

The civil service merit index measures the guarantees of professionalism in the way that the civil service system operates. Specifically, it measures the degree of effective protection against arbitrariness, political capture or clientelism, and the different ways that interested groups or sectors engage in rent-seeking.

The merit index includes three critical practices, which assess the following factors: hiring is open to all candidates with required qualifications and is established according to technical considerations, adequate safeguard mechanisms against arbitrariness during the hiring process are in place and dismissals that affect professional positions are not motivated by political changes.

This is the area of HRM where the most significant progress has been achieved from 2004 to 2012/2015 in the LAC region. The average regional score for this index increased from 33 to 45 points out of 100 between 2004 and 2012/2015. Its growth reflects the high priority given to this area during this period.

The score rose in 11 countries out of the 16 analysed, remained constant in 3; and it fell in 2. Five systems are at a high level (over 60 points), five at the medium level (between 40 and 60 points) and the remaining six register a low level of development. The index's general evolution and the particular ups and downs in each country are explained by the gradual strengthening of the pillars of the meritocratic system: hiring competitions that are open, widely publicised, and based on selection tests.

Within the most advanced countries – Brazil, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile and Colombia – with some variation in each case, the use of competitive hiring is already widely institutionalised or has been reinforced over the last 10 years, mainly through the use of public employment web portals. These information systems are able to advertise job openings, receive online applications, and publish the bases and the results. In some cases, governments have been outsourcing part of the selection process to the private sector.

In the least developed systems – Bolivia, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama and El Salvador – competitions are much less frequent compared to non-competitive and/or discretionary mechanisms. In some cases, the main reason could be that meritocratic reform is very recent. In others, the explanation is that despite reform having been undertaken a decade ago, it has suffered setbacks that have hampered its consolidation. Regardless of the explanation, the effect is the same: meritocratic reform has failed to achieve the sufficient effectiveness and range needed to eliminate, or at least

substantially reduce, non-competitive and/or discretionary selection motivated by political pressure. The consequence is a public administration that may lack the capacity to face multiple management challenges.

Three general challenges emerge in this context: to extend the use of competitive hiring processes and to extend coverage, particularly in the countries with the lowest scores; to apply competitive mechanisms to the contractual workforce, which is in permanent expansion (even in advanced countries, such as Chile); and to continue to introduce competencies into the selection processes.

Methodology and definitions

In 2003, the governments in the 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 2012/2015. 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 J.C. Cortázar, 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>.

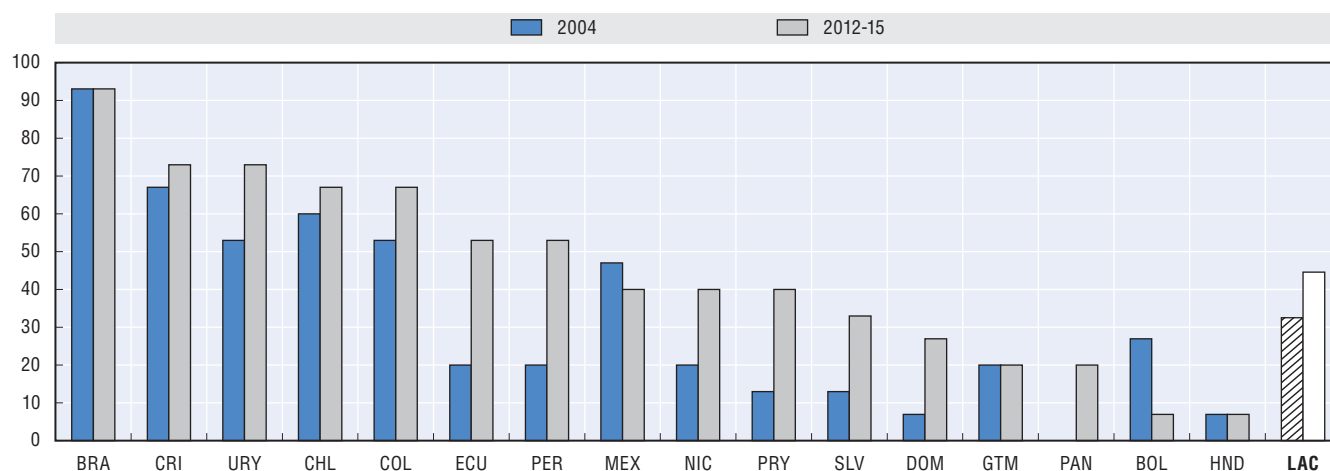
IDB (2017), Civil Service web pages, including the methodology and all country diagnostic reports, <http://descubre.iadb.org/civil-service>.

Figure notes

6.3 and 6.4: 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).

6.3. Civil service Merit (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/10.1787/888933431315>

6.4. Civil service merit: Scores per factor over 2012-15

Scale 0 to 5, with 5 being the best practice

	Hiring is open to all candidates with required qualifications and is established according to technical considerations	Adequate safeguard mechanisms against arbitrariness during the hiring process are in place	Dismissals that affect professional positions are not motivated by political changes
Bolivia	1	0	0
Brazil	5	4	5
Chile	4	3	3
Colombia	4	4	2
Costa Rica	4	4	3
Dominican Republic	1	2	1
Ecuador	3	3	1
El Salvador	2	1	2
Guatemala	1	1	1
Honduras	1	0	0
Mexico	2	1	3
Nicaragua	2	2	2
Panama	1	1	1
Paraguay	2	2	2
Peru	3	2	3
Uruguay	4	4	3

Key:

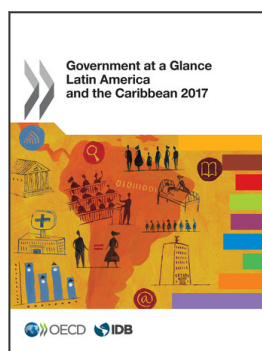
0-1 Low

2-3 Medium

4-5 High

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

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933431737>



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