factor, as Afrodescendants run a greater risk of being stopped and searched in the street, arrested, jailed and sentenced to harsher penalties. These risks, which stem from the use of racial profiling, are an outgrowth of police attitudes and consequent actions that have their origin in unconscious or deliberate racial bias. Certain groups within the population, especially young Afrodescendent men, are the target of violent treatment unrelated to any legitimate form of law enforcement (OHCHR, 2019).[20]

Racial inequalities in education grow sharper at the post-secondary and higher education levels, and young people of African descent between the ages of 20 and 29 are at a clear disadvantage in many of the countries. In Uruguay, for example, non-Afrodescendants are three times more likely to have had access to post-secondary and higher education than their Afrodescendant peers. In Brazil, Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the former have around twice as much access and, in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia and Costa Rica, about 50% more. In contrast, the situation appears to be more favourable for persons of African descent in such countries as Argentina, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama (ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

Afrodescendants are faced with a very uneven playing field in the labour market as well, not only because of differences in the education and training that they may have received, but also as a result of types of discrimination that are clearly prohibited under international human rights instruments. The labour market thus continues to exhibit major inequalities in terms of access to employment, the quality of employment, workers' rights and social protection, all of which hinders efforts to overcome poverty, exclusion and inequality (ECLAC, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2016a and 2016b). Wage income, which is regarded as one of the main indicators of the quality of employment, thus continues to reflect unacceptable levels and forms of discrimination on the basis of sex and race, among other factors.

Various studies have shown that women's average labour income continues to be significantly lower than men's despite women's higher levels of educational attainment (ECLAC, 2012c, 2011, 2016c, 2016a). In much the same vein, the wages and the levels attained both in education and in the labour market by Afrodescendants have remained below those achieved by "white" people (Telles and Steele, 2012; Taschdjian and Vásquez, 2011). Non-Afrodescendants' hourly wages are higher than those of Afrodescendants in all the countries except Panama, where the gap is very small, with the differential ranging from

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[17] Teenage pregnancies have been on the rise in some countries, and this is one of the factors that is thought to reduce people's chances of escaping poverty. It is also linked to gender inequalities, since caring for children is a task that is primarily shouldered by these young women, their mothers and grandmothers, regardless of whether or not the young mother is married to or lives with the baby's father (Rodríguez Vignoli, 2014).

[18] In Brazil, for example, the homicide rate for the general population in 2017 was approximately 31.6 deaths for ever 100,000 persons, whereas the rate for all young people (between the ages of 15 and 24) was 69.9; for young men of African descent, it was 130.4 per 100,000, or more than four times the rate for the general population (IPEA/FBSP, 2019).

[19] The data also show that the differential between the homicide rates for the Afrodescendent and non-Afrodescendent populations is trending upward. Between 2007 and 2017, the homicide rate rose by 33.1% for the population of African descent and by just 3.3% (10 times less) for the non-Afrodescendent population. As a result, in 2017 this rate was 43.1 per 100,000 for the Afrodescendent population and 16.0 per 100,000 for the non-Afrodescendent population. During this same time frame, the homicide rate for Afrodescendent women climbed by 29.9%, while the increase was only 4.5% in the case of non-Afrodescendent women (Abramo, Milosavljevic and Rangel, 2019).

[20] These attitudes may be the result of deeply rooted racism in society and in police institutions. The programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent calls upon States to take steps to put an end to these practices (OHCHR, 2019).

US$1 to US$4 per hour. In Brazil, Afrodescendants' wages are just slightly over half as much as those of non-Afrodescendants, while, in Peru and Uruguay, the gap is around 25% and, in Ecuador, close to 15% (see figure X.3). When the data are disaggregated by race, sex and level of education (see figure X.4), it is seen that non-Afrodescendent men have the highest incomes at a given level of education, while women of African descent have the lowest. This situation is found at virtually all levels of education, but the gap widens at the higher levels.

FIGURE X.3
Latin America (5 countries): average hourly wage income of
people between the ages of 25 and 59, by race, around 2016[a]
*(Percentages)(En porcentajes)*
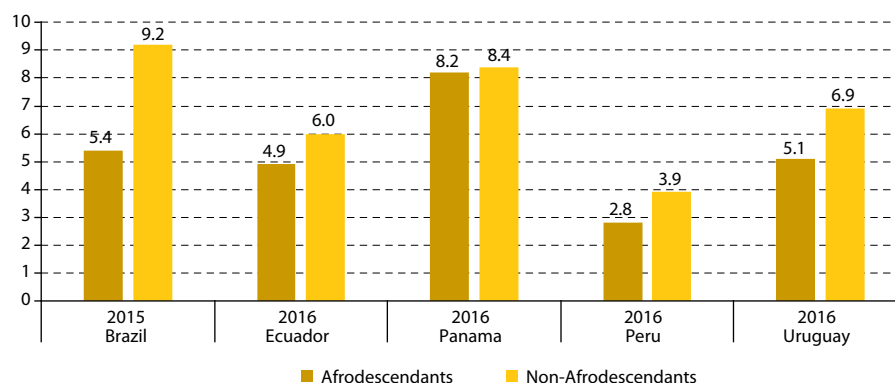
Source: L. Abramo, V. Milosavljevic and M. Rangel, "La matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina y la exclusión de las personas afrodescendientes", Santiago, 2019, unpublished.
[a] The figures for the non-Afrodescendent population do not include people who self-identify as indigenous or those whose ethnic/racial identity is unknown.

FIGURE X.4
Latin America (5 countries): average hourly wage income,
be sex and level of education, 2017[a]
(US$ PPP, 2011)
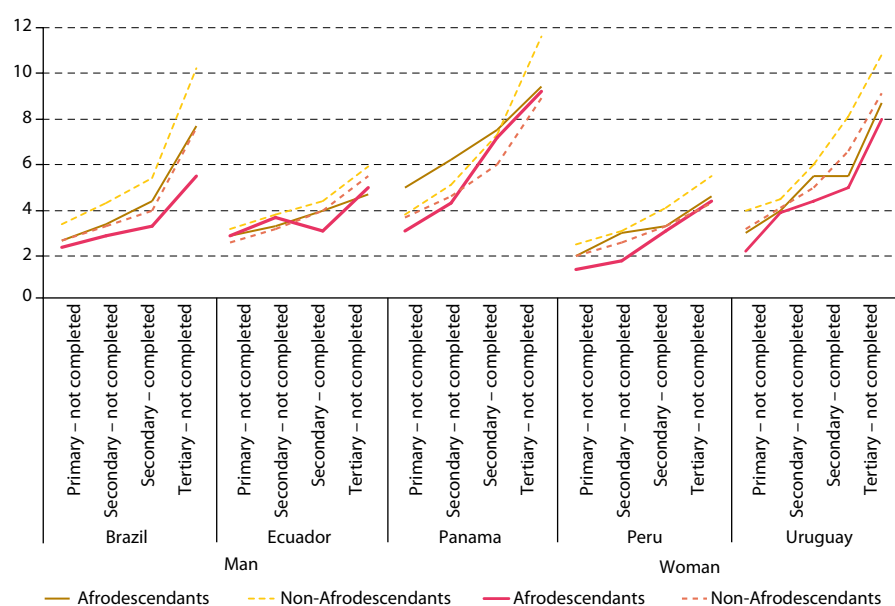
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] The figures for the non-Afrodescendent population do not include people who self-identify as indigenous or those whose ethnic/racial identity is unknown.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America have been marked by various types of inequalities and foreseeable increases in poverty and extreme poverty. The inequalities faced by the Afrodescendent population will not only make its members more vulnerable to being infected with the virus and reduce their ability to recover from it but will also hamper the effort to rebuild the economy after the pandemic has dissipated (see X.1).

The pre-existing socioeconomic problems faced by many persons of African descent in the region —poverty, overcrowding, unemployment or substandard forms of employment in the informal sector of the economy— make it much more difficult for them to follow the recommendations about staying at home and social distancing. Moreover, the prevalence of certain health problems in the Afrodescendent population, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, has heightened both the health-related impacts and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. For example, as of 5 September 2020, 42.2% of the deaths caused by COVID-19 in Brazil were of persons of African descent even though Afrodescendants represented only 38.2% of the hospitalizations (Ministry of Health, 2020, cited in ECLAC/UNFPA, 2020). Institutional discrimination and the failure of health-care services to adopt an intercultural approach also constitute a considerable barrier for persons of African descent that make it even harder for them to gain access to health-care services on an equal footing with the rest of the population. These challenges are compounded by the lack of the kind of disaggregated health information that is needed in order to assess the magnitude of the pandemic's impact on persons of African descent and the underrecording of cases of the disease in certain population groups because not enough coronavirus tests have been made available. Interculturally sensitive communication strategies are therefore needed to inform people about the virus and to apply preventive measures, testing and treatments. Opportunities for participating in decision-making also need to be expanded so that the types of health and other measures that are adopted will actually meet the needs of the Afrodescendent population. Health measures designed to stop the virus from spreading need to be coupled with strategies for enabling the population to practise social distancing and maintain an adequate living standard. A basic income has to be guaranteed for the general population and particularly for persons of African descent, who, as has been discussed at length in this document, are overrepresented in the population subject to poverty, informal employment and joblessness.

Some countries have introduced specific policies relating to COVID-19 for the Afrodescendent population. For example, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico have targeted certain recommendations at ethnic groups, including persons of African descent, and have proposed preventive measures based on the universal principle of self-determination that take the sociocultural characteristics of each community into account. In July, Brazil adopted Act No. 14.021, which establishes sanitary and epidemiological surveillance measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus among Afrodescendent and indigenous populations, which are considered vulnerable groups (ECLAC, 2021).

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "People of African descent and COVID-19: unveiling structural inequalities in Latin America", *COVID-19 Reports*, January 2021 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46621-people-african-descent-and-covid-19-unveiling-structural-inequalities-latin; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Afrodescendientes y la matriz de la desigualdad social en América Latina: retos para la inclusión", *Project Documents* (LC/PUB.2020/14), Santiago, 2020; Health Ministry, *Boletim Epidemiológico Especial*, No. 30, Brasilia, 9 September 2020.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities faced by the Afrodescendent population

Policies for reducing inequalities faced by persons of African descent include:

- Affirmative action to counterbalance the disadvantageous position of Afrodescendants and put an end to structural discrimination against them in the areas of employment, education, health, housing and access to well-being in general.

- Public health policies that are sensitive to the cultural knowledge and practices of Afrodescendants and that safeguard, in particular, the rights of women and girls.

- Education policies that promote community universities, modify school curricula to promote tolerance and combat racial discrimination and introduce interculturality, bilinguilism and an understanding of Afrodescent cultures in the schools.

A variety of policies can be applied in a wide range of fields in order to reduce existing inequalities between Afrodescendants and non-Afrodescendants. These include legal instruments to prohibit racial discrimination, plans for the promotion of racial equality and development, and policies for strengthening traditional Afrodescendant communities, alongside health, education and labour policies.

In the area of health, measures have been put in place that are designed to incorporate Afrodescendent knowledge and practices into public policies,[21] and policies aimed at reducing inequalities in the public health-care system have been introduced. In the field of education and culture, school curricula have been modified and reformed in order to foster tolerance, combat racial discrimination and incorporate interculturality, bilingualism and aspects of Afrodescendent culture into school programmes, and some specialized professorships have even been created at the tertiary level.[22] There are also education plans, platforms and observatories focused on eliminating racist and discriminatory practices, together with policies that foster a greater appreciation of Afrodescendent traditions by, for example, establishing national days for the commemoration of the cultures of persons of African descent[23] (ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

A number of affirmative action policies at the regional level are especially noteworthy because of their scope, objectives and results, as are policies on the creation of community universities in Nicaragua and Brazil's National Policy on Comprehensive Health Care for the Afro-Brazilian Population. The first two types of policies are examples of the efforts being made by civil society and governments to ensure that young people of African descent can gain access to institutions of higher learning and can complete their university studies. The third policy to be discussed below demonstrates the importance of targeted measures for the Afrodescendent population within the framework of a policy aimed at upholding the universal right to health.

1. Affirmative action: education

In recent years a number of Latin American countries have launched affirmative action initiatives or policies under which Afrodescendants receive differentiated treatment aimed

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[21] Noteworthy examples include Costa Rica's Dr. Juan Guillermo Ortiz Guier National Policy for Health 2015-2018 (2015), Nicaragua's General Health Act (2002), Guatemala's Health Code (1997) and Peru's Intercultural Health Policy (2016) (see ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

[22] Examples include the National Languages Act of Guatemala (Decree No. 19-2003, 2003), the Intercultural Bilingual Education Policy of Honduras (Presidential Decision No. 0719-EP, 1994), the General Education Act of Nicaragua (Act No. 582, 2006) and Peru's Bilingual Intercultural Education Policy (2016) (see ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

[23] Examples include the Observatory on Discrimination in Radio and Television in Argentina, the Observatory on Discrimination and Racism in Colombia and the Racism Alert Platform in Peru (see ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

at redressing historical and structural inequalities and moving towards full equality. This type of policy has been used most often in secondary and higher education, where the cumulative inequalities built up during the school years most clearly put young people of African descent at a disadvantage. Moreover, access to higher education and the completion of tertiary studies are factors that Afrodescendent organizations and movements regard as of key importance for advancing the goals of social inclusion and equality (ECLAC, 2017a and 2017b).

Latin American countries that are implementing affirmative action measures designed to benefit persons of African descent include the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay (Rangel, 2020).[24] Affirmative action programmes for Afrodescendants in Brazil were first launched in the early 2000s and included the reservation of a certain number of posts in government agencies for persons of African descent, a requirement that government suppliers have to reserve a certain percentage of their vacancies for persons of African descent and a scholarship programme to promote inclusion in the diplomatic service.[25] The two main legal instruments underpinning these affirmative action measures in Brazil are Act No. 11.096 of 2005, which created the University for All Programme (ProUni), and Act No. 12.711 of 2012.[26]

Some of the main achievements of affirmative action policies in the region have been increased attendance and enrolment of young persons of African descent in post-secondary educational institutions, particularly universities. In at least four countries (Brazil, Colombia, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia), attendance by young members of indigenous peoples and Afrodescendants has been rising steadily in recent years. In Brazil, the percentage of young (ages 18–24) persons of African descent in post-secondary education doubled between 2004 and 2014. Nevertheless, their 2014 attendance levels were still below the 2004 attendance levels of non-Afrodescendants. The enrolment of persons of African descent has trebled in some universities in the country, while other institutions have seen a sizeable increase in enrolment in what are often regarded as prestigious courses of study, such as medicine and law. No appreciable difference has been seen in the average grades of students entering university, as competition for admission takes place among students that are already high performers (Rangel, 2020).

In Brazil, 87.2% of all secondary school students attend public schools, and reserving half of the places in public universities for these students while using selective screening mechanisms that take the ethnic make-up of each state into account has yielded excellent results: the best public school students, who may not have attended the best schools, thus enjoy a more even playing field (Mercadante, 2019).

The implementation of affirmative action measures in the education sector on behalf of low-income persons, members of indigenous groups and Afrodescendants thus helps to combat class prejudice and racism, as well as helping to increase the visibility of these groups and their access to institutions of higher learning. This heightens the influence exerted by positive models for certain social groups, opens the doors to forums in which they can exercise some degree of power and have a greater influence on society and contributes to increased social inclusion (Rangel, 2020).

Policies to combat racism and promote racial equality have been stepped up in a number of Latin American countries. This includes affirmative action policies under which Afrodescendants receive differential treatment.

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[24]   A more in-depth look at the case of Brazil will be taken here because of its education sector's greater scope and years of experience, as well as because more systematic studies on the outcomes of these policies have been conducted.

[25]   See ECLAC (2017a and 2017b) for examples in Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia.

[26]   ProUni determines how full and partial scholarships for private institutions of higher learning will be distributed among students from households having a per capita income of less than the equivalent of 1.5 times the minimum wage. Students from households with per capita incomes of less than the equivalent of 3 times the minimum wage can receive scholarships that cover between 25% and 50% of the total cost of attendance at a private university (Brazil, 2005). Act No. 12.711 of 2012 requires that 50% of the places in federal universities and federal secondary technical institutes be reserved for public school students who self-identify as indigenous or as being of African descent. For further information, see Brazil (2012).

The use of affirmative action policies in the region has driven an increase in young Afrodescendants' attendance at and access to postsecondary educational institutions, especially universities.

Community universities are another example: the case of Nicaragua

The country's two community universities[27] —Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU) and the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN)— have made valuable contributions to the education and development of indigenous and Afrodescendent communities (Sánchez, 2005). The origins of these two universities make them a touchstone for any analysis of higher intercultural education rooted in the rights of the peoples of Central America and of Latin America as a whole.

BICU and URACCAN are open to everyone but they are located in areas in which there is a sizeable Afrodescendent population. They make a valuable contribution not only to the incorporation of this population group into higher education but also to the reinforcement of the cultural relevance of education and development in the autonomous regions of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. Both universities have their origins in a period of major political change in which the constitutional reforms of 1987, which recognize the multicultural and plurilingual identity of Nicaraguan society, and Act No. 28 of 1987 (the Statute of the Autonomy of the Atlantic Coast Regions of Nicaragua) were milestone events (Saballos, 2010).

The social mobilization of indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and the mestizo population of the coastal areas led to proposals for the creation of institutions of higher learning that would provide an alternative to the practice of sending young people from these areas to universities along the Pacific coast. BICU and URACCAN were accredited by the National University Council in 1992 and were granted the status of entities with legal personality by the National Assembly in 1993 (Williams, 2019). Later, the General Education Act established a formal link between these universities and the regional autonomy process by declaring that the universities of the Caribbean coast were institutions of "regional public interest" that were empowered to work with the Regional Autonomous Councils and Regional Autonomous Governments in designing and applying public policies on education, institution-building and the development of community and regional autonomy (Nicaragua, 2006).

According to information posted on the BICU website in 2020, Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University has 8 campuses located along the southern and northern Caribbean coast, offers 22 areas of specialization and has 1,327 graduates. BICU granted 5,765 scholarships between 2007 and 2016, with about half of those grants going to mestizo students, a third to Afrodescendants (around 31% Creoles and 1.75% Garifunas) and the rest to indigenous students.[28] These universities have narrowed the gap in access to higher education in the areas along the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua by providing local options for specialized education in a familiar setting that respects the culture and world view of the local population and thereby strengthens the local population's identity (Cassells, 2017).

As of 2020, URACCAN had four main campuses and four extension campuses located in the two autonomous regions of the country. These locations enable it to make educational opportunities available to the various indigenous peoples and persons of African descent that live along the Caribbean coast. In 2008–2015, it offered a total of 19 postgraduate programmes, 23 specialized courses of study leading to a first-level university degree, 11 specialized courses of study leading to advanced technical certification, 2 leadership schools and 70 community diplomas (URACCAN, 2019). It also offers courses of study in intercultural medicine, intercultural nursing, multicultural psychology, bilingual intercultural education and intercultural communication (Zúñiga, 2017). In addition, URACCAN has institutes for linguistic research and advancement,

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[27]   There is no generally agreed characterization of what gives these institutions their community-based identity. Saballos (2010), for example, states that the community identity of URACCAN derives from the central role it plays in the organizational development process being pursued by these communities as a means of consolidating their autonomy. On the other hand, Cassells (2017), a BICU professor, has said that the profile of BICU as a community university is akin to the community universities of Brazil, which arose out of the partnership between regional leaders and remote municipalities where no other public or private university has established itself.

[28]   BICU resident scholarships cover room and board and fees; its non-resident scholarships cover meals and fees; see BICU (2021). URACCAN scholarships cover fees, room and board, transportation and incidental expenses; see URACCAN (2020). According to Saballos (2010), the resident scholarships cover room and board, student supplies and personal effects.

cultural revitalization, autonomy, traditional medicine, community development and intercultural communication, as well as its Centre for Multi-Ethnic Women's Studies (CEIMM). It also awards diplomas in the Garifuna language, art and culture, in intercultural business administration and in community management for adaptation to climate change (Saballos, 2010).

2. Comprehensive health policy: the National Comprehensive Health Policy for the Black Population of Brazil

The National Comprehensive Health Policy for the Black Population of Brazil is an example of a universal, difference-sensitive social policy (ECLAC, 2017a) that serves to illustrate how a public health system can implement a policy that is sensitive to the differential needs of the Afrodescendent population. These kinds of policies seek to uphold the principle of universality by leaving no one behind, while, at the same time, reaching more vulnerable groups and being sensitive to their needs, which are not always met by universal policies. Achieving this goal may entail the use of affirmative action policies such as those discussed earlier, also in relation to Brazil.

Brazil's Consolidated Health System is governed by Act No. 8.080 of 1990 and is a complex system that guarantees comprehensive, universal access to the entire population free of charge.[29] As part of this system and in an effort to advance the cause of equity in health care, in 2009 the Ministry of Health instituted the National Comprehensive Health Policy for the Black Population (see Measure No. 992 of 2020). The inequity which this policy is designed to address arises out of a combination of structural and institutional racism that is reflected in negative health indicators for the black population,[30] such as, for example, a lower life expectancy, higher rates of maternal and infant mortality, a higher incidence of chronic and infectious diseases and high rates of violence (Ministry of Health, 2017).

This policy is also the outcome of a recognition of the fact that Afrodescendants have a higher incidence of certain genetic or hereditary diseases that call for special attention, such as falciform anaemia,[31] diabetes mellitus (type 2),[32] hypertension[33] and Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency.[34] Racial inequalities are also a factor in other situations, such as, for example, the chances of surviving certain diseases.[35]

Implementation of this policy has advanced haltingly, however. According to a study conducted by the Secretariat of Health of the State of São Paulo and the University of São Paulo (Batista and Barros, 2017), as of 2016, only 57 municipalities had put it into practice even though its implementation does not necessarily entail increased expenditure. The limited uptake of this policy is the outgrowth of some authorities' belief that racial disparities are primarily attributable to social differences and differing income levels rather than to racial identity itself and that, in order to promote equity, the supply of services should not

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[29] See [online] https://www.saude.mg.gov.br/sus.

[30] The concept of the health of the black population was, according to Werneck, developed by the black population to classify and underscore three aspects of the black population's health and disease experience: racism, which affects this population's life and health both directly and indirectly, since it acts as an influential determinant of health status; differentiated vulnerability to certain illnesses; and the learning and living of Afro-Brazilian cultures and traditions that embody specific world visions and ways of acting that influence people's views about health and their health-related practices (Werneck, 2010).

[31] A hereditary disease caused by a recessive gene that is found in between 2% and 6% of Brazil's population overall but which has a frequency of between 6% and 10% in the Afrodescendent population (Ministry of Health, 2017).

[32] This condition is more common among black males (9% more than among white males) and black women (around 50% more than among white women) (Ministry of Health, 2017).

[33] Between 10% and 20% of adults have this condition, which is the direct or indirect cause of between 12% and 14% of all deaths in Brazil. In general, men tend to have higher blood pressure, and hypertension tends to trigger more complications in Afrodescendants of both sexes (Ministry of Health, 2017).

[34] This deficiency is relatively more common among Afro-Americans (13%) and people of Mediterranean descent, such as the populations of Italy and the Middle East (5%–40%). The relative lack of this enzyme leads to hemolytic anaemia and is more frequent among boys than girls (Ministry of Health, 2017).

[35] A study of women who had breast cancer and were treated in the same public hospital found that, 10 years after starting treatment, the white women were more likely to still be alive than the black women (Nogueira and others, 2018).

be differentiated. Another difficulty is the fact that medical research tends to focus on the analysis of social differences rather than racial ones and that not all health services collect information on their users' race or skin colour. They fail to understand that, by offering the same services to all based on universal difference-insensitive policies, they end up deepening existing inequalities (Batista and Barros, 2017).

D. Suggested references

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E. Questions

- Taking existing conditions in your country/state/district into consideration, propose an affirmative action policy in the field of education for persons of African descent. What would be the main problems that would arise during its implementation? How would you resolve them?

- Taking the issues relating to statistical invisibility into account, do you think that the Afrodescendent population in your country/state/district has been undercounted? If yes, what are the main reasons for this? How could a more accurate count of the Afrodescendent population in your country/state/district be obtained?

- What policy would you propose for averting discriminatory practices against persons of African descent in the labour market? What problems do you think would arise that could interfere with such a policy's approval and implementation?

- Are policies in place in your country/state/district to combat incitement to racial violence or hatred, particularly when new information and communications technologies, including the Internet, are used for that purpose? If no such policy exists, propose an appropriate one. If such a policy is in place, how well does it work? How could it be improved?

- Identify indicators of the existence of racial inequality between the Afrodescendent and non-Afrodescendent populations (infant mortality, unemployment rates, the percentage of persons of African descent who have a post-secondary education, etc.).

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Chapter **XI**

Persons with disabilities[1]

A. Normative framework

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the fastest human rights treaty to have been negotiated and the first of the twenty-first century. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006; the Convention came into effect in May 2008 and has been ratified by all the countries of the region.[2] The Convention complements pre-existing international human rights treaties and sets forth States' legal obligations and duties to respect and ensure the equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. Although the Convention is not the first human rights instrument to deal with disability concerns and does not recognize any new human right for persons with disabilities, it offers this group an unprecedented level of protection (DESA/OHCHR/IPU, 2007).

The addition of a universal human rights treaty specifically for persons with disabilities was borne of the fact that "persons with disabilities are still primarily viewed as 'objects' of welfare or medical treatment rather than 'holders' of rights" and are still denied those basic rights and fundamental freedoms that most people take for granted. The Convention ensures that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others (DESA/OHCHR/IPU, 2007, p. 4).

The Convention encompasses numerous areas where persons with disabilities have been discriminated against, including access to justice; participation in political and public life; education; employment; freedom from torture, exploitation and violence; and freedom of movement.[3]

The Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS, 2014) indicates that all the Latin American countries have specific legislation protecting persons with disabilities that promote their social and labour inclusion. This dual inclusion is written into various instruments at the international, regional and national levels. In terms of progress regarding the rights to education and decent work for persons with disabilities, the most important instrument at the international level is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. But there are other instruments, such as the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

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[1] This chapter was prepared by Raúl Holz, Consultant in the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

[2] See United Nations (2007).

[3] For further detail on the Convention, see "Chapter 2: The Convention in detail" in DESA/OHCHR/IPU (2007).

B. Assessment of inequalities affecting persons with disabilities

- The number of people living with some type of disability in Latin America and the Caribbean is estimated at around 70 million, equivalent to 12.5% of the regional population.

- The way we understand disability has changed over time, from an approach based on individual impairments towards an emphasis on interaction and the individual's relationship with the physical and social environment.

- Although disability has become more visible in the statistics, many challenges remain in terms of adequately capturing disability and applying the results effectively in surveys, censuses and administrative records to improve comparability among countries.

- An accurate assessment should differentiate by type and degree of disability, which in turn affects quality of life, possibilities of self-care, education, employment and the full enjoyment of rights and the full and effective inclusion in society.

- An analysis of the inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities implies addressing the need to support caregivers.

The concept of disability has changed significantly over time. This is important because it directly impacts both quantitative and qualitative assessments and public policies. In short, the conceptualization of disability may be said to have moved from an approach that treats disability as an individual health problem to a social and rights-based approach; in other words, from disability as a personal health matter caused by a disease, disorder or accident that requires medical care and individual rehabilitation to an understanding of disability from the perspective of the interaction between people who have a health problem and their social and physical environment. In this second reading, it is society that puts up barriers or facilitates participation, inclusion and individual performance and realization. The emphasis is on an inclusive perspective that promotes policies and programmes to improve the lives of persons with disabilities by broadening opportunities and accessibility in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
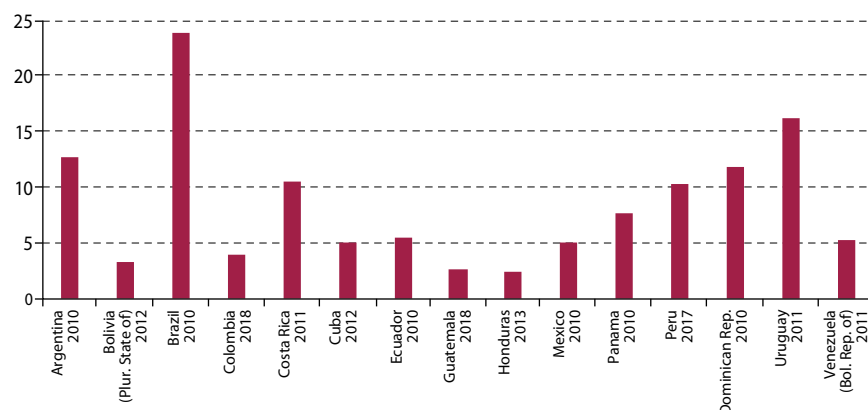
As reflected in specific surveys and in censuses, the conceptual evolution of disability and the corresponding impact on the collection of data on the respective population have not bypassed the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, despite regional progress on statistical visibility, significant lags remain in terms of the real application of the suggested questions,[4] which are based on difficulties in carrying out activities, in line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization (WHO). As a result, although capture of disability statistics has improved between census rounds, comparability between countries is still complicated by methodological differences that persist in data collection and analysis. This is reflected mainly in the type of questions asked in surveys, as some distinguish between different degrees of severity of disability (ECLAC, 2014). According to the *Regional report on measuring disability: overview of the disability measurement procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean* (ECLAC, 2014), around 70 million people, or 12.5% of the population, live with some kind of disability in the region. These figures may be expected to rise with population ageing. The large variation between countries in the prevalence of disability testifies to the persistence of methodological differences and comparability issues between countries across the region.

12.5%
REGIONAL POPULATION

70 **million** WITH A DISABILITY

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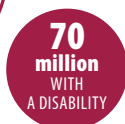
4   The Washington Group on Disability Statistics, established in 2001 by the member countries of the United Nations Statistical Commission, has prepared a short list of questions suggested for use in census and surveys.

Although not all the countries in the region have carried out the census of the 2010 round, of the 16 countries that have done so, 15 include questions aimed at capturing aspects of disability. The highest percentages are observed in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Uruguay, where the population with disabilities exceeds 10%. In Guatemala and Honduras, the percentages are lower (see figure XI.1) (ECLAC, 2021a).

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Persons with disabilities and their rights in the COVID-19 pandemic: leaving no one behind", COVID-19 Reports, Santiago, January 2021 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46603-persons-disabilities-and-their-rights-covid-19-pandemic-leaving-one-behind.

This is a heterogenous population that experiences multiple and simultaneous forms of discrimination based on socioeconomic status, gender, age, place of residence, race or ethnicity and migratory status, among others (ECLAC, 2021b). ECLAC (2013 and 2017) and Ullmann and others (2018) provide information that explains how disability figures increase along the axes of the matrix of inequality; in other words, for women, the rural population, indigenous persons and Afrodescendants, those with lower incomes and older persons. Two examples are presented below that illustrate how disability intersects with other axes that structure inequality, such as ethnicity, age and sex. As shown in table XI.1, disability prevalence is greater among indigenous people, even after controlling for age.

COUNTRY AND CENSUS DATE	AGE 60 AND OVER	
	INDIGENOUS	NON-INDIGENOUS
Brazil, 2010	66.0	63.4
Colombia, 2005	25.8	23.9
Costa Rica, 2011	45.4	36.4
Ecuador, 2010	24.2	22.4
Mexico, 2010	30.3	25.7
Panama, 2010	32.7	32.0
Uruguay, 2011	52.8	44.2

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special processing of census microdatabases and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Linkages between the social and production spheres: gaps, pillars and challenges* (LC/CDS.2/3), Santiago, 2017.

The prevalence
of disability also
varies with age
and between
men and women.

The prevalence of disability also varies with age and between men and women. Although it rises in both sexes as the years pass, the percentage for women tends to be higher after age 60 (see figure XI.2).

FIGURE XI.2
Latin America and the Caribbean (26 countries):
disability prevalence, by age and sex,
around 2010
(Percentages)
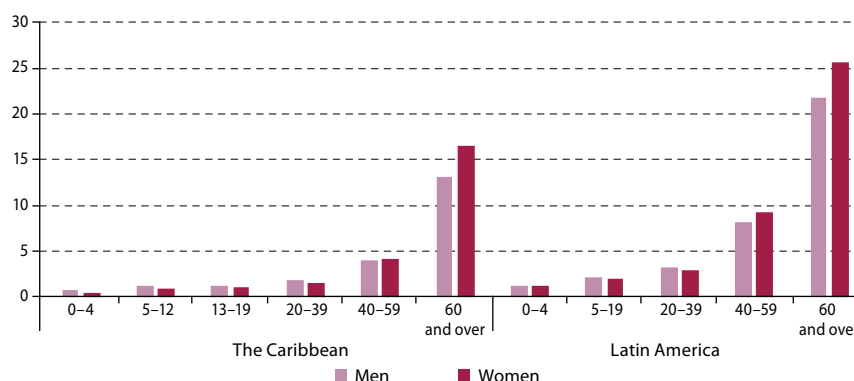
The Caribbean   Latin America
■ Men   ■ Women

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of National Population, Household and Housing Census of Argentina, 2010; Population and Housing Census of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2012; Demographic Census of Brazil, 2010; National Socioeconomic Survey of Chile, 2011; X National Population Census and VI Housing Census of Costa Rica, 2011; Population and Housing Census of Cuba, 2012; National Multipurpose Household Survey of the Dominican Republic, 2013; Population and Housing Census of Ecuador, 2010; XVII Population Census and VI Housing Census of Honduras, 2013; National household income and expenditure survey of Mexico, 2012; XI National Population Census and VII Housing Census of Panama, 2010; first Specialized National Disability Survey of Peru, 2012; Population and Housing Census of Uruguay, 2011; XIV National Population and Housing Census of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 2011. For the Caribbean, data were obtained from the 2010 Population and Housing Census rounds of Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Trinidad and Tobago.
a Latin America and the Caribbean: simple average.

The discrimination and inequality affecting persons with disabilities translates, among other things, into lower educational attainment and a lower rate of labour market participation. In turn, these outcomes are heavily differentiated by type of disability. According to census information from 21 countries of the region, in Latin America visual and mobility limitations are the most frequent, followed by hearing and communication limitations, while in the Caribbean cognitive and mobility impairments are most common. For access to education and employment, visual and motor disabilities present the least impediment, while persons with mental and cognitive impairments or limited self-care capacity face the greatest barriers to entering economic and social activities. The evidence available for 17 countries shows that the percentage of economically active persons aged 15 and over with a disability is significantly lower than for persons without disabilities. The differences range from 15 percentage points in Brazil to 47 in Barbados (ECLAC, 2013).

Disability is also positively correlated with poverty: the population with disabilities is overrepresented among the poor. Disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty as there is a vicious circle between the two (ILO, 2002, p. 4; Yeo and Moore, 2003). Although the relationship is bidirectional, concrete evidence establishing the precise links is still scant, although it is growing. The evidence available suggests that bidirectionality occurs, on the one hand, through the poor having a higher probability of living with a disability owing to lack of access to health and rehabilitation services and proper nutrition and the tendency to perform more dangerous jobs, among other things. And, on the other hand, persons with disabilities have a higher probability of living in poverty owing to lower educational attainments, weak labour market entry and the high costs associated with disability, such as for assistive devices, special transport, rehabilitation and care, among others.

The care that persons with disabilities receive is another important aspect for examining disability-related inequality. According to the *World Report on Disability* (WHO, 2011), care is critical for enabling many persons with disabilities to participate successfully in social and economic activities. The care of persons with disabilities shows how the axes of inequality concatenate, as most caregivers are women from the same family. Care work often means that a member of the household, typically a woman, has to forgo paid work, to the detriment of the household income (Groce and others, 2011; Pinilla-Roncancio, 2015). Data from Chile's National Study of Disability of 2015 showed that 74% of caregivers were women (Ministry of Social Development and Family, 2016). However, it is important to recall that not all persons with an impairment need support or specific care. The need for assistance also varies depending on the range of movement within and outside the home. The subject of care must therefore be included in a proper analysis of disability-related inequality, with a view to policymaking for reducing inequalities (ECLAC, 2013).

The global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities. Given the risk that the pandemic will exacerbate the exclusion of persons with disabilities, the need to include them in development processes is becoming increasing urgent and essential (see box XI.1).

RECUADRO XI.1
Las personas con discapacidad
durante la pandemia del COVID-19

The limited information available in the context of the pandemic makes it even more difficult to estimate its impact on the population with disabilities. However, persons with disabilities are known to be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 because they face greater barriers in terms of applying basic protection measures, such as hand-washing and physical distancing. Their greater exposure is due to a number of reasons, such as the inaccessibility of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities; dependence on physical contact for support; the inaccessibility of public health information; or internment in often overcrowded or unhealthy institutional settings. These barriers are aggravated by socioeconomic disadvantages in the case of people who live in informal settlements or are affected by other disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes.

Because persons with disabilities have greater health needs, they are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from COVID-19. Persons with disabilities are, for example, more vulnerable to secondary diseases such as lung problems, diabetes, heart disease and obesity, which can worsen the consequences of COVID-19 infections. Added to this is the increased risk of discrimination in access to health care and vital health-care procedures during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19 and measures taken to control the pandemic can be particularly deleterious for persons with disabilities. Already facing exclusion in employment terms, they are also more likely to lose their job and have greater difficulties in returning to work during the recovery phase. The current crisis is also more likely to have exacerbated their exclusion from education as they are less likely to make use of distance-learning modalities.

Measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 have led to significant disruptions to services and support systems. In addition, domestic violence has risen significantly during confinement, particularly affecting women and girls with disabilities.

In order to progress towards egalitarian and inclusive communities, it is important to include persons with disabilities at all stages of the response to COVID-19, with a view to establishing consultation and participation mechanisms, prioritizing socioeconomic responses, improving their health care and expanding social protection programmes in general as well as those targeting persons with disabilities specifically.

The scant information available also affects evaluation of the access of persons with disabilities to the mitigation and control measures that are being implemented in the areas of health, education, social protection and work. Early reports from organizations of persons with disabilities point to the situation for this group worsening during the pandemic in the areas of health, education, access to social protection and particularly in connection with employment. This perception is backed up by a predominantly negative assessment of the measures taken as well as a pessimistic outlook concerning future scenarios for this population.

An online survey of members of social organizations and networks of persons with disabilities during the pandemic reaffirms the perception that there are still few measures specifically for the population with disabilities. Although they are often included in lists of predictably vulnerable groups, no particular adaptations and adjustments are provided to ensure their effective access to services, programmes or benefits. Some countries have begun to trial disability-inclusion policies, however. For example, in Argentina, the government incorporated workers with disabilities in a scheme to support wage employment by providing monthly financial aid for wage subsidies. In Mexico, guidelines were issued on enabling persons with disabilities to continue teleworking, and in Colombia steps were taken to include them in measures taken for all workers in the case of unemployment (Meresman and Ullmann, 2020).

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2020* (LC/PUB.2021/2-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2021; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Persons with disabilities and their rights in the COVID-19 pandemic: leaving no one behind", *COVID-19 Reports*, Santiago, January 2021 [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46603-persons-disabilities-and-their-rights-covid-19-pandemic-leaving-one-behind; S. Meresman and H. Ullmann, "COVID-19 y las personas con discapacidad en América Latina: mitigar el impacto y proteger derechos para asegurar la inclusión hoy y mañana", *Social Policy series*, No. 237 (LC/TS.2020/122), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020; United Nations, "A disability-inclusive response to COVID-19", *Policy Brief*, May 2020 [online] https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-disability-inclusive-response-covid-19.

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities affecting persons with disabilities

POLICY PROPOSALS

Priority policies for reducing inequality between persons with and without disabilities include:

- Inclusive education and training for persons with disabilities.
- Promotion of labour inclusion.
- Social protection as an enabler of full and effective participation by persons with disabilities.
- Cross-cutting policies such as accessibility and the potential of information and communications technology (ICT), as well as anti-discrimination and affirmative action measures.

1. Inclusive education and training for persons with disabilities

One of the critical manifestations of inequality between persons with and without disabilities occurs in educational settings, significantly affecting children, adolescents and young people and their possibilities at later stages of the life cycle (ECLAC, 2017). In general, persons with disabilities are less likely to have access to education and to have lower retention rates once in education (WHO, 2011). In this respect, the 2030 Agenda commits to ensuring "inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015, p. 14). More specifically, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reaffirms "the right of persons with disabilities to education", with States called upon to ensure "an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning" (United Nations, 2007, p. 14). A study by Samaniego and others (2009), *Personas con discapacidad y acceso a servicios educativos en Latinoamérica: breve análisis de situación*, analyses the regional experience in depth and identifies policies that could help to reduce inequalities between personas with and without disabilities. These include but are not limited to the needs to:

- Explicitly recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education in the Constitution. From a rights perspective, constitutional recognition is fundamental for promoting educational inclusion, especially when the tendency remains to design and implement educational systems based on a welfare rationale instead of recognizing the right to education of persons with disabilities. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and Paraguay stand out as countries with a more explicit constitutional wording on the right to education for persons with disabilities. Although important, however, this legal stipulation is not enough, since there is often a gap between the proclamation of a right and the act of upholding it, in the form of effective provision of the service by the State.

- Promote policies to join up the rather fragmented institutional arrangements for educational access for students with disabilities. The evidence indicates that a structural response is needed, so that education for persons with disabilities is complemented with health and food services. For example, in Chile, the National Disability Service (SENADIS), which is part of the Ministry of Social Development and Family, has partnered with the Ministry of Education to set up cross-sectoral measures on a variety of topics, including: advice on inclusive education policy; technical consultancy on bursaries; and advice on accreditation of higher education institutions in relation to disability variables. SENADIS also forms part of a commission involving various public and private bodies set up to establish an early childhood care network.[5]

- The experience indicates that preparation to work with students with disabilities must be included in teacher training from the start, i.e. at the university level. Teacher should be prepared to incorporate adapted didactic materials and to be able to work in multidisciplinary teams, and support and expert advice should be made available for them. This should also be complemented with curricular flexibility. In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education encourages teachers to attend a disability sensitization course as part of its teaching modernization strategy. The course, an initiative of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities backed by the Ministry of Labour and the Indoamérica Technological University, is aimed at fostering a positive shift in attitudes through disability sensitization for public servants and private workers, with a view to achieving effective care and inclusion in society of persons with disabilities.[6]

- Evidence from successful cases supports the supposition that inclusive educational policies are more likely to be successful when they are developed and implemented in conjunction with students with disabilities and their families. The establishment of information and participation mechanisms to facilitate joint work is essential in this regard. An example is the Colombian Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) strategy, which sets forth conceptual and methodological guidelines to be followed by local organizations, community leaders, non-governmental organizations and the public sector, who are engaged in formulating, designing, implementing and evaluating programmes and projects with the strategy. One objective of this strategy is to increase the possibilities of access to educational services for persons with disabilities.[7]

- Finally, inclusive education requires ensuring accessibility, including in transportation, information and communications. This should include, for example, electronic services and Braille signage, in addition to facilitating sign language learning to ensure access to communication and information.

INSTITUTIONS

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reaffirms "the right of persons with disabilities to education" with States called upon to ensure "an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning" (United Nations, 2007, p. 14).

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[5] For further information, see [online] https://www.senadis.gob.cl/pag/141/1207/trabajo_intersectorial.
[6] For further information, see [online] https://educacion.gob.ec/curso-de-sensibilizacion-en-discapacidades/.
[7] For further information, see Ministry of Health (2021).

The evidence from successful cases confirms that inclusive educational policies have better chances of success when they are developed and implemented jointly with students with disabilities and their families.

Regarding public policy on training for persons with disabilities, the international experience is on the whole quite recent (Zúñiga, 2015) and is closely linked to employment inclusion efforts. Experience in this regard indicates the advisability of building work-related skills, preferably based on dialogue with firms. This facilitates labour market integration insofar as working terms and conditions are designed together with companies. The experience also shows that it is important to provide support for the integration process.

2. Promotion of labour inclusion

The countries of the region still owe a great debt to the population with disabilities in terms of their labour market inclusion under decent work conditions. Zúñiga (2015) identifies three factors that affect the poor employment integration of persons with disabilities: (i) individual factors, rooted in limited technical knowledge and soft skills, and incompatibility between certain job functions and type of disability; (ii) accessibility-related factors connected with workspaces and distances between home and workplace; and (iii) the social context, such as overprotection and low expectations of family members and potential employers, and employers' lack of information and knowledge on disability.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010) points out that getting the economic incentives right for all actors involved in the process would increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. More specifically, social security disability beneficiaries should continue to receive payments to stay in work or continue looking for work. Moreover, OECD argues in favour of subsidizing the private sector to hire persons with disabilities. The public sector should also provide resources to properly evaluate the ability to work, as well as payment for labour intermediaries who successfully and sustainably reintegrate persons with disabilities into the labour market.

Given the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in relation to labour market entry, a study for Ibero-America by the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS) (2014) proposes 12 measures to promote the employment of persons with disabilities: [8]

- Mandatory job quotas for persons with disabilities in public administration and private companies and effective oversight of these measures. In Chile, for example, companies with 100 or more workers are legally obliged to reserve 1% of staff or contractual positions for persons with disabilities or persons in receipt of a disability pension.[9]

- Preferential treatment of companies that hire persons with disabilities in goods or services procurement by the public administration. In Argentina, the three State powers, decentralized State bodies, non-State public entities, State companies and private companies providing outsourced public services must prioritize companies that hire persons with disabilities in their procurement of inputs and supplies, cost conditions and legal compliance being equal.[10]

- Public employment and career guidance services for persons with disabilities.

- Incentives for private firms that hire persons with disabilities.

- Disability pensions in the public pension system. For example, in Uruguay, a non-contributory benefit is paid monthly to persons with disabilities who lack the resources to meet their basic needs, according to the medical evaluation of the Disability Assessment department.[11]

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[8]   For further information on these measures promoting the employment of persons with disabilities with examples in several countries of the region, see OISS (2014).
[9]   For further information, see Decision No. 4137/101, Directorate of Labour (2017).
[10] For further information, see Act No. 25689, Argentina (2003).
[11] For further information, see Social Insurance Bank (2017a).

- Additional measures to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities (e.g. teleworking and job retention schemes).

- Measures to sensitize companies about the employment of persons with disabilities.

- Occupational training for persons with disabilities.

- Self-employment and start-ups by persons with disabilities.

- Supported employment, based on a mediator who helps in job adaptation.

- Sheltered employment, whereby a percentage of the workforce consists of persons with disabilities, who receive personal and social support services. In this sort of scheme participating firms usually also receive favourable tax treatment. Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Spain and Uruguay have quotas of this kind.[12]

- Consideration of cross-cutting perspectives and variables (gender, age, indigenous populations and rural populations) in public policies for the labour market integration of persons with disabilities.

<aside>
INSTITUTIONS

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes the key role of social protection in enabling persons with disabilities to achieve full and effective participation (United Nations, 2007).
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3. Social protection

Adopting a broad notion of social protection, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes the key role of social protection in enabling persons with disabilities to achieve full and effective participation (ILO and others, 2018). Social protection provides a variety of instruments that can be combined in different ways to reduce inequality between people with and without disabilities. This section considers transfer and care policies as options to address the barriers faced by this population. As noted earlier, not all people with a limitation need specific support or care. The need for support also varies with the possibilities of moving outside or inside the home

The aim of these policies is to enable persons with disabilities to live independently, with the same options of choice, control and freedom and, depending on their age and specific circumstances, to study, work or otherwise participate in society. This objective also forms part of guaranteeing and promoting the full exercise of all the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the Convention.

Conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs) have aimed mainly to reduce poverty and extreme poverty by increasing families' monetary resources and simultaneously strengthening the human capacities of their members. Several CCTs in the region include persons with disabilities as direct recipients.[13] Notable among the programmes in operation is the Porteña Citizenship programme in Argentina, which supports vulnerable families through subsidies aimed at ensuring access to basic necessities, health care and school retention.[14] In Ecuador, the Human Development Grant (BDH) provides a transfer of US$ 50 per month to persons in poverty who have a 40% disability or more.[15] In Jamaica, the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) includes a bimonthly health-care voucher that covers persons with disabilities.[16] In Paraguay, the conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme called *Tekoporã* seeks to provide social protection to households in poverty and improve their members' quality of life. One component of *Tekoporã* supports indigenous families in poverty whose members include persons with disabilities.[17] In

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[12] For further information, see pp. 26–29 in OISS (2014).
[13] For further information, see Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes Database - Latin America and the Caribbean [online] https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/cct.
[14] For further information, see [online] https://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/desarrollohumanoyhabitat/ciudadania-portena.
[15] For further information, see [online] https://www.inclusion.gob.ec/bono-de-desarrollo-humano1/.
[16] For further information, see Ministry of Labour and Social Security (2018).
[17] For further information, see [online] https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/programas/tekopora.

Uruguay, the Family Allowances under the Equity Plan CCT programme, aimed at children and adolescents from households in vulnerable socioeconomic conditions, last all life long for persons with disabilities (with an eligibility check every three years) or until they become eligible for another social security benefit.[18]

Based on the regional experience of recurring care provision, policy options include: (i) training and support for the provision of care based on in-person relationships, such as home-care services aimed at assisting with domestic tasks such as cleaning and shopping;[19] (ii) home nursing services to meet self-care and basic medical needs; (iii) provision of assistive devices for persons with disabilities, home adaptation or skills for greater autonomy;[20] and (iv) respite care to provide relief for family members and other caregivers to "care for the carers"[21] (ECLAC, 2013). Although these entitlements are aimed mainly at care arrangements in the home, in many countries the resources allocated for the care of persons with disabilities go to residential institutions. In this respect, Convention indicates that the institutional option infringes the rights of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2007). Accordingly, policies should promote care arrangements whereby children with disabilities live with their families and older persons with disabilities live independently in their communities (ILO and others, 2018).

4. Cross-cutting policies: access and attitudinal barriers

The priority policies described above have little chance of success unless they take into account the physical and social barriers that impede access by persons with disabilities to services and employment. The design of inclusive education, employment programmes and social protection must include non-discriminatory measures and solutions to access barriers. In view of the diversity of situations and needs of persons with disabilities, ILO and others (2018) recommend that policies should combine effective access to programmes with specific enabling mechanisms for persons with disabilities.

- Accessibility (physical and communicational)[22]

Accessibility must be a condition of environments, buildings, products, services and communications to be used and understood by everyone safely, equally and independently. Achieving universal accessibility is critical for policies to be successful. Physical and communicational access policies require a universal design that supports an unbroken chain of accessibility, enabling a person's physical movement from their place of origin to their destination. To this end, accessibility must be analysed and designed under a rationale of continuity, connecting the inside of the home, the urban space and transport. Accessing a park, a hospital or a school and finding a job require adequate facilities in each of these spheres

With some variations, the accessibility chain is fragmented and inadequate in Latin America. Outside areas that require improvement include: mobility-enabling elements, signage, the width and surface of sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, tactile paving, street furniture such as garbage cans, public telephones, water fountains, parking lots and pedestrian walkways. Limitations are also evident in buildings accessibility, with a lack of ramps, difficulties for interior and vertical circulation and in doors and windows, as well as toilet services.

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[18] For further information, see Social Insurance Bank (2017b).

[19] One example is the Joaquin Gallegos Lara Allowance in Ecuador. For further information, see Ecuador (2020).

[20] Chile's Technical and Technological Assistance Financing Programme covers the cost of support equipment and prothesis for persons with disabilities on low incomes. See [online] https://www.senadis.gob.cl/pag/569/1649/proceso_de_financiamiento_ayudas_tecnicas_2020.

[21] One example is the Childcare to Support Working Mothers Programme in Mexico. For further information, see CONEVAL (2019).

[22] The section on communicational access is based on Ullmann and others (2018), which also contains more information on the use of ICTs differentiated by types of disability, their link with human rights and other regulatory and regional policy frameworks, as well as the promotion of ICTs for persons with disabilities how it relates to national laws, policies and programmes.

Accessibility to cultural, recreational and tourist areas continues to be deficient, as does access to natural environments such as squares and urban parks, playgrounds, swimming pools and wild areas (Boudeger, Prett and Squella, 2010).

The rapid development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) offers great possibilities for communications accessibility policies. Like all tools, however, in themselves ICTs have the potential to either increase or reduce inequalities between people with and without disabilities, depending on how their development is channelled. Table XI.2 offers a summarized view of ICTs that can promote inclusion for persons with disabilities. The potential impact of each of these technologies depends in turn on the type of disability and the scope of action (health, education, work, day-to-day autonomy, government services and participation in public life).[23]

The accessibility chain is fragmented and inadequate in Latin America.

TABLE XI.2
Technologies that have a potential impact
for the inclusion of persons with disabilities

TYPE OF TECHNOLOGY	POTENTIAL USES BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Internet	Websites: online education and training courses, social networking, shopping, banking and other services Telework Telemedicine and e-health
Mobile devices and services	SMS Emergency services in voice, text and sign languages Health applications Interactive multimedia services and applications
TV and services	Access services: text subtitles, audio subtitles, descriptive video Sign language interpreting Chat systems
Software and apps	Accessibility software: screen reading, voice to text, touchscreen typing Accessible e-books and e-documents Apps for special education and recreation Wearables
Emerging ICT	Artificial intelligence Speech to text, text to speech, text/speech to sign language

Source: Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development and others, *The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework*, Geneva, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2013.

Many of these technologies are advanced by technology companies themselves, without States becoming directly involved (Darvishy, Erocal and Manning, 2019). But there are also initiatives by government bodies, sometimes in partnership with private companies. For example, the *Vive Digital* plan of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies of Colombia provides screen-reader and magnifier software through the ConVerTIC project, which is free to download nationwide and aims to benefit over 1,200,000 Colombians with visual disabilities.[24] In Peru, the National Council for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities and the National Office for Electoral Processes set up a virtual platform for the April 2021 general elections, to enable voters to choose the polling place closest to their home. Persons with disabilities were able to indicate their type of disability so that, on voting day, the personnel assigned to the respective polling stations could take the measures accordingly, to ensure the right to vote.[25] In Argentina, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Disability Agency launched a videocall service for persons with deafness and hearing loss to answer questions about risk factors, prevention methods and other kinds of information related to the pandemic.[26]

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[23]   For further information, see p. 6 in Darvishy, Erocal and Manning (2019).
[24]   For further information, see [online] https://convertic.gov.co/641/w3-channel.html.
[25]   For further information, see Peru (2020).
[26]   For further information, see Argentina (2020).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the transition to the information society is uneven both between and within countries. Despite the potential of ICTs to expand the opportunities for participation by persons with disabilities, there are major gaps of access and use of these tools by this population. For ICTs to be a vehicle for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities, recommendations include: (i) ensure that people with disabilities have financial access technology; (ii) accelerate national plans that relate to ICTs and persons with disabilities; (iii) strengthen coordination and articulation among the different government and civil society entities to promote ICT usage among persons with disabilities; (iv) promote the development of apps or other technological tools designed to respond to the challenges of living with specific disabilities; (v) promote greater participation by persons with disabilities in developing ICT; (vi) improve statistical visibility; (vii) support qualitative studies for Latin America and the Caribbean to improve understanding of the barriers and factors that limit ICT use among persons with disabilities; (viii) foster capacity-building for ICT use; and (ix) recognize ICTs as an essential tool for fulfilling the rights and needs of persons with disabilities (Ullmann and others, 2018).

- **Anti-discrimination and affirmative action measures**

Anti-discrimination and affirmative action measures must be cross-cutting elements in any policy aimed at reducing inequalities between persons with and without disabilities. If the policies on education, labour market inclusion and social protection described above are to have a positive impact, they must include measures prohibiting la disability-related discrimination. This is expressly stipulated in the standards on employment and work in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[27]

As seen in particular in relation to policies on labour inclusion, affirmative action can form part of these policies through inclusive selection and recruitment mechanisms. There are laws, for example, that oblige firms to reserve a percentage of their positions for persons with disabilities (e.g. article 93 of Brazil's "Quota Law" (Act No. 8.213, of 24 July 1991),[28] or Ecuador's Disabilities Organizational Act).[29] Uruguay has similar legislation but it applies to the public sector only (Act No. 18.651 on the Comprehensive Protection of Persons with Disabilities).[30] A key point in enabling these measures to fulfil their purpose is ensuring effective oversight. Another form of affirmative action is certification of organizations that make the effort to ensure inclusion. An example in this respect is *Sello Chile Inclusivo* ("Chilean Seal of Inclusiveness"), a certification created in since 2012 and extended by the Government of Chile through the National Disability Service (SENADIS). It is awarded to public and private institutions of any size that take affirmative action aimed at social inclusion for persons with disabilities. Applications may be submitted by public or private institutions that comply with the legal provisions in terms of labour inclusion and universal accessibility, in two different categories: (i) an institutional management category for projects on strategic, innovative and continuously monitored good practices in inclusion; and (ii) a public spaces category for projects involving public spaces that are free for the community to use, such as parks, natural reserves, squares or museums, and represent outstanding examples of universal accessibility.[31]

[27] The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (article 5, paragraphs 3 and 4) provides that "in order to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, States Parties shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided. Specific measures which are necessary to accelerate or achieve de facto equality of persons with disabilities shall not be considered discrimination under the terms of the present Convention" (United Nations, 2007, p. 7).
[28] For further information, see ILO (2014).
[29] For further information, see Ecuador (2012).
[30] For further information, see Uruguay (2010).
[31] For further information, see [online] https://www.sellochileinclusivo.cl/sello/sello.html.

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SUGGESTIONS

E. Questions

- Comment on the following quote in relation to how the conceptualization and understanding of disability has evolved in the field of public policies in your country and the implications this has for policymaking:

  biologically speaking, human beings have no errors, no handicaps, no dysfunctions ... In biology there are no handicaps ... It is in the space of human relationships where the person defined as limited becomes limited (Maturana, quoted in Samaniego and others, 2009).

- Prioritize three policies that seem relevant to the employment of persons with disabilities in your country. Substantiate your choice. Discuss how the choice, design and implementation of the chosen policies would change for three different types of disability.

- From your own experience, select innovative ICT options that could foster the inclusion of persons with disabilities in primary and tertiary education amid rapid technological change.

- Choose a social protection programme that you are familiar with, and identify whether there are physical barriers that limit access to it for persons with disabilities.

- Propose a universal accessibility and inclusion policy (it may be in the field of labour, education, health, autonomous living or government services and participation in public life). What management tools are essential, in your view, to design and implement the policy? What do you think are the main obstacles to its implementation? How could they be solved?

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Chapter **XII**

Migrants[1]

A. Normative framework

The regulatory framework for migration is composed of a long series of international conventions, regional and bilateral treaties, and national laws.[2] The relevant international instruments include both general and specific provisions on the protection of the rights of migrants. These include provisions on refugees, stateless persons, migrant workers and their families, along with measures aimed at combating discrimination and xenophobia. In line with a rights-based approach to access to a range of social services, such as health care and education, these rights should be guaranteed without reference to the legal status of migrants and their families.

The States represented at the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, held on 19 September 2016, adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in which they undertook to frame the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compact, which was then adopted in Marrakech in December 2018,[3] calls for the establishment of principles, commitments and understandings among the signatory countries relating to international migration as viewed within the context of all its dimensions, causes, effects, associated conditions and humanitarian aspects, along with all its related issues in regard to development and human rights. The Compact recognizes the need to guarantee protection for migrants' rights based on an understanding of the fact that migration is a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development in today's globalized world (ECLAC, 2019a).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes goals and targets relating to the migrant population.[4] The Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development also establishes that international migration issues need to be approached from a long-term perspective involving the adoption of sustainable agreements, regulations and policies on migration governance (ECLAC, 2015 and 2020). At the regional level, while it is true that economic integration initiatives such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have regional agreements dealing with the movement, residence and protection of migrants in their member States, less headway has been made in Latin America and the Caribbean than in other world regions.

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[2] For further information, see ECLAC (2015, 2018a and 2019a), Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez (2018), Mejía (2018) and IPU/ILO/OHCHR (2015).

[3] For further information, see [online] https://www.un.org/es/conf/migration/global-compact-for-safe-orderly-regular-migration.shtml.

[4] The Sustainable Development Goals (and targets) associated with international migration which therefore concern migrants directly are Goal 1 (1.1, 1.3), Goal 3 (3.8, 3.c.), Goal 4 (4.1, 4.3, 4.b.), Goal 5 (5.2, 5.4, 5.6), Goal 8 (8.3, 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 8.10), Goal 10 (10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.7, 10.c.), Goal 11 (11.1), Goal 13 (13.b.), Goal 16 (16.1, 16.2, 16.9) and Goal 17 (17.3, 17.18). For further information, see IOM (2021a) and [online] https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-institutional-strategy-migration-and-sustainable-development.

Normative frameworks at the national level have also been broadened with a view to the social inclusion and protection of migrants from abuse and violations of their rights. In addition to ratifying and acceding to international agreements, some countries in the region have passed migration laws that include provisions on human trafficking[5] or on emigration and consular services and/or refer (generally implicitly) to the migrant population in their Constitutions.[6]

B. Assessment of inequalities affecting migrants

ASSESSMENT

- The situation with respect to international migration in Latin America and the Caribbean has become more complex and poses challenges in terms of risks and vulnerabilities at the various stages of the migration cycle.

- In 2019, 40.5 million people from Latin America and the Caribbean were living outside their home country (the equivalent of 6% of the region's total population and 15% of the total number of migrants in the world).

- The migrant population has not been accorded a high priority in social policy or social protection systems.

- Migrants face challenges in their countries of destination in regard to labour inclusion (decent forms of employment) and social inclusion (access to housing, health care, education and so forth).

- Irregular migration status and manifestations of xenophobia, nationalism and racism have an impact on migrants' well-being.

The term "migrant" is applied to people who have changed their place of habitual residence and gone to another country (international migration) or region within the same country (internal migration) in the hope of improving their social and economic situations.[7] The term "migration" is defined as any movement of persons, including refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people and economic migrants (IOM, 2004). Because there are so many different reasons why people decide to migrate, this issue needs to be addressed on the basis of a broad approach that takes a wide range of causal factors into account (see box XII.1).[8]

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[5]   In response to the serious human rights violations associated with the trafficking of girls and adolescent and adult women, 14 countries have passed laws to protect women migrants (ECLAC, 2019a). For further information on those laws, see Fries (2019).

[6]   For further information, see the Institutional Framework Database for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2017) or ECLAC (2019a) (tables V.9, V.10, V.A1.2 and V.A1.3).

[7]   This chapter refers particularly to international migration.

[8]   According to ECLAC (2019a, p. 153), mixed migration flows are now being seen which are composed of asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied children and adolescents, environmental migrants, migrants in irregular situations, migrants who have been smuggled across borders, trafficking victims and stranded migrants, among others.

People's decisions to remain where they are or to go elsewhere are prompted, as well as facilitated or blocked, by a range of factors that are beyond their control (OECD, 2008). Motivations for international migration can be divided into "push factors" and "pull factors". Push factors originate in migrants' home countries and generally involve a number of adverse conditions, while pull factors originate in host countries where migrants hope to find better life opportunities (OECD, 2008; Maastricht University/IOM, 2016). Both types of factors are in constant flux (OECD, 2008). Some examples are:

¡Push factors in home countries:

- Poverty and inequality

- Economic crises (e.g. unemployment) and social crises (e.g. famine)

- Political crises, instability and persecution (e.g. military dictatorships)

- Civil wars

- Violence (including gender violence) and unsafe conditions

- Natural disasters (e.g. floods, landslides)

- Climate change/climate instability (e.g. droughts)

- Discrimination (e.g. on the basis of gender, race, ethnic identity or religion)

Pull factors in host countries:

- Greater economic and social opportunities (employment opportunities, higher wages, educational opportunities, health status, safety)

- Economic, political and social stability

- Family reunification

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of C. Maldonado, J. Martínez and R. Martínez, "Protección social y migración: una mirada desde las vulnerabilidades a lo largo del ciclo de la migración y de la vida de las personas", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2018/62), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2018; Maastricht University/International Organization for Migration (IOM), *The Push and Pull Factors of Asylum-Related Migration: a Literature Review*, Brussels, European Union, 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Migration then and now", *OECD Insights: International Migration*, Paris, 2008; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Children on the move", 31 August 2016 [online] https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1382-push-and-pull-factors-affecting-children-in-migration.html.

Note: For further information, see UNICEF (2016).

The territorial dimension is thus one of the axes of the social inequalities, limitations and opportunities facing migrants. The gaps that exist in both the home and host countries are key factors in determining migration patterns and migrants' propensity to remain (temporarily, on a seasonal basis or permanently) or to go elsewhere in search of better living conditions (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018).
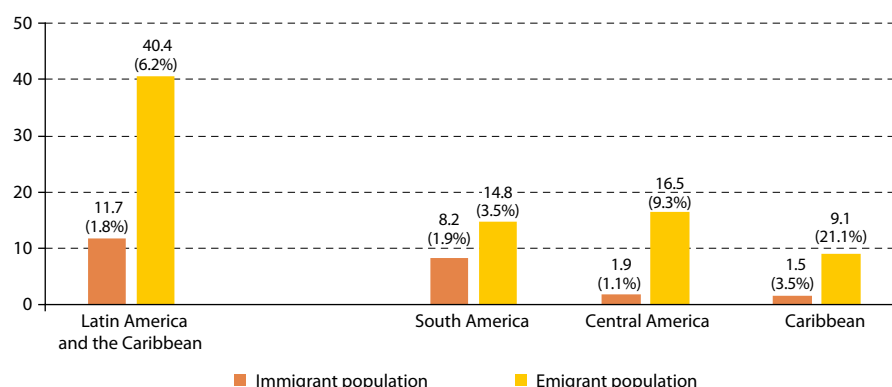
Different countries use different criteria for determining who is and who is not a migrant, and this, in combination with their varying methods of compiling the relevant data, reduce the comparability of national statistics. One of the recommendations regarding international migration statistics made by the United Nations is to draw a distinction between short-term migrants (those who remain in the host country for between three months and one year) and long-term migrants (who remain for at least a year) (IOM, 2017). In short, the term "migrant" can represent a wide range of situations, needs, motivations and risks. Differentiated policies on migration are therefore called for.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has both outward and inward migration flows (see figure XII.1), with the main patterns being extraregional migration, historical immigration from overseas, intraregional flows in both directions (see figure XII.2) and

planned or forced return migration (for the definitions of these and other terms, see box XII.2). In 2019, according to estimates of the United Nations Population Division, 40.5 million people from Latin America and the Caribbean were living outside their home country (the equivalent of 6% of the region's total population and around 15% of the total number of migrants in the world):1 out of every 5 citizens of the Caribbean, 1 out of every 10 Central Americans and 1 out of every 30 South Americans (ECLAC, 2019a).

FIGURE XII.1
Latin America and the Caribbean (47 countries): immigrant and emigrant populations, by region of origin and birth, 2019[a]
(Millions of persons and percentages of the total population)

■ Immigrant population   ■ Emigrant population

2019
40.5 million

PEOPLE FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN LIVING OUTSIDE OF THEIR HOME COUNTRY

6%
OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OF THE REGION

15%
OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MIGRANTS IN THE WORLD

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago.
[a] The countries and territories included in these statistics, by region, are: South America: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Suriname and Uruguay; Central America: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama; the Caribbean: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Turks and Caicos Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and United States Virgin Islands.

BOX XII.2
Selected international migration terms

Country of origin: A country that is the source of a migration flow, whether legal or illegal.

Country of transit: A country through which an individual migrant or group of migrants move on their way to their destination in another country.

Deportation: The act of a State in the exercise of its sovereignty in removing an alien from its territory to another place after refusal of admission or termination of permission to remain.

Diaspora: Any people or ethnic population that leaves their traditional ethnic homeland, whether individually or as members of organized networks and associations, and that maintain ties to their place of origin.

Displacement: A forced removal of a person from his/her home or country, often as a result of armed conflict or natural disasters.

Emigration: The act of departing from one territory with a view to settling in another.

Exodus: Isolated and sporadic movements of groups out of their country of origin.

Expulsion: An act by an authority of a State with the intention and with the effect of securing the removal of a foreign person or persons against their will.

Extrarregional migration: The movement of persons from and to other regions.

Feminization of migration: The growing participation of women in migration flows.

Forced return: The compulsory return of an individual to the country of origin, country of transit or a third country on the basis of an administrative or judicial act.

Foreigner (or alien): A person who is not a national of a given State. The term includes stateless persons, asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers.

Immigration: A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settling there.

Intrarregional migration: The movement of persons from one country to another within the same region. With the increased economic integration brought about by various regional integration agreements, these migration flows are on the rise.

Mixed flows: Complex population movements that include asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants and other migrants.

Permit: Documentation, usually issued by a government authority, which allows something to exist or someone to perform certain acts or services. Examples include residence permits and work permits.

Receiving country: A country of destination or a third country that receives a person from another country. In the case of return migration or repatriation, the receiving country is also the country of origin. A country that has agreed to receive a certain number of refugees or migrants on a yearly basis by presidential, ministerial or parliamentary decision.

Refugee (recognized): A person who, "owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country" (UNHCR, 2010, p.14).

Repatriation: The personal right of a refugee or a prisoner of war to return to his/her country of nationality under specific conditions.

Return migration: The movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence, usually after having spent at least one year in another country. The return may or may not be voluntary and includes voluntary repatriation.

Right to leave: Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his or her own.

Stateless person: A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law. As such, a stateless person lacks those rights attributable to nationality or to the status of a legal and habitual resident in the State of temporary residence. Such persons also have no right of return in the event that they travel.

Smuggling of migrants: An international movement that involves a migrant person's unauthorized (illegal) entry into a State (irregular migration) on the basis of a direct or indirect commercial transaction that generates economic gains or other material benefits for the smuggler. Migrants who are victims of smuggling may be subject to such practices as bribing, kidnapping and extortion.

Stranded migrant: Persons who are detained for a prolonged period of time, have had their applications for asylum rejected or are in an irregular migration situation.

Trafficking in persons: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. The exploitation may take the form of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The concept of trafficking in persons may be applied to both internal and international movements of persons.
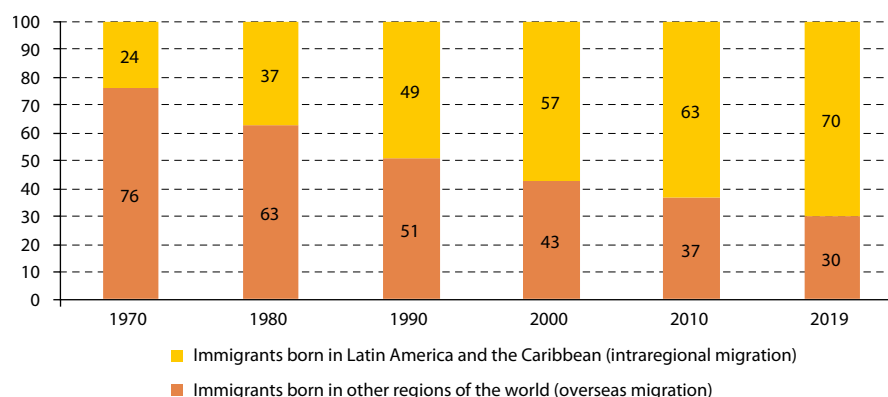
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019; International Organization for Migration (IOM), *World Migration Report*, Geneva, 2017, and "Glossary on migration", *International Migration Law*, Geneva, 2004 [online] https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_1_en.pdf; Organization of American States (OAS), *International Migration in the Americas Third Report of the Continuous Reporting System on International Migration in the Americas (SICREMI) 2015*, Washington, D.C., 2015; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva, 2010; United Nations, "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime", *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (A/RES/55/25), New York, January 2001.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019 (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019.

In recent decades, intraregional migration has been on the rise. Whereas in 1970 it accounted for 24% of all migration, by 2019 it represented more than 70% of the total (see figure XII.2) and has led to the emergence of new migration corridors (Carrasco and Suárez, 2018; ECLAC, 2015; Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). It has thus become an item that now figures prominently on the social and political agenda of the region.[9] To differing degrees, all the countries of the region are countries of destination, of origin and/or of transit, and they all are therefore faced with challenges in relation to violations of the rights of migrants and discrimination against them, both when they are on the move and when they are seeking to integrate into society either in their host country or upon returning to their home country (ECLAC, 2015; Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). Diagram XII.1 depicts the possible stages in the migration cycle and the relationships between place of origin, transit, destination and possible return, along with the transnational space generated by the various flows and ties associated with migration (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018).

FIGURE XII.2
Immigrant population, by place of origin, 1970–2019[a]
(Percentages)

- ■ Immigrants born in Latin America and the Caribbean (intraregional migration)
- ■ Immigrants born in other regions of the world (overseas migration)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019.

[a] The countries and territories included in these statistics are: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, British Virgin Islands, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands and Uruguay.

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[9] A large number of people are currently emigrating from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and settling in Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and some Caribbean countries. In recent years, the flow of people moving out of Central America has increased in both size and visibility as many of these people travel through Mexico on their way to the United States. Cooperative initiatives have been undertaken by a number of countries in connection with both of these migrant populations. In the case of Venezuelan emigrants, various assistance mechanisms have been devised, such as the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), as well as political undertakings such as the Quito Process and inter-American working groups such as those founded by the Organization of American States (OAS). In the case of Central America, the Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and South-Southeast Mexico, which was developed in 2018 by 21 United Nations bodies, including ECLAC, is based on four pillars: economic development, social well-being, environmental sustainability and the migration cycle (ECLAC, 2019a).

DIAGRAM XII.1
Possible stages in the migration cycle
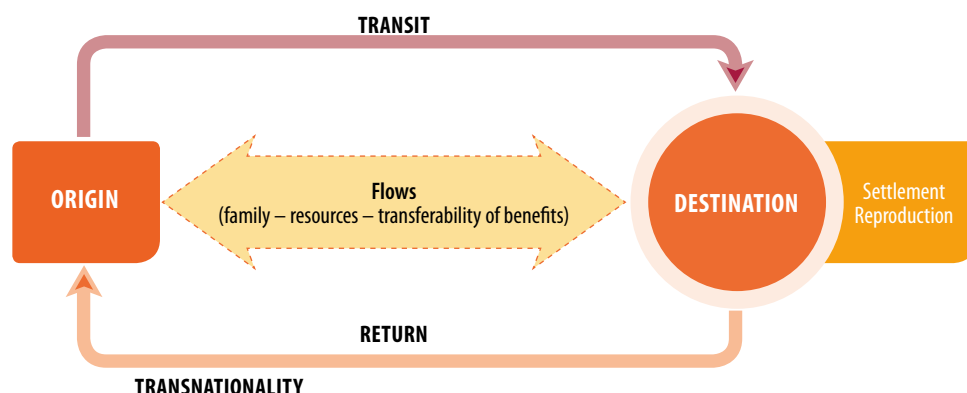
Source: C. Maldonado, J. Martínez and R. Martínez, "Protección social y migración: una mirada desde las vulnerabilidades a lo largo del ciclo de la migración y de la vida de las personas", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2018/62), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2018.

In 1970, there were 104 male migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean for every 100 female migrants. In 2010, there were 95 males for every 100 women (Stefoni, 2018). Thus, intraregional migration in some of the region's migration corridors is becoming increasingly feminized, although the situation varies across countries (ECLAC/ILO, 2017; Stefoni, 2018).[10] Gender-related vulnerabilities of adult and adolescent women and girls are heightened during migratory movements, with some of the most extreme manifestations of those vulnerabilities being human trafficking[11] and migrant smuggling.[12]

The life-cycle perspective is a highly useful one for the analysis of migration because it encompasses the needs for social protection and the differentiated risk levels that may be intensified at the various stages of the migration cycle. Access to health services, education and social security coverage, among others, largely depends on how broad the coverage provided by the countries' social protection systems is (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). For example, migrant children are doubly vulnerable, and in recent years the number of accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children has soared, with the latter group being the main object of concern.[13] In addition to being vulnerable to such threats as violence, exploitation, abuse and trafficking, migrant children and adolescents are prone to dropping out of school and being used as child labour and are exposed to various sorts of traumas and psychosocial disorders. Adults, on the other hand, are at the appropriate stage of life to engage in labour migration, with the key factor being the success of the working-age migrant population in gaining entry to the formal labour market, since this is a gateway to membership in social protection systems and to the possibility of securing recognition of foreign qualifications or diplomas that will facilitate their entry into appropriate forms of employment. Another source of vulnerability for this population group has to do with pre-existing membership in a contributory social protection system and the difficulty that emigrants and returning migrants

> The life-cycle perspective is a highly useful one for the analysis of migration because it encompasses the needs for social protection and the differentiated risk levels that may be intensified at the various stages of the migration cycle.

[10]   Canales and Rojas (2018) find that most Mexican and Central American migrants are male, whereas more migrants from other countries are female. In the case of Mexico, there are 1.09 men for every woman in cumulative migration totals, and the corresponding indicator for the northern triangle of Central American countries is 1.14. For the other countries, the ratio is reversed, with women migrants outnumbering male migrants by 13.5%. Carrasco and Suárez (2018) find that a majority of recent immigrants to Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Mexico are male (36% more male than female migrants in the case of Mexico).

[11]   Data for 2016 indicate that women and girls are the main victims of human trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean and that most of them are trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. Other forms of exploitation include illegal adoption and forced begging. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, for example, 170 victims of illegal adoptions were identified between 2014 and 2017 (UNODC, 2018).

[12]   For further information on these issues, see UNODC (n/d) and IOM (2021c).

[13]   Between 2013 and 2017, a total of 180,000 unaccompanied children and adolescents from northern Central America were held in detention. The figure climbs to 244,000 if the cases of Mexican children and adolescents are counted as well (Canales and Rojas, 2018). For further information, see UNICEF (2017) and Johnson (2019).

have in transferring the associated benefits from one system to another. This is the stage at which gaps in contributions to retirement funds are most likely to occur. For older adults, the biggest challenges have to do with policies on the transferability of pension benefits and health insurance coverage. When older adults return to their home countries, they may lose access to payments and benefits that they had acquired in their host country owing to the lack of transnational transfer mechanisms (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018).

The difficulties experienced by migrants are often aggravated by ethnic/racial discrimination that has a negative impact on their well-being and enjoyment of their rights (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). In 2010, according to census information from the countries of the region, the more than 83,000 indigenous persons who were international immigrants represented a very small percentage of the indigenous population in each country of destination (less than 3.3%), with the exception of Costa Rica, where 12.4% of all indigenous persons in the country had been born outside of its borders. Other groups, such as Haitians, are the object of overlapping or intersecting discrimination on the basis of their national origin and racial discrimination (ECLAC, 2019a).

The vulnerabilities and disadvantages experienced by the migrant population, and particularly those groups of migrants who have to deal with multilayered forms of discrimination, are exacerbated under emergency conditions (see box XII.3).

BOX XII.3
Migrants and COVID-19

The impact of the pandemic on migrants is reflected in three interrelated areas in which their pre-existing vulnerabilities and disadvantages have been heightened:

- Health

The substandard living conditions of migrants who find themselves in vulnerable positions expose them to the health hazards posed by the pandemic while, at the same time, they have only limited means of protecting themselves. In addition to living and/or working in substandard, overcrowded conditions, they lack access to other basic services such as water, sanitation services and food. Various kinds of barriers also make it hard for them to secure health care (including mental health, psychosocial services and sexual and reproductive health care). Those barriers include legal considerations associated with their (regular or irregular) migration status, cost, a lack of familiarity with the cost-free services to which they are entitled, language barriers, cultural aspects, fear of deportation or other penalties, and discrimination. One example of actions taken to redress this situation is the Peruvian government's approval of temporary health-care coverage for refugees and migrants who test positive for COVID-19 or who fear that they may have become infected.

- Socioeconomic conditions

The socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic have been especially severe for migrants who have unstable sources of income and limited access to benefits, such as migrants working in the informal sector of the economy who lack access to decent forms of employment and social protection. This group is more exposed to the socioeconomic shocks generated by reductions in income, mounting unemployment and rising commodity prices. As an example of the actions taken in response to this situation, as of November 2020, 32 countries of the region had implemented new social protection measures or adapted existing ones to address the pandemic's effect on poor and vulnerable segments of the population. Three of these measures explicitly include migrants within their target group: the Panama Solidarity Plan[a], the *Colombia está Contigo* ("Colombia Is with You") Vulnerable Migrant Programme[b] and the economic support measures put in place for Venezuelan migrants in Peru.[c]

The drop in remittances caused by the loss of jobs and wages, together with the closure of money transfer agencies because they were not classified as essential services, has been a blow to migrants' families in their home countries who use those funds to cover basic necessities, and those families have become poorer than before as a result.[c] In response, Guatemala[e] and El Salvador[f] have taken steps to enable migrants working abroad to send back remittances at no cost.

- Human rights and protection

Border closures and other restrictions on people's movements put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 have had a severe impact on the rights of many migrants who may find themselves in dangerous situations, such as unaccompanied children and adolescents. Border closures, together with the socioeconomic crisis, may, for example, drive migrants to seek out migrant smugglers, who may traffic them or exploit them in other ways.

The closure of national borders has also left many migrant workers stranded in destination or transit countries, while those who lose their jobs are at risk of losing their visas and may, as a result, be placed in temporary, overcrowded migrant detention centres.

Measures that have been introduced to deal with these problems include the following: (i) in Ecuador, the allowable time period for Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador to apply for a humanitarian visa has been extended up to the end of the state of emergency; (ii) in Chile, an online system has been set up that automatically extends people's visas and residence permits for six months upon request; and (iii) in Panama, stranded migrants have been granted refuge until such time as restrictions on international travel are lifted.

Situations may arise in which migrants are forcibly returned to their home countries, which are not in a position to receive them safely or to properly reintegrate them into that society. During the COVID-19 pandemic, return migration flows have begun to be observed and may continue owing to job losses and the absence of social safety nets in migrants' host countries.[g]

The fear of becoming infected with COVID-19 has exacerbated what were already serious problems of xenophobia, racism and stigmatization. Under crisis conditions, the urgent need for inclusive policy measures for migrants becomes even more evident. These measures need to include universal health care as a tool for coping with COVID-19 and measures for meeting the needs of migrants, whatever their migration status may be, and addressing the conditions that place them in vulnerable positions.

While the outlook is a complicated one, the crisis also offers an opportunity to evaluate the contributions that migrants make to sustainable development and their potential contributions to the recovery of the region's societies once the pandemic has passed. The pandemic has served to highlight the contributions that migrants make to the region's societies and economies, as many of them are employed as essential workers in national health systems, as caregivers and in the food supply chain. Examples along these lines can be found in Peru, Chile and Argentina, where refugees who are doctors, nurses and other types of health workers who were trained abroad are working in those countries to combat the pandemic.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of A. Carvajal, "Más de 34.000 migrantes han llegado a Cúcuta para cruzar a Venezuela", *El Tiempo*, 15 April 2020 [online] https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/regreso-de-migrantes-venezolanos-a-su-pais-por-la-crisis-del-coronavirus-484642; International Organization for Migration (IOM), "How are remittances being affected by COVID-19?", 2020 [online] https://rosanjose.iom.int/site/en/blog/how-are-remittances-being-affected-covid-19; El Salvador, "Gobierno lanza iniciativa de envío de remesas con costo cero y descuentos en mayo", 2 May 2020 [online] https://www.presidencia.gob.sv/gobierno-lanza-iniciativa-de-envio-de-remesas-con-costo-cero-y-descuentos-en-mayo/; Panama, "Plan Panamá Solidario arrancará la próxima semana", 20 March 2020 [online] https://www.presidencia.gob.pa/Noticias/Plan-Panama-Solidario-arrancara-la-proxima-semana; *Peru21*, "Venezolanos en Perú recibirán apoyo económico para subsistir cuarentena por COVID-19", 1 April 2020 [online] https://peru21.pe/peru/venezolanos-en-peru-recibiran-apoyo-economico-durante-cuarentena-adelanto-el-ministro-de-relaciones-exteriores-coronavirus-covid-19-comunidad-internacional-noticia/; United Nations, "COVID-19 and people on the move", *Policy Brief*, June 2020 [online] https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_people_on_the_move.pdf.

[a] For further information, see Panama (2020).

[b] For further information, see [online] http://portal.gestiondelriesgo.gov.co/.

[c] For further information, see *Peru21* (2020).

[d] Data for the Central American countries indicate that remittances have been dropping off since March, and estimates for Latin America and the Caribbean point to a downturn of 19.3%. For further information, see IOM (2020).

[e] For further information, see [online] https://www.guatemala.gob.gt/guatemaltecos-varados-en-ee-uu-retornaron-al-pais/.

[f] For further information, see El Salvador (2020).

[g] For example, see Carvajal (2020).

Migration status is a factor that interacts with other axes of the social inequality matrix. The difficulties faced by migrants that are inherent to their situation, especially if they are in an irregular situation[14] or are stateless,[15] are compounded by discrimination, abuse and a lack of opportunities because of their socioeconomic situation, gender, age, ethnic or racial identity, disability or factors related to their location in the country of origin, transit or destination, all of which gives rise to varying types and degrees of vulnerability and risk (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018).

1. Poverty

In estimating the probabilities that an immigrant and a non-migrant with the same socioeconomic traits (age, sex, education, area of residence and household type, among other things) will be poor, countries can be classified as falling into one of three different groups: (i) countries where poverty rates are higher among migrants than non-migrants (positive effect), such as Chile (where the poverty rate is 5.9 percentage points higher among migrants than non-migrants), Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic; (ii) countries where there is no significant difference between the two groups' poverty rates (neutral effect), such as Argentina (the rate among migrants is 1.3 percentage points higher) and Panama; and (iii) countries where poverty is lower among migrants than non-migrants (negative effect), such as Brazil (the poverty rate among migrants is 3.4 percentage points lower than among non-migrants) and Guatemala (see figure XII.3) (ECLAC, 2019a).

FIGURE XII.3
Latin America (9 countries): difference in
poverty rates, by migration status[a]
(Percentage points)
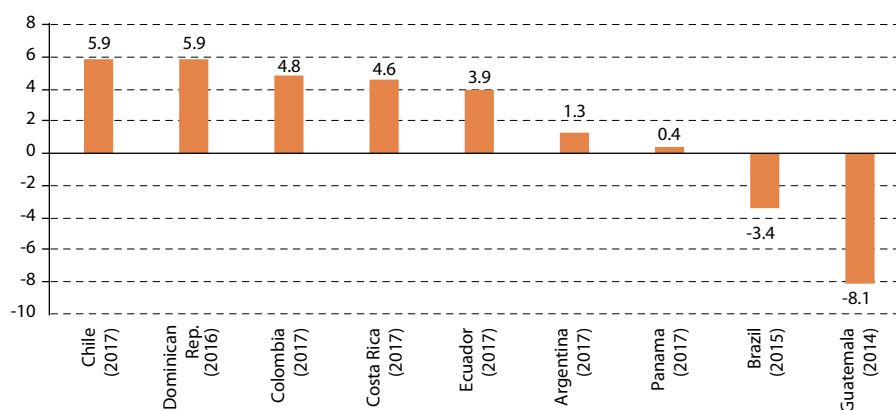
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019.
[a] Estimated marginal effect of migration status on likelihood of being poor. The value of the effect is seen as the difference between the two probabilities.
/ Panama / Brazil

> The probability that a migrant will be poor is greater than the probability of a non-migrant being poor in a majority of the countries in the region for which data are available.
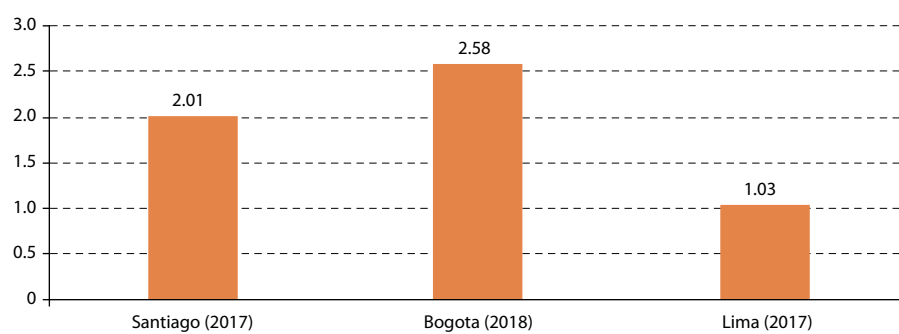
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[14] IOM (2018) has noted that an irregular status may be occasioned by the fact of having crossed a border without authorization, overstaying after a visa has expired, engaging in activities not permitted under the visa that a person holds (e.g. working), being born into an irregular situation or remaining in a country after a visa or asylum application has been denied. Migrants in irregular situations can be arrested, detained and deported without being able to avail themselves of due process guarantees to defend themselves (IPU/ILO/OHCHR, 2015).
[15] UNHCR (2014) has noted that persons may be rendered stateless by policy, legal or administrative guidelines or by the movement of borders between countries. The absence of a connection between a State and an individual is what causes a person to be stateless. Stateless individuals are often treated as irregular immigrants. For further information on statelessness, see UNHCR (2019).

2. Housing

One of the main problems in relation to migrants' living conditions is overcrowding (whether while they are in transit, when they return to their home country or when they are in the country of destination). Census information shows this to be the case in migrants' host countries: according to national census data, 33% of migrants residing in Santiago, Chile (2017), live in overcrowded conditions; 37% of those living in Bogota, Colombia (2018), do so; and overcrowding is a problem for 23% of the migrant residents of Lima, Peru(2017) . Overcrowding is more common among the migrant population than local populations (see figure XII.4). There are areas in some cities where the overcrowding rate in migrant households is up to three times higher than among the local population (ECLAC, 2020).

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "The impact of COVID-19: an opportunity to reaffirm the central role of migrants' human rights in sustainable development", *COVID-19 Reports*, Santiago, November 2020.
[a] The ratio is expressed as the quotient between the percentages of migrants and non-migrants subject to overcrowding.

3. Labour market

The unemployment rates among recent and long-term migrants (less than and more than five years in the host country, respectively) and the sectors of the economy in which they work differ from the corresponding rates and sectors of employment of the local population; definite differences in these indicators for men and women are also apparent.[16] In the case of unemployment rates, three main patterns can be distinguished: (i) they are lower for long-term migrants than for the local population; (ii) they are lower for the local population than for recent migrants (except in Chile); and (iii) they are higher for women than for men in all the subgroups except in Argentina (long-term migrants) and Mexico (see figure XII.5) (ECLAC, 2019a).

In all the countries of the region, migrants are overrepresented among paid domestic workers relative to the local population (see figure XII.6). The domestic service sector is the biggest employer of immigrant women in Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile and Costa Rica (ECLAC/ILO, 2017). Women migrants employed as domestic workers come from various social segments, and the reasons why they have chosen to become migrants differ as well. In many cases, their previous work histories are unrelated to paid domestic work (ECLAC, 2019a).

STATISTICS

In comparison with the local population, migrants are overrepresented among paid domestic workers in all the countries.

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[16] According to Sabates-Wheeler and Koettl (2010), as quoted in ECLAC (2019a), discrimination against migrants as manifested in relation to their social and labour rights makes them a cheaper pool of labour for employers than local workers are (ECLAC, 2019a).

FIGURE XII.5
Latin America (6 countries): unemployment rates for
the local population, recent migrants and log-term migrants,[a]
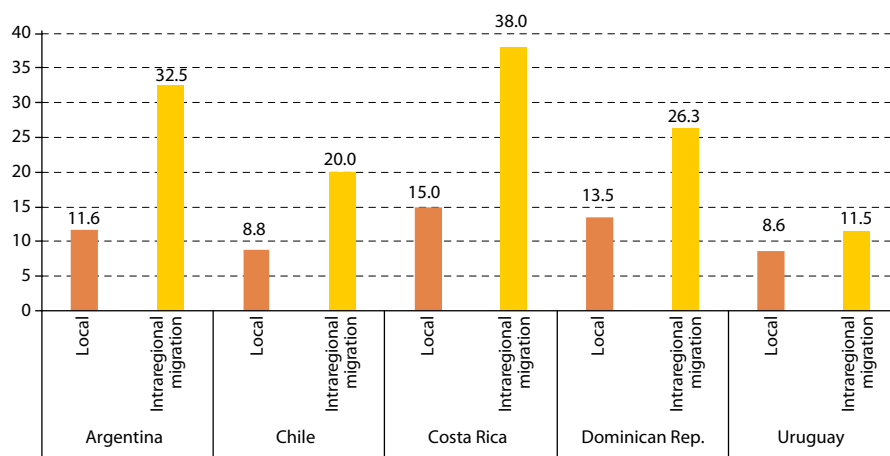by sex, around 2015
(Percentages)
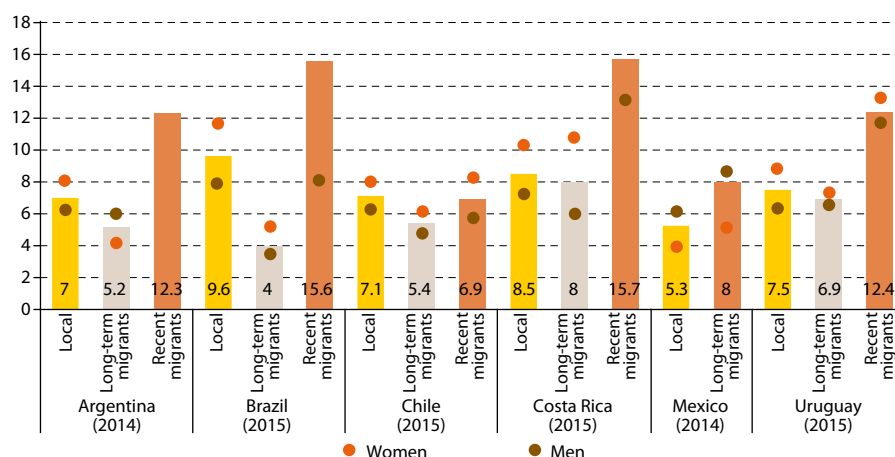
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission
for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019* (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1),
Santiago, 2019.

[a] Recent migrants are defined as those who have been in the host country for less than five years. Long-term migrants
are defined as those who have been in the host country for more than five years.

FIGURE XII.6
Latin America (5 countries): women aged 15 years or
over who are employed as paid domestic workers, around 2015[a]
(Percentages)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019*
(LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2019.

[a] Dominican Republic: n < 40 cases.

In the case of male migrants, some of the main sectors of employment are agriculture
(Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Paraguay), construction
(Argentina, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic) and financial services (Chile, Mexico,
Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay) (ECLAC/ILO, 2017). The levels of skills and
qualifications among immigrants vary a great deal, however (ECLAC/ILO, 2017), and it

is therefore to be expected that immigrants with lower levels of formal education are concentrated in low-skill occupations while their more highly educated peers will be employed in more skilled occupational categories.

Research on the high levels of labour informality among immigrant workers indicates, for example, that in 2011 in Argentina, 67.4% of immigrants originally from South American countries were employed in the informal sector of the economy, compared to 41.7% of non-migrant workers and 41.8% of internal migrants. In Costa Rica, 29% of all migrant workers and 32% of female migrant workers are employed in the informal economy. In 2012 in the Dominican Republic, 83.6% of Haitian migrant workers employed in the farm sector were working under informal arrangements, while the corresponding figure for the construction industry was 91% (ECLAC/ILO, 2017).

4. Remittance flows and costs

Increases in migrants' income levels have an impact on the well-being and developmental progress of their families, either directly (if they live together) or indirectly via remittances (IOM, 2017).[17] These flows are very important for some countries, and in some cases exceed the levels of official development assistance that they receive (ECLAC, 2018a; IOM, 2017). Their economic importance depends on the production structure of each recipient country. For example, in 2017, remittances accounted for over 15% of GDP in such countries as Honduras (20.3%) and El Salvador (19.3%), whereas, in others, they were equivalent to less than 3% of GDP (2.6% in Mexico, 0.9% in Costa Rica and 0.7% in Panama) (data from 2019, ECLAC (2021)). ECLAC estimates (2019a) that the poverty rates for the total populations of the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras would climb by between 1.5% and 2.4% if no remittances were received. Remittances represent the highest percentages of the population's total income in Honduras (5.2%), El Salvador (4.9%) and the Dominican Republic (4.8%) (ECLAC, 2019a). It has also been found that 51% of the Guatemalans who received remittances in 2016 lived in rural areas (ECLAC, 2018b).

The cost involved in sending remittances remains high in some specific corridors but varies depending on the channels and agencies used for that purpose. For example, in the Caribbean, the cost of sending funds through the most expensive remittance corridor (from the United States to Cuba[18]) is twice as high as it is for the least expensive one (Spain to the Dominican Republic) (Mejía, 2018). A study published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that the cost of sending funds tends to be higher for South-South remittance corridors than for North-South corridors because there is less competition in those markets, paving the way for informal mechanisms (Mandrile, 2014, quoted in Stefoni, 2018). World Bank data (2019 and 2021) indicate that the average cost of sending less than US$ 200 to the Latin American and Caribbean region was equivalent to 5.52% of the sum involved when it was sent from the United States and to 6.20% of the sum when it was sent from various other regions,[19] but was equivalent to 6.83% when sent from one location to another within the same region.

STATISTICS

In 2017, remittances represented over 20.3% of GDP in Honduras and 19.3% in El Salvador.

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[17]   According to data from Fundación BBVA Bancomer/CONAPO (2018, quoted in Padilla Pérez, Santamaría and Villarreal, 2020), the largest share of remittances in Mexico are used to buy food and clothing (80%, on average), while the remaining 20% is used to pay for health care and education, to pay off debts and to start a business. In Ecuador, a recipient may invest as much as 10% of the remittance on production activities (González, Viera and Ordeñana, 2009, quoted in Padilla Pérez, Santamaría and Villarreal, 2020).

[18]   The average cost in this remittance corridor was 9.41% in the first quarter of 2019 and 13.98% in the fourth quarter of 2018 (World Bank, 2021).

[19]   Ecuador is the lowest-cost destination, at 3.77% during the first quarter of 2019 (World Bank, 2021).

C. Priority policies for reducing inequalities faced by migrants

Some of the high-priority policies for reducing the inequalities faced by migrants focus on:

- Regularizing the status of migrants in order to reduce their vulnerability and to facilitate efforts to address possible irregularities, human trafficking and mixed migration flows.

- Promoting access to education and health care for all migrants. .

- Ensuring that migrants' social benefits are transferrable.

- Reducing the cost of remittances and of financial inclusion as a means of multiplying the beneficial economic impact on migrants' home communities.

Creating more decent job opportunities in migrants' countries of origin is an essential step in order to make migration an option rather than a necessity, and public policies in destination countries should focus on creating conditions that are conducive to equality between local and migrant populations rather than being confined to managing migration flows (ECLAC, 2018a), especially in view of the preponderance of labour migration in Latin America. The promotion of integrated social development policies at the national, subnational and local levels is fundamental, as is the creation of inclusive job markets in countries of origin, transit and destination through the adoption of measures to ensure and safeguard decent job opportunities in line with the principle of economic and cultural integration.

Above and beyond their specific objectives, policies must be based on a recognition of migrants as rights holders and should provide long-term responses to international migration issues (ECLAC, 2019a). All related initiatives and policies should also embody and reinforce gender, ethno-racial, generational, territorial and cross-cutting human rights approaches (ECLAC, 2019a).

1. Regularization of migration status

Access to an identity and policies aimed at promoting social and labour inclusion are closely linked. In order to help reduce migrants' vulnerability, steps therefore need to be taken to provide access to local documentation and to implement regularization policies. Information campaigns and legal (and especially consular) advisory services are examples of some of the tools that can be used at different stages in the migration cycle. Coordination between labour and migration policies is of pivotal importance in removing obstacles to the use of employment contracts and preventing people from losing their residence permits if they lose their jobs (ECLAC, 2019a and 2019b).[20] Greater effort also needs to be devoted to the quantification of irregular movements, since a fuller understanding of the nature and scale of these flows will facilitate the design and implementation of more effective strategies.

POLICIES

In order to help make migrants less vulnerable, steps need to be taken to provide access to local documentation and to implement regularization policies.

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[20]   In response to the diversification of migration flows and the appearance of new ones in the region, a number of transit and destination countries have instead introduced restrictive measures in an effort to step up the control and protection of their borders. In November 2015, for example, Nicaragua closed its southern border in response to an increase in the flow of Cuban and Haitian migrants and, in December 2015, Costa Rica blocked Cubans from entering the country and then, in August 2016, closed its borders to all irregular migrants (IOM, 2017).

Examples of the different regularization processes —some of which are universal in nature while others target specific nationalities and/or employment sectors— launched by some countries include the following:

- In Costa Rica, the Directorate-General for Migration, in coordination with the National Children's Foundation (PANI) and the National Apprenticeship Institute, assist foreign students under 18 years of age who wish to regularize their migration status or persons under that age whose migration status is irregular and who wish to become students (Canales and Rojas, 2018).

- Under the 2006 Agreement to Regulate the Immigration and National Labour Situation of Peru and Ecuador in the Border Regions and the Ecuador-Peru Migration Statute, Ecuador issued 2,000 work visas to Peruvian migrants and their families and in later years has issued 2,993 protection visas and 232 work visas (Stefoni, 2018).

- In 2010, under Argentina's *Patria Grande* homeland regularization programme for immigrants from MERCOSUR member countries, the migration status of approximately 424,000 persons, most of whom were from Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was regularized; 100,000 of these persons received permanent residency and another 126,000 received temporary residence permits. Regularization procedures were introduced for persons from the Dominican Republic and Senegal in 2013 and for Korean nationals in 2014 (Stefoni, 2018).

- In Paraguay, day-long regularization events have been held under the Agreement on Residence for Citizens of the States Parties of MERCOSUR and the MERCOSUR Agreement on Internal Migration Regularization. The most recent such event was held in November 2014 (Stefoni, 2018).

- Since the reinstatement of a democratic system in Chile, regularization campaigns (referred to as "amnesties") have been carried out in 1998, 2007 and 2018 (ECLAC, 2019a).

- In the second half of 2019, Colombia introduced a temporary measure called "First the Children"[21] under which Colombian nationality can be conferred on children born to Venezuelan parents on Colombian territory since 19 August 2015.

- In June 2019, the government of Trinidad and Tobago started up a regularization procedure under which 16,523 Venezuelans received an exemption from work permit requirements (initially valid for six months) that allows them to work and entitles them to health and education services (ECLAC, 2019a).

2. Access to health, education and housing

The full range of health services should be adapted to accommodate the arrival of migrants, sometimes en masse, both in transit countries and in countries of destination (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). In Colombia, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection has designed a plan for organizing the health sector's response to migration-related demands, mainly due to the huge influx of Venezuelan migrants. Colombians returning to their country, immigrants having a regular migration status and Venezuelan immigrants who are in possession of Special Stay Permits can register with the General Social Security Health System (SGSSS). Immigrants with an irregular migration status are entitled to initial emergency medical care.

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[21]   For further information, see Colombia (2021).

POLICIES

Steps need to be taken to facilitate the recognition and accreditation of courses of study completed abroad. The certification of prior studies and qualifications helps children, adolescents and young people enrol in educational institutions and is extremely helpful for migrant workers seeking to improve and expand their employment opportunities.

In addition to providing access to compulsory education for migrant children and adolescents, steps need to be taken to facilitate the recognition and accreditation of courses of study completed abroad. The certification of prior studies and qualifications helps children, adolescents and young people enrol in educational institutions and is extremely helpful for migrant workers seeking to improve and expand their employment opportunities. Multilateral agreements in this field can facilitate this process (Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). Some important lessons can be learned from Chile's experience: migrants' children should be enrolled in primary and basic education,[22] and the public health-care system should provide services to all foreign children and adolescents under the age or 18 and to all pregnant women[23] (OAS, 2015). Mexico provides another example with its "Education without Borders" programme. Launched in 2017, this programme's objectives are: to uphold the right to education of Mexican nationals who are returning to their country, migrants, refugees and persons who have been granted supplementary protection measures; to provide educational counselling services to help children and adolescents start, continue and complete their primary and secondary educations and to secure certification of those studies; to integrate migrants into basic and upper secondary educational institutions; to set up public education modules to make instruction available at the 11 repatriation stations along the border; and to help students enter the national education system even if they do not have academic or identity documents.[24]

Government housing services generally help people find places at shelters or in temporary settlements. Given the urban housing shortage in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, lessons need to be learned from experiences with measures adopted in other world regions. These measures have included rental vouchers, the repurposing of empty buildings and subsidies for housing improvements and additions.[25] In Chile, for example, nearly 10,000 housing subsidies were furnished to migrants between 2010 and 2017; applicants had to be in possession of permanent residence permits and demonstrate that they had been residing in the country for at least five years, but in 2014 the latter requirement was rescinded.[26]

3. Transferability of benefits

The low priority that social security institutions place on entering into agreements and disseminating information about the established procedures and requirements for transferring entitlements poses a challenge in this regard. The lack or shortcomings of mechanisms for coordinating the operations of social security systems in countries of origin, transit and destination are also a problem, as is the absence of an appropriate institutional structure for this purpose (ECLAC, 2019a; Maldonado, Martínez and Martínez, 2018). In addition to bilateral agreements, some examples of advances in this connection are the following:

- Decision No. 545 of the Andean Community's Andean Labour Migration Instrument of 2003[27] grants Andean migrant workers the right to register with one of the social security systems or social benefits systems operating in the receiving country and entitles them to the full benefits provided under that system in accordance with the relevant regulations currently in force. It also guarantees the right to have the contributions paid in any member country credited for access to the corresponding social security or other benefits in another country.

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[22] For further information, see Ministry of Education (2021)
[23] For further information, see Ministry of Health (2017).
[24] For further information, see National Institute for Adult Education (2019).
[25] For further information, see Triveno and Nielsen (2020).
[26] For further information, see Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (n/d) and University of Chile (2020).
[27] For further information, see Andean Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs (2003).

- The Multilateral Social Security Agreement of the Southern Common Market, which was signed in 1997 and has been in force since 2005,[28] authorizes the provision of monetary and health benefits in accordance with the legislation of each MERCOSUR member country. Periods of coverage or contributions paid while in the territory of any of the States parties are counted towards the accrual of old age, disability and death benefits.

- The Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security, which entered into force in October 2011 for the countries of Latin America together with Spain and Portugal,[29] not only represents a long-term solution but also provides for the coordination of existing national laws on pensions as they stand, without modifications, thereby helping to ensure the economic security during old age of the citizens of countries whose social security models differ markedly from one another. To date, this agreement has been ratified by 12 countries: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Portugal, Spain and Uruguay (ECLAC, 2019a).

4. Reduction of remittance costs and financial inclusion

The cost of sending remittances needs to be lowered in Latin America and the Caribbean, since the fees charged for this service not only reduce the amounts that are sent but also the amounts received at the other end by the intended recipients (ECLAC, 2018a; Mejía, 2018). Mechanisms are also needed to ensure that these funds are channelled into productive activities (Stefoni, 2018). The financial technology (*FinTech*) and electronic banking industries have a leading role to play in lowering the cost of money transfer services and in expanding access to financial services for the segments of the population that have traditionally lacked that access. This concern is explicitly reflected in target 10.c. of Sustainable Development Goal 10 (By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent) (United Nations, 2015, p. 21). Along the same lines, objective 20 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration focuses on using various means to promote the more rapid, economical and secure transfer of remittances through legal channels.[30]

Mexico is noteworthy for its design of financial products that migrants can access from their homes and that they can use both while they are in Mexico and when they are in their country of destination. Some of the programmes aimed at reducing remittance costs and promoting the use of formal transfer channels and financial inclusion are the following (Padilla Pérez, Santamaría and Villarreal, 2020):[31]

- The People's Network (L@Red de la Gente) and the *Directo a Mexico* arrangement offered by the Welfare Bank, S.N.C., of Mexico (formerly the National Savings Bank and Financial Services (BANSEFI)) transfer remittances from Mexicans residing in the United States at a cost of between US$ 3.00 and US$ 5.00.

- The *Debicuenta Exprés* express debit account of the Welfare Bank, S.N.C., of Mexico is a sight deposit account that comes with a debit card which migrants can open online from any location. Users receive a preferential exchange rate and are authorized to name a third party who can access the funds in Mexico with a debit card.

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[28] For further information, see Common Market Council (1997).
[29] For further information, see OISS (n/d).
[30] For further information, see United Nations (2018).
[31] For further information, see Secretariat of Welfare (2017); FSV (n/d), and [online] http://www.directoamexico.com/; https://www.lareddelagente.com.mx/.

Examples of initiatives for promoting productive investments and asset acquisition include:

- Migrant Programme 3x1 of the Secretariat of Welfare of Mexico supports initiatives of migrant organizations for carrying out development projects in their towns or communities of origin.

- The *Regresa y Emprende* ("Come Back and Start Up") loan facility is made available by the Nacional Financiera, S.N.C., of Mexico to all returning migrants and their families who wish to start a business.

- The Nearby Housing Programme of the Social Housing Fund (FSV) of El Salvador allows migrants to use their remittances to make payments on mortgages for a house for their family.

- The *Tu Vivienda en México* ("Your Home in Mexico") programme of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs promotes other programmes dealing with the construction and acquisition of housing.

D. Suggested references

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E. Questions

- Review the legal framework for migration in your country. Does the legislation cover migrants' right to have access, for example, to health care? Does the migrant population have access to certain services? If so, is that access contingent upon migration status or the possession of a residence permit?

- Choose one of the axes of the inequality matrix and give specific examples of how given inequalities may be greater for migrants in your country than for the local population.

- How economically important are remittances for your country? How much does it cost to send remittances from the countries where most of the emigrants from your country are residing? Find out if there are programmes in your country that link remittances with housing programmes or programmes for investment in production assets.

- What are the main challenges for your country in relation to the integration of migrants? In your view, which are the top two areas in which the needs of immigrants should be addressed on a priority basis (e.g. health, education, housing, nutrition, decent work, visas and identification documents or culture)? What could your country do (or not do) to enhance the integration of migrants into society and into the labour market?

- Examine the public policies relating to the migrant population in your country. How well do they address the two areas that you selected for priority attention above? If they do not address those areas, what policies would you propose?

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Territorial inequality[1]

A.   Normative framework

Although there is no global instrument referring to ensuring rights at the territorial level, a number of intergovernmental agreements in recent years have taken a particular perspective on territorial issues. At the global level, these include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2020b), the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) (United Nations, 2017) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (United Nations, 2015).[2] The 2030 Agenda affords relatively little weight to the local perspective, but does mention it several times, emphasizing its role in efforts to: build the resilience of the poor to disasters (Goal 1); ensure women's full and effective participation (Goal 5); support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management (Goal 6); devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (Goal 8); safeguard cultural and natural heritage, and increase the number of human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and resilience to disasters in all countries (Goal 11); strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries (Goal 13); increase the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities (Goal 15); ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (Goal 16); and strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Goal 17).

In Habitat III and the Sendai Framework the local and the subnational levels are mentioned explicitly and prominently. The New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III is especially important for Latin America and the Caribbean, because of its emphasis on inclusive cities and its defence of access in cities and equal enjoyment of them as a human right. The Sendai Framework offers concrete actions that can be taken to protect the benefits of development against the risk of disasters. Throughout the Sendai Framework, the local level is emphasized as the focus of priority actions relating to "understanding disaster risk"; "strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk"; and "enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction" (United Nations, 2015, p. 8).

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[1]   This chapter was prepared by Raúl Holz, Consultant in the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

[2]   For further information on Habitat III and the Sendai Framework, see United Nations (2017) and UNDRR (2021).

At the regional level, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development[3] establishes the most fundamental principles and guidelines for territorial development policies. In the framework of the Consensus, among others, the countries agreed to:

promote the development and well-being of people in all territories without any form of discrimination, and provide full access to basic social services and equal opportunities for populations whether they live in urban or rural areas, in small, intermediate or large cities or in isolated areas or small rural settlements; [...] promote inclusive development of natural resources, avoiding the social and environmental damage that this may cause (ECLAC, 2013, p. 29).

Finally, another regional instance promoting territorial development is the General Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI). The Assembly is the main forum for political agreement, coordination and regional cooperation on matters of housing, habitat and local and urban development (ECLAC, 2016a).

B. Assessment of territorial inequalities

- Territory affects opportunities for the fulfilment of political, economic and social rights and can be a source of discrimination. Living conditions, as well as the probability of being rich or poor, depend, among other factors, on the part of the country people live in.

- Differences by place of residence in the coverage and quality of the social services, employment and public infrastructure to which the population has access mean that gaps in the various social indicators are reproduced structurally.

- One of the main difficulties in measuring territorial inequality is the availability of comparable and updated socioeconomic statistics at the subnational level. What is more, the political-administrative definitions of data do not necessarily align with local socioeconomic realities.

- The data available confirm the existence of large territorial inequalities between major administrative divisions, between rural and urban areas, and between smaller divisions such as municipalities and suburbs. For example, poverty levels in Latin America average 45.1% in rural areas and 26.4% in urban areas. Territorial disparities intersect with other axes of social inequality and are especially evident in the analysis of the situation of indigenous populations.

As has been discussed in numerous ECLAC publications,[4] territory matters and it is a key axis of the matrix of social inequality. Place of birth and residence determines opportunities and socioeconomic conditions, it impacts on the fulfilment of political, economic and social rights, and can be a source of discrimination in itself, as can gender, race or religion (ECLAC, 2012b). Living conditions, like the probability of being rich or poor, depend, among other factors, on

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[3] For further information on the Montevideo Consensus, see ECLAC (2013).

[4] The most recent contributions by ECLAC addressing territorial inequalities include: *The Inefficiency of Inequality* (ECLAC, 2018a), "*Panorama del desarrollo territorial en América Latina y el Caribe, 2015: pactos para la igualdad territorial*" (ECLAC, 2015); "Panorama del desarrollo territorial en América Latina y el Caribe, 2017: agendas globales de desarrollo y planificación multinivel" (ECLAC, 2017a), *The social inequality matrix in Latin America* (ECLAC, 2016b), "Panorama multidimensional del desarrollo urbano en América Latina y el Caribe" (Montero and García, 2017).

where people live within a country: prosperous or left-behind regions, rural or urban areas, rich or poor suburbs. A proper analysis of inequality should include the territorial level. This level articulates, configures, produces and represents an aspect of social inequality. It is at particular territorial levels that inequalities crystalize and intersect.

Territorial inequalities are also expressed in the access and quality of social services in health and education and the type of work available. In addition, subnational public administrations (at the regional or local level) have different physical, technical, regulatory and financial resources that condition their range of policy action. This is also seen in imbalances in the quality and density of infrastructure —road networks, communication routes in general, communications infrastructure, basic economic facilities (ports, airports) and, obviously, the local basic equipment (drinking water, sanitation, transport)— which constitute a key obstacle to territorial development (ECLAC, 2015).

Lastly, territory not only refers to place of residence, but can also be considered an ascriptive variable.[5] The place where one lives or comes from becomes an axis that structures social relations; it can reinforce the ascription to positive facets of the territorial identity or, alternatively, reinforce processes of discrimination that operate on the basis of stigma and deepen social inequalities.

An initial assessment approach is to start with the inequalities in the first territorial division (or major administrative division), which takes different names in the countries of the region (region, province, department or state), then, where possible, to move on to smaller territories (minor administrative divisions such as, for example, districts, communes, delegations and municipalities), insofar as the development of the country's statistical tools allows. A caveat is that, owing to the socioeconomic disparities of the different political-administrative divisions within the countries, subnational comparability between countries is limited.[6] It is therefore difficult to affirm unequivocally that one country is more unequal at the local level than another. For example, at the higher political-administrative level, Ecuador has relatively small divisions compared to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which has larger divisions.

1. Major administrative divisions

Inequalities between different territories are evident in a first approach looking at the major administrative divisions within the respective countries (see figure XIII.1). Although differences are seen in poverty rates in all the countries, the magnitude of variations around the respective country average is very uneven. Panama shows very large territorial variations in poverty rates between provinces/*comarcas*. Uruguay, by contrast, shows the smallest percentage of population in poverty and the least variation between its major administrative divisions. In most cases, the territories with the lowest poverty levels are also the territories or metropolitan regions where the capital city, economic and industrial hubs, tourist areas or mining areas are located. On the other hand, the highest levels of poverty are often found in areas with a large indigenous presence, such as the *comarcas* in Panama, Lempira in Honduras, Chocó in Colombia and Chiapas in Mexico.


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[5]   Indigenous peoples have an indissoluble link with the land, a practice of territoriality in the physical, social and symbolic senses, and a concept of territory that is not only a geographical and physical place, but also a social and cultural one (ECLAC, 2007).

[6]   To this are added territorial inequality measurement problems relating to data availability at the subnational level and the way political and administrative divisions are defined. For more information on this topic, see Buitelaar and others (2015).

FIGURE XIII.1
Latin America (15 countries): population in poverty
by territory and country, around 2017[a]
(Percentages)
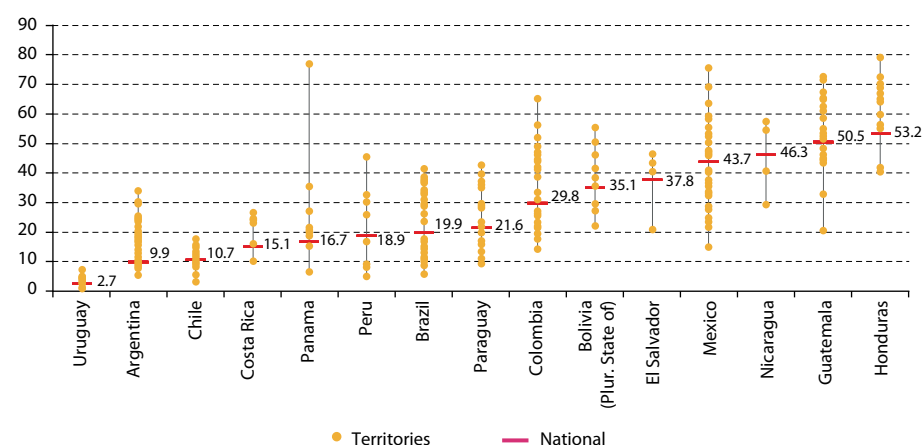
Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a]   Data refer to 2017, except for Ecuador (2016), Guatemala (2014), Honduras (2016), Mexico (2016) and Nicaragua (2014).

2. Inequality between territorial entities

The concentration of wealth and population in a few areas is one of the most hallmarks of territorial inequalities. These concentrations generally occur in the largest cities, metropolises and urban regions of each country. In most cases, these areas represent less than 10% of the country's surface area, but they carry great weight in terms of population and contribution to GDP (see figure XIII.2).

FIGURE XIII.2
Latin America (8 countries): share of selected metropolitan areas
in national surface area, population and GDP, around 2010
(Percentages)
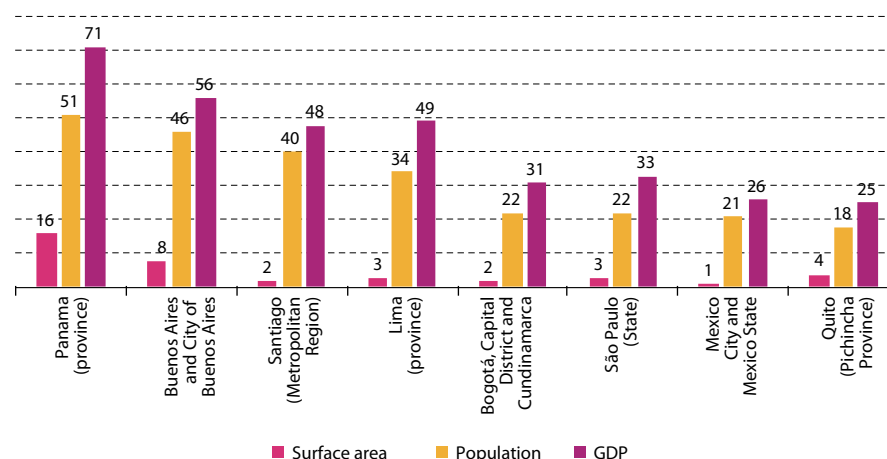
Source: *Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Territorial development in Latin America and the Caribbean: challenges for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Draft annotated index"* (LC/MDCRP.27/3), Santiago, 23 August 2018.

3. Rural–urban inequality

Given the availability of data from household surveys, examining the rural-urban gap is generally one of the easiest ways to analyse territorial gaps in the countries. The rural-urban gap tends to favour urban areas in different socioeconomic indicators. For example, the population living in

poverty is vastly higher in rural areas, the percentage of households with water available inside the dwelling and school attendance of children aged 13–19 in quintile I also show better figures in urban areas, and there are fewer women devoted exclusively to household work (see figure XIII.3).

FIGURE XIII.3
Latin America (18 countries): rural-urban gap
for various social indicators, 2018[a]
(Percentages)
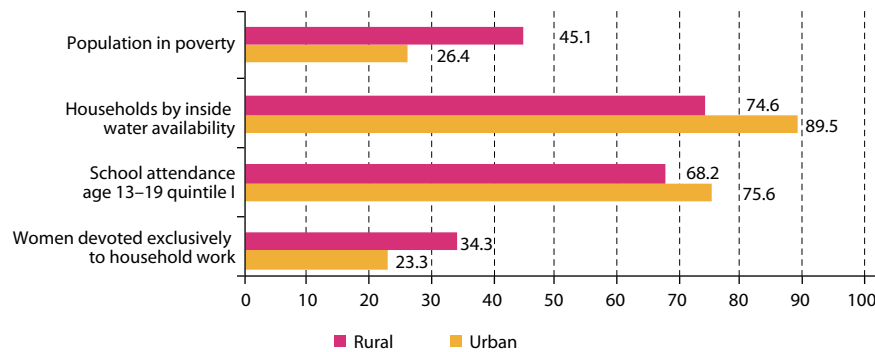
STATISTICS

The rural-urban gaps tends to show urban areas better off in several socioeconomic indicators. For example, in Latin America the poor population is almost 19 percentage points higher in rural areas.

45.1%
RURAL POVERTY

26.4%
URBAN POVERTY

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).
[a] The population in poverty is calculated on the basis of estimates or projections in the corresponding year for: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Plurinational State of Bolivia, and Uruguay. The other three indicators are simple averages and include household surveys conducted in the respective countries in the corresponding year; where there is no information for that year, data from the most recent preceding year are used.

4. Urban segmentation

Two thirds of the Latin American population lives in cities with 20,000 inhabitants or more and almost 80% in urban areas (ECLAC, 2012a). Territorial inequality also occurs within cities with residential segregation manifested in the concentration of relatively homogeneous social groups in specific spaces. This segregation is expressed, for example, on the one hand, in the urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing, and on the other, in homogeneous high-level neighbourhoods which are a form of "walled cities" (Pfannenstein and others, 2019). In the first case, figures in the region vary widely, from 74.4% in Haiti to 5.4% in Guadeloupe (see figure XIII.4).

FIGURE XIII.4
Latin America and the Caribbean (26 countries): urban population
living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing, 2014[a]
(Percentages)
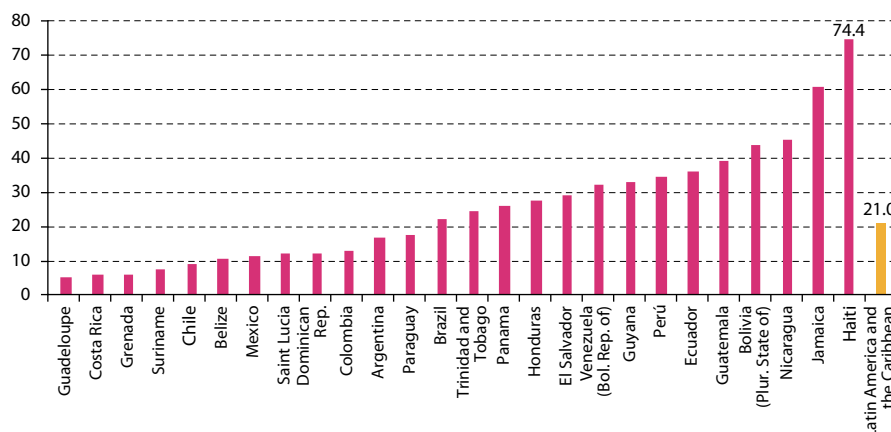
Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of United Nations, Global SDG Indicators Database, 2021 [online] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/.
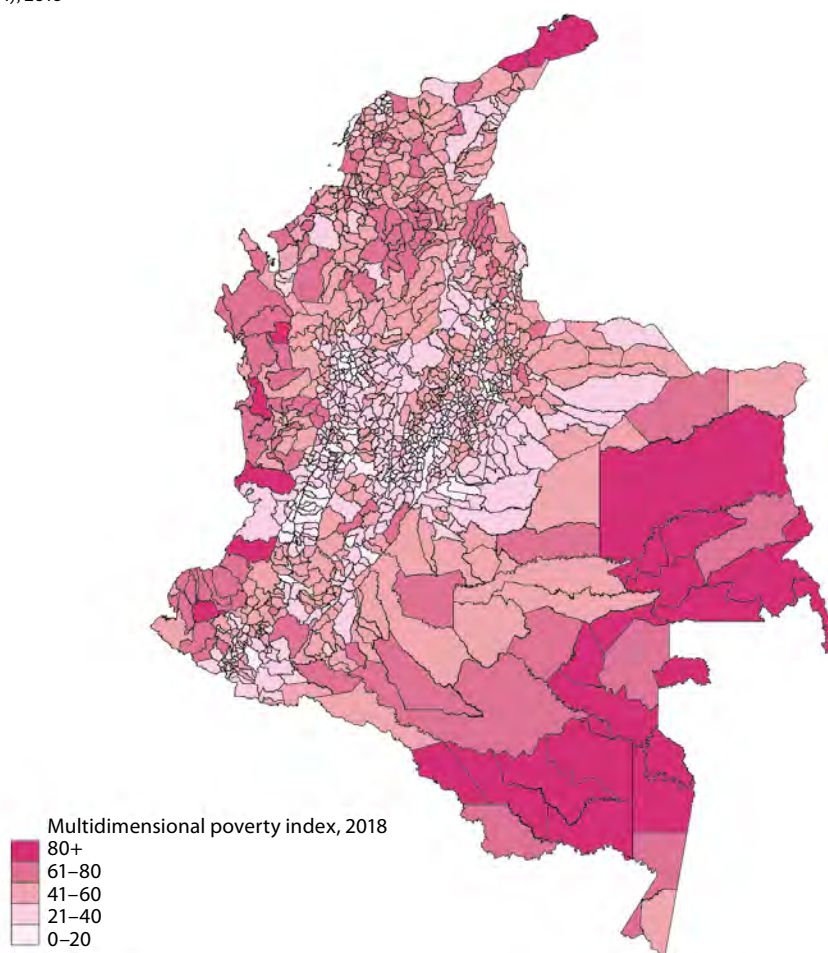[a] The figure for Latin America and the Caribbean is a weighted average.

5. Inequality between minor administrative divisions

Social indicators are becoming an increasingly important tool for examining territorial socioeconomic level and for informing social policies. These indicators are used often at the national level, while at the subnational level progress has been slower owing to more limited data availability. Colombia has a municipal multidimensional poverty index (MPI) based on the 2018 census, which allows the analysis of territorial inequality at the municipal level. Inequality between municipalities can vary significantly as shown by the MPI for the case of Colombian municipalities (see map XIII.1),[7] which varies between 0 and 100, where figures closer to 100 indicate greater multidimensional poverty. In Colombia, the highest levels of municipal multidimensional poverty are found predominantly in the Orinoquía-Amazonía and Pacífica regions; conversely, the lowest occur in the municipalities located in the Central and Eastern regions of the country.

MAP XIII.1
Colombia: municipal multidimensional
poverty index (MPI), 2018

Multidimensional poverty index, 2018
80+
61–80
41–60
21–40
0–20

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), "Medida de pobreza multidimensional municipal de fuente censal 2018", 2020 [online] https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-y-desigualdad/medida-de-pobreza-multidimensional-de-fuente-censal.
**Note:** The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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7   The measure is constructed on the basis of five dimensions (educational status of the household, conditions of childhood and youth, health, work, access to household public services and housing conditions) and 15 indicators. Each dimension counts for 20% and the indicators have the same weight within their respective dimension. Households that have deprivations in at least 33.3% of the indicators are considered multidimensionally poor. Although in this case the mapping refers to the poverty index, it would be possible to map each of the 15 indicators that make up the municipal MPI.

6. Disasters and territorial inequality

Of all the world regions, Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most prone to natural disasters (United Nations, 2020a). Since 2000, approximately 154 million Latin American and Caribbean people have been affected by 1,254 disasters, including floods, hurricanes and storms, earthquakes, droughts, landslides, fires, extreme temperatures, volcanic events and epidemics. Although climate change is a global phenomenon, the type of disaster tends to vary significantly across Latin America and the Caribbean regions. In South America floods are by far the most common type of disaster, followed by landslides, earthquakes and storms. In the Caribbean, the majority of disasters are storms and floods and in Central America and Mexico the order changes, with floods, storms and earthquakes more prevalent (see figure XIII.5).
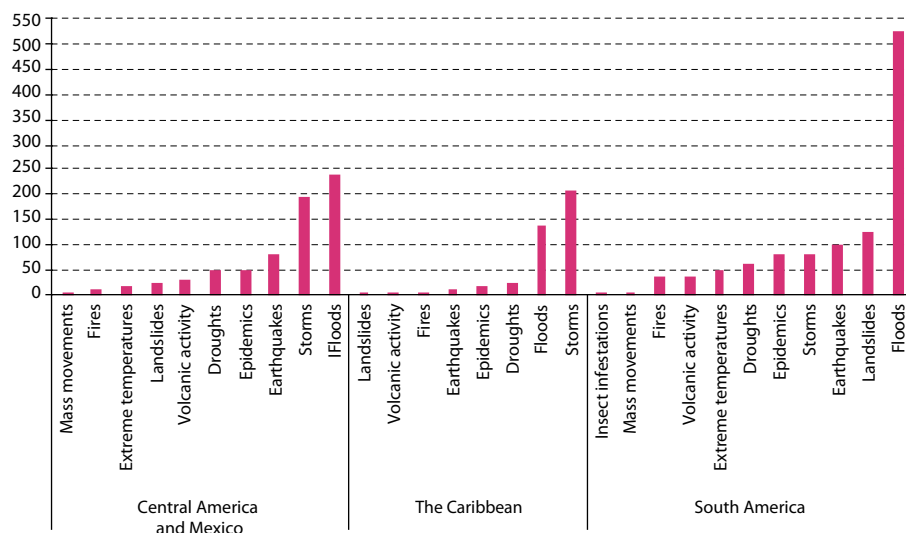
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), International Disaster Database (EM-DAT), 2021 [online] https://public.emdat.be/ [accessed in 2020].

These territorial aggregations are very general in terms of disaster analysis and do not allow for the differentiation of specific territorial impacts. The most socioeconomically vulnerable territories are usually also more exposed to disasters. For example, small island developing States face the greatest economic losses in GDP terms (UNDRR, 2017). Likewise, differences exist not only between countries, but also within them; disasters have a greater impact on communities or people who live in poorer areas and suffer increasingly and disproportionately from their effects. In other words, the axes of inequality intersect. Several population groups, such as women, older persons, persons with disabilities, children, indigenous peoples, and subsistence and family farmers are particularly vulnerable. For example, women are more likely to die in these events than men (Trucco and Ullmann, 2016) and it is estimated that economic losses for the population living in poverty are two to three times greater than for the non-poor (Cecchini, Sunkel and Barrantes, 2017), both because of the vulnerability of their assets (Hallegatte and others, 2017) and because of their limited access to disaster risk management tools (Vakis, 2006).

The prospects for recovery also tend to be uneven across territories, again with strong biases by gender, age and disability (ECLAC, 2017b). Disasters can destroy specific local income-generating assets, such as stocks or reserves of commercial products, agricultural

Disasters are both a cause and a consequence of poverty and vulnerability.

assets (such as livestock), work materials, workshops or means of transport, among others. Unemployment and income loss as a result of a disaster can have significant effects, with a strong territorial bias, on the well-being of individuals or families in the short term (including in subsistence terms), on the ability to recover and on life prospects. In other words, disasters are both causes and consequences of poverty and vulnerability, as has been shown once again by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the significance of territorial inequalities (see box XIII.1).

Territorial inequalities have shown up strongly amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In the most vulnerable territories, high levels of overcrowding and poverty have made it more difficult for people to comply with the lockdowns and physical distancing decreed in many countries to avoid coronavirus infections. Given the lack of income to cover basic needs, mobility has been seen to be higher in those areas despite the social isolation measures imposed.

The areas that have most socioeconomic lags also have more deficient basic services. Lack of water and sanitation hinders compliance with basic hygiene measures to prevent and control the spread of the disease. Added to this is poorer access to health services and primary care, a strategic local item that is often neglected and thus hinders timely care as well as the possibility of tracing cases.

In the most vulnerable areas, many households lack the logistical conditions they would need to stock up on food for many days, so their members need to go out often, especially to markets and street stalls. In addition, food markets, which are important for vulnerable areas because they offer cheaper alternatives, have continued to function and many of them have become hotspots for the spread of the virus.

Territorial differences are also seen in education, with a higher risk of dropping out of school in areas where poor access to the Internet and the lack of equipment (such as computers, tablets or smartphones) make online teaching and normal education difficult for millions of children during the pandemic. This is in addition to parents' lack of familiarity with information technologies, which makes it difficult for them to provide support.

Informal work, the source of income for many Latin American households, also has territorial biases. Many informal workers lack access to quality health services and are more exposed to contagion given the nature of their work. They also tend to have lower incomes, fewer savings and no alternative income sources, which forces them to go out and find a way to earn a subsistence income in the absence of comprehensive emergency policies.

Social policies for socioeconomic containment amid the pandemic also face territorial challenges. The lack of banking services for many people living in slums or rural areas and the difficulty of reaching remote areas has complicated the delivery of emergency transfers, food baskets and health services for COVID-19 prevention and care.

Finally, more than ever, the pandemic has highlighted the need for the authority to act at different territorial scales —national, subnational and local— and to do so in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, supported by the various community stakeholders and political and social organizations

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2020* (LC/PUB.2021/2-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2021; "Political and social compacts for equality and sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean in the post-COVID-19 recovery", *COVID-19 Special Report*, No. 8, Santiago, 15 October, 2020a; "Addressing the growing impact of COVID-19 with a view to reactivation with equality: new projections", *COVID-19 Special Report*, No. 5, Santiago, 15 July, 2020b; "The social challenge in times of COVID-19", *COVID-19 Special Report*, No. 3, Santiago, 12 May, 2020c; "Measuring the impact of COVID-19 with a view to reactivation", *COVID-19 Special Report*, No. 2, Santiago, 21 April, 2020d; "Latin America and the Caribbean and the COVID-19 pandemic: economic and social effects", *COVID-19 Special Report*, No. 1, Santiago, 3 April, 2020e; "The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean", *COVID-19 Report*, Santiago, April, 2020f.

C. Priority policies for reducing territorial inequalities

The priority policies for reducing territorial inequalities include:

- Proximity governments are crucial for bringing opportunities and rights to individuals, families and communities in the territories that are furthest behind.

- Family accompaniment is one of the most concrete ways in which social policy can be brought closer to citizens, and it is where efforts to resolve social policy fragmentation are most successful at the territorial level.

- The participation of individuals, families and communities in the design and oversight of policies and programmes that concern them is fundamental both for the success of the policies and for the legitimacy of the process. Programmes where communities co-manage resources and open municipalities are two examples.

- Greater disaggregation of statistical data is key to the visibility of territorial inequalities and their intersections with vulnerable groups. In this regard, progress has been made in the region in the development of synthetic indices and territorial observatories for different socioeconomic data and administrative levels.

POLICY PROPOSALS

Local governments are increasingly considered critical spaces for debating policies and promoting participation in public management, given their proximity to citizens and their territorial scale. Local governments' possibilities of playing an important role depends, among other things, on the degree and type of decentralization of the respective country. The link between central and subnational governments, the functions or attributions of subnational governments vis-à-vis the central government, and the use and collection powers of public resources strongly affect the radius of action of local governments (see box XIII.2).[8]

Territorial inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean are just one more manifestation of the inequality that characterizes the region in general. They also relate interdependently and cumulatively to economic, social and environmental inequalities. This means that territorial inequalities are structural in nature and reducing them requires policy efforts that are relevant and sustained over time. Four territorial policies identified as priorities are outlined below: (i) proximity government; (ii) family accompaniment; (iii) citizen participation and (iv) territorial visibility.

BOX XIII.2
Decentralization and territorial inequality

Decentralization could have significant advantages for reducing territorial inequality, by giving local governments a greater role in the provision of social services such as education and health, and in the implementation of social protection policies. It allows social policies to be adapted to the preferences and needs of the people in the local area, supports management models and participatory strategies for identifying and prioritizing solutions, and brings together communities in the area. However, Latin American experiences of decentralization and its impact on convergence between territories has not necessarily been promising.

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[8]   A detailed analysis of these topics, though very important, exceeds the scope of this document.

Decentralization processes in Latin America have occurred across very different political and economic frameworks and have implied reforms to very different administrative systems. What is understood by decentralization and local government autonomy does not necessarily carry the same connotation in all the countries. An analysis of decentralization in basic education and primary health care carried out for seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Plurinational State of Bolivia) highlights different initial motivations and different sequences of implementation, as well as the diversity of territorial and institutional levels involved in the transfer of provision functions and responsibilities between countries. The evidence from these experiences suggests that territorial gaps widened for education and health indicators (Di Gropello and Cominetti, 1998). Although the diversity of situations limits the scope for making generalizations about the distributional impacts between territories, Finot (2001) qualifies the widening of education and health gaps, observing that coverage was in fact increased albeit amid ongoing economic concentration. In other words, decentralization has enabled strides in the coverage of social services and even of political participation, but it is creating pressure on the fiscal balance and has not helped to ease economic concentration.

These experiences do not invalidate the potential benefits of decentralized social policies, but they draw attention to the dangers of forms of decentralization that reproduce and deepen territorial disparities. They also represent a call to safeguard the role of the State as guarantor of rights that should be strengthened by the decentralization processes. Effective autonomy to provide social services at local levels, having resource transfer systems that promote greater efficiency and equity, directly transferring greater responsibilities to educational and health establishments, and having adequate local capacities are some of the necessary conditions for advancing towards a gap-reducing model of decentralization.

1. Proximity government: territorial coordination policies[9]

The territorialization of social policy poses a major challenge of vertical coordination —i.e. between the different levels of government, from the central to the local— and of horizontal coordination, which refers to cross-sectoral coordination between the government entities responsible for social policy at each level. In this regard, a prominent initiative in terms of developing a more comprehensive approach to social policy at the local level is that of proximity government. The term "proximity government" is broad and supports a comprehensive approach to social policy in the domain of local governments (Blanco and Gomá, 2002 and 2003). At least four key elements can be identified in a proximity government: social assistance, prevention and promotion; participation; and networking and leadership.

An example of a territorial approach to social institutionality is the Social Assistance Referral Centres (CRAS) of Brazil, which act as a gateway to social assistance at the territorial level. These Centres provide the full range of social and assistance services and manage basic social protection at the territorial level, within the framework of the Single Social Assistance System of Brazil. They organize and coordinate social assistance networks through a local public office where social assistance services are offered and they are located, as a priority, in areas of greatest social vulnerability. The professional staff can coordinate with the communities to develop solutions to face shared problems, such as lack of accessibility to services, violence in the neighbourhood, child labour or lack of transportation. The CRAS Centres offer a Comprehensive Family Support Programme (PAIF) and a social relationship and integration support service (*Serviço De Convivência e Fortalecimento De Vínculos*, SCFV). At

Proximity governments can foster a comprehensive social policy approach within the territory of local governments.

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[9]   This topic is developed in greater detail in the social institutionality toolkit.

CRAS Centres people can also sign up with the Federal Government Single Registry for Social Programmes, a data collection and information tool used to identify low-income families so that they can be included in social programmes. The social assistance work of CRAS in the territory is complemented by Social Assistance Specialized Referral Centres (CREAS), which cater to families and individuals in situations of social risk or whose rights have been infringed, for example persons who have experienced physical or sexual violence, individuals who are homeless, victims of neglect or those who have suffered discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Cunill-Grau, Repetto and Bronzo, 2015).[10] One of the key tools for facilitating access by the population in remote or scattered areas has been the creation of mobile teams, whose work around the territory includes dissemination of the services offered, contact with local social actors and the collection of information for other social assistance and sectoral services.

A different sort of proximity government is the experience of Uruguay with the *Cercanías* national strategy for strengthening family capabilities,[11] the youth network scheme *Jóvenes en Red* ("Networked Youth")[12] and *Uruguay Crece Contigo* ("Uruguay Grows with You").[13] *Cercanías* is an interinstitutional strategy for family interventions in situations of extreme social vulnerability through various ministries and public bodies. *Jóvenes en Red* promotes rights access and fulfilment for young people aged 14–24 who are outside the education system and the formal labour market. Lastly, *Crece Contigo* is aimed at consolidating a comprehensive protection system from early childhood. Although the programmes target different population groups, they all have the intersectoral and proximity principles at their core, with support as a key mechanism in their design and implementation (Baráibar Ribero and Paulo-Bevilacqua, 2019; Ministry of Social Development, 2019a).[14]

A third example is Panama's "Hive Strategy: Panama free of poverty and inequality, the Sixth Frontier", whose purpose is to connect up public policy implementation at the territorial level through multisectoral provision. To reach the territorial level, plan implementation is organized through the provincial governments and provincial technical offices. Because they are closer to communities, these bodies are responsible for aligning and prioritizing their basic needs. Initially, priority was given to 63 districts and 300 townships on the basis of multidimensional poverty data.[15]

2. Family accompaniment [16]

Family accompaniment is one of the most commonly used territorial intervention strategies in the region. Family accompaniment fulfils different roles and is given different names in different countries.[17] One way to describe the role that family accompaniment plays in social policy territorialization strategy is to characterize its role in the social programme of which it forms part. In this regard, at least three models may be identified that describe how family accompaniment is coordinated and embedded within social programmes. A caveat is that not all family accompaniment programmes can be clearly categorized in one of the three models identified here.

In the first model, family accompaniment is secondary to the main component of the programme. For example, in social programmes whose main pillar is conditional transfers, family accompaniment basically tends to revolve around verifying fulfilment of the co-responsibilities by transfer-recipient families.

POLICIES

Family accompaniment is one of the most commonly used territorial intervention strategies in the region.

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[10] For more information, see Ministry of Citizenship (2015).
[11] For more information, see [online] http://guiaderecursos.mides.gub.uy/28489/programa-cercanias.
[12] For more information, see [online] https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-desarrollo-social/politicas-y-gestion/programas/jovenes-red.
[13] For more information, see [online] https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-desarrollo-social/primera-infancia.
[14] For more information, see Ministry of Social Development (2019b).
[15] For more information, see Social Cabinet (2016).
[16] This topic is developed in greater detail in the social institutionality toolkit.
[17] Some of the names translate approximately as "social co-managers" (Colombia, Costa Rica), "support assistants" (Ecuador), "social promoters" (Panama) and "facilitators" (Peru).

In the second model, family accompaniment is a component in its own right in a larger programme and works in conjunction with other components. An example of this is the family accompaniment provided through Chile's Securities and Opportunities scheme, which is a subsystem of the Intersectoral Social Protection System of the Ministry of Social Development and Family. Securities and Opportunities provides support for the most vulnerable persons and households via three components: (i) accompaniment programmes; (ii) social benefits (grants and cash transfers); and (iii) access to State social services. The accompaniment programmes are: (i) *Programa Familia* ("Family Programme"), which consists of psychosocial and psycho-occupational support for families in extreme poverty and vulnerability; (ii) *Programa Vínculos* ("Linkages Programme"), which provides psychosocial and occupational support through a community monitor for persons over 65 years of age who live in poverty, alone or with one other person; (iii) *Programa Abriendo Caminos* ("Opening Paths Programme"), for children and adolescents aged 0–18 with a significant adult deprived of liberty; caregivers are included in the programme as beneficiaries and each family is accompanied by a professional team comprising social workers, psychologists and teachers, among others; and (iv) *Programa Calle* ("Street Programme") for adults living on the streets; this consists of psychosocial and psycho-occupational support from a multidisciplinary professional team.[18]

In the third model, family accompaniment is the main component of the programme, as in the Territorial Family Care Teams (ETAF) of the *Cercanías* interinstitutional strategy in Uruguay. In *Cercanías*, Territorial Family Care Teams handle the proximity work and the restitution of rights for family groups whose rights have been infringed, as well as coordination with other local interinstitutional actors. In this case, family accompaniment functions clearly as an effort to avoid social policy fragmentation at the territorial level.[19]

3. Social participation

From a rights perspective, it is essential to expand arenas for participation towards communities and families as key actors in the design and control of policies and programmes that concern them, both for the success of the policies and for the legitimacy of the process. Prioritizing links with families, individuals and community organizations in the process of identifying and addressing structural conditioning factors in the territory can improve social policy for several reasons. Among others:

- Social policy gains greater legitimacy by involving people in the development of the place where they live and the development processes that affect them.

- Social policy becomes more relevant as its diagnosis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are brought closer to its recipients.

- Highly structured programmes are less effective and efficient in very small and/or remote communities.

Two forms of participation are presented below: the first focused on local governments and exemplified through participatory budgets, open governments and citizen oversight; and the second illustrated by social programmes that include participation as a central pillar of implementation.[20]

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[18] For more information, see [online] http://www.chileseguridadesyoportunidades.gob.cl/.

[19] See Ministry of Social Development (n/d), for an example of the terms of reference of Territorial Family Care Teams.

[20] Although the following section describes experiences of social participation in a markedly positive manner, the obstacles to effective citizen participation must not be disregarded. Among others, these are: power asymmetry between the State and citizens (and among citizens, between those who are organized and those who are not) and as a specific facet of this, information asymmetries between public officials and participating citizens. These issues can also be linked with and made more complex by resistance from political authorities, problems in accessing public information and, possibly, lack of social commitment and public apathy.

Participation in proximity governments

Participatory budgeting basically consists of community participation in the prioritization of the public budget. This has been most successful at the municipal level. Participatory budgets began to flourish at the municipal level in 1989 with the experience of Porto Alegre. From there, similar initiatives have been repeated around the world and in many parts of Latin America, including in areas of Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Chile, Brazil and Mexico. Participatory budgeting initiatives have also been promoted from the central level in Guatemala, Peru and Nicaragua. Participatory budgets do not tend to be explicitly designed for redistributive purposes and their distributive impacts have been little evaluated.[21] However, the pioneering experience of Porto Alegre has stood out, among others, for its positive redistributive impacts, both through the progressiveness of rates and taxes charged by the municipal government and through the prioritization and targeting of resources in the poorest neighbourhoods (Navarro, 1998 and 2005; De Soussa Santos, 2002). To increase distributional impact, recent experiences in Peru suggest the need to facilitate engagement by the poorest people in participatory processes and improve the capacity of the technical cadres of the municipalities responsible for the process (Jaramillo and Alcázar, 2013).[22]

Open governments are another experience reflecting the importance of participation in social policies at the territorial level.[23] In Paraguay, more than 50 municipalities have committed, in alliance with the Open Government Partnership (OGP), to create municipal councils that ensure citizens have a say and a vote in how budgets are spent and how families that most need support are prioritized.[24] Another example of open government is the department of Nariño in Colombia, which drew up an Action Plan 2019–2021 that envisages increasing the participation of civil society representatives in formulating commitments and generating solutions. In a context of violence and attacks on social leaders, the Plan sets up mechanisms and spaces for the construction of collective proposals for territorial development. For example, the civil society platform *Alianza Nariño Decide*, is a citizen participation mechanism that organizes open dialogues to facilitate participation, among other things. The purpose is for citizens to identify and prioritize the needs of their territory, by means of workshops, and make them available to candidates to include in the territorial development plan.[25]

Citizen oversight offices are another mechanism for citizen participation in local government decisions. In this case, community participation is channelled through the users of social policies, thus fulfilling an oversight and assessment role. An example is citizen oversight of conditional cash transfer programmes. Peru has experiences with Citizen Monitoring Committees, which use surveys and complaints channels to identify implementation issues with the *Juntos* National Programme of Direct Support to the Poorest, and makes recommendations to the Programme's executive board. In another experience, civil society and local government representatives from local groups in the framework of the Brazilian programme *Bolsa Familia*, the region's largest conditional cash transfer programme by coverage. Citizen oversight in this case contributes to reducing errors of inclusion or exclusion of recipients and ensuring sufficient and adequate health and education services to cope with additional demand.[26]

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[21] Most studies have focused on the analysis of the institutional design and the forms of participation. For a review of the academic literature, see Suárez Elías (2015).

[22] Localities that have implemented participatory budgeting have sometimes produced manuals. Some examples are: "Instructivo presupuestos participativos" of Colombia (Ministry of the Interior, 2016); *Guía del presupuesto participativo basado en resultados* of Peru (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, 2010); "Manual de presupuesto participativo" of Rosario, Argentina (Grey, n/d); "Manual operativo para la implementación de presupuestos participativos (PP) of Chile" (Salinas and Ábalos, 2006).

[23] For more information, see ECLAC (2021 and 2019a).

[24] For more information, see OGP (2021) and Escotto (2018).

[25] For more information, see OGP (2019).

[26] For more information see [online] http://ella.practicalaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Guide-GOV-revisado.pdf y http://ella.practicalaction.org/es/knowledge-spotlight/spotlight-on-publications-citizen-oversight-of-conditional-cash-transfer-programmes/.

From a rights perspective, it is essential to expand arenas for participation towards communities and families as key actors in the design and control of policies and programmes that concern them, both for the success of the policies and for the legitimacy of the process.

Another example is the Network of Community Defenders for the Right to Health of Guatemala, which is made up of leaders chosen by their communities to identify needs and problems arising in health services in the communities. When a problem is identified, representations are made to the relevant authorities to resolve it. Information campaigns are also carried out to inform the population of this channel for reporting infringements of their right to health.[27]

Under the leadership of its Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Colombia has built up Adolescent and Youth Friendly Health Services (SSAAJ) as a social oversight strategy, scaled for local level implementation. This scheme pursues differentiated responses for the population aged 10–29 in order to guarantee their sexual and reproductive rights. In this framework, one of the ways in which health services and adolescent and youth participation are anchored at the territorial level is through youth-friendly health centres, in which the District Secretariat of Health supports the municipalities to set up youth oversight bodies and foster and ensure sexual and reproductive rights. Key social organizations for population development are identified, such as youth organizations, community-based organizations, youth centres and churches and work plans are drawn up in consultation with them.[28]

Social programmes in which participation is a key pillar

One example is the *Cuna Más* home visiting programme in Peru, which promotes early childhood development. It was set up by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion in 2012 and is aimed at supporting the development of infants up to age 3 in poverty and supporting parenting behaviours. It operates at three levels: central, regional and local. In rural areas it works through family accompaniment. *Cuna Más* is based on a co-management model between the government and the communities at the local level, with the latter empowered to participate in decision-making, oversight and general operations. The community or communities form management committees that sign cooperation agreements with the government. The committee's main tasks and responsibilities include: the administration of financial resources; keeping the community informed; inviting families to participate in the programme; nominating, together with the community, the facilitators who will carry out weekly family visits; tracking the early childhood development indicators of the families participating in the programme; and sensitizing the community about early childhood development in coordination with other territorial actors (Josephson, Guerrero and Coddington, 2017).

A second example is the School Feeding Programme (PAE) for Indigenous Peoples in Colombia, which aims to strengthen nutritional knowledge from within the worldview of indigenous peoples, prioritizing the use of produce grown and prepared in the region and contributing to the autonomy of indigenous peoples' own governments. Programme implementation is coordinated by the respective territorial entity and includes an "indigenous operator" —an indigenous authority, council, protection agency and/or association of traditional authorities. Indigenous peoples determine the menus to be provided in educational establishments under the modality of a community kitchen. The community selects members to promote the programme and carries out follow-up, monitoring and oversight, in order to help ensure that it works properly in their respective communities.[29]

Finally, a third example is the School Feeding Act in Honduras,[30] which came into effect 2017. In this case, parents are actively involved in implementation of the scheme through school feeding committees. Municipal Development Councils (COMDES), School Development Councils (CED) and parents' associations from each educational establishment jointly provide

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[27]   For more information, see [online] https://vigilanciaysalud.com/.
[28]   This is framed under Resolution 518 of 2015 issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, which permits engagement by the population in social oversight for establishing policies, plans, programmes, projects and strategies for preventive health and treatment of illness. For more information, see [online] https://www.minsalud.gov.co/salud/publica/ssr/Paginas/Servicios-de-salud-amigables-para-adolescentes-y-jovenes-SSAAJ.aspx.
[29]   For more information, see Ministry of National Education (2018).
[30]   Decree No. 125-2016.

social oversight to ensure that the National School Feeding Programme fulfils the objectives established by the law and evaluate the results-based management of the programme from the economic, financial and social perspectives.[31]

4. Shedding light on territorial inequalities: the importance of statistical disaggregation

A social policy that is relevant at the territorial level needs to be made visible through data disaggregation. The inclusion of territory-specific questions on vulnerable populations in censuses, household surveys and administrative records is, therefore, crucial to improve the sources of information and indicators used for assessments and to design, implement, follow up and monitor social policies aimed at reducing gaps between territories. Data disaggregation at this level should build in information on the intersection between the territory and the other structural axes of inequality, such as gender, ethnicity and race, and the different stages of the life cycle, among others. This information should be able to be crossed with economic, social and environmental data that describe the well-being of families, individuals and communities, such as work, social protection, income, health, education, housing, basic services and exposure to disasters, as well as variables concerning social participation. If it is possible to collect it, information on social participation at the local level should be cross-cutting across each of the structural axes. This way, statistical disaggregation at the territorial level can support the construction of well-being indicators that may be critical for achieving a better understanding of local poverty and inequality. These indicators, in turn, speak to the options for action by social services and programmes in relation to vulnerable populations.

Latin America has made progress in the disaggregation of territorial data in the socioeconomic sphere. This progress is reflected in: (i) synthetic socioeconomic indicators, and (ii) territorial information observatories. One specific socioeconomic indicator is the multidimensional poverty index (MPI). This is available, for example, at the municipal level in Colombia for 2018,[32] and in Mexico for 2010 and 2015. A similar index is the multidimensional poverty index for children and adolescents in Panama, which is available at the level of provinces and *comarcas*.[33]

Another is the Gini index, available at the municipal level in Mexico for 2010 and 2015.[34]

Observatories that combine sources of territorial information for various indicators are also increasingly available. Examples are the Territory Observatory Uruguay (OTU) that includes data on 14 different areas including income, health, education, territorial cohesion, generations, gender and race, for regions, departments, municipalities and localities,[35] and the City System Observatory of Colombia, which includes variables on basic services, overcrowding, GDP of construction and the homicide rate, among others.[36] In Brazil, the SDG Mandala chart shows the degree of development of municipalities in four dimensions: economic, social, environmental and institutional. It offers a dropdown menu of statistics and synthetic indicators such as the municipal human development index (HDI).[37] There is also a growing number of portals that summarize information on progress towards the SDGs, such as the Information System of Sustainable Development Goals of Mexico, which groups data at the national, federal and municipal levels, depending on the indicator.[38]

POLICIES

The inclusion of territory-specific questions on vulnerable populations in censuses, household surveys and administrative records is crucial to reduce gaps between territories.

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[31] For more information, see Honduras (2017).
[32] For more information, see DANE (2020).
[33] For more information, see MPPN (2019).
[34] For more information, see CONEVAL (2017).
[35] For more information, see Office of Planning and the Budget (2019).
[36] For more information, see DNP (2019).
[37] For more information, see CNM (2021).
[38] For more information, see INEGI (2019). For information on other observatories, see ECLAC (2019b).

Today a great deal of information on the economy and society is available in digital format. Big data comes from various sources and is found in different formats such as social networks, website content and electronic transactions. These data offer great potential to collect, process, analyse and visualize information for social and economic studies at the territorial level.

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E. Questions

- Do you believe that there are spheres of attention that should be a priority in the territories of your country that are furthest behind (for example: health, education, housing, nutrition and decent work)? Why? Is there a difference from one territory to another?

- Investigate social policies aimed at specific territories in your country. To what extent do you believe they respond to the priority spheres of attention identified in the first point? If there are no such policies, what would you propose?

- Are you aware of any social policy that reproduces territorial inequalities by failing to take into account specific local situations at the design or implementation stage? What measures would you propose to solve this problem?

- Can you give an example of a social policy that has included participation by the target community in its assessment, design or implementation? How successful was the participation? What problems arose and how could they be solved?

- Can you identify a programme that includes a family accompaniment component? What are the main characteristics of that family accompaniment? How successful has it been? What problems and challenges can you identify that should be resolved? How would you propose to solve these problems and challenges?

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Public policy challenges for the achievement of equality[1]

This chapter is the last in this public policy toolkit for the reduction of inequalities. Its various chapters and its analyses of 11 different axes of inequality have provided extensive information on the key international standards which guide the formulation and implementation of social policies for the reduction of inequality from a rights-based perspective. They have also furnished assessments of the main problems or issues relating to the social inequalities associated with each axis and, on the basis of regional experiences, have outlined high-priority social policies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to the analysis of the challenges and priority policies associated with each one of the axes of the inequality matrix that have been discussed throughout this document (see table XIV.1), there a series of emerging and structural challenges that will need to be addressed in order to attain greater equality.

A. Emerging challenges[2]

1. The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is having profound economic and social impacts and may be a harbinger of an increasing number of health-related disasters in the future that, if they come to pass, will pose new social policy challenges. The worldwide health crisis caused by the coronavirus and its various socioeconomic impacts attest to the nature of the social inequality matrix in the region. In the light of the wide, long-standing gaps that the pandemic has widened even further, it has become more urgent than ever to take up the challenge of implementing universal, solidary redistributive policies conceived of from a rights-based perspective that will leave no one behind. The challenges involved in dovetailing short-term social protection

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Emerging challenges on the road to greater equality include:
- The COVID-19 pandemic
- Climate change and climate-related disasters
- The demographic, epidemiological and nutrition transitions
- Technological change
- Violence in all its various forms.

measures to cope with the most pressing needs associated with the emergency (a universal guaranteed income, medical attention, basic services and housing, an adequate diet and education) with medium- and long-term measures (universal health care, the implementation of labour inclusion strategies during the recovery stage) for safeguarding people's rights and providing universal social protection are the concerns that are demanding the countries' immediate attention and that may presage future challenges to be faced if similar health emergencies arise in the future (ECLAC, 2020).

2. Climate change and climate-related disasters

The Latin American and Caribbean region is struggling to cope with climate change and the increasingly frequent disasters associated with the cumulative destruction of the planet's habitats. The people in the lower-income strata of society are not necessarily the ones who have played the biggest part in the destruction of natural habitats —caused, for example, by the overharvesting of land and marine resources and by air pollution— but they are the ones who are the most impacted by those disasters. In addition to the people who are vulnerable because of their socioeconomic situation, there are a number of different population groups —such as women, older adults, persons with disabilities, children, indigenous peoples, campesinos and family farmers— who are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and who tend to have fewer resources to draw upon in striving to recover from them (ECLAC, 2017 and 2019; Dorling, 2017). Mitigation and adaptation measures —including social protection instruments designed specifically for the groups that are most vulnerable to natural disasters— need to be put in place in order to prevent climate change and climate-related disasters from deepening existing inequalities.

3. The demographic, epidemiological and nutrition transitions

The demographic, epidemiological and nutrition transitions are also marked by inequalities. The increasing pace of the ageing of the population and the feminization of that ageing process in the region are not evenly distributed. For example, there are vast differences in the life expectancies at birth of people in different socioeconomic segments, both across and within countries, between rural and urban dwellers, and between residents of different areas of a single city (Bilal and others, 2019). Given these spatially determined differences in life expectancies, there is clearly a need for health, pension and care policies to be tailored to different geographical areas and adjusted for gender-based differences.

The countries of the region are witnessing changes in the population's epidemiological profile, which, before the COVID-19 pandemic, was exhibiting a decline in the prevalence of communicable diseases and an increase in noncommunicable ones (such as diabetes, myocardial ischemia and cerebrovascular disorders) (PAHO, 2017). At the global level, between 22% and 25% of the disease burden is related to modifiable environmental factors. Inequality in these cases is manifested through diet, access to water and water quality, hygiene and sanitation services, urban air pollution and exposure to smoke in enclosed spaces. An additional consideration is that children are more vulnerable to these factors than adults are (PAHO, 2011; Prüss-Üstün and Corvalán, 2006; Prüss-Üstün and others, 2016).

Malnutrition can also be looked at through the lens of inequality, since it is more prevalent among low-income groups, women, indigenous peoples, persons of African descent and rural households in Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO and others, 2018). The region's emerging nutrition profile will require efforts to overcome a range of multidimensional challenges in the areas of health and sanitation, education and production in order to deal simultaneously with the problems of undernutrition and obesity.

4. Technological change

Unlike the situation in the developed world, technological change in Latin America and the Caribbean is occurring against a backdrop of high levels of informal economic activity, a social protection deficit, poverty and inequality. An examination of historical experiences and more recent technological changes makes it clear how these changes have gone hand in hand with mounting inequalities, are widening the gap in income distribution between capital and labour and are creating increasingly favourable conditions for highly qualified professionals while eroding the opportunities open to low-skilled workers (Allen, 2009; Autor, Mindell and Reynolds, 2019; Frey, 2019). There is concern not only about the possible net loss of jobs, but also about the increasing deterioration of working conditions as a consequence of the use of certain types of new technologies (Madariaga and others, 2019). There is a greater probability that the more underprivileged social sectors, such as indigenous peoples, Afrodescendent persons and communities, low-wage workers and people with a lower level of formal education, will be hurt more than others by automation technologies and that existing inequalities will therefore be intensified (Katz, 2019). Just how much technological change might help to actually reduce existing inequalities will be determined by institutional and educational factors, the nature of labour relations and the efficacy of social protection systems, among other elements. Policies that promote innovation and provide protection to workers can be designed to make use of technological changes to generate greater shared welfare.

5. Violence in its various forms

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most violent and unequal region in the world. The combination of these two traits is not a coincidence, since there is a strong correlation between the two (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). The many different dimensions of violence (murders, assaults and sexual violence) are an especially imminent threat for the poor and for children, young people, women, indigenous people, Afrodescendants, migrants and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.[3] The violence that goes along with drug trafficking and conflicts triggered by objections to extractive activities in indigenous territories have destructive ramifications for inclusive development processes. The first target for Sustainable Development Goal 16 (target 16.1) explicitly refers to the need to "significantly reduce all forms of violence". One of the policy challenges in the drive to reduce inequality is therefore to take into account the specific forms and nature of the violence that affects different vulnerable groups.

B. Structural challenges

1. Move towards a rights-based policy approach: from beneficiaries to citizens

In order to fashion public policies that will be effective in reducing inequality, a rights-based approach that embodies the concept of social citizenship needs to be adopted. This approach alters the public policy perspective by viewing people as citizens rather than as beneficiaries based on the understanding that all persons, simply by virtue of the fact that they are members of society, are fully entitled to attain social well-being (ECLAC, 2016). This approach opens the way for linking up policies with national and international legal commitments whereas, without that legal status, State action aimed at curbing inequalities tends to be less deliberate (ECLAC, 2014). The essential aspects of the rights-based approach which should guide the design, implementation

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[3]   Although the reference is specifically to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, in this context the reference should be taken more loosely to include all persons who are faced with violence and discrimination as a result of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or sexual characteristics, whether apparent or real, and persons who may identify with other terms.

Structural challenges to be overcome in order to attain greater equality include:

- Moving in the direction of a rights-based policy approach in which members of the target group are seen as citizens rather than as beneficiaries
- Achieving universalism that is sensitive to differences
- Promoting participation
- Working towards honouring international commitments
- Social compacts for equality
- Institution-building and policy linkages
- Statistical visibility of the various dimensions of inequality.

and evaluation of social policies are: integrality, institutionality, enforceability, progressiveness and non-regressiveness, equality and non-discrimination, participation, transparency and access to information and accountability (Cecchini and Rico, 2015; Sepúlveda, 2014).

2. Achieving universalism that is sensitive to differences

Policy tools aimed at reducing inequalities by putting a stop to discriminatory practices need to embody a recognition of ethnic/racial differences and differences related to gender, place of origin, culture, language and religion and need to be tailored to specific needs. This does not conflict with the principle of the universality of rights and, in fact, facilitates the expression of that principle (Habermas, 1998; Hopenhayn, 2001). A universalism that is sensitive to differences reconciles the principle of universality in access to social services as viewed from a rights-based perspective with a proactive approach focusing on closing gaps and overcoming inequalities so that "no one is left behind". This paves the way for public policies that include affirmative action measures and strategies for breaking down the access barriers to social services and well-being faced by people and population groups who have been excluded and discriminated against. In so doing, it also paves the way for making real progress towards the universalization of rights. Placing priority, for example, on access to policy tools calibrated to differing levels of vulnerability, such as affirmative action scholarships, income transfers to the most vulnerable groups and the provision of caregiving services to mothers, fathers, adolescents and young people can underpin policies that are truly relevant to people's identities and needs, thereby advancing the causes of full inclusion and a culture of equality (ECLAC, 2019).

3. Promoting participation

Inequality negates the possibility of participating fully in society and is one of the more egregious violations of people's rights. Participation plays an important role in reducing inequality because it promotes the representation of different groups and acts as a bulwark for a population that is fully capable of exercising its rights. It confers greater legitimacy on public policies and reinforces democracy, but it also improves the policy landscape by facilitating the development of policies that invite greater ownership and that are more relevant to the different kinds of inequalities that exist. Promoting the participation of the individuals, families and communities that social policies are intended to benefit in the design, implementation and monitoring of those policies is of pivotal importance in engendering wide-ranging participation that will serve as the foundation for inclusive development.

4. Working towards honouring international commitments

The legal foundations for each country's social policies differ in terms of their frames of reference and components. When States ratify the mandates and proposed objectives espoused by different international forums, they make certain commitments that enable them to place greater priority on reducing inequalities in the areas of health, education, labour and housing and in terms of gender, race or ethnicity and other motives for discrimination. These commitments have also strengthened the rights-based approach in social policy and fostered universalism that is sensitive to differences and citizen participation. While the countries of the region are parties to a large number of international human rights treaties and have highly developed national legal frameworks, they need to cover more ground in translating the formal commitments they have made into the effective enforcement of human rights. Overcoming the challenges they face in terms of policy design and implementation and in achieving concrete results that will underpin their efforts to honour the commitments made under national and international human rights instruments is an undertaking that they must not turn away from.

5. Social compacts for equality

Reducing inequality is not only a question of having the right social policies; there are also institutional constraints that militate against greater equality. In the presence of institutions that perpetuate inequality through the actions of individuals or entities that wield economic and political power and engage in rent-seeking behaviour based on their long-standing privileged access to natural and financial resources, it becomes clear that a new social compact is in order. Such a compact could serve as an inspiration for an "agreement among political and social stakeholders on the array of institutions [...] and public policies that will be needed in order to ensure that this new path is plotted out on the basis of careful deliberation and that it will be effective in leading the region forward" (ECLAC, 2014, p. 302). Social compacts can provide a foundation for the political viability of institutional reforms that can engender policies for reducing inequalities (ECLAC, 2014) —policies that are more urgently needed than ever in a world shaken by COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Institution-building and policy linkages

Inequality and poverty will never be vanquished unless the structures and processes underlying the extreme concentration of wealth are changed. These structures and processes tend to be rooted in special institutional arrangements. The challenge is to develop a social institutional structure[4] that mainstreams more egalitarian conditions throughout the economic and political system. This will entail consolidating a legal and regulatory foundation that ensures the viability of the exercise of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and reinforces the sustainability of social and political policies of State, rather than simply of the government that is in office at any given time. It will also entail coordinating and linking up the various social policies (in the fields of education, health, labour, social protection, care and housing), economic policies and environmental policies; building up social governance capacity; setting up highly effective and efficient technical teams and management processes; and ensuring the availability of a sufficient and sustained supply of resources to underpin a sound social policy. Yet another remaining challenge is the establishment of comprehensive social development strategies for linking up policy action at the national, subnational and local levels (ECLAC, 2016).

7. Statistical visibility of the different dimensions of inequality

In order to leave no one behind, attention needs to be drawn to the gaps that exist all along the various axes of the social inequality matrix. In order for it to be possible to prepare a suitable assessment that can serve as a foundation for the formulation of public policies for reducing existing inequalities, disaggregated statistical data are needed so that policymakers can pinpoint the inequalities focused on in this toolkit in the areas of socioeconomic strata, gender, the life cycle, ethnic/racial identity, place of residence, migration status and disability status. Data are also needed that will make it possible to see where different inequalities intersect.[5] Disaggregated statistics thus facilitate the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at closing the gaps affecting vulnerable persons and groups in the areas of education, health, the labour market, social protection and care, basic services, citizen security, and participation and decision-making.

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[4]   See the companion toolkit for the institutional framework.
[5]   This challenge is addressed by Sustainable Development Goal 17 and, more specifically, by target 17.18: "By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts." (United Nations, 2015, p. 27)

TABLE XIV.1
Examples of public policies for reducing inequality,
by axis of the social inequality matrix

AXIS OF INEQUALITY		POLICY ORIENTATION	STRATEGIC POLICY AREAS
Socioeconomic stratification		Reducing inequalities in income and in the labour market.	Policies to promote the labour and productive inclusion of sectors of the population that are most vulnerable to poverty.
			Institution-building policies for the labour market, including minimum wages and collective bargaining.
			Education, health and nutrition policies aimed at narrowing socioeconomic gaps by boosting productivity, employment and income levels.
Gender inequalities		Ensuring women's economic, physical and decision-making autonomy and gender mainstreaming.	Laws and public policies to address violence and harassment and to uphold women's right to fully exercise their sexual and reproductive rights.
			Laws and policies on employment, ownership, access to and control over land, social protection for paid domestic workers, care and pension systems, among others.
			Laws and public policies designed to ensure women's more active participation in politics, the labour market, trade unions and community organizations at all levels.
			Gender mainstreaming in all laws, policies and programmes in all areas and at all levels.
Inequalities at the different stages of the life cycle	Childhood and adolescence	Safeguarding children and adolescents and ensuring their development.	Promotion of well-being and social inclusion at all stages of childhood and adolescence by means of universal health and quality education policies, together with social protection systems that combine cash transfers, care policies and policies to promote early childhood development.
			Child protection policies that include preventive measures, address behaviours that generate vulnerability during children's and adolescents' developmental process, and ensure that they have a safe environment that is free of violence.
	Youth	Ensuring the social inclusion of young people in the fields of education, employment, health and culture and guaranteeing them a life free of violence along with opportunities for political participation.	Keeping young people in school so that they can reach a higher academic level and expanding the curricula.
			Vocational training and job placement.
			Promoting access to comprehensive health care relevant to this stage in life.
			Reducing violence and promoting culture and participation.
	Adulthood	Ensuring access to decent work	Basic income security.
			Decent working conditions and social and labour protection.
			Job training to help workers adapt to changing employment conditions.
			Care services.
	Old age	Ensuring the full inclusion, integration and participation of older adults in society.	Basic income security; supplementing retirement benefits with non-contributory pensions in order to ensure universal social protection.
			Policies that ensure greater access to comprehensive public health services in line with international human rights standards.
			Reinforcing long-term care services to prevent asset drawdowns and thereby reduce the vulnerability of the older adult population.

TABLE XIV.1
(concluded)

AXIS OF INEQUALITY	POLICY ORIENTATION	STRATEGIC POLICY AREAS
Indigenous peoples	Guaranteeing the recognition of indigenous peoples as holders of collective rights, particularly in terms of guarantees for their right to self-determination, collective ownership of their territories and political participation.	Design and implementation of laws, plans, strategies, policies and programmes to guarantee the territorial rights of indigenous peoples.
		Effective implementation of measures to guarantee the right to free, prior and informed consent.
		Affirmative action measures as a special mechanism for remedying the disadvantageous positions to which indigenous people have been relegated and for countering structural discrimination against indigenous peoples in the areas of employment, education, health, housing and, in general, access to well-being while taking their individual and collective rights into account.
		Measures of redress to counter the violation of indigenous peoples' rights in specific instances and to ensure non-repetition.
Persons of African descent	Recognizing, acknowledging and guaranteeing the rights of Afrodescendent populations.	Affirmative action measures for remedying the disadvantageous positions to which persons of African descent have been relegated and for countering structural discrimination against persons of African descent in the areas of employment, education, health, housing and, in general, access to well-being.
		Public health policies that are sensitive to the culture and needs of the Afrodescendent population, with special consideration of their knowledge and practices and with special safeguards for the rights of women and girls.
		Education policies to promote such initiatives as the establishment and administration of community universities and to reform school curricula to foster tolerance, discourage racial discrimination and incorporate intercultural aspects, bilingual education and Afrodescendent culture.
Persons with disabilities	Ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy the same human rights and opportunities as everyone else.	Inclusive education and training for persons with disabilities.
		Promoting labour inclusion.
		Social protection through transfer policies and care policies to facilitate full and effective participation on the part of persons with disabilities
		Cross-cutting policies on accessibility and the potential uses of information and communications technologies, together with anti-discrimination measures and affirmative action
Migrants	Recognizing migrants as rights holders and combating the discrimination that they face in their journeys, in terms of social integration when they reach their destination and in their home country when they return to it.	Regularization of the status of migrants as an essential factor in reducing their vulnerability throughout the migration cycle.
		Policies on access to physical and mental health services and to education regardless of the legal status of migrants and their families.
		Transferability and recognition of migrants' rights to benefits under contributory social protection schemes when in countries of destination and after returning to their home countries.
		Lowering the cost of sending remittances and promoting financial inclusion.
Territorial inequalities	Ensuring the development and well-being of people in all places, ensuring that they have equal opportunities and promoting the inclusive use of natural resources.	Promoting government efforts to work closely with the community and to bring opportunities closer to individuals, families and communities in the most underprivileged areas and to assist them in availing themselves of their rights.
		Promoting the participation of individuals, families and communities as key stakeholders in the design and oversight of policies and programmes that affect their lives.
		Compiling more disaggregated statistical data in order to make territorial inequalities visible and to see how those inequalities intersect with others that affect vulnerable groups.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

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This toolkit aims to facilitate the assessment of the multiple dimensions of social inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to provide relevant information on social policies implemented in different countries in the region that have effectively reduced inequality. It also supplies information on key international standards that, starting from a rights-based approach, will facilitate the formulation and implementation of social policies that will reduce inequality. The analysis draws attention to the challenges that need to be taken up by social policymakers in order to improve the living conditions of the population groups that have been left the furthest behind. The descriptions of these policies are intended to be a starting point for exploring and expanding upon the array of possible responses to inequality.