

The quality of public policies and the services provided by any government are closely linked to the quality of its civil service. The ways in which the civil service is managed – in other words, crucial human resources management (HRM) functions such as planning, recruitment and selection, and professional development, and the incentives for professionalisation, among other factors – are critical factors to attracting, retaining, and motivating suitable staff.

Within the HRM agenda, workforce planning enables coherent policies to be defined in all of the HRM practices connected to it. Staffing levels, consolidated staff costs and skill requirements should ideally derive from a careful planning process.

A methodology developed by the IDB in 2003, following the Ibero-American Charter for the Public Service (ICPS), measures central government performance in HR planning through six factors: organisations' priorities and strategic orientation as a source to determine staffing needs; personnel information systems; degree of over/understaffing per institution; overall wage bill cost; personnel technical skills; and HRM policies and practices that are informed by the planning process.

Between 2004 and 2015, central governments in many Latin American countries improved their HR planning practices according to this methodology (see figure 6.1). However, the average score was still low, at 42 points out of 100.

While several Latin American governments have workforce planning manuals, most of the time these are merely formal documents. Offices responsible for HRM and governing bodies of the institutions often lack sufficient planning capacity and, to varying degrees, are subordinate to the decisions and criteria of the budgetary authorities (ministries of finance), which do not always consider it a priority to complement quantitative planning with qualitative planning (e.g. Mexico).

Brazil and Chile, whose civil service achieved a high score in planning, share two main characteristics: the practice of planning is institutionalised in the public agencies' routines; and planning combines quantitative aspects (staff numbers and budget) with qualitative ones (staff profiles that include competencies). The existence of technically strong budget and planning offices, strategic documents developed by institutions, solid personnel information systems and a civil service agency that coordinates with the HR units within the line ministries are the main factors that define government performance in this area.

Countries with lowest scores, such as Honduras and Paraguay, were characterized at the time of their assessments by the weakness or absence of basic planning instruments, with direct effects on workforce quality and balance.

Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru managed to improve scores substantially during the period, mainly through strengthening the use of HR planning tools, improving personnel information systems and increasing the percentage of staff with university degrees.

Methodology and definitions

In 2003, the governments in the LAC region signed the ICPS, which defines the basis of a professional and efficient civil service and provides a generic framework of guiding principles, policies, and management mechanisms needed to build it. After defining this common framework, the countries – with the support of the IDB – established a baseline to measure the extent to which their own civil service systems were aligned with these principles and practices, using a methodology with critical points linked to the civil service subsystems of the ICPS. Data for a second measurement were collected through individual country diagnostics between 2012 and 2015. Further details about the construction of the composite indicators can be found in Annex A.

Further reading

Iacoviello, M. and L. Strazza (2014), “Diagnostic of the Civil Service in Latin America”, in JC Cortázar, J.C., M. Lafuente and M. Sanginés (eds). *Serving Citizens: A Decade of Civil Service Reforms in Latin America (2004-13)*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, <http://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/6636>.

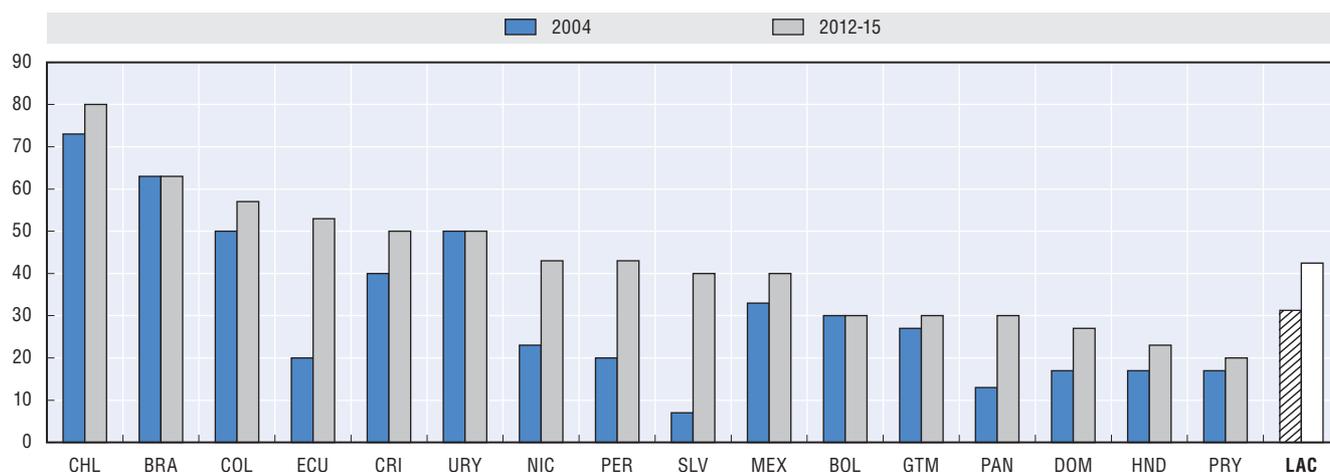
IDB (2017) Civil Service web pages, including the methodology and all country diagnostic reports, <http://descubre.iadb.org/civil-service> and <https://mydata.iadb.org/Reform-Modernization-of-the-State/Civil-Service-Development-Index/ddw5-db4y/about>.

Figure notes

6.1 and 6.2: Timing of the second assessment per country was the following: Ecuador and Peru (2015); Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay (2013); Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama (2012).

6.1. HR planning in the public sector (2004, 2012-15)

Scale 0 to 100, with 100 being the best possible score



Source: Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (2014).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933431308>

6.2. HR planning: Scores per factor over 2012 -15

Scale 0 to 5, with 5 being the best practice

	Organization's priorities and strategic orientation as a source to determine staffing needs	Personnel information systems	Degree of over/understaffing per institution	Overall wage bill costs	Personnel technical skills	HRM policies and practices are informed from planning process
Bolivia	1	2	1	3	1	1
Brazil	3	4	3	2	4	3
Chile	4	4	4	5	4	3
Colombia	2	3	3	3	4	2
Costa Rica	2	3	2	3	3	2
Dominican Republic	1	1	1	2	1	2
Ecuador	1	2	1	2	2	1
El Salvador	2	3	1	2	2	2
Guatemala	1	2	1	3	1	1
Honduras	1	3	0	1	1	1
Mexico	1	4	1	3	1	2
Nicaragua	2	3	2	2	2	2
Panama	2	2	1	2	1	1
Paraguay	1	2	1	0	2	0
Peru	2	2	1	3	3	2
Uruguay	2	3	2	2	4	2

Key:

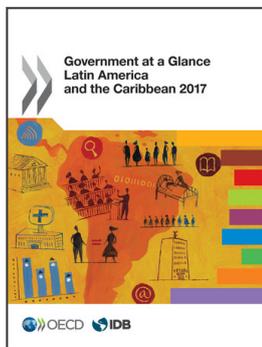
0-1 Low

2-3 Medium

4-5 High

Source: Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (2014).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933431724>



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