

### Key results

The remarkable decline in mortality, as evidenced by the increase in life expectancy, is one of the greatest achievements of the last century. Lives continue to get longer, and this trend is predicted to continue. In 2010-15, life expectancy at birth averaged 70.7 years for men and 76.6 years for women. Among women, the figure was highest in Chile (82.6 years), followed by Costa Rica, Uruguay, Jamaica, Panama, Argentina, Mexico and Ecuador, all above 79.0 years. For men, life expectancy at birth was highest in Costa Rica (77.7 years) followed by Chile, Mexico and Panama.

Mortality declines started early in the twentieth century in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. By 1950, life expectancy at birth was slightly over 50 years in the region, an indicator that improved by more than 40% in the following 50 years.

While mortality declined at all ages, the main driver of the increase in life expectancy at birth was the reduction in infant mortality rate for several decades. Only by 2005 did the increases in life expectancy at birth become slower than those of life expectancy at age 65. This decline in old-age mortality is especially important for the finances of retirement-income systems, as older people are living ever longer. In 2010-15, on average in LAC countries, women aged 65 could expect to live an additional 18.6 years, which is forecast to increase to 22.0 years by 2050-55. Men of the same age could expect to live 16.1 more years in 2010-15, with a projected increase of 2.8 years by 2050-55 to reach 18.9 years. Gender gaps in the longevity of older people are expected to remain broadly constant in relative terms but increase in absolute terms (from 2.5 to 3.1 years on average in LAC countries). Paying pensions from age 65 would become around 15-20% more expensive under these forecasts.

There is considerable variation between LAC countries in life expectancy at older ages. Women in Chile are predicted to live another 25.8 years on reaching age 65 in 2050-55. In contrast, women in Guyana are expected to live an extra 15.9 years from age 65 in 2050-55. The figure for Chile is considerably higher than any other countries, with Belize and Costa Rica being the next highest at 25.0 and 24.8 years respectively.

For men there is less variation between countries than there is for women. Costa Rica has the longest life expectancy at age 65 of 22.0 years in 2050-55, followed by Chile at 21.8 years. Again, Guyana has the shortest life expectancy for 65-year-old: 13.3 years.

The gender life-expectancy gap at age 65 is predicted to be between two and five years in favour of women for every LAC country in 2050-55.

This is a worldwide trend, and as a result many countries have increased or plan to increase their pension ages. Others have introduced elements into their retirement-income provision that will automatically adjust the level of pensions as people live longer. Both of these options will have to be considered in the LAC region as life expectancy estimates continue to increase and with retirement ages being under 65 in many countries, meaning that retirement duration is in fact higher than the figures quoted above.

Overall, longevity gains are due to rising living standards, but also greater access to quality health services. While socioeconomic differences at all ages (and particularly among children) have been significant for many years, future declines in mortality are expected to reduce the gaps currently observed across social groups in most countries.

### Definition and measurement

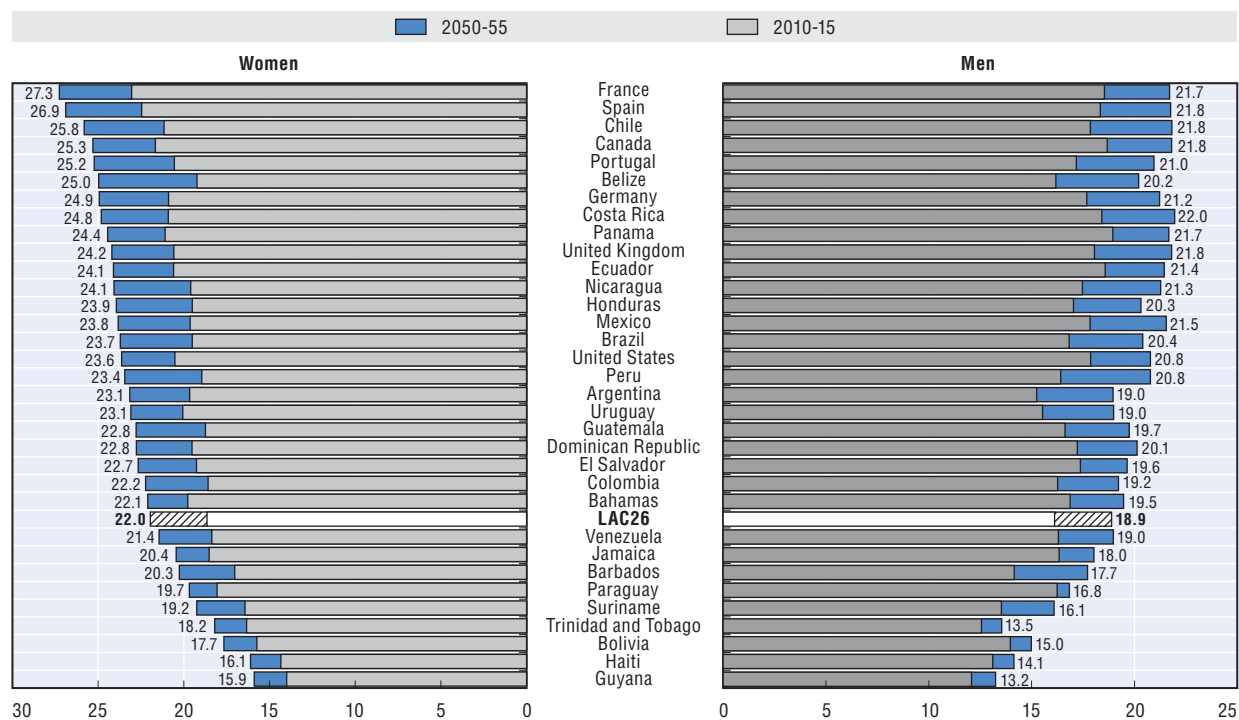
Life expectancy is defined as the average number of years that people of a particular age could expect to live if they experienced the age- and sex-specific mortality rates prevalent in a given country in a particular year. Since the determinants of longevity change slowly, life expectancy is best analysed over a long time horizon.

### Sources and further reading

Whitehouse, E.R. (2007), "Life-Expectancy Risk and Pensions: Who Bears the Burden?", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 60*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/060025254440>.

Whitehouse, E.R. and A. Zaidi (2008), "Socio-Economic Differences in Mortality: Implications for Pension Policy", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 71*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/231747416062>.

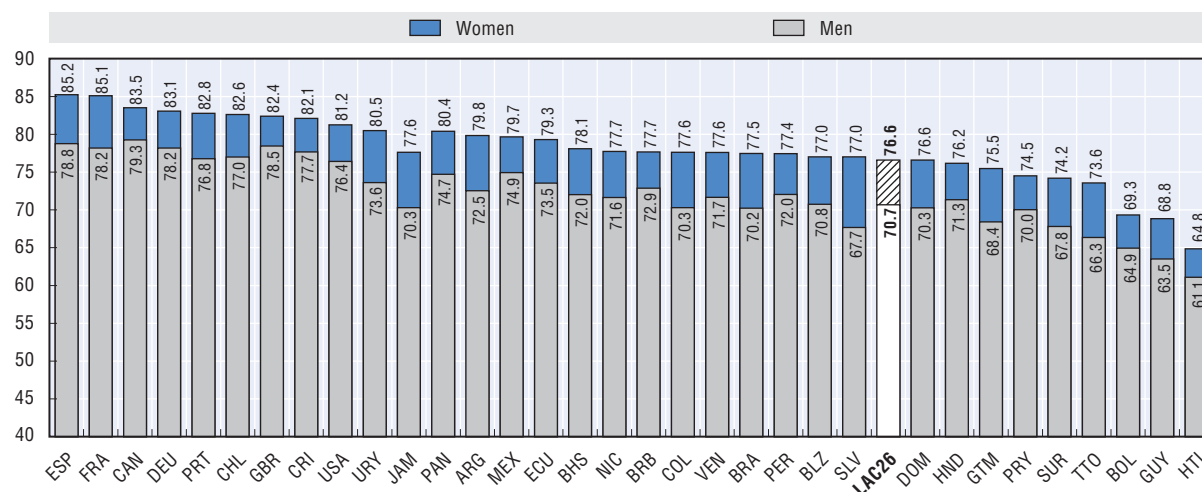
## 2.2. Additional life expectancy at age 65, in years, men and women, in 2010-15 and 2050-55



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects – 2012 Revision.

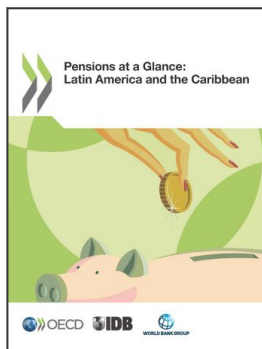
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933161434>

## 2.3. Life expectancy at birth, in years, men and women, in 2010-15



Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects – 2012 Revision.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933161442>



**From:**

## **Pensions at a Glance**

Latin America and the Caribbean

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### **Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD/Inter-American Development Bank/The World Bank (2014), “Life expectancy”, in *Pensions at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264224964-7-en>

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