

Creating equal participation and opportunities for women contributes to a more representative and diverse workforce. In many countries, the public sector is expected to be a model employer, leading the way and setting standards for the implementation of gender equality, and promoting diversity. A public sector workforce that reflects the diversity of society would probably deliver better results, for example, a diverse workforce is better positioned to understand and serve the needs of the various segments of the population.

The public sector generally employs more women, especially in care positions (e.g. nursing, teaching) which are traditionally regarded as “female occupations”, and could offer better conditions for those who need to combine work and family obligations than the private sector does. In 2018, on average 51.0% of public sector employees were women in LAC, compared to 60.2% in OECD countries. The share has remained stable over time: in 2011, the share of women in public employment was on average 50.7% in LAC and 59.2% in OECD countries. Jamaica, the country with the largest share of women in the public sector (60.3%), has a difference of 19 p.p. with Belize, the country with the smallest share in LAC (41.2%).

Recent evidence has shown that women in LAC work more hours than men, but are less likely to get paid because they spend more time producing goods and services for family consumption (e.g. food, care) (Bando, 2018). Hence, in 2018, women represented on average 41.0% of the total workforce in LAC, while the average across OECD countries was 45.8%. Again, there is a 20 p.p. gap between Barbados, the country with the highest (53.4%) and Guatemala (33.6%), the country with the lowest share of women in total employment.

While equal representation of women in public sector employment has been achieved (and even surpassed) in some LAC countries, this is not the case for leadership positions. Available data –referring to January 1, 2019 - show that most LAC countries are far from achieving gender equality in ministerial positions at the federal/central level of government. In 2019, on average in LAC, 27.4% of ministerial positions were filled by women, which is around 4 p.p. lower than the OECD average (31.2%). However, ministerial positions change frequently in LAC.

By 2019, Nicaragua (55.6%), Colombia (52.9%) and Costa Rica (51.9%) achieved gender parity in ministerial positions. On the other end of the spectrum, there are no female ministers in Belize. Many LAC countries have substantially increased the share of women ministers between 2012 and 2019, such as in Uruguay (35.8 p.p.), Costa Rica (23 p.p.), El Salvador (22 p.p.), Mexico (21 p.p.) and Colombia (20 p.p.). In other countries the representation of women in ministerial positions declined substantially, namely Bolivia (31 p.p.),

Brazil and Ecuador (18 p.p. each). In order to fully grasp women's participation in all levels of public employment, data on women representation in senior positions would be required as evidence in OECD countries shows that they tend to be under-represented in senior positions.

Methodology and definitions

Data on public sector employment were collected by the International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT database. Data are based on the Labour Force Survey unless otherwise indicated. Public sector employment covers employment in the government sector plus employment in publicly owned resident enterprises and companies. Data represent the total number of persons employed directly by these institutions without regard for the particular type of employment contract. The employed comprises all persons of working age, who, during a specified brief period, were in the following categories: paid employment or self-employment.

Data for gender equality in ministerial positions in national government were obtained from the Interparliamentary Union's “Women in Politics” database. Data represent the percentage of appointed ministers as of 1 January of each year of reference. Data show women as a share of total ministers, including deputy prime ministers and ministers. Prime ministers/heads of Government were also included when they held ministerial portfolios. Vice Presidents and heads of governmental or public agencies have not been included in the total.

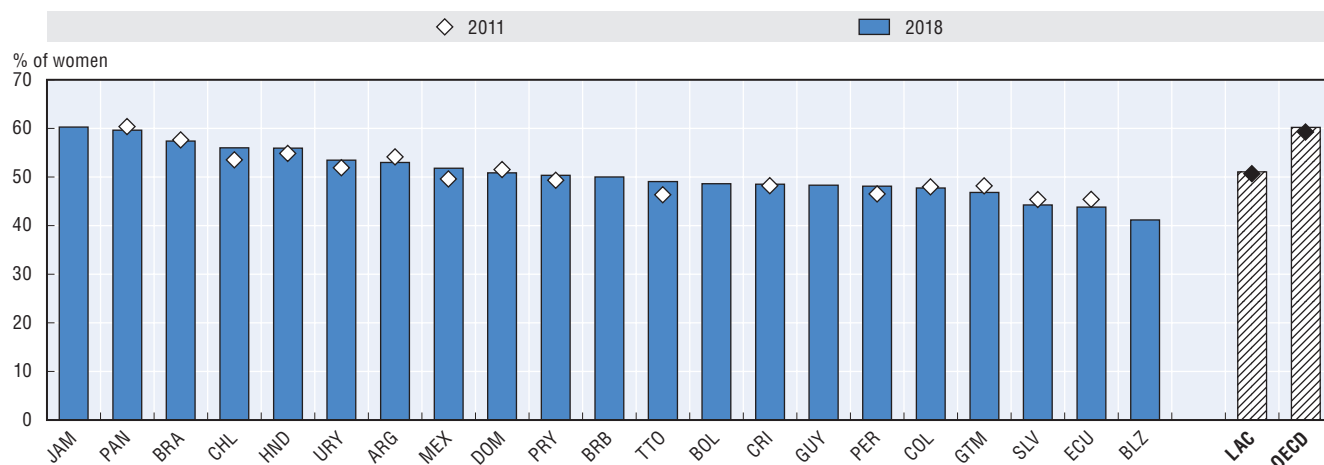
Further reading

Bando, R. (2018). *Evidence-Based Gender Equality Policy and Pay in Latin America and the Caribbean: Progress and Challenges*. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington DC. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0001614>

Figure notes

3.3 and 3.4: Data are based on the Labour Force Survey (data for Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru are based on other household surveys). Data for Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Guyana and Jamaica are not included in the LAC average. Data for Argentina refer to urban areas only. Data for Jamaica exclude own-use production workers. Data for Belize, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Paraguay and Peru are for 2017 rather than 2018. Data for Barbados, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago are for 2016 rather than 2018. Data for Brazil are for 2012 rather than 2011.

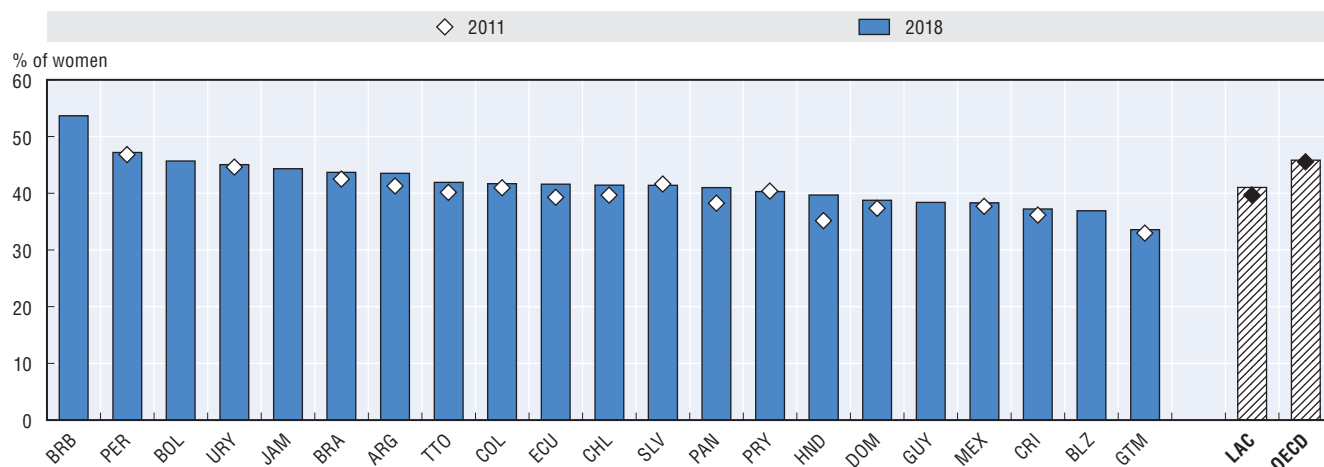
3.3. Gender equality in public sector employment, 2011 and 2018



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT (database), Employment by sex and institutional sector.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934091638>

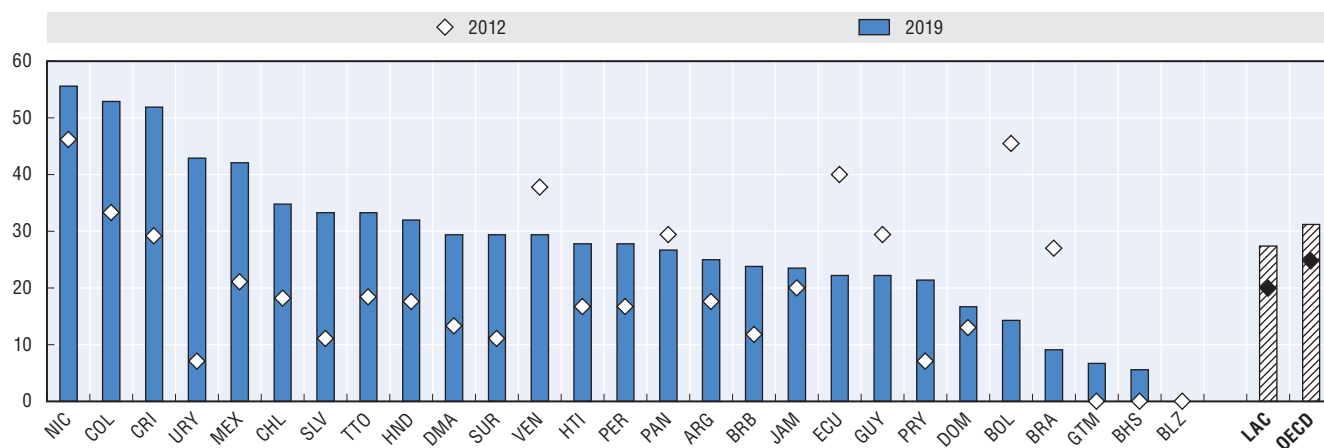
3.4. Gender equality in total employment, 2011 and 2018



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT (database), Employment by sex and institutional sector.

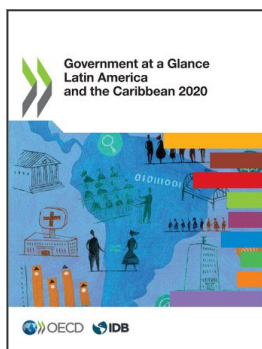
StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934091657>

3.5. Gender equality in ministerial positions, 2012 and 2019



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) "Women in Politics", 2012 and 2019.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934091676>



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