

Latin America and the Caribbean 30 Years on from the World Summit for Social Development

Towards a Global Pact for
Inclusive Social Development



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC



Regional Conference
on **Social Development**
in Latin America and the Caribbean

Brasília, 2–4 September 2025

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Foreword

At the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, countries underscored the importance of placing people at the centre of public policymaking and established 10 commitments that have served as inspiration for public policy design and the broader global debate on social development across all regions. These include the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment and social integration, the achievement of gender equality and universal and equitable access to quality education and primary healthcare.¹ These commitments have also provided essential guidance for the efforts undertaken by governments, civil society and international cooperation organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the 30 years since that milestone, and building on other major global agreements, such as the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015, the countries of the region have actively participated in the design and implementation of key social protection policies aimed at combating poverty, hunger and inequality, while advancing the exercise of social rights. During this period, significant progress has also been made in building social policy institutions, notably through the establishment and strengthening of ministries of social development in most countries of the region.

In recent decades, reducing inequalities and achieving inclusive social development have been priority areas of the work agenda of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The establishment of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the preparation of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, adopted at the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2019, are both the fruit of the joint efforts between ECLAC and the countries of the region.

Despite the commitments made, the efforts undertaken and the progress achieved, the region continues to face major challenges related to poverty, hunger and inequality, reflected in wide gaps in both income and the exercise of rights. In recent years, ECLAC has framed its analysis of the development challenges faced by most countries in the region around three development traps: low capacity for growth; high inequality, low social mobility and weak social cohesion; and weak institutional capacities and ineffective governance.

The low capacity for growth is evident, for example, in the average annual growth rate of Latin America and the Caribbean, which stood at just 0.9% between 2014 and 2023, considerably lower than the 2.0% registered in what was termed the “lost decade” of the 1980s. ECLAC has cautioned that the region has just completed a second lost decade, marked not only by stagnant economic growth but also by weak employment creation and a slowdown in the reduction of poverty, which began in the early 1990s. The Commission has also stressed the need to step up efforts on multiple fronts to avoid a third lost decade.

At the same time, the region is undergoing significant demographic, climate-related and technological changes that pose challenges and present opportunities for advancing inclusive social development. Without investment in comprehensive, high-quality public policies, these trends could have profound negative effects on the population. Added to this complex scenario is an international context shaped by multiple economic, social and political crises that fuel uncertainty and hinder development efforts.

To overcome these development traps, ECLAC has consistently advocated for a shift towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model. It has proposed 11 vital transformations, 5 of which relate directly to inclusive social development: (i) reducing inequality and strengthening social mobility and cohesion; (ii) expanding social protection and the welfare state; (iii) ensuring quality education for all and wide access to vocational education; (iv) progress towards gender equality and the care society and (v) strengthening of the technical, operational, political and prospective (TOPP) capabilities of the institutions responsible for these areas.² Moreover, breaking out of the low-growth trap requires a major productive transformation grounded in productive development policies.

¹ United Nations. (1995). Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. *Report of the World Summit for Social Development. Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (A/CONF.166/9)*.

² Salazar-Xirinachs, J. M. (2023). Rethinking, reimagining and transforming: the “whats” and the “hows” for moving towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model. *CEPAL Review* (141). (LC/PUB.2023/29-P/-*). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In line with the ECLAC institutional mandate and in accordance with resolution 5(V) adopted at the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2023 —by which countries requested the Commission to prepare a draft road map and a document “which will allow the region’s voice to be heard at the World Social Summit to be held in 2025”³— we have carried out a series of activities and prepared documents over the past two years, in close collaboration with national teams. These efforts have been led by the Chair of the Regional Conference for the period 2023–2025, held by the Ministry of Social Development and Family of Chile, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development and Assistance, Family Affairs and the Fight against Hunger of Brazil, which will assume the chairship for the period 2025–2027 at the sixth session of the Regional Conference.

Given their critical role in advancing inclusive social development, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the fight against inequality in its multiple dimensions are regional priorities that should guide social policymaking in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Discussions with teams from the region’s social development ministries on how to address these challenges reveal consensus on what social policies should be implemented and how to do so. Particular importance was placed on the development of universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, including comprehensive care policies grounded in a rights-based approach, in order to ensure access to education, health, pensions, employment and housing. These efforts should be backed by adequate investment to ensure their financial sustainability.

This document summarizes the results of the work carried out over the past two years, highlights the achievements made and puts forward proposals to overcome ongoing challenges in the region. It is our hope that its contents will serve as a basis for reflection and debate among national social development authorities, and contribute meaningfully to discussions at the sixth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to forging a unified regional voice in the lead-up to the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in November 2025.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs

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³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2024). *Report of the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/CDS.5/4). https://crds.cepal.org/5/sites/crds5/files/2400471e_cds.5_report_0.pdf



Executive summary

Introduction

At the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, the 186 countries in attendance—117 of them represented by their Heads of State or Government—underscored the importance of placing people at the centre of public policy, and emphasized eradicating poverty, enhancing productive employment and reducing unemployment, and fostering social integration (United Nations, 1995). Three decades on from this landmark event, the world has undergone profound transformations at unprecedented speed and with significant social impacts, such as those stemming from climate change, the technological revolution, migration, population ageing and the emergence of different forms of violence. These are compounded by the region’s long-standing social issues, including the persistence of poverty, hunger, and inequality; precarious employment; and insufficient access to quality education, health care, and housing, among others.

Addressing this current social reality in Latin America and the Caribbean requires more than simply looking at recent efforts and learning from successes and setbacks; it is also essential to focus on the present and look to the future. In this context, and with a view to attaining the social goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and proactively and effectively addressing the challenges of the coming decades, the Second World Summit for Social Development presents an opportunity to work towards a global pact for inclusive social development, in accordance with the mandate of the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and drawing inspiration from the *Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development* (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2020) and the vision set out in the Pact for the Future (United Nations, 2024).

The aim is to seize this opportunity and make decisive progress towards inclusive social development, so that “all people are able to live free from poverty and achieve a level of well-being that aligns with high, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and that enables the development of skills in conditions of freedom and dignity, with full exercise of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and opportunities for recognition and participation to address social divides and inequalities” (ECLAC, 2025c, p. 4).

I. From Copenhagen to Doha: 30 years of inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

The following is a brief examination of the similarities and differences that shape the region’s social reality, the public policy approaches adopted to address it, and the processes that have emerged in recent decades. This will provide context for the challenges, opportunities, and public policy proposals that reflect the collective voice of the region’s ministries of social development in the lead-up to the Second World Summit for Social Development.

A. Changes in core dimensions of inclusive social development over the past 30 years

1. Poverty between the first and second “lost decade”

In the early 1990s, the region had just entered a phase of recovery following the “lost decade” triggered by the debt crisis and structural adjustment policies, which had led, not least, to a sharp decline in social spending. Between 1980 and 1990, regional per capita GDP contracted by just over 6.7%, while poverty

rose by over 8 percentage points, pushing approximately 68 million more people into poverty. Over half of the Latin American population —51.2%, or around 212 million people— was living in poverty and it took the region more than 25 years to return to the poverty levels registered in 1980, nearly twice the time it took for economic recovery.

In the 2000s, the region registered relatively sustained economic growth, driven in part by the commodity price boom. There was also a gradual expansion of social spending, marked by the slow but steady development and scaling-up of anti-poverty social programmes and non-contributory pension systems. The 2008 financial crisis slowed this trend to some extent, but it prompted governments to take a more active role in addressing the effects of the crisis with countercyclical policies in both the social and productive sectors. As a result, poverty and extreme poverty continued to trend downward in most countries, at least until 2014, when they reached their lowest levels —27.7% (161 million people) and 7.8% (45 million people), respectively— before the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. That year, the region entered what has been termed the “second lost decade,” characterized by a slowdown in the average GDP growth rate to below 1% and by occasional declines in social indicators, particularly in the labour market, reflected in a slight uptick in poverty and extreme poverty rates. As a result of the crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty increased by nearly 3 percentage points, returning to the 2008 level, while extreme poverty rose by just under 2 percentage points, reaching levels similar to those recorded in the 1990s. Poverty levels in the region are projected to be at their lowest (26.8%, or approximately 170 million people) in 2024, with extreme poverty similar to pre-pandemic levels (10.4%, or 66 million people). Despite this recovery, most countries of the region are far from reaching the targets set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Among the main factors behind the reduction in poverty in recent decades are economic growth, rising female labour force participation rates, higher real wages and the surge in commodity prices between 2000 and 2014. Other key factors include the expansion of public social spending and, in this connection, the implementation of social policies and the role of public transfers, including both conditional and non-conditional cash transfer programmes, as well as non-contributory pension systems. To continue in this direction, in addition to promoting cash and in-kind family transfer programmes, it is essential to increase public investment in education and accessible health systems, improve their quality and implement policies that foster the creation of formal employment, enhance working conditions and support increases in real wages, particularly for low-income workers. There is a need to promote fiscal reforms to make tax systems more progressive, limit tax evasion and avoidance and strengthen social investment as a means of contributing to the reduction of inequality and poverty. These efforts should be accompanied by macroeconomic policies that support sustained economic growth and generate opportunities for all segments of the population, with particular attention to the inclusion of vulnerable groups. It is also essential to expand coverage and improve the quality of social protection systems, including unemployment insurance, non-contributory pensions and other transfer programmes, and comprehensive policies that address the multiple dimensions of inequality (ECLAC, 2025c).

2. Malnutrition and food security

Hunger and malnutrition are indicators of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region where, despite being the world’s largest food exporter (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [OECD and FAO], 2023), 187.6 million people suffered from moderate or severe food insecurity in 2023, equivalent to 28.2% of the regional population (FAO et al., 2024). Moreover, the region is undergoing a nutritional transition marked by the coexistence of undernutrition, overweight and obesity (Martínez et al., 2024).

Since the 1990s, the region has seen a significant decline in chronic undernutrition, with prevalence among children under age 5 falling from 21.8% to 11.5%. However, this progress has been uneven, with considerable variation across countries and subregions. At the same time, overweight and obesity in this population increased from 6.8% in 2000 to 8.6% in 2022, 3 percentage points higher than the global average (FAO et al., 2024).

As with undernutrition, the situation varies across countries. According to estimates, in 2022, 29.9% of the adult population was obese,¹ reflecting an upward trend in all countries of the region since 2000. The double burden of malnutrition represents a serious challenge with direct consequences for the affected population and far-reaching impacts on society and national economies, as shown in studies conducted by ECLAC and the World Food Programme (WFP) in partnership with national institutions (Martínez et al., 2024).

3. Inequality

High inequality, in its multiple dimensions, together with low social mobility and weak social cohesion constitute a structural trap that hinders countries' progress toward inclusive social development, an essential component of sustainable development. As in 1995, Latin America and the Caribbean remains the most unequal region in the world based on the Gini index of income distribution. The region's pronounced structural inequality and low intergenerational social mobility are rooted in deeply interrelated factors, as outlined in the social inequality matrix developed by ECLAC (2016).

The measurement of multidimensional inequality has gained importance, in recognition of the fact that well-being is not solely determined by income, as reflected in the multidimensional poverty indices described above. However, challenges remain in terms of methodology and availability of data for analysing gaps, particularly with regard to the inclusion of historically overlooked groups and tracking inequality across the life cycle.

B. Progress in policy approaches to non-contributory social protection in Latin America and the Caribbean

There have been major transformations in non-contributory social protection over the past 30 years. Since the 1990s, drawing on the experience of social investment funds and conditional cash transfer programmes, the region has progressively developed institutional frameworks for policy to fight poverty and provide access to services for the exercise of social rights (Cecchini and Martínez, 2011). Likewise, there have been significant social development and protection changes in terms of policy approaches and scope, some of which are set out below.

- (i) From the fight against poverty to inclusive social development This change expanded the focus of social development to include groups who are vulnerable to poverty as well as the middle class as priority target populations. The definition of poverty was also broadened, looking beyond income to adopt a multidimensional perspective that considers rights and capacities. This approach to measuring poverty is currently in use in 11 countries (ECLAC, 2025b).
- (ii) From specific targeted programmes to universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems. The most important aspects of this change include the following:
 - From targeted services to universal rights, moving from a restrictive approach with a primary focus on preventing errors of inclusion through more uniform services just for the poor, to the provision of a more efficient and differentiated range of services to achieve the universal exercise of rights.
 - From safety nets to social protection systems. The aim is not only to mitigate the impacts of economic crises on populations living in poverty—who are often excluded from social security—through time-limited instruments, but also to build an integrated system that combines contributory and non-contributory components.

¹ Body mass index above 30 kg/m².

- From conditional transfers to guaranteed income. The focus of these programmes has broadened, both in terms of the target populations and the concept of conditionality, with increasing attention given to the goal of ensuring that all individuals can live above the poverty line.
 - From access to social services infrastructure to care policies. While the goal of having adequate infrastructure to deliver quality social services to the poor, in accordance with the priorities established by social investment funds, continues to pose major challenges for the countries of the region, the focus has shifted away from programmes or projects in isolation and towards a public policy approach aimed at creating comprehensive social protection systems that encompass service provision and stakeholder participation. This has given rise to new goals and management models that seek to coordinate services and address emerging challenges, such as the design of comprehensive care policies. Several countries of the region are developing such policies, which are a core component of social protection systems.
- (iii) From systems based on targeting “beneficiaries” to information systems based on the use of data and social household registries for decision-making. This is an area in which social development ministries have played a leading role.
- (iv) From limited development of evaluation and monitoring in the 1990s to its gradual expansion in the region. At present, despite the considerable challenges that persist, there is growing recognition of the need to expand and improve linkages between these activities. The approach has shifted from a limited focus on expenditure efficiency towards one that incorporates cost-effectiveness, as well as the sufficiency and financial sustainability of social investment.

Lastly, conceptions of funding for social policy have also developed in a positive direction in the last 30 years: previously considered a current expenditure, social funding has come to be viewed as an investment, with observable effects not just on individuals participating in social programmes but on the economy as a whole.

C. Institutional frameworks for social policy in Latin America and the Caribbean since the 1990s

Social institutional frameworks provide fundamental infrastructure for implementing quality social policies in pursuit of inclusive social development (Martínez and Maldonado, 2019). Although major challenges remain, significant progress has been made in this area of public policy of countries of the region. This includes the widespread ratification of international conventions and treaties on rights related to inclusive social development, as well as the establishment and expansion of ministries of social development, now present in at least 23 countries. These developments reflect the region’s commitment to advancing social policies aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and promoting access to social protection, both for the wider population and for specific groups (ECLAC, 2023b).

This progress has been accompanied by a degree of institutional instability and a lack of technical, operational, political and forward-looking (TOPP) capabilities, which poses significant challenges across the legal and normative, organizational, technical and operational, and financial dimensions in overcoming the trap of high inequality, low social mobility and weak social cohesion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since the 1990s, social development policies have been increasingly bolstered by institutional frameworks at both the regional and international levels. These include the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 and the mandates deriving therefrom, the prominence given to social issues in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the provisions of the Pact for the Future. Added to this are multilateral spaces for monitoring and cooperation that have gradually established a key institutional framework for the advancement of inclusive social development policies worldwide. These include the United Nations Economic and Social Council and its various subsidiary bodies and commissions, notably the Commission for Social Development, which monitors the agreements that emerged from the World Summit for Social Development, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, various cooperation bodies, ministerial forums and specialized conferences have played a key role in shaping the region's social institutional framework. These include the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, adopted in 2019 to support the achievement of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda in the region. There are also important coordination mechanisms for sectoral policies in the areas of education, health, labour inclusion and housing.

Over time, the social development agenda has increasingly recognized the need to address inequality and strengthen social institutions to achieve inclusive social development. Global, regional and national efforts have been especially helpful in building a more robust policy agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean and supporting concrete measures in key areas, such as social protection, education, health and labour inclusion.

II. Emerging challenges and opportunities for inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

There follows a short summary of some of the emerging topics viewed as essential for advancing towards inclusive social development in the region.

1. Technological changes and social inclusion

In an increasingly digital world, access to information and communications technology (ICT) and the effective use thereof have become essential to social, economic and political participation. The digital divide persisting between different population groups threatens to deepen existing inequalities and prevent broad swathes of society from reaping the benefits of the digital age. New technologies also have a strong impact on labour inclusion. Automation, robotization and the advent of generative artificial intelligence are changing the nature of work, and education and training systems must adapt in response. Digital skills and lifelong learning are crucial to prepare workers for the jobs of tomorrow.

2. Climate change and vulnerability to disasters

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world when it comes to disasters and the effects of climate change, such as storms, floods and droughts, are increasingly frequent and intense. In particular, small island developing States (SIDS), such as those in the Caribbean, shoulder enormous costs in terms of human life and physical infrastructure. Disasters also disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population, exacerbating existing inequalities. A comprehensive approach must therefore be taken to integrate social protection with climate change and disaster management to ensure dual institutional and social resilience (ECLAC, 2024c).

3. Demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transitions

These three transition processes will only intensify in the coming years. The decline in fertility rates is reducing the dependency ratio, which produces a temporary demographic dividend for most countries. However, in view of ongoing population ageing, there are also long-term pension, care and health system challenges to consider. Noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, have become the leading cause of death in the region. The approach to these diseases must be one of prevention and surveillance, by fostering universal access to primary health care, basic services and vaccination. Lastly, the double burden of malnutrition (undernutrition and overweight) also presents major challenges for health, food and social protection systems.

4. Migration on the rise

Migration flows within Latin America and the Caribbean have grown significantly and become more diverse in recent years, owing to economic crises, political conflicts, vulnerability to violence, disasters and family reunification (Maldonado et al., 2018). It is essential to adopt a rights-based approach to managing migration to ensure social protection and inclusion for migrants at all phases of the process.

5. Social cohesion and governability in the face of multiple forms of violence and conflicts

Violence in all its forms is a major obstacle to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region where one of the highest homicide rates in the world is affecting public safety, social cohesion and governability. With the steady expansion of drug cartels and criminal groups, organized crime poses a growing challenge to the authority of the State. Addressing this requires public policies for crime prevention —rather than crime response alone— built on proactive social and labour inclusion measures that reinforce equal rights. Strategies are also needed to improve social cohesion, as well as policies to boost economic and social well-being. Steps must be taken to make the institutional framework perform better and be more effective and accountable, and improve participation in decision-making and democratic governance.

6. The global context: crisis and uncertainty

In addition to the issues discussed above, the significant impacts of global crises in the social, political and economic spheres have shaped the region's recent history and show no signs of abating. These events and processes range from the COVID-19 pandemic —and the resulting food and fuel price crises caused by supply chain disruptions and their effects on global food systems— to geopolitical, economic and trade uncertainty and the resulting cutbacks to resources for international cooperation. This state of affairs creates great uncertainty, affecting the financial sustainability of inclusive social development policies and, by extension, countries' ability to meet the commitments of the 2030 Agenda. For this reason, it is essential to sustain the fulfilment of the social goals of the SDGs and to strengthen forums for cooperation and regional integration.

Periods of crisis and uncertainty are nothing new and today the region is equipped with a wider and better array of tools to address the social impacts of such crises as well as institutional frameworks for social policy that, albeit with room for improvement, stand in better stead than in decades past.

III. Towards a global pact for inclusive social development

This section presents a summary of the main stances adopted by the region for analysis at the Second World Summit for Social Development. It includes both the vision of ministries of social development and additional proposals encompassing other areas of social policy, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the challenges and proposals that must be considered in working towards a global pact for inclusive social development. Also included are messages which countries around the world have discussed, through their representatives to the United Nations, and contributions from within the United Nations system to the work and agreements of the Summit.

A. Proposals from the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

The proposals made by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean are grouped into four spheres:

- (i) Combating inequality, poverty and hunger: a priority for the region and the world. This objective is a priority for attaining inclusive social development. Although these scourges are long-standing, they are understood to be surmountable. The region's hallmark inequality is an economic development trap that shows up in well-being gaps (wealth and income distribution) and in gaps in access to social rights (education, health, social security and housing) and political rights (participation and recognition). Efforts are also needed to tackle newly emerging gaps that constrain inclusive social development, linked to climate change, ageing, migration, new forms of violence, organized crime and the technological transformation. It is thus all the more important to move ahead with multidimensional inequality measurements and seize the opportunity presented by major international agreements and commitments, such as the Pact for the Future and the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, in order to drive achievement of SDGs 1, 2 and 10, while strengthening North-South and South-South cooperation in order to leave no one behind.
- (ii) Social protection systems: comprehensive care policies and quality public policies to leave no one behind. Building linkages between social inclusion and social protection policies is important to achieve inclusive social development in the region and around the world, focusing on:
 - Universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, in line with the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development of 2019
 - High-quality social policies that are effective, efficient, sustainable, transparent and participatory.
 - Care systems and their importance amid ongoing social and demographic transformations.
 - Labour inclusion as the master key to tackling inequality, fostering upward social mobility and ensuring the exercise of rights.
 - Social protection for dealing with disasters.
 - Policies to counter different kinds of violence and foster social cohesion, recognition and participation.
 - Social policy institutional frameworks for ensuring the exercise of rights, the provision of public goods, the implementation of high-quality social policies and public participation.
- (iii) Action for inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Based on the work and agreements of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the following points are especially important:
 - The Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development: the preparation of the Agenda is a reflection of what can be accomplished through social dialogue among the countries of the region.
 - Social investment: a spending standard and commitments on financing for non-contributory social protection to progress towards ending poverty. The proposal is that “the countries of the region increase spending, through their ministries of social development or equivalent entities, on non-contributory social protection policies, to a target of at least 1.5%–2.5% of GDP or 5%–10% of annual public spending, with a view to ending poverty” (ECLAC, 2024c, p. 63).
 - A regional commitment to inclusive social development: this is necessary to achieve the political and financial aims of inclusive social development in a sustainable manner, as well as to achieve “a minimum level of well-being and ensure dignity and the exercise of the social rights of all” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 18).

- (iv) Towards a global pact for inclusive social development. Given that the foregoing calls for concerted international effort, the following proposals are put forward:
- A global pact for inclusive social development: “in keeping with the recent experience of the Pact for the Future, the international community, at the Second World Summit for Social Development, is encouraged to adopt a global pact for inclusive social development to realize the social commitments agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 19).
 - Social investment: international financial institutions and developed countries are called upon to commit financing for policies geared towards inclusive social development, to provide access to innovative financial instruments, and to offer facilities such as investments backing sustainable development strategies. “In turn, developing countries must commit to making their best efforts with respect to fiscal institutional frameworks and efficient management of public resources to ensure transparency and the sustainability of financial support. South-South, North-South and interregional cooperation agreements present opportunities for meaningful progress in this area and should be leveraged” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 19).
 - Institutional frameworks for social policy: new metrics are needed for decision-making on investment and on development policies, to align with sustainable development. In addition to criteria on efficiency (profit and productivity), such metrics should include distribution criteria and procedures to measure the environmental footprint (carbon emissions and biodiversity) and the social footprint (social and labour inclusion and the exercise of rights). The experiences of the financial sector and private corporations show that this is an achievable goal.
 - Implementing of the Global Digital Compact for progress towards inclusive social development: digital technologies are transforming the world, with immense potential benefits for well-being. However, strengthened international cooperation is needed to close the digital divide, which affects developing countries in particular (United Nations, 2024, annex I). The aims and commitments of the Global Digital Compact must be built into the global pact for inclusive social development.
 - Strengthening multilateralism and cooperation: “[t]he call to strengthen international cooperation capacities and to translate multilateralism into public policy action for inclusive social development and leave no one behind is thus reaffirmed” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 20).

Lastly, the document draws attention to the accelerating pace of the transformations under way and hence the need to convene the next World Summit for Social Development without waiting another 30 years. It proposes holding the Third World Summit no more than five years after the Second World Summit, to examine progress and setbacks, agree upon priorities and alternatives, and reach agreement on a shared path forward.

B. Areas complementary to the work of ministries of social development to be considered in a global pact for inclusive social development

Advancing towards a global pact for inclusive social development that addresses the multiple dimensions of poverty, hunger and inequality entails more than universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems. These must be complemented by inclusion policies to ensure well-being and access, focused on service delivery for the exercise of social rights, especially in the areas of education, health, housing, water and sanitation, which are under the purview of various State bodies other than ministries of social development or their equivalent.

In the area of education, investment is essential to foster upward social mobility. It is proposed to invest in early childhood education, improving infrastructure and promoting the professionalization of teaching personnel; to ensure secondary school completion as a baseline for progress towards young people’s inclusion and social mobility; to step up efforts to streamline the school-to-work transition; and to improve lifelong learning systems, in keeping with labour market requirements (ECLAC, 2025b).

In the area of health, ensuring universal access is essential, as is linking it with the other components of social protection, fostering social participation and focusing on the social determinants of health. Primary healthcare strategies must also be strengthened, combined with a robust disease prevention and health promotion component and investment in physical and mental health (ECLAC, 2025b).

In relation to housing, policies are proposed to secure the right to decent housing, with appropriate spaces to ensure physical security and reduce overcrowding, as well as access to drinking water, sanitation, energy, communication and Internet service, along with public spaces for a healthy environment.

In short, a global pact for inclusive social development means developing public policies that ensure social and labour inclusion, high-quality education and healthcare, housing, basic services and care, joined up with comprehensive, universal, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, and supported by institutional frameworks for social policy in line with the prerequisites for a welfare state to tackle the scourges of poverty, hunger and inequality. In this framework, cooperation and multilateralism are critical for the viability and sustainability of the proposals put forward.

C. The proposals in light of the preparation of the political declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development

The policy priorities and proposals presented in this document are very much aligned with countries' proposals in the draft political declaration for the Second World Summit for Social Development. The draft coincides with the region's priorities of poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all and social integration (United Nations, 2025, p. 1).

This document includes a variety of proposals that complement the vision of the draft declaration in several areas. For example, both proposals emphasize the multidimensionality of poverty, the importance of universal social protection systems and the need for financial sustainability. They also emphasize the importance of labour inclusion and call for support for the implementation of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, the strengthening of labour and labour market institutions, and the adoption of macroeconomic policies to underpin the creation of decent work.

With regard to social inclusion, both documents underline the commitment to foster inclusive, equitable and cohesive societies, based on the principles of human dignity, solidarity, tolerance and participation for all (United Nations, 2025, p. 5). They also address the challenges of the demographic transition and technological shifts, the need to invest in early childhood, persons with disabilities, culture and social cohesion, and gaps related to racism and xenophobia. They both speak of the importance of institutional capacity-building through social development policies with a holistic approach, recognizing the family as a central enabler of social development.

Moreover, the proposals included in this document also align with the priorities and proposals made by the inter-agency task force to support preparation of the Second World Summit for Social Development, which produced three synthesis briefs containing key messages on the three pillars of sustainable development: social inclusion, eradicating poverty, and full employment and decent work for all (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025). The present document thus coincides greatly with the proposals by the inter-agency task force in relation to the priorities associated with poverty, hunger and inequality, the approach grounded in human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the need for linkages among high-quality public policies and universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, with suitable institutional frameworks and governance.

The alignment between regional perspectives and ongoing global efforts indicates that the region's proposals should be welcomed at the international level. However, this will only be attainable with sufficient political backing for an implementation approach capable of both catering to the urgency of the current context and laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable processes. In this regard, there is all the more reason to call upon the international community, in line with the Pact for the Future (United Nations, 2024), to establish a global pact for inclusive social development in order to revitalize commitments, keep the focus on current challenges and consider those of both the near future and the longer term, to leave no one behind.



Introduction

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995 and attended by representatives of 186 countries, 117 of whom were Heads of State or Government, underscored the importance of placing people at the centre of public policies, promoting full and productive employment and strengthening social integration. In the three decades since this landmark event, the world has undergone profound transformations at unprecedented speed and with significant social impacts, such as those stemming from climate change, the technological revolution, migration, population ageing and the emergence of different forms of violence. These changes are taking place in a global context of recurring crises and high levels of geopolitical uncertainty.

The Second World Summit on Social Development, to be held in Doha in 2025, represents a unique opportunity to adopt and renew key agreements on the development of social policies in the region and worldwide. In the Pact for the Future, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 79/1 of 22 September 2024, Heads of State and Government expressed concern about persistent inequalities within and between countries and decided to pursue ambitious outcomes for the Second World Summit. Developments in the international arena over the past year have heightened the urgency of addressing this concern and of redoubling efforts accordingly.

The region has come a long way in recent decades in terms of the provision of social services like health and education, and income poverty —estimated at 26.8% in 2024— is at a historical low. Countries made substantial progress following a sharp decline in poverty between 1990 and 2014, although this was followed by a period of stagnation exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (ECLAC, 2024a). Social policies and the institutions that implemented them have played a central role in these advances, although priorities, approaches and capacities to address structural demands and respond to diverse shocks vary widely across the region. Despite positive developments, major challenges remain in relation to persistent inequality in income distribution —reflected in a Gini coefficient of 0.452 in 2023, accompanied by low social mobility and weak social cohesion—, and in the exercise of social rights. The lowest-income population, women, people living in rural areas, children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, migrants, Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendants are the most affected, mirroring the areas and axes of the social inequality matrix (ECLAC, 2024a).

Over the past 30 years, Latin America and the Caribbean has also undergone a significant demographic transformation, albeit at different speeds across countries and subregions. In 1995, Latin America was, on average, in full demographic transition, marked by a faster decline in birth rates than in mortality. The region's annual population growth rate was around 1.7% in 1995, reflecting a steady decline in fertility since the 1970s and relatively low mortality rates (Ortiz et al., 2003). During the 1995–2000 period, Latin America's total fertility rate was estimated at 2.9 children per woman and, around 1995, life expectancy at birth was 69 years. By contrast, the Caribbean was, on average, in a more advanced stage of demographic transition in the 1990s, with an annual population growth rate of 0.9%.

Today, the region as a whole is in an advanced stage of demographic transition, with an estimated annual population growth rate of 0.9% for 2020–2025, according to projections by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC, although some countries remain in earlier phases.¹ The current total fertility rate stands at 1.85 children per woman, below the replacement level of 2.1, and life expectancy at birth is approximately 75 years. This signals the gradual end of the region's demographic dividend (2020–2025), as the dependent population (those aged under 15 years and over 65 years) is growing faster than the working-age population and an accelerated ageing process is under way (ECLAC, 2022a and 2024b). As a result, the demographic window of opportunity is closing and the region is entering a phase of increasing demographic burden, with growing challenges for social protection systems, which are reflected in labour markets, pension and health systems and the provision of care.

¹ The following countries are in full demographic transition: Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Suriname. Haiti is still at an incipient transition stage.

The challenges stemming from these ongoing changes compound those linked to persistent poverty and inequality, precarious work and insufficient access to quality education, pensions and housing, among others. Addressing the region's current social reality requires more than reflecting on the recent past and learning from its achievements and limitations; it demands close attention to the present and a forward-looking perspective. While the region has managed to leverage the opportunities presented by these changes to produce positive outcomes, the world is facing multiple crises —geopolitical, social, health-related, environmental and economic— that cast doubt on the possibility of achieving meaningful improvements in the well-being of the population.

In this context, and with a view to attaining the social goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and proactively and effectively addressing the challenges of the coming decades, the Second World Summit for Social Development presents an opportunity to work towards a global pact for inclusive social development. Such a pact should draw inspiration from the *Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development* (ECLAC, 2020) and be aligned with the vision set out in the Pact for the Future (United Nations, 2024). The aim is to seize this opportunity and make decisive progress towards inclusive social development, so that “all people are able to live free from poverty and achieve a level of well-being that aligns with high, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and that enables the development of skills in conditions of freedom and dignity, with full exercise of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and opportunities for recognition and participation to address social divides and inequalities” (ECLAC, 2025c, p. 4).

The aim of this document is to offer inputs to help seize the opportunity at hand. It complements the work carried out over the past two years in the context of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, summarized in two documents prepared jointly with the Presiding Officers of this subsidiary body. The first, *Reducing Inequality and Pursuing Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges, Priorities and Key Messages in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development*, was presented at the sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers, held in Bridgetown in 2024 (ECLAC, 2024c); and the second, *The road to the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025: towards a pact for inclusive social development*, was presented at the second special meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held virtually in March 2025 (ECLAC, 2025c).

This document includes a summary of the changes observed in key dimensions of inclusive social development in recent decades, both in terms of their conceptualization and the public policies formulated in response. It contrasts current social conditions, policy approaches and institutional changes with those present at the time of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. The second section outlines some of the major current and future challenges facing the region, highlighting a number of key features of social policy. The third section summarizes the elements included in the proposed pact for inclusive social development, prepared by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference and presented in March 2025 (ECLAC, 2025c). This section also examines policy areas pertaining to other social policy sectors and provides a brief comparison of the proposals featured in global discussions.

CHAPTER

I

From Copenhagen to Doha: 30 years of inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

- A. Changes in core dimensions of inclusive social development over the past 30 years
- B. Progress in policy approaches to non-contributory social protection in Latin America and the Caribbean
- C. Institutional frameworks for social policy in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1990

To adequately frame the challenges, opportunities and public policy proposals reflected in the message voiced by the region's social development ministries in the lead-up to the Second World Summit on Social Development, it is important to briefly review the changes in the region's social landscape over the past three decades, the policy approaches adopted and the processes currently unfolding in Latin America and the Caribbean.

A. Changes in core dimensions of inclusive social development over the past 30 years

This section presents a summary of key aspects of inclusive social development in the region over the past three decades, including changes, progress and limitations, with emphasis on the areas in which public policy has played a pivotal role.

1. Poverty between the first and second “lost decade”

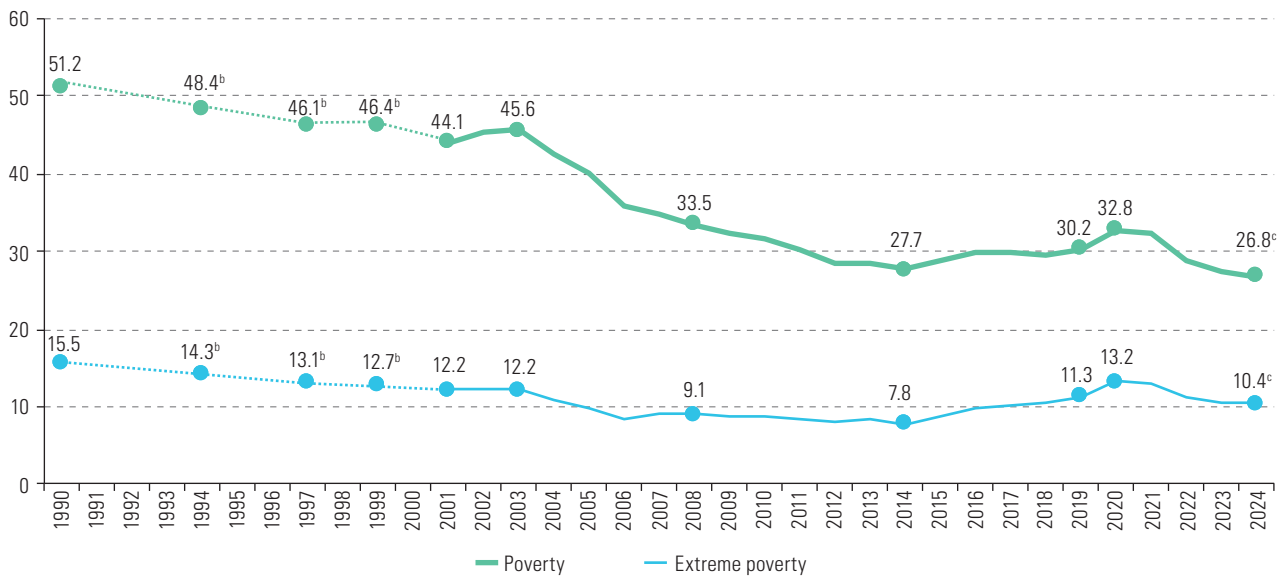
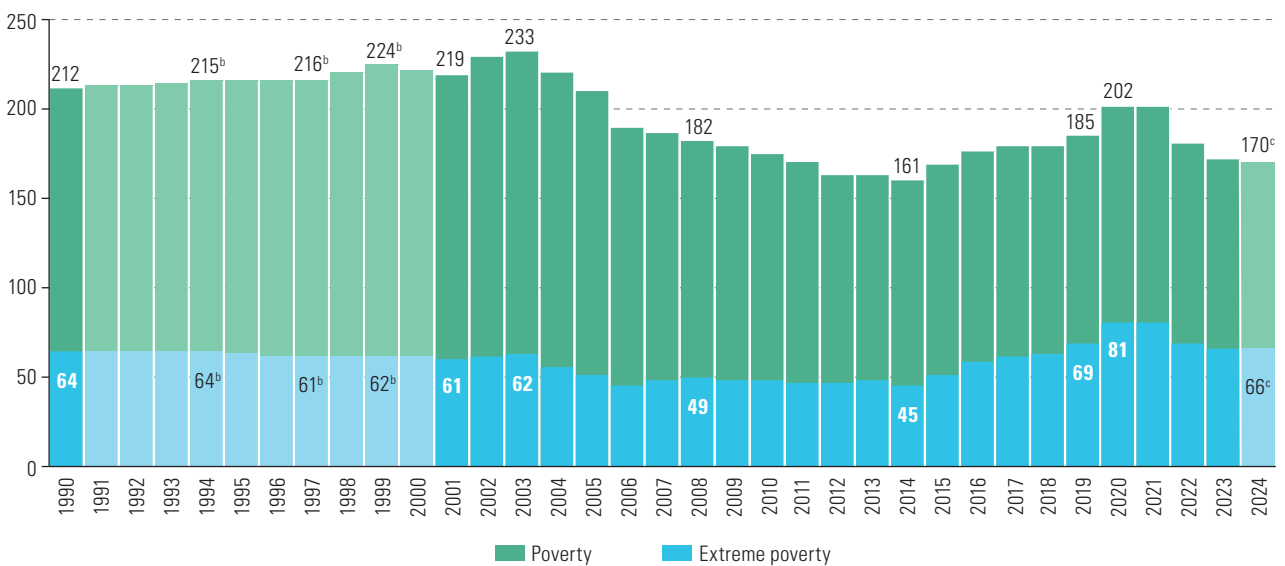
Poverty was a central concern at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, at which the international community recognized it as one of the major global challenges and its eradication an ethical, social, political and economic imperative. Eradicating poverty thus became one of the three overriding goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, alongside promoting full and productive employment and fostering social integration as a central element of social development (United Nations, 1995). The Programme of Action included a range of concrete measures, such as the design of national policies to reduce overall poverty and eradicate absolute poverty, the promotion of sustained economic growth and job creation, the mobilization of financial and technological resources and citizen participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of social development policies and programmes. It also reflected a broad global consensus on the pressing need to recognize poverty and extreme poverty as fundamental obstacles to social development, an urgency later echoed in international initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals established in 2000, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, the first goal being to end poverty.

The early 1990s were challenging times for the region as it recovered from the “lost decade” triggered by the debt crisis and structural adjustment policies that had led to a substantial decline in social spending. Between 1980 and 1990, regional per capita GDP contracted by just over 6.7%, accompanied by a rise in poverty of over 8 percentage points, pushing approximately 68 million people into poverty. At that time, over half of the Latin American population —51.2%, or around 212 million people— was living in poverty (see figure I.1). It took the region more than 25 years to return to the poverty levels registered in 1980, nearly twice the time it took for economic recovery. This underscores the magnitude and persistence of the impact of the debt crisis in the region, which affected not only economic performance but also the social fabric and the overall well-being of the population.

There has been a general improvement in poverty indicators since 1990, with an average annual reduction of approximately 0.65 percentage points. This trend has been driven by economic growth, incipient social programmes targeting the most disadvantaged populations, such as Bolsa Escola in Brazil and the Education, Health and Food Programme in Mexico, and improved access to basic services in various countries. However, despite the fall in the number of people living in extreme poverty, the increase in the total number of people in poverty indicates that economic growth —particularly volatile from the mid-1990s on— was insufficient to reduce poverty in absolute terms across all countries.

Figure I.1

Latin America (18 countries):^a poverty and extreme poverty rates, 1990–2024
(Percentages and millions of people)

A. Percentages**B. Millions of people**

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. CEPALSTAT database. <https://www.cepal.org/en/organizational-unit/statistics>.

Note: Weighted average. The dotted lines and lighter coloured bars indicate modelled figures.

^a Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

^b The previous series and the current series cannot be spliced owing to the methodological adjustments of the latter.

^c Projections.

In the 2000s, following several international and subregional crises such as the “tequila crisis” (1994–1995), the Asian crisis (1997) and the dot-com crisis (2000–2001), the positive effects of the commodity price boom contributed to relatively sustained economic growth. This was accompanied by a gradual expansion of social spending and the progressive development and scaling-up of anti-poverty social programmes and non-contributory pension systems. The 2008 global financial crisis somewhat slowed this positive trend, but high commodity prices enabled States to take a more active role and address the impact of the crisis on the real economy through countercyclical policies in both the social and productive sectors. As a result, poverty and extreme poverty continued to trend downward in most countries, at least until 2014, when they reached their lowest levels —27.7% (161 million people) and 7.8% (45 million people), respectively— before the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. From that year onward, which marked the end of the commodity price boom, the region entered what the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has termed Latin America’s “second lost decade,” characterized by a slowdown in the average GDP growth rate to below 1% per year (ECLAC, 2024e) and by declines in specific social indicators, particularly in the labour market. This was reflected in a slight uptick in poverty and extreme poverty rates in 2019, which stood at 30.2% and 11.3%, respectively.

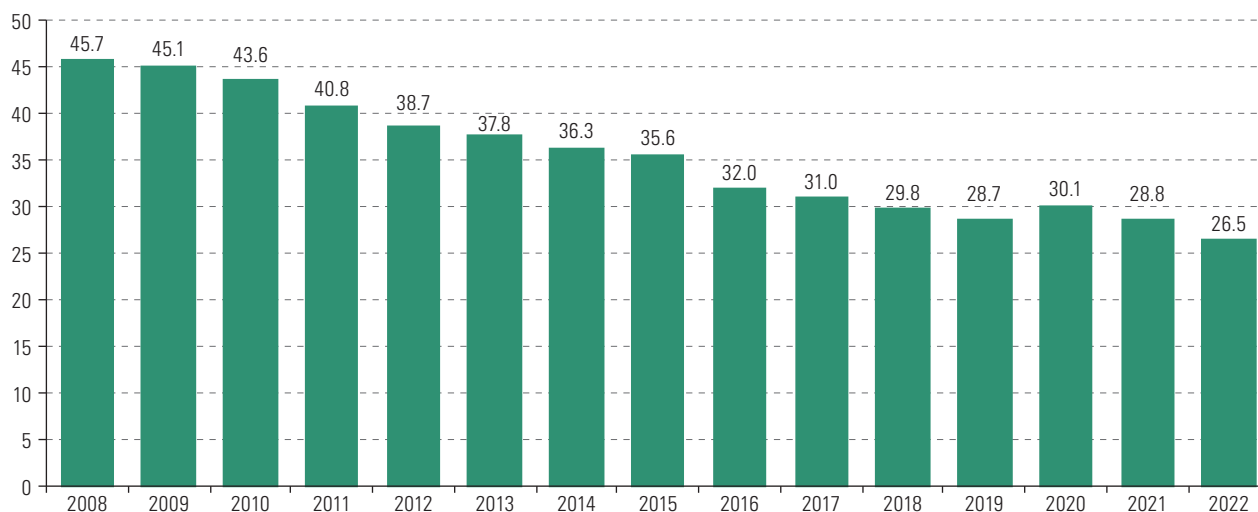
The crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant deterioration in these indicators: the poverty rate increased by nearly 3 percentage points (reverting to 2008 levels and effectively erasing 12 years of progress), while extreme poverty rose by almost 2 percentage points (equivalent to levels recorded in the 1990s). The region began to recover gradually in 2021 and poverty levels in the region are projected to be at their lowest (26.8%, or approximately 170 million people) in 2024, with extreme poverty similar to pre-pandemic levels (10.4%, or 66 million people). Despite this recovery, poverty and extreme poverty in most countries in the region remain far from the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals and SDGs.

At the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, at which countries shared experiences in poverty measurement using the unsatisfied basic needs method, carried out primarily in Latin America with support from ECLAC, poverty was acknowledged as a complex and multidimensional challenge, whose root causes and impacts span across all aspects of social, economic and environmental life. A comprehensive approach was thus proposed, addressing not only lack of income but also access to education, health, housing and other basic services, while underscoring the need for policies and interventions that respond to the multiple needs of people living in poverty (United Nations, 1995, pp. 45–51). This multidimensional perspective was fully reflected in the SDGs, particularly Goal 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), and all countries agreed on the need to consider more complex definitions of poverty that went beyond the monetary dimension.

In recent decades, this approach, which complements income-based poverty measurements, has led to the development of a global multidimensional poverty index. Its most recent edition (2021) included data on health, education and standard of living in 111 countries. At the regional level, 11 countries have developed multidimensional poverty measurements tailored to their specific diagnostic and policy design needs, and as such, they are not comparable across countries. ECLAC recently launched a multidimensional poverty index for Latin America that is comparable across 17 countries in the region, covering four key dimensions (housing, health, education, and employment and pensions), with data from 2008 onward (ECLAC, 2025b). At the subregional level, the index shows a consistent reduction in multidimensional poverty levels, although there was a reversal in this trend in 2020 (slightly less pronounced than in the case of income poverty) owing to specific declines in indicators for labour market participation, access to health insurance and school attendance (see figure I.2). These data indicate that multidimensional poverty has declined more sharply than income poverty over the past 15 years, as public policy support for the exercise of social rights has played a fundamental role.

Figure I.2Latin America (17 countries):^a incidence of multidimensional poverty, 2008–2022

(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. *Índice de pobreza multidimensional para América Latina. Metodologías de la CEPAL* (7) (LC/PUB.2025/3-P).

Note: Weighted average.

^a Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

Among the main factors behind the reduction in income poverty since the 1990s are economic growth, rising female labour force participation rates, higher real wages and the surge in commodity prices between 2000 and 2014, which raised export revenues in several countries of the region and helped to finance social programmes and reduce poverty. Other key factors include the expansion of public social spending and, in this connection, the implementation of social policies and the role of public transfers, including both conditional and non-conditional cash transfer programmes, as well as non-contributory pension systems.

To continue the fight against poverty and move towards its eradication requires not only strengthening cash and in-kind transfer programmes, but also increasing public investment in education and health systems, improving their quality and implementing policies for the creation of formal employment, better working conditions and higher real wages, particularly for low-income workers. There is also a need to promote fiscal agreements aimed at making tax systems more progressive, limiting tax evasion and avoidance and strengthening social investment as a means of contributing to the reduction of inequality and poverty. Such efforts should be accompanied by macroeconomic and productive development policies that support sustained economic growth and generate opportunities for all segments of the population, with special attention to the inclusion of the poor and vulnerable. This includes expanding coverage and improving the quality of social protection systems, such as unemployment insurance, sustainable pension schemes and family allowances, and implementing comprehensive policies that address the multiple dimensions of inequality (ECLAC, 2025c).

2. Malnutrition and food security

Food insecurity is one of the most serious manifestations of poverty, particularly extreme poverty. Understood as the lack of reliable access to a sufficient quantity of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and a healthy and active life, food insecurity is an inherent feature of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean. Hunger and malnutrition are indicators of this inequality in a region where, despite being the world's largest food exporter (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [OECD and FAO], 2023), 187.6 million people suffered from moderate or severe food insecurity in 2023, equivalent to 28.2% of the regional population (FAO et al., 2024). Moreover, the region is undergoing a nutritional transition marked by the coexistence of undernutrition, overweight and obesity (Martínez et al., 2024).

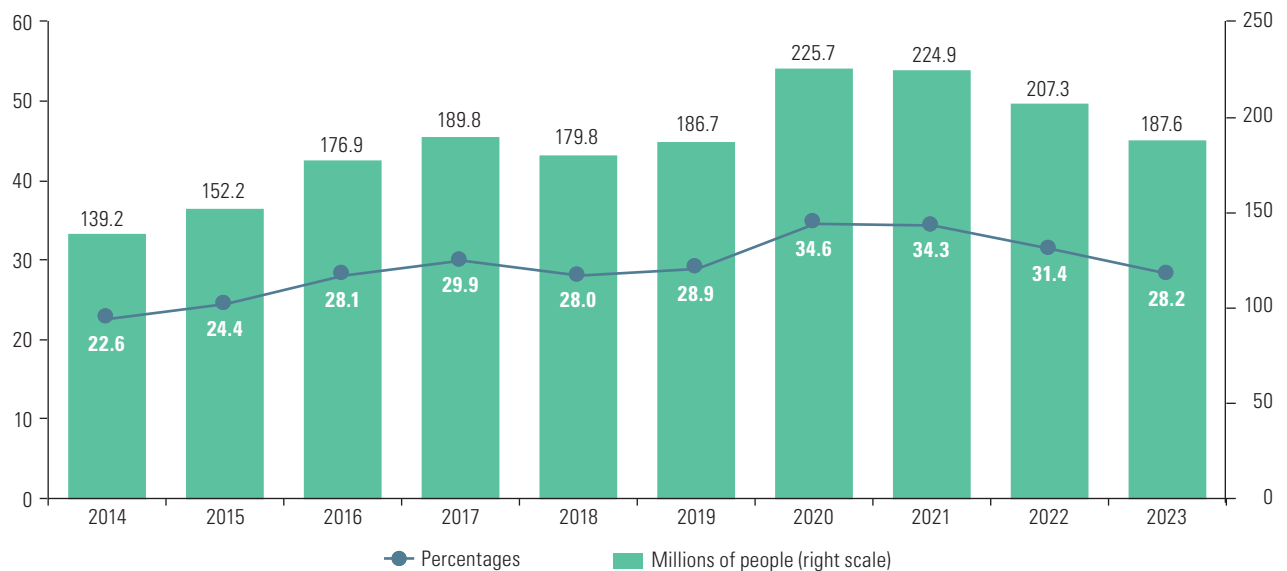
The Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 highlighted the severity of this issue at the global level and, given that chronic hunger and malnutrition significantly impair children's health and development, recognized that those growing up in poverty are often permanently disadvantaged. Accordingly, the Programme of Action highlighted the need to integrate nutrition and food security into social development policies, ensuring a safe and nutritionally adequate food supply, at both the national and international levels, a reasonable degree of stability in the supply of food, as well as physical, social and economic access to enough food for all (United Nations, 1995, p. 56). This was further reflected in one of the targets of the Programme of Action, which proposed to halve severe and moderate malnutrition among children under 5 years of age by the year 2000, using 1990 levels as a baseline.

The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean¹ has risen since measurements began in 2014 (see figure I.3), when the figure stood at 22.6% of the regional population, slightly more than 139 million people. It peaked at 34.6% in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting nearly 226 million people, then declined moderately to 28.2% in 2023, meaning that 187.6 million people still had difficulty accessing sufficient food (FAO et al., 2024). These indicators reflect the challenges faced by a significant portion of the population in being able to afford a variety of foods that meet nutritional requirements and accessing a healthy diet. At the regional level, the cost of a healthy diet was initially estimated at US\$ 3.61 at purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day in 2017, the first year for which this estimate was available. By 2022, this cost had risen to US\$ 4.56 PPP per person per day, the highest value recorded globally in comparison to the global average of US\$ 3.96 PPP in the same year. Consequently, 182.9 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean were unable to afford a healthy diet (FAO et al., 2024).

Figure I.3

Latin America and the Caribbean (34 countries and territories):^a moderate or severe food insecurity, 2014–2023

(Percentages and millions of people)



Source: Suite of Food Security Indicators. FAOSTAT. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>.

Note: For detailed information on the development of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, see <https://www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/fies/en/>.

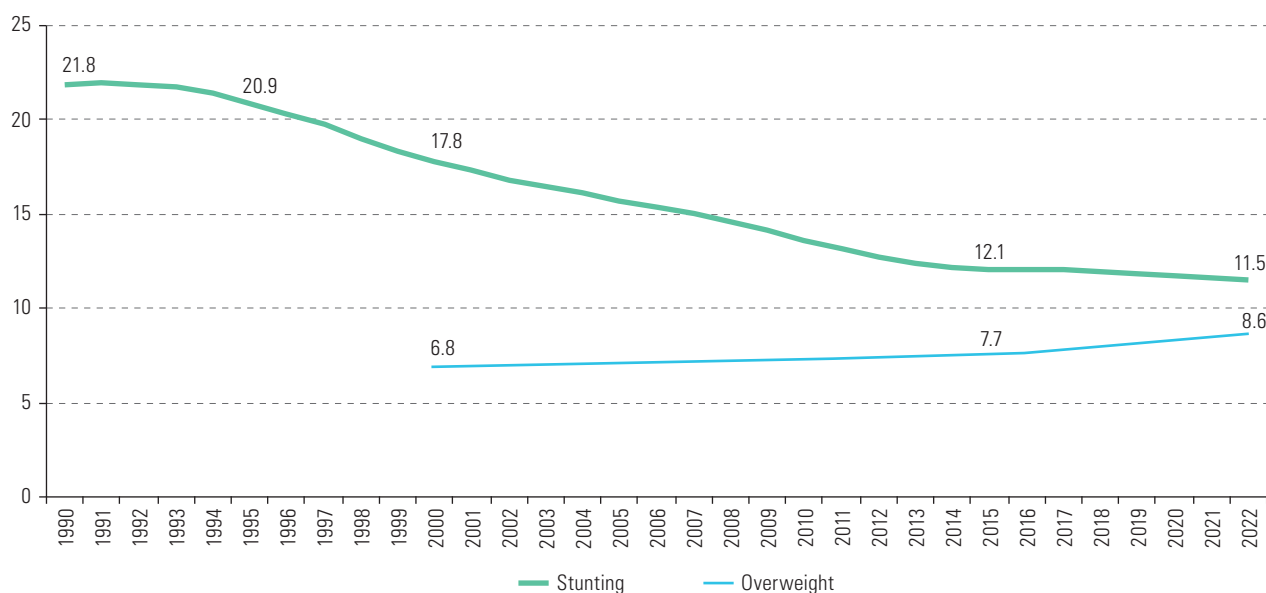
^a Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

¹ The Food Insecurity Experience Scale estimates the proportion of the population facing moderate or severe limitations in accessing sufficient food over the course of a year (FAO et al., 2023).

During the 1990s, chronic undernutrition fell significantly in Latin America and the Caribbean —there was a 4 percentage point decrease in moderate or severe stunting—, reflecting improved access to food and basic nutritional conditions. These advances were largely the result of country efforts to strengthen maternal and child public health policies, enhance food access and improve socioeconomic conditions. Nevertheless, despite the progress, the targets set out in the 1995 Programme of Action were not fully met. This shortfall contributed to the renewal of commitments to combat malnutrition in the framework of the 2000 Millennium Summit (Millennium Development Goal 1) and, subsequently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Goal 2: zero hunger). As shown in figure I.4, there was sustained progress in the period 2000–2015, with a 5.7 percentage point drop in chronic undernutrition. It has continued to decline, albeit at a slower pace, highlighting persistent challenges among marginalized populations and those living in extreme poverty and with low levels of social inclusion. Chronic undernutrition continues to vary considerably from one country to another: in 2022, Chile, Paraguay, Saint Lucia and Turks and Caicos Islands reported a prevalence of less than 5% in children under 5, compared with more than 17% in Ecuador, Haiti and Honduras. With regard to stunting, Guatemala reported a prevalence of 43.5% among children under age 5.

Figure I.4

Latin America and the Caribbean (26 countries and territories):^a rate of stunting and overweight in children under 5 years of age, 1990–2022
(Percentages)



Source: CEPALSTAT, FAOSTAT and Global Change Data Lab. Our World in Data. <https://tinyurl.com/3fah9a36>.

^a Argentina, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands and Uruguay.

Alongside the moderate progress in reducing chronic undernutrition, the issue of overnutrition has become an area of growing concern. In 2000, the regional prevalence of overweight among children under 5 was 6.8%. This figure rose steadily to 7.7% in 2015, representing an increase of 0.06 percentage points per year. From 2015 onward, the rate increased by 0.13 percentage points annually, to 8.6% in 2022 (see figure I.4). This is 3 percentage points higher than the global average, and the regional growth rate is also above the global rate (FAO et al., 2024). However, figures vary widely among countries of the region. In 2022, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Suriname recorded overweight prevalence rates below 5% among children under 5. Meanwhile, Barbados, Turks and Caicos Islands and Trinidad and Tobago registered rates of 10%, while Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay reported rates above 10%.

It is estimated that in 2022, 29.9% of adults were obese, reflecting an upward trend in all countries of the region since 2000.² In several countries, namely The Bahamas, Belize, Puerto Rico and Saint Kitts and Nevis, obesity levels were above 40%. Meanwhile, in 2019, 17.2% of women aged 15–49 were anaemic (FAO et al., 2024). These figures suggest a gradual shift in dietary and lifestyle patterns among a significant share of the region's population. While such changes have helped to reduce undernutrition, they have also led to greater nutritional imbalances. Drivers of this nutritional transition include urbanization, increased access to calorie-dense processed foods and reduced physical activity among children. The double burden of malnutrition (undernutrition alongside overweight and obesity) represents a serious challenge with direct consequences for the affected population and far-reaching impacts on society and national economies. As shown in studies conducted by ECLAC and the World Food Programme in partnership with national institutions, the estimated cost of the double burden of malnutrition in eight Latin American countries between 2014 and 2019—taking into account child undernutrition and adult overweight and obesity, which are associated with productivity losses and higher risks of mortality and morbidity linked to diabetes mellitus and hypertension—averaged 6.5% of GDP, with a high of 16.3% of GDP in Guatemala. In addition to illustrating the cost of inaction in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, this estimate also points to the potential economic gains of tackling these challenges through the financing of social policies and the fulfilment of rights. Looking ahead, this would represent a key investment for achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Curbing undernutrition and obesity therefore requires comprehensive public policies, including initiatives related to nutritional education, the regulation of ultraprocessed foods and their advertising and labelling, enabling environments for physical activity, support for sustainable and diversified agriculture and the overall strengthening of nutritional surveillance (Martínez, Mejía and Espíndola, 2024).

3. Inequality

High inequality, in its multiple dimensions, together with low social mobility and weak social cohesion constitute a structural trap that hinders countries' progress toward inclusive social development, an essential component of sustainable development. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this is compounded by the traps of low capacity for economic growth and weak institutional capacity and ineffective governance, which together give rise to the region's three development traps. As ECLAC (2024d) notes, these factors not only persist over time, but are mutually reinforcing, thereby limiting the possibilities for structural transformation and the consolidation of a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model.

At the World Summit for Social Development, inequality was recognized as a structural barrier to development. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action included commitments to reduce inequality of income and opportunity, promote equity and social justice and ensure universal access to education, health and other essential services (United Nations, 1995). By the end of the twentieth century, the reduction of inequality was already considered a necessary condition for achieving inclusive social development, particularly from an income perspective.

In 1995, Latin America and the Caribbean was the most unequal region in the world based on the Gini index of income distribution, and this has remained largely unchanged over the past 30 years (see figure I.5). Despite efforts undertaken by countries of the region to meet goals and targets on poverty reduction and expanding essential social services, there have been no sustained effects on the reduction of structural inequality.

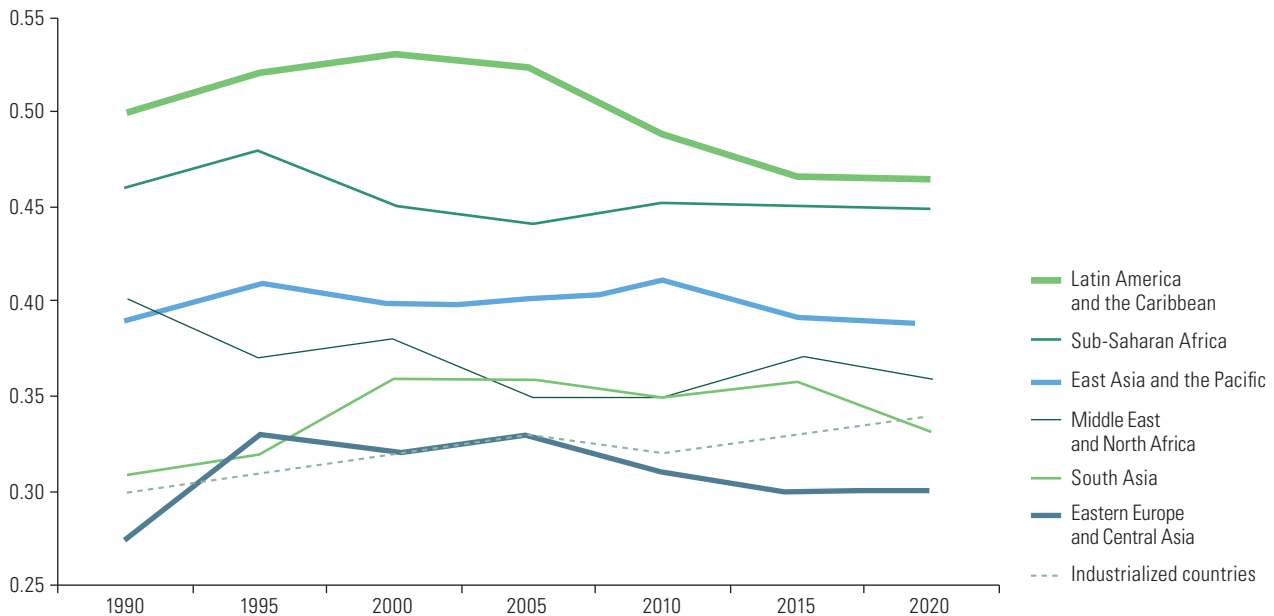
As a counterpoint to the sustained increase in the 1990s, the region saw a significant drop in Gini index values in the period 2005–2015, attributed mainly to improved labour market conditions and social policies implemented in a context of relatively high economic growth. However, this indicator has remained relatively unchanged since 2015, reflecting the persistence of the structures that underpin inequality. Furthermore, the document presented at the sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on

² Body mass index above 30 kg/m².

Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2024c) highlights that this stagnation poses serious challenges for mobility, social cohesion and sustainable development. Therefore, it is essential to design public policies that take into account the state of social cohesion in the countries of the region and to deepen knowledge on this issue (see box I.1).

Figure I.5

Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions and country groupings: inequality levels and trends, Gini index, 1990–2020



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2024). *The trap of high inequality and low social mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean: An obstacle for inclusive and sustainable social development*. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8ff10af8-1308-418a-91ae-9803abca7bbd/content>.

Box I.1

A brief look at social cohesion

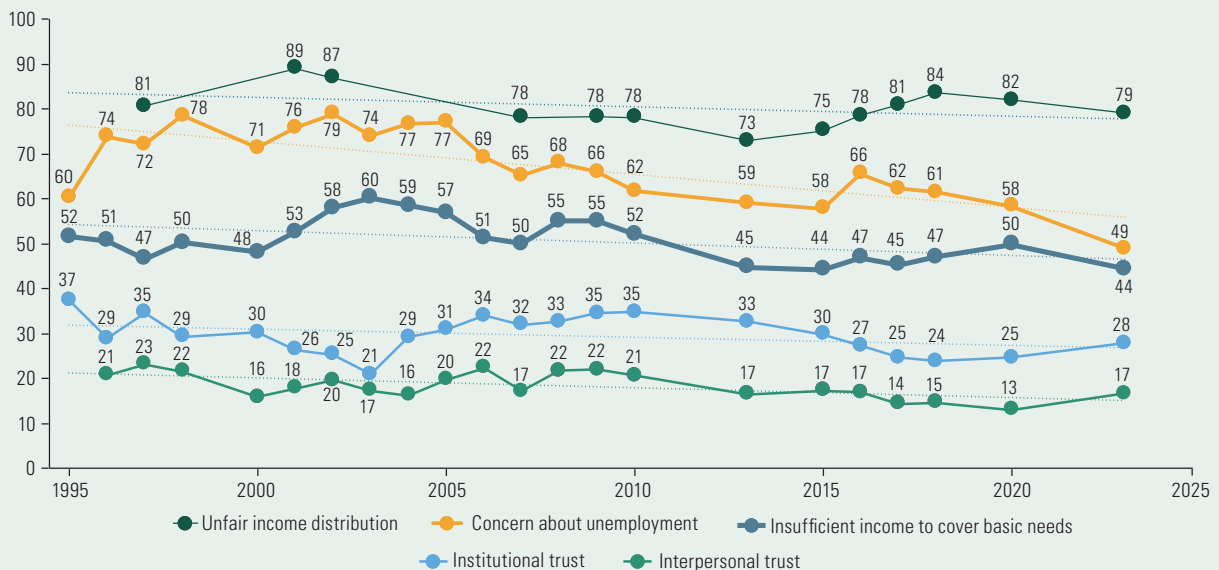
Social cohesion is the invisible binding force that holds societies together and motivates people to live together voluntarily without the need for continuous external coercion or immediate material interest. It can be defined as the capacity of a society, and of its democratic institutions, to develop rights-based social relations that confront inequality with a sense of belonging and an orientation towards the common good (Maldonado et al., 2021). This concept gains relevance in a context shaped by the three development traps facing Latin America and the Caribbean: low capacity for growth; high inequality, low social mobility and weak social cohesion; and low institutional capacity and ineffective governance (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2023).

According to data collected by Latinobarómetro and the Latin American Public Opinion Project in 18 countries of the region, the perception of high levels of inequality and interpersonal and institutional distrust remained high among the Latin American population. The proportion of individuals who believe that most people can be trusted fell from 21% in 1995 to 13% in 2020, but increased slightly to 17% in 2023. This trend points to weak social cohesion, which has persisted in the region since the late twentieth century, owing to the challenges of social and labour inclusion, as well as high inequality in multiple dimensions of well-being (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2023). In addition, other processes taking place in the region, such as increased intraregional migratory flows, economic uncertainty and crises, disasters and multiple forms of violence, further complicate social inclusion and weaken the social fabric (ECLAC, 2024c). This fosters feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and distrust among the population, lowers expectations of social mobility and undermines the sense of belonging based on mutual recognition and the effective enjoyment of rights (Maldonado et al., 2022).

As shown in figure 1, the perception of unfair income distribution has remained consistently high since 1997, with peaks in 2001 (88.9%), 2002 (86.8%) and 2018 (83.5%) and a slight decline in 2023 (78.9%). This reflects ongoing feelings of injustice and inequity that permanently affect social inclusion. Furthermore, the proportion of people reporting that their income is insufficient to cover basic needs has also remained high, but shows a downward trend, falling from 60% to 44%. This aligns with concerns about unemployment, which remained above 70% until 2005, then declined steadily to 49% in 2023. At the same time, the number of people who reported not being concerned about unemployment increased. This corresponds with the relative improvement in access to formal employment, especially following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as the labour informality rate fell from 47.3% in the first quarter of 2021 to 45.8% in the first quarter of 2024 (ECLAC, 2024e). These data also reflect the progress made in expanding both contributory and non-contributory social protection coverage over the past decade.

Figure 1

Latin America (18 countries):^a perceptions of the population regarding trust, income distribution, basic needs and employment status, 1995–2023
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from Latinobarómetro.

^a Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

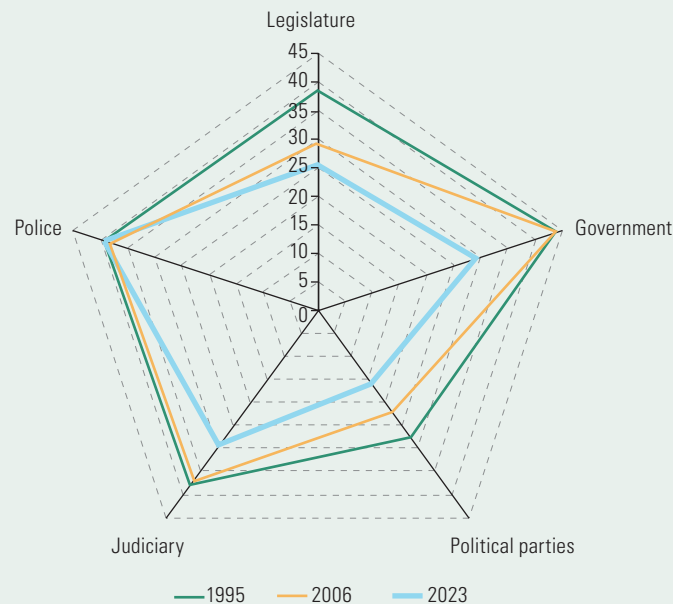
One of the constituent elements of social cohesion is the quality of social relations and the sense of belonging that may arise from everyday interactions, which involve two fundamental aspects: interpersonal trust and institutional trust (Maldonado et al., 2021). As shown in figure 1, both indicators decreased over the period 1995–2023 (from 21% to 17% and from 37% to 28%, respectively). Although these figures improved slightly between 2020 and 2023, distrust remains a distinctive feature across the region.

Institutional trust in key institutions—including the government, the legislature, political parties, the police, the judiciary and electoral institutions—has deteriorated since 1995 (see figure 2). Political parties have consistently ranked as the least trusted institutions among the population, with an average trust level of 16%. Electoral institutions and the police show somewhat higher and relatively stable levels of trust, although these too have fallen since 2015. The decline in institutional trust between 2013 and 2017 coincides with the emergence of corruption scandals in many countries (such as the Odebrecht and Lava Jato cases), along with high levels of social discontent, which often found expression in large-scale social protests, such as those seen in Brazil (2013), Chile (2019) and Colombia (2021). This climate of institutional distrust not only undermines the legitimacy and

strength of democratic governance but also weakens the population's preference for democracy as the best form of government. Support for democracy rose from 47.0% in 2004 to a high of 61.0% in 2007, before declining steadily to around 38.4% in 2023. This drop of more than 20 percentage points reflects a significant loss of enthusiasm for democracy, alongside rising indifference and even a growing preference for authoritarian forms of government (ECLAC, 2024c).

Figure 2

Latin America (18 countries):^a population trust in institutions, 1995–2023
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from Latinobarómetro.

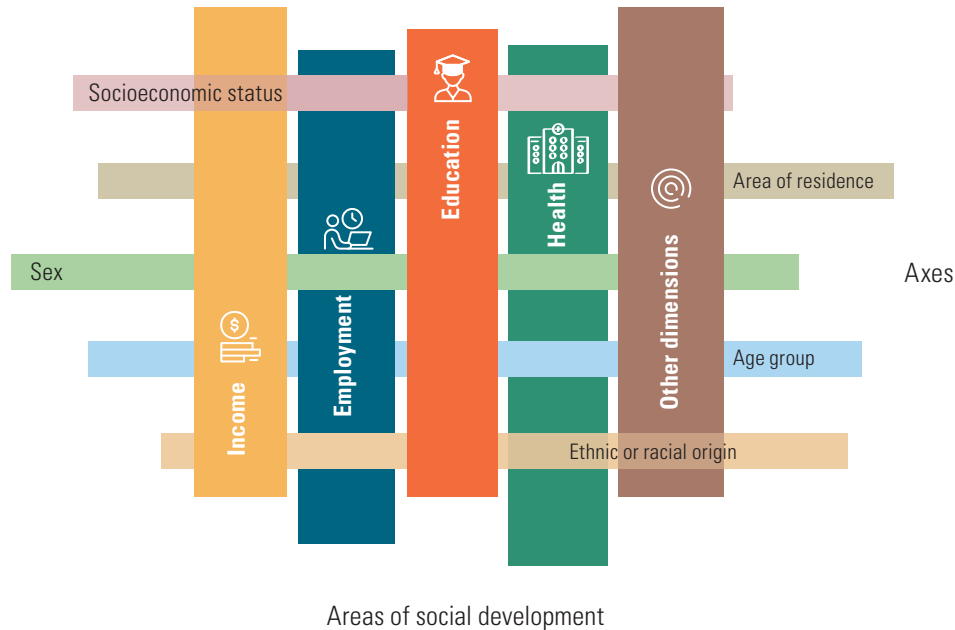
^a Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], on the basis special processing of Latinobarometro and Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) data; Maldonado, C., Tromben Rojas, V., Cea, C. and Suárez Sarrazin, J. I. (2021). Panorama de la cohesión social en América Latina y el Caribe. *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2021/205). ECLAC; Salazar-Xirinachs, J. (2023). Rethinking, reimagining, transforming: The “whats” and the “hows” to move towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model. *CEPAL Review* (141) (LC/PUB.2023/29-P). ECLAC; ECLAC. (2024c). *Reducing Inequality and Pursuing Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges, Priorities and Key Messages in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development* (LC/MDS.6/3) and ECLAC (2024). *The trap of high inequality and low social mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean: An obstacle for inclusive and sustainable social development*. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8ff10af8-1308-418a-91ae-9803abca7bbd/content>.

High structural inequality and low intergenerational social mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean stem from deeply interrelated factors, such as sluggish and segmented labour markets, the limited redistributive capacity of tax systems, unequal access to quality public services and persistent gender, territorial and ethnic and racial inequalities. These conditions reinforce the intergenerational transmission of disadvantages and limit development opportunities for broad segments of the population (ECLAC, 2024d). ECLAC underscores the multidimensional nature of inequality, noting that its different dimensions not only coexist but also interact, giving rise to persistent exclusion mechanisms. The social inequality matrix developed by ECLAC (2016) describes how inequalities are structured and expressed in different areas of social life and reproduced through institutions, culture and power relations, shaped by axes such as class, gender, race or ethnicity, disability, age and territory (see diagram I.1).

Diagram I.1

Latin America and the Caribbean: social inequality matrix



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2016). *The social inequality matrix in Latin America* (LC/G.2690(MDS.1/2)).

ECLAC has identified six main factors that explain the region's high inequality: (i) low growth, which leads to sluggish and highly informal labour markets, and large disparities in productivity, which generate segmented labour markets with large pay disparities; (ii) regressive tax systems; (iii) weak social policies and social protection policies that do little to reduce the effects of production-based inequality; (iv) education systems with serious deficiencies, not only in terms of high dropout rates in secondary education, but also in relation to poor learning outcomes that do not meet the new labour market needs arising from the technological revolution; these systems are too segmented to act as the powerful mechanisms of social mobility they ought to be; (v) gender inequality; and (vi) large inequalities and spatial segregation in urban areas, where 80% of the region's total population lives (ECLAC, 2024c, p. 6).

The region has made progress in measuring inequality by strengthening statistical capacities and expanding access to more detailed household surveys. Nevertheless, challenges remain in terms of data comparability, the measurement of high incomes and financial assets and the inclusion of property wealth in distributive analyses (ECLAC, 2023a).

At the same time, the measurement of multidimensional inequality has gained importance, in recognition of the fact that well-being is not solely determined by income, as reflected in the multidimensional poverty indices described above. However, challenges remain in terms of methodology and availability of data for analysing gaps, particularly with regard to the inclusion of historically overlooked groups and tracking inequality across the life cycle.

Against this background, an intersectional and multidimensional approach should be used to analyse the situation and design public policies that respond comprehensively to the challenges posed by inclusive social development, with an emphasis on access to social services, early childhood care, care systems and labour market inclusion. However, many of these policies lack an explicit objective aimed at reducing structural inequality, thereby limiting their capacity to overcome the traps that perpetuate social exclusion. As ECLAC has noted, extreme inequality hinders progress towards sustainable development (ECLAC, 2024d, p. 1).

In particular, early childhood development policies must play a central role, given their well-documented potential to reduce inequality and mitigate the intergenerational transmission of poverty. This calls for sustained investment, intersectoral coordination and institutional frameworks that ensure effective and sustainable outcomes over time.

Almost three decades after the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, which placed social protection at the centre of poverty eradication strategies, the commitment to reduce inequality should be one of the guiding pillars of a new social development agenda (ECLAC, 2024d). Only through the implementation of public policies focused on reducing inequalities, fostering social justice and ensuring financial sustainability will it be possible to overcome the structural traps that perpetuate exclusion and move towards more cohesive, resilient and sustainable societies in the long term.

4. Strengthening the non-contributory component of social protection systems

There has been significant progress in the social protection systems of Latin America and the Caribbean in the past 30 years, contributing to poverty reduction and to narrowing historical gaps in the exercise of social rights. This progress has been driven largely by the expansion of non-contributory social protection systems and policies. During this period, there has been a shift from a highly targeted approach—focused exclusively on the population living in extreme poverty—towards a scenario in which different approaches coexist and are gradually converging towards universal social protection, with increasing levels of coverage and guaranteed access for people in situations of vulnerability. The first conditional cash transfer programmes were introduced in the 1990s in several countries of the region, such as Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras and Mexico, and have evolved to include broader coverage and are now widespread. In 2022, such programmes were present in 20 countries across the region. In the case of non-contributory pension systems, while 14 countries already had such schemes in place in the 1990s, by 2022 they had expanded to 28 countries. In addition, universal or quasi-universal coverage had been implemented in Chile, Mexico, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Suriname.

While great strides have been made towards universality, much remains to be done, as the levels of coverage and adequacy of social protection vary widely across countries. In 2022, 59.9% of households in 14 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean had access to contributory social protection, whether exclusively or in combination with other forms,³ while 27.0% accessed social protection solely through non-contributory mechanisms. Nearly one quarter of households continued to lack coverage, particularly those with lower incomes and those located in rural areas (ECLAC, 2024d). These figures underscore the persistent challenges to achieving universal social protection, in keeping with the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development (ECLAC, 2020). These challenges are closely linked to fiscal constraints and institutional weaknesses that hinder the expansion of spending and entitlement coverage. For example, according to ECLAC data (2024c), in 2023, countries of the region allocated an average of 4.4% of GDP to social protection spending, the same proportion as in 2022 and significantly lower than the 5.8% recorded in 2020. Despite this decline, spending levels remain above those recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the region, Brazil was the country that had allocated the highest share of GDP to social protection (12.4% in 2023), and Jamaica the lowest (0.8%).

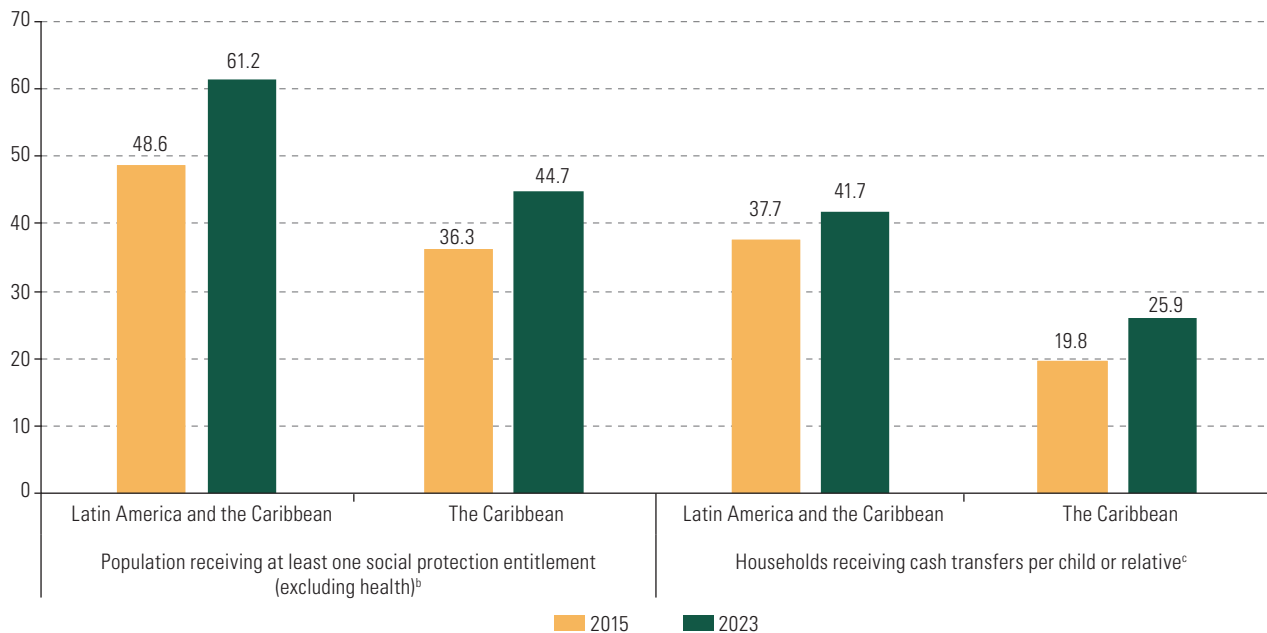
³ This analysis draws on data from household surveys conducted in 14 countries of the region. It also employs a typology developed by ECLAC to estimate the distribution of social protection coverage—whether contributory, non-contributory or a combination of the two—and identify households without access to such protection. A household has access to contributory social protection when at least one household member aged 15 or over contributes to the pension system or receives a contributory pension. A household is considered to have access to non-contributory coverage when at least one of its members receives this type of entitlement. See ECLAC (2024a) for details.

According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO)⁴ monitoring progress towards SDG target 1.3 (Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable), the proportion of the population covered by at least one social protection entitlement increased by 12.6 percentage points between 2015 and 2023, from 48.6% to 61.2%. Although significant, this progress was uneven at the subregional level. In the Caribbean for example, the increase was more modest, a mere 8.4 percentage points over the same period. While the region advanced in coverage for children and families receiving cash transfers, which rose from 37.7% in 2015 to 41.7% in 2023, this indicator shows that less than half of this population has basic access to social protection (see figure I.6).

Figure I.6

Latin America and the Caribbean (45 countries and territories):^a proportion of population covered by social protection floors or systems (indicator 1.3.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals), 2015 and 2023

(Percentages of reference population)



Source: International Labour Organization, Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, on the basis of Social Security Inquiry. <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=32>.

Note: Weighted average based on the estimates for the countries. The indicator corresponds to target 1.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere).

^a Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guyana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands and Uruguay.

^b Population receiving contributory or non-contributory cash transfers, except entitlements related to health and sickness, or at least actively contributing to a social security system, as a percentage of the total population.

^c Refers to the ratio of households receiving cash transfers for children or relatives to the total number of households with children and ratio of children in receipt of cash transfers to the total number of children.

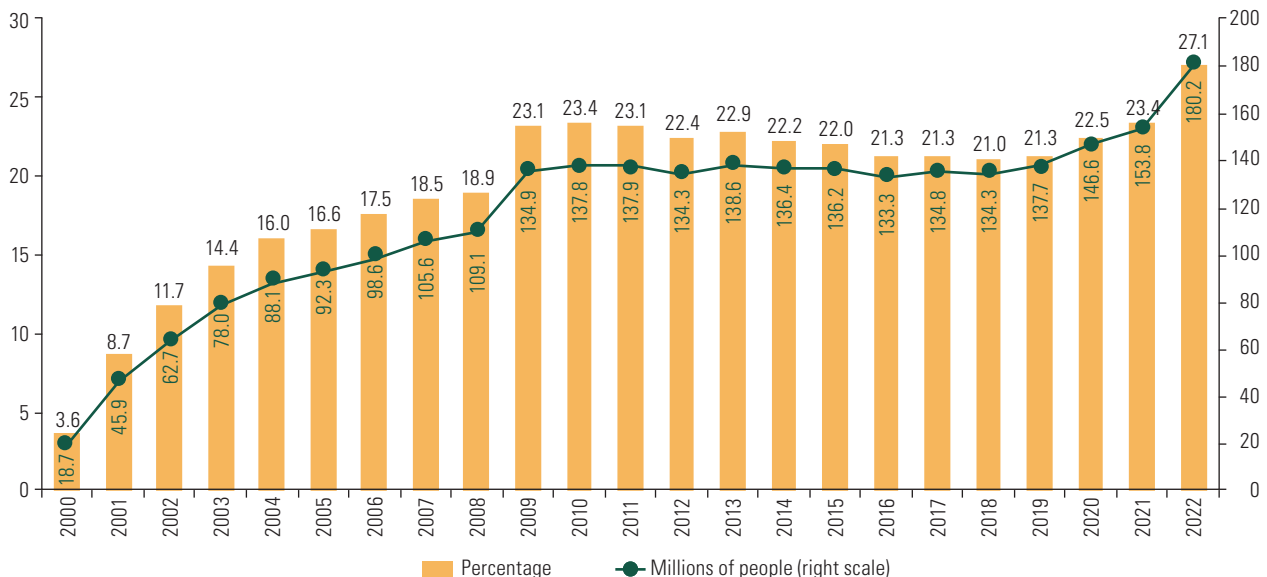
Progress in the social protection systems of Latin America and the Caribbean is largely the result of the expansion of the non-contributory component of social protection systems. Key policies in this regard include conditional and non-conditional cash transfer programmes, non-contributory pension systems and labour

⁴ Information is only available for 2015 and 2023, on the basis of the Social Security Inquiry and administrative data. For more information, see <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

inclusion programmes. According to ECLAC data,⁵ in 2022, more than 180 million people —27.1% of the region's population— lived in households receiving conditional cash transfers and other continuous transfers. This coverage is a substantial increase on the 3.6% recorded in 2000 (see figure I.7). It is also estimated that these transfers helped to reduce extreme poverty and total poverty in the region by 2.2 percentage points and 2.9 percentage points, respectively, in 2022⁶ (ECLAC, 2024d).

Figure I.7

Latin America and the Caribbean (20 countries):^a population in recipient households of conditional cash transfer programmes and other continuous transfers, 2000–2022
(Percentages of the total population and millions of people)



Source: Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes Database - Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/home>; Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre-Population Division of ECLAC; United Nations (2022), *World Population Prospects 2022*. <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

Note: Weighted average based on information on conditional transfer programmes and other continuous cash transfers from the countries. In addition to conditional transfer programmes, the indicator includes other permanent cash income transfers, but not in-kind transfers and subsidies. For Brazil, data for 2020 refer to the *Bolsa Família* programme, while data for 2021 and 2022 refer to the *Auxílio Brasil* programme.

^a Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

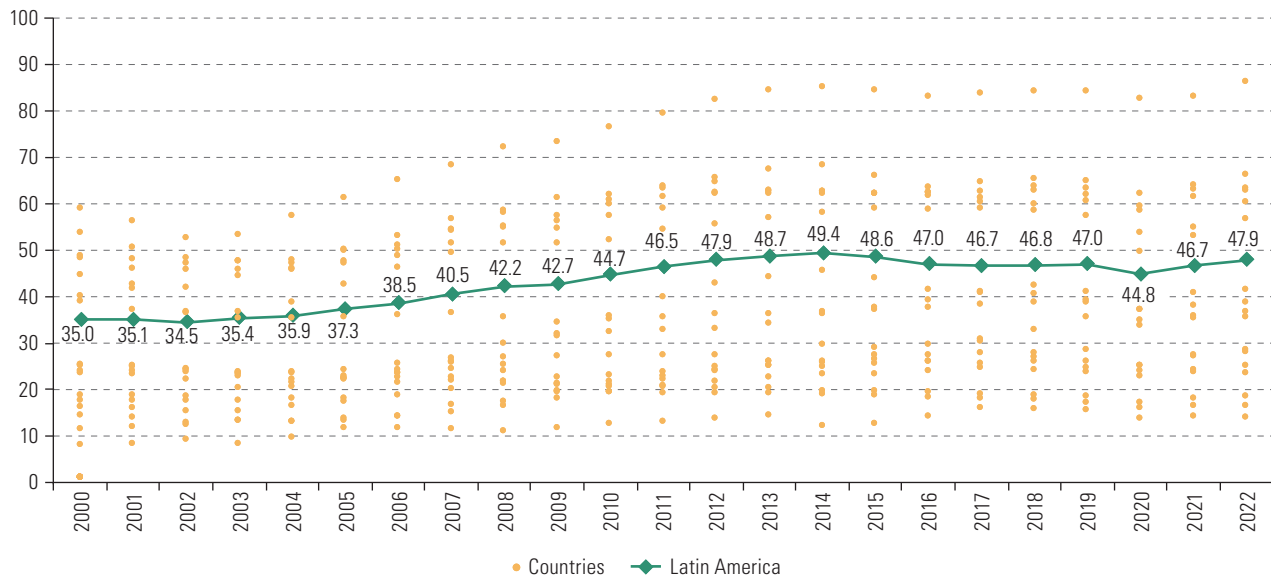
An analysis of social protection in old age shows significant gaps in the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean pension systems to provide social protection to all older persons. High levels of informality, among other factors, are a structural feature of the region's labour markets, resulting in low contribution rates and to limited contributory coverage. The coverage of active participants in Latin America —or the proportion of the economically active population contributing to pension systems— was 35.0% at the beginning of the twenty-first century and 47.9% in 2022, reflecting a recovery from the decline in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it fell to 44.8%. While this represents a notable increase of 12.9 percentage points, more than half of this population was not covered in 2022 (see figure I.8).

⁵ Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes Database - Latin America and the Caribbean, a mandate from the first session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/40359-resolucion-1i-conferencia-regional-desarrollo-social-america-latina-caribe-lima>.

⁶ Estimate based on the simple average of the impact of all public transfers recorded in official household surveys in the following 14 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

Figure I.8

Latin America (17 countries):^a coverage of the economically active population contributing to pension systems, 2000–2022
(Percentages)



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of administrative data from countries and the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre-Population Division of ECLAC. Labour force estimates and projections: 2022 revision.

Note: Weighted average of the economically active population.

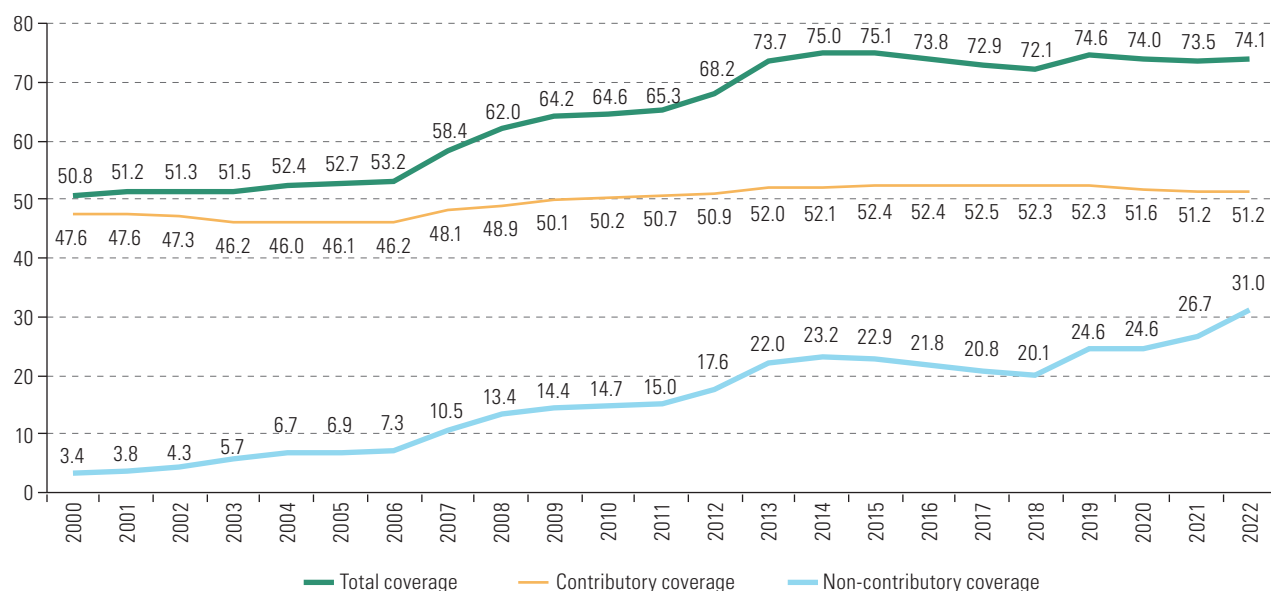
^a Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

The small proportion of active workers contributing to pension systems leads to low levels of coverage in contributory pension systems in old age. In 2022, contributory pension coverage in Latin America and the Caribbean stood at 51.2%. In this respect, the countries of the region have significantly expanded the coverage of non-contributory pension systems in recent decades. While pension coverage under the contributory component increased by 3.6 percentage points between 2000 and 2022, total pension coverage, measured as the percentage of the population aged 65 and over receiving some form of pension, rose from 50.8% in 2000 to 74.1% in 2022, an increase of 23.3 percentage points over a 22-year period. Non-contributory pension system coverage expanded by 27.6 percentage points between 2000 and 2022, from 3.4% to 31.0%. This has had a significant effect on reducing poverty in old age, estimated at no less than 5.2 percentage points around 2021 (Arenas de Mesa and Robles, 2024; Vila, Robles and Arenas de Mesa, 2024; and Arenas de Mesa, Espíndola and Vila, 2024) (see figure I.9).

The region continues to face substantial challenges in the sufficiency of non-contributory social protection entitlements. According to the information from household surveys in 14 countries of Latin America in 2022 (ECLAC, 2024d), conditional cash transfers covered, on average, only 46.8% of the per capita income shortfall of poor households. Entitlements provided through non-contributory pension systems represented 92% of the poverty line in 2022 (Vila, Robles and Arenas de Mesa, 2024), although average monthly amounts were well below those of contributory pensions (ECLAC, 2024d).

Figure I.9

Latin America and the Caribbean (27 countries);^a total pension coverage, contributory and non-contributory, 2000–2022
(Percentage of the population aged 65 and over)



Source: Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes Database - Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/ps>; Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre-Population Division of ECLAC. Labour force estimates and projections: 2019 revision; United Nations. (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019*.

Note: Total coverage refers to the percentage of the population aged 65 and over with access to a pension. It is not equal to the sum of contributory and non-contributory coverage. This is because in some countries, there are people who receive both. Non-contributory coverage does not include information for Honduras, Nicaragua or Saint Lucia. Contributory coverage does not include information for Jamaica.

^a Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

In sum, the region has made considerable progress in building and expanding social protection systems in recent decades. However, major challenges remain in coverage levels, sufficiency of entitlements and financial sustainability. The design of these systems must be strengthened to address the multiple crises and shifts under way, including those related to the demographic transition and the world of work. Possible strategic actions include strengthening the design of existing policies to ensure households' financial security and eradicate poverty and enhancing their impact by expanding coverage and sufficiency levels, with a particular focus on eradicating poverty in childhood and old age. It is also critical to link existing policies with capacity-building strategies for labour inclusion, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Moreover, given the challenges posed by the demographic transition and the current care crisis, it is essential to strengthen comprehensive care policies and intensify efforts to consolidate sustainable pension systems in which contributory and non-contributory social protection entitlements are increasingly coordinated, as well as social protection systems and sectoral policies in key areas for inclusive social development.

5. Advances in education coverage and challenges related to quality and narrowing gaps

In recent decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has made significant strides in access to education at all levels, driven by legislative reforms extending compulsory schooling and by policies aimed at access for and retention of students from the most marginalized areas (United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean [UNESCO - OREALC], United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] and ECLAC, 2022). However, major challenges remain in educational inclusion, especially at the pre-primary, upper-secondary and tertiary levels. Although coverage is nearly universal at some levels, there are intractable exclusionary obstacles that affect the most vulnerable populations.⁷ This is compounded by a persistent learning crisis in the region, resulting from a steady decline in learning quality over the past decade (Pritchett, 2025), which was worsened by the protracted school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation calls for an urgent transformation of education systems to ensure quality learning, develop core skills and respond to emerging challenges, such as the acquisition of socioemotional and digital skills.

In addition to the extension of compulsory schooling, secondary education coverage in the region has increased mainly through diversification of the education supply, including by implementing alternatives to regular secondary school that are tailored to the needs of rural populations, low-income groups and Indigenous Peoples, among others. Although these strategies have enabled broader access, they have also led to educational pathways of varying quality, which reproduce forms of segmentation within the education system (Acosta, 2022). The secondary education completion rate climbed steadily in Latin America between 1994 and 2023, both in the highest income quintile, where it increased from 65% to 88%, and in the lowest quintile, where it rose from 19% to 52% (see figure I.10). Accordingly, the completion rate gap by socioeconomic level fell from approximately 46 percentage points in 1994 to 36 percentage points in 2023, although it remains very wide. However, there has been a slowdown in the pace of progress since 2015, and inequalities stemming not only from income level but also from ethnicity and race, area of residence, disability status, migration status and other factors persist (Huepe, Palma and Trucco, 2022).

Figure I.10

Latin America (15 countries):^a upper-secondary education completion rate among young people aged 20–22,^b by extreme income quintiles, 1994–2023^c (Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and, for data prior to 2000, household surveys.

Note: Simple averages of national completion rates and of the first (the poorest) and the fifth (the wealthiest) per capita income quintiles. Some missing figures were estimated at the national level to calculate the simple average at the regional level. Data for Argentina refer to urban areas.

^a Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

^b For countries in which the official age of entry to primary education is 6 years and the total duration of primary and secondary education is 11 years, the completion rate for the population aged 19–21 is analysed.

^c Data for 1994 are for that year and other proximate years.

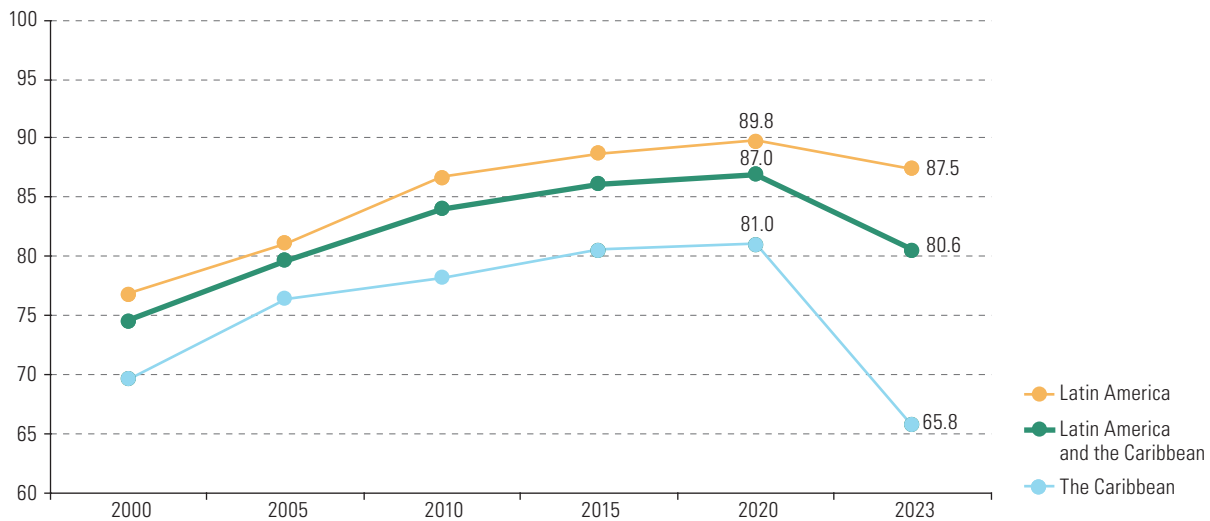
⁷ This includes Indigenous children, adolescents and young people, Afrodescendants, refugees and migrants, as well as the most socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, persons with disabilities, and persons with non-heterosexual orientation or non-cisgender identity (ECLAC, 2022b).

In the region, the increase in the secondary education completion rate is associated with the markedly higher tertiary education enrolment rate, which rose from 18.3% in 1990 to 56.7% in 2023 in Latin America. However, except in a few countries, these gains have primarily benefitted the middle- and upper-income strata, deepening inequality in access to this level of education (UNESCO-OREALC, UNICEF and ECLAC, 2022). Tertiary education coverage has expanded owing to the implementation of new student loan, scholarship and support programmes, among other measures, in addition to the expansion of public supply (UNESCO-OREALC, UNICEF and ECLAC, 2022).

Investing in early childhood education is equally critical for inclusive social development. Not only does it improve educational trajectories, but it also entails benefits for socioemotional well-being, work performance and income in adulthood. Many of the region's countries have designed and implemented comprehensive plans and policies targeting this age group since the 2000s (Santos García, 2024), leading to sustained growth in pre-primary enrolment rates (see figure I.11). However, unlike in other stages of education, where attendance rates have returned to pre-pandemic levels, there has been an unprecedented decline in enrolment one year before primary school since 2020 across the region, especially in the Caribbean, breaking the upward trend of previous decades. Early childhood education was not sufficiently prioritized during the COVID-19 health emergency, either in terms of distance learning strategies or reopening decisions (Cortázar and Torres, 2023). This shows that the social value afforded to early childhood education and recognition of its essential role in comprehensive development remain limited (Santos García, 2024).

Figure I.11

Latin America and the Caribbean (22 countries)^a net enrolment rate one year before the official primary entry age, 2000–2023
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Note: Simple average. Some missing figures were estimated at the national level to calculate the simple average at the regional level.

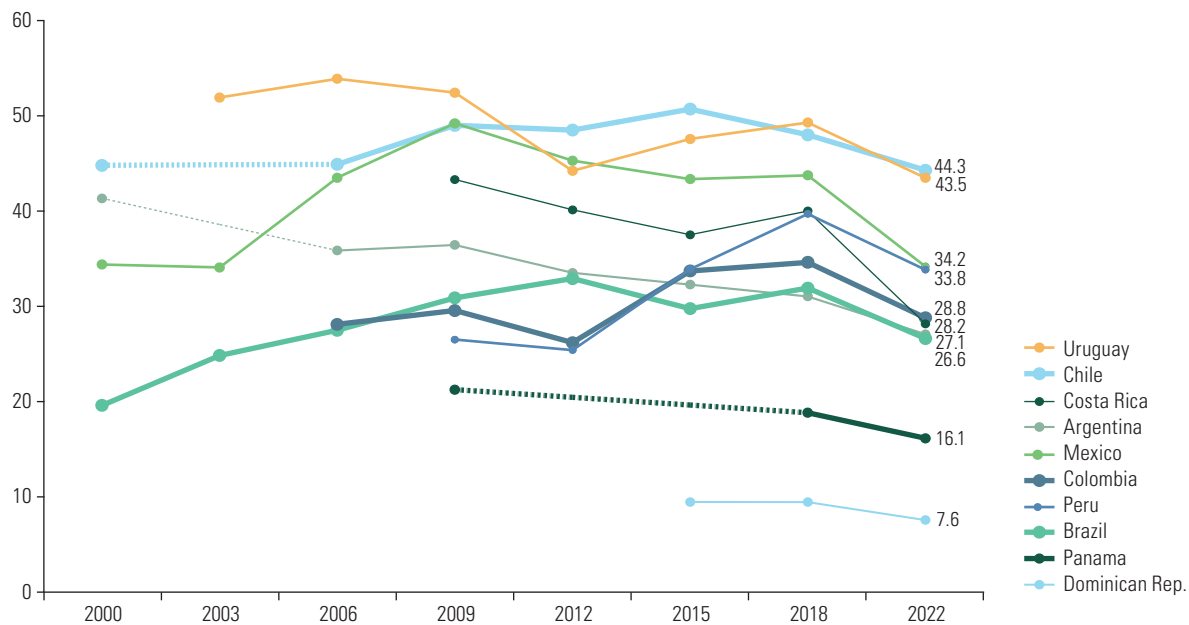
^a Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay. The Caribbean: Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

As noted above, the region's educational inclusivity challenge is compounded by an equally critical problem: the low quality of learning. Data from international standardized tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) paint a worrying picture, with low learning outcomes and no

sustained improvements over time. Of the 10 countries of the region that participated in at least three rounds of PISA, 5 recorded declines of more than 15% in the proportion of students achieving minimum proficiency in mathematics since their first assessment (see figure I.12). In 2022, in most countries assessed, less than half of students reached that threshold, and in some cases, the figure is below 20%. This is explained both by the impact of the pandemic on learning and by the expansion of secondary education coverage to population groups that were previously excluded and now part of the first generation to attain a higher level of education.

Figure I.12

Latin America (10 countries): students achieving minimum proficiency in mathematics by the end of lower secondary education, 2000–2022
(Percentages of total)



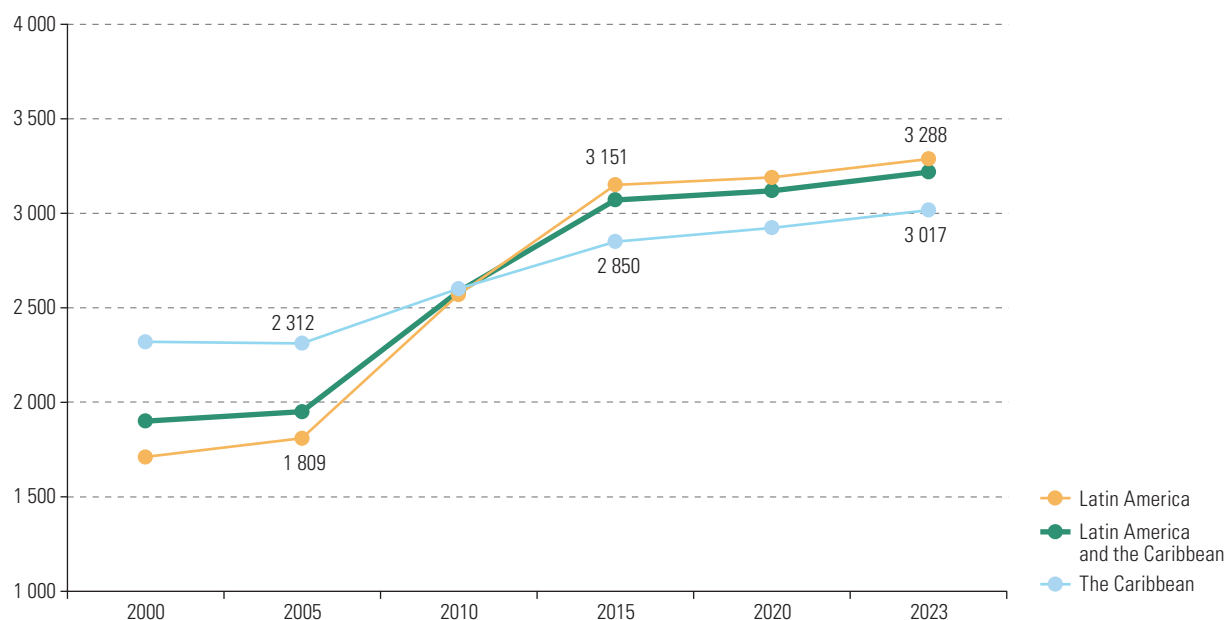
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), *PISA 2022 Assessment and Analytical Framework*, PISA, OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/dfe0bf9c-en>.

Note: Countries that participated in three or more rounds of PISA. El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica and Paraguay are not included, as they only participated in the 2022 round.

Given that education is a human right and that it yields substantial economic and social returns—including increased productivity, enhanced social cohesion and reduced inequality—it is essential to ensure stable and predictable financing to advance towards inclusive and sustainable development. Between 2005 and 2015, public expenditure per primary and secondary student increased sharply, particularly in Latin America, against the backdrop of regional economic growth (UNESCO-OREALC, UNICEF, ECLAC, 2022). Over that period, public expenditure per student rose by 74.2% in Latin America and by 23.3% in the Caribbean, to average US\$ 2,151 and US\$ 2,850, respectively (see figure I.13). However, from 2015 onwards, the pace of growth of this investment slowed considerably, mirroring the economic slowdown. Between 2015 and 2023, spending per student increased by just 4.3% in Latin America and 5.9% in the Caribbean. This change in spending trends highlights the urgent need to move towards financing mechanisms that ensure financially sustainable investment in education.

Figure I.13

Latin America and the Caribbean (17 countries):^a public expenditure on education per student enrolled in compulsory education (primary and secondary), 2000–2023
(Constant dollars at 2021 prices, in purchasing power parity)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Note: Simple average. The regional average includes data modelled at the national level.

^a Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. The Caribbean: Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Challenges related to education access and quality become even more pressing in light of the gaps between populations, as in the case of persons with disabilities, who face significant constraints in the areas of capacity-building and labour market inclusion (see box I.2).

Box I.2

Disability: a core element of education and labour inclusion gaps in Latin America

The lack of comparable data makes it difficult to conduct a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the social and labour inclusion of persons with disabilities in the region. Just five countries in Latin America—Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia—have data disaggregated by disability in their household surveys from two distinct periods: around 2015 and 2021. Despite the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, data availability remains limited. It is therefore urgent to strengthen and promote the production and systematic collection of statistics to advance knowledge on the subject and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities face multiple barriers in various areas of their lives. In education, these barriers range from a lack of physical and technological accessibility in educational establishments to discrimination in the classroom, which hampers their entry and retention in the education system (World Health Organization [WHO])

and World Bank, 2011). Persons with disabilities therefore have fewer years of schooling than persons without disabilities (see figure 1). For example, in Costa Rica and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, data show that the gaps widened between the surveys. Moreover, the average number of years of schooling among persons with disabilities remained below 10 in all years reviewed. This falls short of target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to ensure that all children—including those with disabilities—complete primary and secondary education.

Figure 1

Latin America (5 countries): Average years of schooling of persons 25 and over, with and without disabilities, around 2015–2021^a
(Years)



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

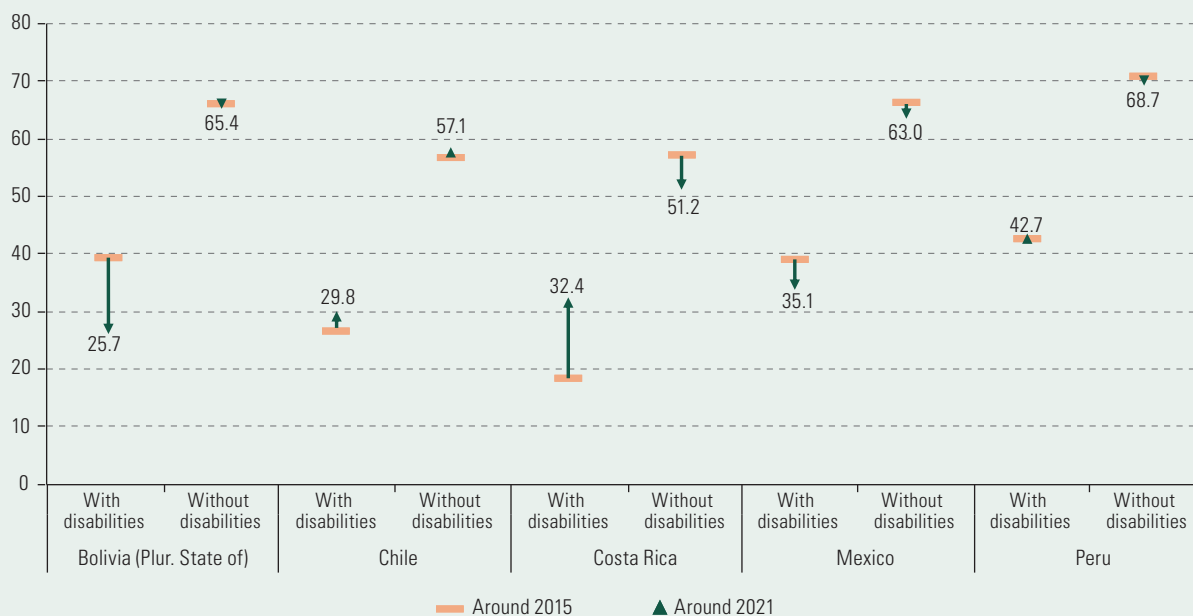
^a Data for the Plurinational State of Bolivia refer to 2015 and 2021; those for Chile, to 2015 and 2017; those for Costa Rica, to 2015 and 2021; those for Mexico, to 2016 and 2020; and those for Peru, to 2015 and 2021.

A low average number of years of schooling is strongly associated with difficulties in accessing all levels of education. The percentage of persons with disabilities who have completed tertiary education is lower than that of persons without disabilities, with a difference of approximately 10 percentage points in all countries analysed. In Peru, for example, the gap was 15 percentage points in the second year studied. In this regard, SDG target 4.5, on ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training, is far from being met, highlighting the challenges remaining in the region in the educational inclusion of persons with disabilities.

With regard to employability, the percentage of persons with disabilities in employment is significantly lower than that of persons without disabilities (see figure 2). This is a reality regularly faced by persons with disabilities, the result of multiple barriers in the workplace, including a lack of awareness of reasonable accommodation, the absence of accessible infrastructure and even discrimination from employers and colleagues (WHO and World Bank, 2011). The data also confirm the close relationship between educational level, skills acquired, years of schooling and entry to and continuity in the labour market. As such, educational barriers have a direct impact on the labour opportunities of persons with disabilities and perpetuate inequalities in employability and job quality (Herrera, Huepe and Trucco, 2025).

Figure 2

Latin America (5 countries): employed persons aged 15 and over, with and without disabilities, around 2015–2021^a
(Percentages)



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of ECLAC, BADEHOG.

^a Data for the Plurinational State of Bolivia refer to 2015 and 2021; those for Chile, to 2015 and 2017; those for Costa Rica, to 2015 and 2021; those for Mexico, to 2016 and 2020; and those for Peru, to 2015 and 2021.

In addition, the percentage of self-employed or own-account workers is higher among persons with disabilities than among those without, with differences ranging from 10 to 20 percentage points. This type of employment tends to be associated with informality, meaning less labour protection, limited access to social entitlements and precarious working conditions (ECLAC, 2023a). It is essential that countries implement effective measures to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities and thus ensure their social and labour inclusion. Advancing towards inclusive social development means ensuring the participation of all, leaving no one behind.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG); World Health Organization and World Bank. (2011). *World Report on Disability 2011*. Herrera, P., Huepe, M. and Trucco, D. (2025). Education and the development of digital competences in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2025/3). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2023). *Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023* (LC/PUB.2023/18-P/Rev.1).

6. Institutional progress and gaps in access and financing in the health sector

In the Copenhagen Declaration, countries committed to promoting and attaining the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, together with access for all to primary healthcare. Although some progress has been made 30 years on, various challenges remain in the region.

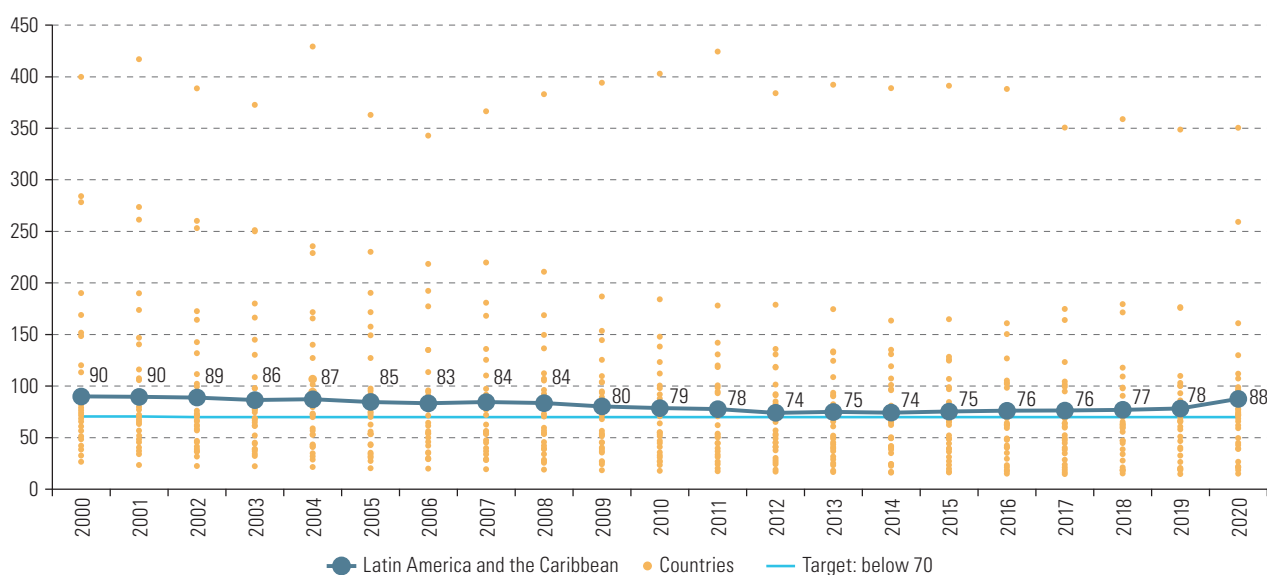
On average, life expectancy at birth has increased significantly and steadily over the last three decades. Despite the temporary decline recorded between 2019 and 2022 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (ECLAC, 2022b), life expectancy at birth is projected to rise from 69 years in 1995 to 76 years in 2025. Rapid

population ageing is linked to the epidemiological transition, characterized by a rising incidence of chronic and non-communicable diseases, which place considerable strain on health systems. This reinforces the need to invest in primary healthcare, since health promotion and disease prevention generates savings, to contain the growing demand for and high cost of treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care (ECLAC and Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], 2024; ECLAC, 2024a).

The reduction of maternal mortality, defined as the death of a woman during pregnancy or delivery or within 42 days of childbirth, stagnated between 2000 and 2019. This reflects the multiple barriers to health access and the structural inequalities in the region's health systems (PAHO and WHO, 2024). In 2020, maternal mortality increased, reaching levels similar to those recorded in 2000, primarily as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its displacement effect on essential health services (see figure I.14).

Figure I.14

Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries):^a maternal mortality ratio, 2000–2020
(Number of deaths per 100,000 live births)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. CEPALSTAT, on the basis of United Nations, Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

Note: Simple averages. WHO defines the maternal mortality ratio as the number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100,000 live births over the same period. It depicts the risk of maternal death relative to the number of live births and essentially captures the risk of death from a maternal cause in a single pregnancy or live birth.

^a Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

SDG target 3.1 calls for a reduction in the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Countries are gradually closing in on that target, but with five years left before the deadline, the likelihood of achieving it at the current pace is low (ECLAC, 2025a). Given that the causes of maternal mortality are largely preventable, ensuring timely care throughout the prenatal, delivery and postpartum cycle is a priority (PAHO and WHO, 2024).

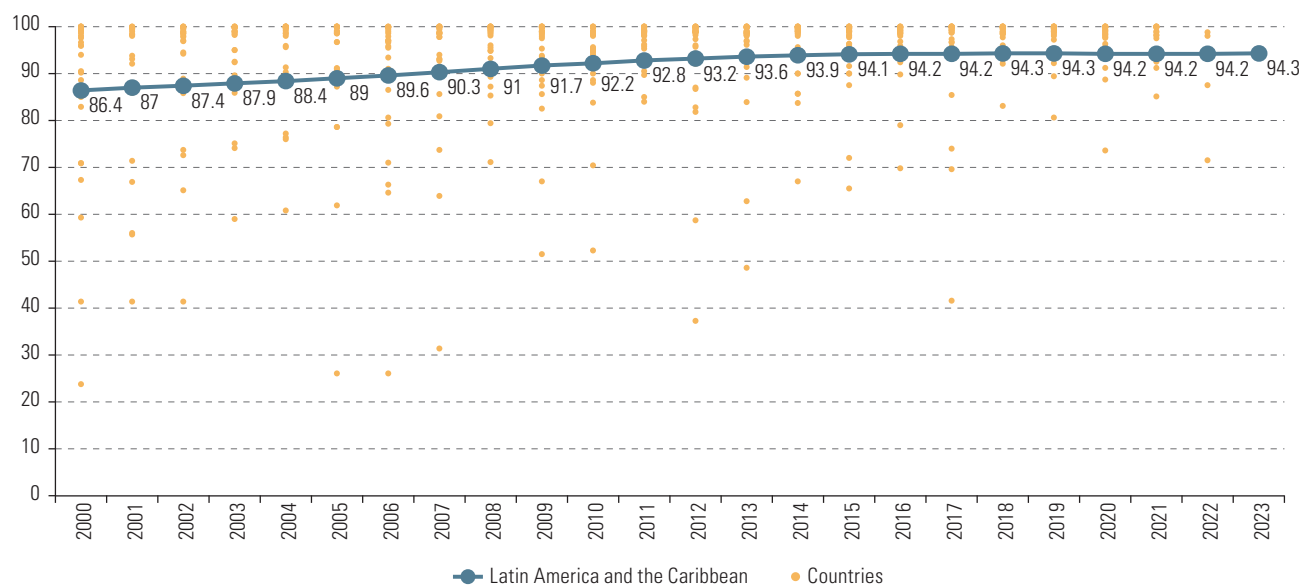
Another key health indicator is child mortality, which is often associated with factors such as low income, adolescent motherhood, limited access to basic and health services and to timely healthcare, and insufficient primary care (ECLAC, UNICEF and Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office [LACRO], 2007). This indicator declined considerably in Latin America and the Caribbean between 2000 and 2023, falling from 33.0 deaths to 15.9 deaths per 1,000 live births—below the threshold set in SDG target 3.2, which calls for

a reduction in under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births. The highest child mortality rates are concentrated in the Caribbean, where four countries (Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Haiti) have not yet achieved the target (ECLAC, 2025a). These regional gains reflect governments' prioritization of child health policies and the structural transformations associated with the expansion of access to basic services and the health network (ECLAC, 2025a). Thus, in addition to adopting a primary healthcare strategy, it is critical to strengthen preventive measures to reduce child mortality, including by implementing vaccination schedules and ensuring sufficient access to food, drinking water and sanitation services. The regional average rate masks significant inequalities both across and within countries.

In terms of health service coverage and access, the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel has trended upward in the region, rising from 86.9% in 2000 to 94.1% in 2023, and has remained stable since 2015 (see figure I.15). Although there has been less dispersion in recent years, data by country and area of residence —urban or rural— reveal profound inequalities. In 2017,⁸ the rate of births attended by skilled health personnel for women residing in rural areas was markedly lower than for women residing in urban areas⁹ (Marinho, Dahuabe and Arenas de Mesa, 2023). These disparities, also evident in other indicators such as access to antenatal care, probability of premature death from noncommunicable diseases and causes of disability-adjusted life years lost, are closely linked to the social determinants of health and are shaped by political, economic and social forces, which affect living conditions and limit access to health services and the quality of those received, exacerbating inequalities in health outcomes (WHO and Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008).

Figure I.15

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries): births attended by skilled health personnel, 2000–2023 (Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. CEPALSTAT, on the basis of United Nations, Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

Note: The figures for Latin America and the Caribbean refer to the simple average for each year or to the latest available data for the country.

⁸ Data are from different years, subject to availability, for 19 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Data for Guyana and Peru refer to 2020; those for Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Honduras to 2019; those for Costa Rica, Ecuador and Suriname refer to 2018; those for Belize, Haiti, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia to 2016; those for Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico to 2015; those for El Salvador to 2014; and those for Panama and Uruguay refer to 2013 (Marinho, Dahuabe and Arenas de Mesa, 2023).

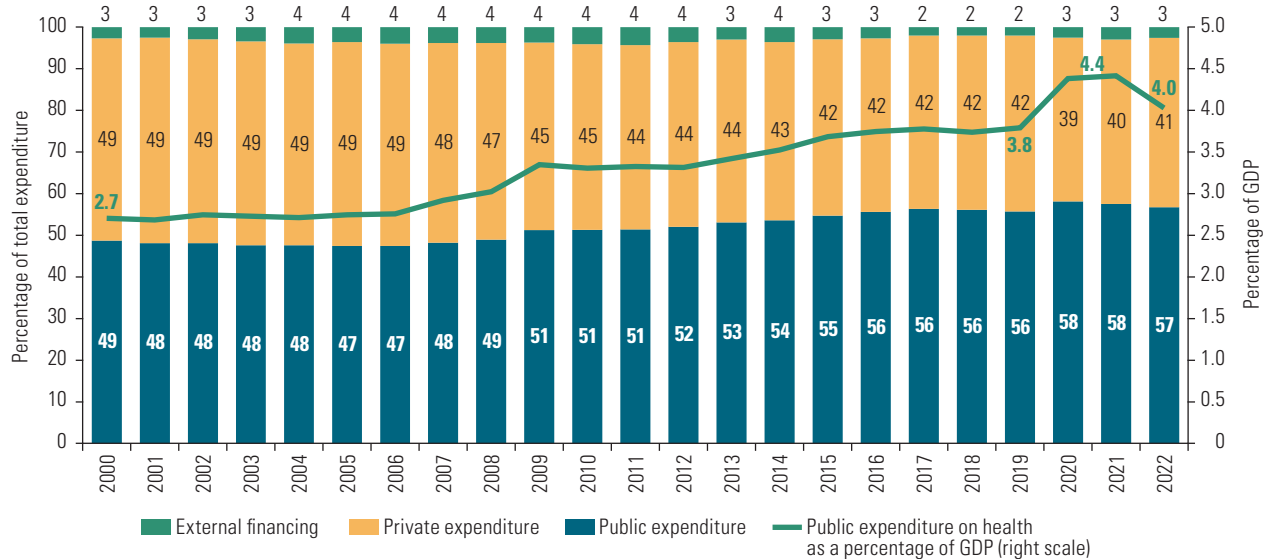
⁹ The differences are particularly stark in Haiti, where the gap is approximately 30%, and in Guatemala, Panama and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where the difference is around 20% (see Marinho, Dahuabe and Arenas de Mesa, 2023).

Public spending on health increased by 1.7 percentage points of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean between 2000 and 2022, rising from 2.7% to 4.4%. This reflects the considerable improvement associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, but spending remains below the 6% target recommended by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) (PAHO and WHO, 2020). In 2022, spending fell to around 4% of GDP, similar to pre-pandemic levels (see figure I.16). Meanwhile, out-of-pocket spending as a share of total health spending, which accounts for more than half of private spending on health, fell from 38.2% in 2000 to 26.2% in 2020. However, it picked up again in 2021, reaching 31.7% in 2022, above the WHO-recommended ceiling of 20% of total health expenditure (WHO, 2010). Recent studies show that to make meaningful progress in financial protection in health and meet this target, investment in health must be financially sustainable, with public health expenditure equivalent to 6.7% of GDP (Marinho, Sugg and Farías, 2025). The region's countries therefore need to increase public investment in health and strengthen financial protection for households to reduce out-of-pocket spending, which can lead to financial catastrophe and impoverishment and perpetuate health-related inequalities, especially for the most vulnerable populations (ECLAC and PAHO, 2024).

Figure I.16

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries): public expenditure on health and composition of total health expenditure, 2000–2022

(Percentages of GDP and of total expenditure)



Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of World Health Organization (2025). Global Health Expenditure Database. <https://apps.who.int/nha/database/ViewData/Indicators/en>.

Note: Simple average. The figures, compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO), refer to the general government, according to the official sources of each country. According to WHO, private health spending refers to financial resources that are used to finance health services and do not come from public sources (i.e., they are not controlled or managed by the government). This spending includes funds from a variety of private sources allocated to the consumption of health-related goods and services, such as medical attention, medicines and preventive or curative services.

Against this backdrop and looking ahead to the Second World Summit for Social Development, it is critical for the region's countries to strengthen their commitment to move towards universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient health systems that ensure equal and timely access for the population as a whole, leaving no one behind. To this end, there is a need to coordinate these efforts with social protection systems and consolidate a primary healthcare strategy as the cornerstone of addressing the social determinants of health. Only in this way will it be possible to overcome existing health inequalities, promote inclusive and sustainable development and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. Labour inclusion amid participation gaps and a challenging outlook for decent work

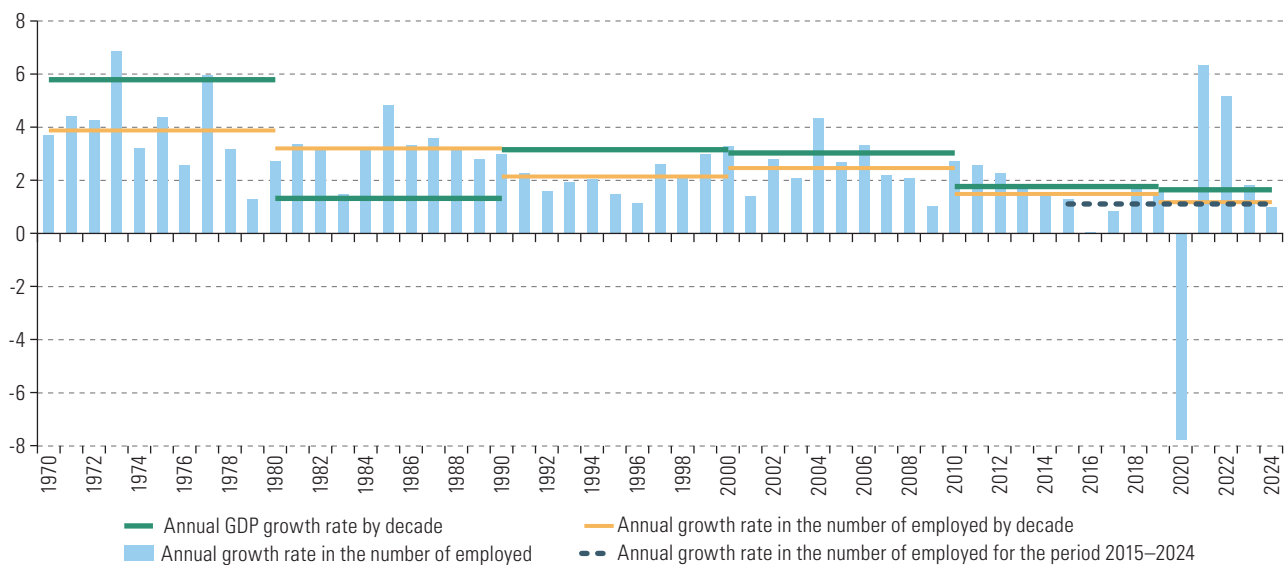
Since the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, the world has witnessed significant structural transformations in the areas of employment and labour inclusion. In Latin America and the Caribbean, these changes have been shaped by global economic trends, technological progress, demographic shifts and a growing social demand for greater equality and integration. These transformations have reshaped the region's occupational structure, which is marked by a steady decline in agricultural sector employment and the rapid expansion of the services and trade sectors, which account for an ever-larger share of jobs, albeit often with precarious or informal working conditions.

Employment generation has been closely related to economic growth and highly sensitive to the various cycles in the region. Successive economic crises —such as the Asian crisis in the late 1990s, the dot-com crisis, the 2008 global financial crisis and, more recently, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic— have directly affected the number and quality of jobs. This reflects the low resilience of the region's labour markets to external shocks.

In what ECLAC has called the region's "second lost decade," employment growth over the past 10 years reached a nadir unmatched in the last half-century, even following previous economic downturns (see figure I.17). It took more than two years for employment to return to pre-pandemic levels (CEPAL, 2023a). In the 10 years between 2015 and 2024, annual employment growth fell to a historic low, averaging 1.1% (see the dotted line in figure I.17), even lower than the 1.5% recorded between 2010 and 2019. The weak growth expectations for the region in the coming years suggests that downtrend in the creation of high-quality jobs will continue (ECLAC, 2024e).

Figure I.17

Latin America and the Caribbean (21 countries):^a rates of growth in the number of employed persons and GDP, period averages, 1970–2024
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of CEPALSTAT; World Bank, World Development Indicators; and official data from the University of Groningen.

Note: GDP figures do not include the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

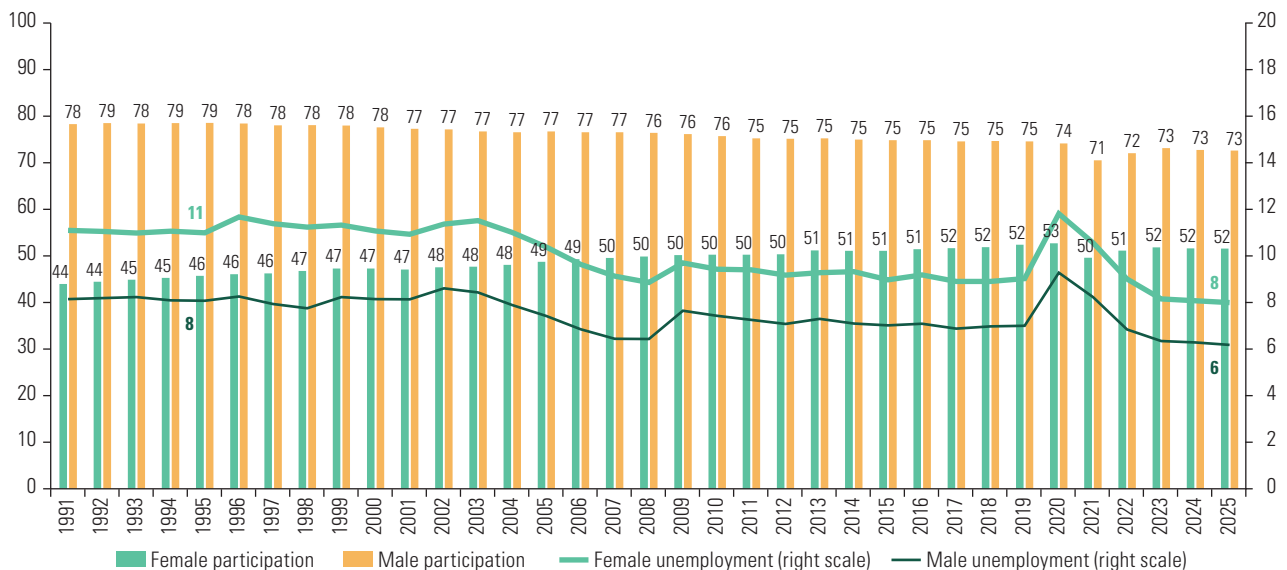
^a Argentina, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

A weak labour market, its low resilience to external shocks and high dependence on economic growth are some of the most pressing challenges to achieving sustainable development in the region, especially in a context of persistent low growth, global uncertainty and shrinking fiscal space. This could slow employment creation over the medium term and diminish the effectiveness of employment as a means of overcoming poverty and building pathways towards well-being.

On the gender equality front, major strides have been made over the last three decades in women's incorporation into the labour market, especially in the first half of the 2000s. However, just half of working-age women are currently in the labour market (see figure I.18), a reflection of the persistent structural barriers that hinder their full inclusion. This is compounded by unresolved wage gaps and the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work, which continues to fall primarily to women, adolescents and girls.

Figure I.18

Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries and territories):^a labour market participation and unemployment rates, by sex, 1991–2025
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of International Labour Organization. ILOSTAT. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Note: Simple average.

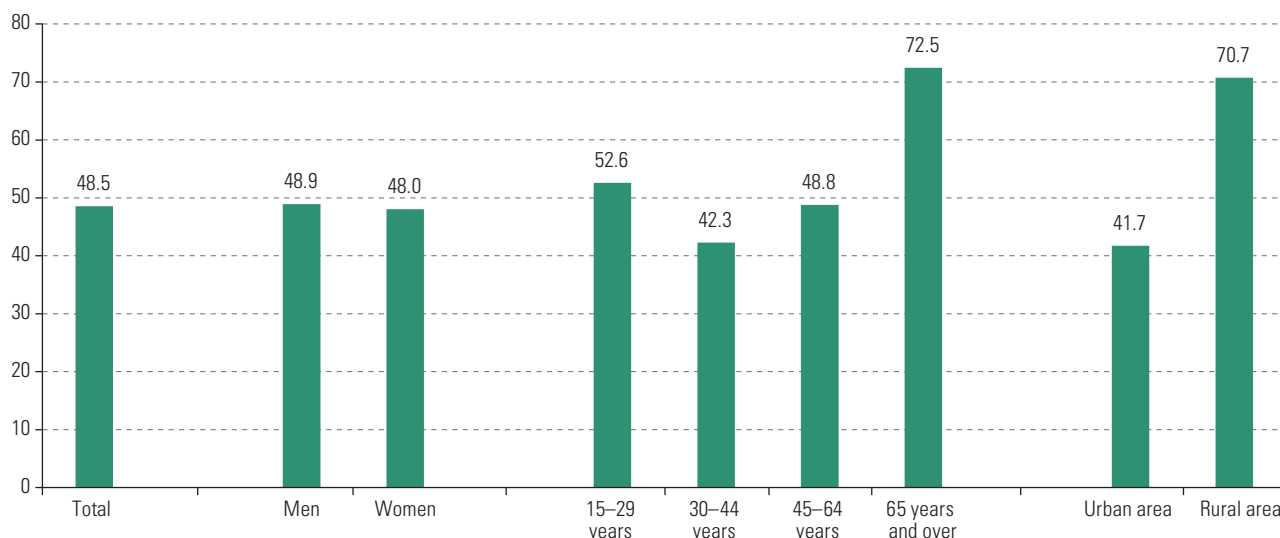
^a Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States Virgin Islands and Uruguay.

Although the unemployment rate has declined in certain periods, it has remained relatively stable in structural terms, with no significant improvement in the inclusion of historically excluded groups. In 2025, as in the mid-1990s, unemployment continues to be higher among women, young people and Afrodescendants, underscoring the need to advance towards labour policies with an intersectional approach.

Over the last few decades, employment creation has not ensured that jobs meet minimum standards in terms of occupational safety, social security and decent working conditions. In 1995, ECLAC addressed the issue of the rapid expansion of the informal sector in urban areas, which mainly affected women, with 5 in 10 urban women informally employed (ECLAC, 1995). By 2024, half of the region's workers were in informal employment, with no social security to protect them, their families or their dependents (see figure I.19).

Figure I.19

Latin America (10 countries):^a informal employment rate, by sex, age group and geographic area, 2023
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of processing of employment surveys from the region.

Note: Weighted average.

^a Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

The formalization of workers and their inclusion in social and labour protection systems remain outstanding challenges for the countries of the region. While there are no significant differences between men and women, clear disparities exist at different stages of the life cycle, especially among young people and older persons, as well as in rural areas, where informality affects 7 out of every 10 persons employed. In addition, new technologies and service platforms—often presented as quick or complementary employment options—pose fresh challenges for the countries of the region. Climate change and its impacts on economic activities and workers, along with demographic, technological and productive transformations, also give rise to new challenges for labour markets across the region. Policymakers must take into account the automation of tasks and its potential impact on employment, while also promoting digital inclusion, with particular attention to its effects on the long-term productivity and competitiveness of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is estimated that 28.4% of workers in the region are in occupations at high risk of automation, a trend that particularly affects men and individuals with intermediate levels of education (Espíndola and Suárez, 2023). This new labour and productive landscape calls for comprehensive responses that link labour, education and technology policies with existing social protection policies (see box I.3).

Box I.3

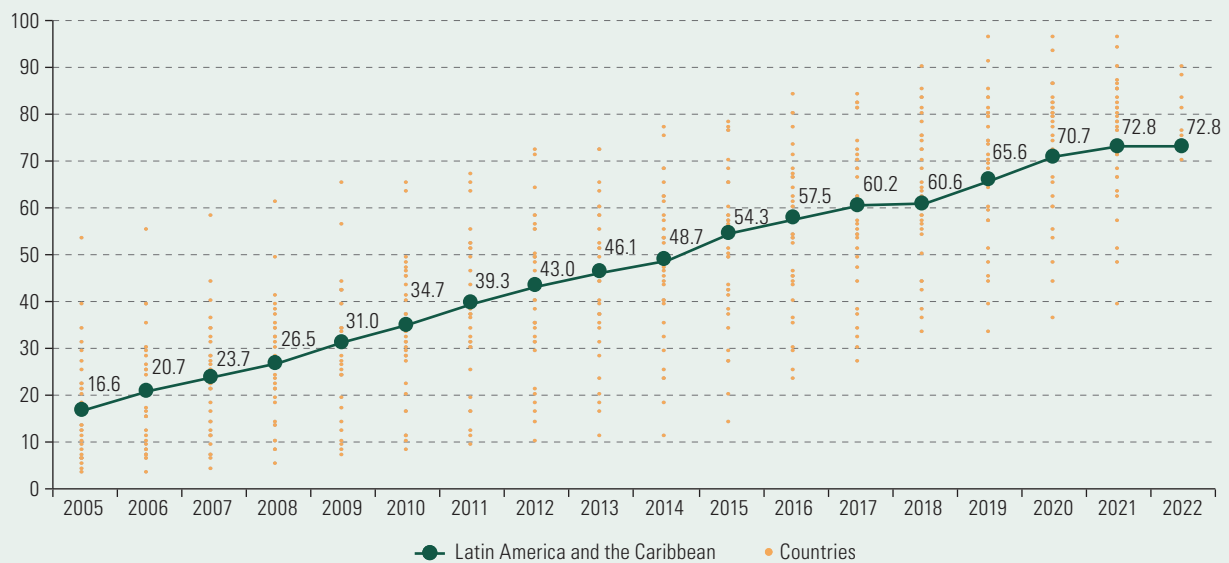
Digital inclusion: a growing challenge for inclusive social development strategies

Since the late 1990s, the digital revolution has transformed how people connect, consume, produce goods and access public services, with impacts across multiple dimensions of the economy and society. Without a doubt, one of the most significant changes in recent years has been the widespread adoption of the Internet and mobile devices, which has facilitated interpersonal connectivity. Added to this is the emergence of new business models enabled by digital technologies, which collect and generate data to deliver new value propositions, and by the transformation of existing models through the use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and cognitive robotics.

Over the past 30 years, exponential changes have reshaped society, production and the State, generating new demands from the population that must be addressed through public policy. In this context, and from the perspective of inclusive social development, the concept of digital inclusion has emerged, which can be defined as the process that enables full participation in the digital world, ensuring the protection of people's rights and the reduction of risks in a highly digitized environment (Palma, 2024).

According to the latest data, Internet connectivity in Latin America and the Caribbean has grown substantially in this century. In 2005, 16.6% of the population were Internet users; by 2022, this figure had risen to 72.8%. However, these figures mask inequalities in a region characterized by structural disparities. Beyond access, achieving meaningful connectivity and digital inclusion requires adequate infrastructure, a variety of devices and high-quality connections, factors that are not equitably available across or within countries of the region.

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries): internet users, 2005–2022
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of International Telecommunication Union. (2023, July). World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database; ECLAC. ECLAC. (2000 a 2022). Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and Digital Development Observatory. <https://desarrollodigital.cepal.org/en/indicadores>.

Technological transformation is undoubtedly a major challenge for the future of inclusive social development. Digital social protection requires adequate resources for its implementation and the creation of a secure environment that promotes non-discrimination and safeguards individual rights, including progress in legislation and regulations on security and privacy. In addition, it is essential to foster digital citizenship, as the future will increasingly be shaped by digital tools, making access to such tools indispensable, together with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate and exercise rights in this new space. States must therefore promote the development of rights-enabling conditions to secure digital citizenship.

Ultimately, countries must move forward in the digital transformation process while ensuring that the structural inequalities prevailing in the region are not replicated in the digital realm, and that the impacts of this transformation do not pose substantial risks to the well-being of the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Source: Digital Development Observatory, on the basis of World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database; Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG); International Telecommunication Union and Palma, A. (2024). *Protección social digital: elementos para el análisis* (LC/TS.2024/97). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since the World Summit for Social Development, Latin America and the Caribbean has made progress in strengthening regulatory frameworks governing employment and designing rights-based active labour market policies, leading to important gains in State capacities. However, significant gaps remain in equitable access to quality employment opportunities and guaranteed social protection. These gaps disproportionately affect women, young people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendants, thus there is a need to develop comprehensive labour inclusion strategies that integrate economic growth, productive innovation, care policies and universal and sustainable social protection systems.

8. Progress on housing, water and sanitation

The right to housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). According to the capability approach (Sen, 1999), living in adequate housing is both an end unto itself and a means to acquiring other capabilities. WHO and UNICEF have been developing water and sanitation programmes since the 1970s, which have been progressively strengthened and complemented as part of the global WASH initiative. The WASH initiative aims to ensure universal and sustainable access to drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene, which are vital to health, human dignity and socioeconomic development.¹⁰ The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development included access to adequate housing as one of the basic human needs that policies should address, alongside universal access to drinking water, adequate sanitation and energy services. These are essential services for improving health and quality of life, in particular for people living in rural areas and poor urban areas (United Nations, 1995, pp. 51, 57, 66).

Comparable data at the regional level regarding housing and access to basic services have been available since 2000, thanks to the monitoring of Millennium Development Goal 7, in particular target 7.C (Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation).¹¹ This enabled significant progress on access to the main basic services related to housing in the new millennium. In 2000, in 18 countries of the region, lack of adequate access to drinking water sources affected 14.4% of the population on average (68 million people); that figure was down 5.6 percentage points by 2015, indicating a gradual narrowing of the gaps between the highest and lowest socioeconomic levels (i.e. first and fifth income quintiles) and a significant improvement in rural areas, although there was no meaningful reduction in the gaps between rural and urban areas (see figure I.20.A). Progress levelled out in the mid-2010s: the average proportion of the population without adequate access settled just above 8%, and the number of people in Latin America with difficulties in this area has consistently been around 45 million for the past 10 years.

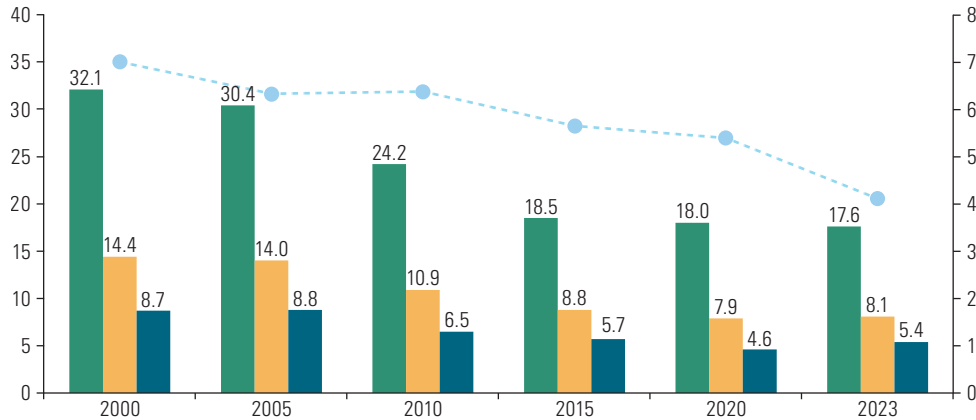
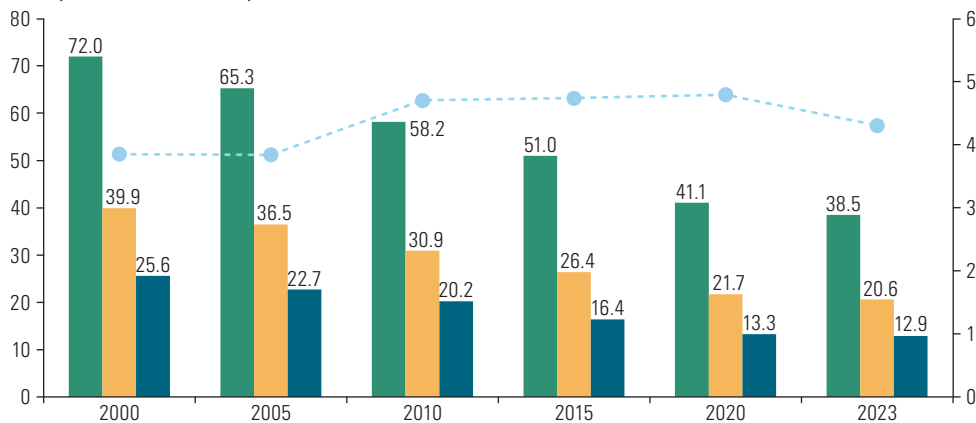
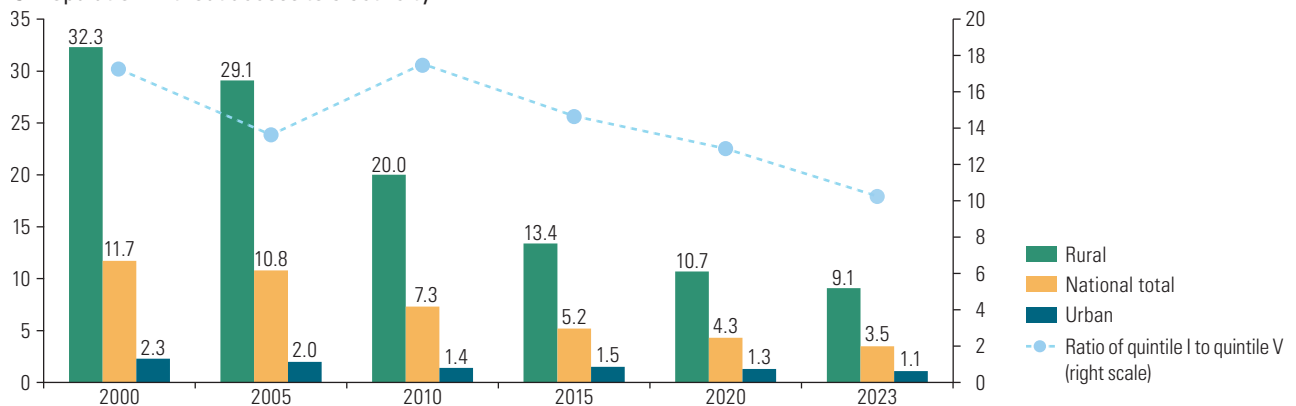
Similarly, access to adequate sanitation systems improved significantly: the population without access shrank by more than 19 percentage points on average, from 39.9% in 2000 to 20.6% in 2023, which translates into an additional 64 million people gaining access to sanitation. While the most pronounced improvement occurred between 2000 and 2015, progress has continued since, including in rural areas and lower-income populations. However, these improvements have been less effective in closing gaps for certain geographical areas and socioeconomic groups. For example, in rural areas, 38.5% of the population still does not have access to improved sanitation systems (see figure I.20.B).

¹⁰ See <https://www.unicef.org/wash>.

¹¹ See <https://www.cepal.org/en/node/42777>.

Figure I.20

Latin America (18 countries):^a population without adequate access to drinking water, sanitation or electricity, 2000–2023
(Percentages)

A. Population without adequate access to drinking water^b**B. Population without adequate access to sanitation^c****C. Population without access to electricity^d**

Source: CEPALSTAT, on the basis of the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).

Note: Simple averages.

^a Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

^b Population whose main source of drinking water meets at least one of the following conditions: is exposed to external contaminants, in particular faecal material; in urban areas, is not located on the same premises as the dwelling, making access and transportation difficult, among other things; and/or is highly vulnerable to different types of weather events or disasters.

^c Population whose household meets at least one of the following conditions: has no toilet; shares a bathroom with other dwellings; in urban areas, has a toilet that does not drain into a sewer or septic tank; and/or, in rural areas, has a cesspit or untreated latrines, or discharges untreated waste to land surface, river or sea.

^d Population without access to electricity provided by public utilities, in both urban and rural areas.

In 2000, the proportion of the population with access to a source of electricity in the home was already high, at approximately 88% on average. This meant that 33 million Latin Americans were not connected to the electrical grid. Although there was still a significant gap relative to urban areas, more than two thirds of the rural population had access to electricity. The expansion of residential access to the electrical grid followed a trend similar to drinking water and sanitation, accelerating in the 2000s before flattening out at near-universal rates (simple average of 96.5%). There was also a substantial narrowing of gaps both geographically and —especially in the past 10 years— socioeconomically.

This progress demonstrates that governments are committed to implementing effective public policies that enhance people's quality of life and to mobilizing considerable resources to finance public infrastructure for basic services. Still, obvious challenges lie ahead: despite expanded service coverage and the achievement of near-universal access to electrical grids, geographical and socioeconomic inequalities persist. Another major challenge relates to clean energy use in households, where progress has been insufficient: in 2000, an average 23.8% of the population used wood, charcoal, petroleum or petroleum products to cook, compared to 15.4% in 2015 and 12.4% in 2023. The air pollution caused by these fuels has adverse public health implications (including the indoor pollution directly affecting at least 52 million Latin Americans), in addition to exacerbating deforestation and climate change.

To achieve further progress on household access to basic water, sanitation and energy services, it is necessary to tackle related problems, such as the rising cost of housing and the declining proportion of proprietor households in Latin America, which went from 71.3% in 2000 to 66.6% in 2023. Countries must also turn their attention to reducing the percentage of the urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (i.e. temporary or makeshift dwellings). Progress in this area has stalled since the mid-2010s: 16.9% of the region's population, or slightly more than 110 million people, lived in such conditions in 2022.

In view of the above, social housing programmes need strengthening, including through increased public investment in housing and community amenities (which, in Latin America, decreased from 0.7% of GDP in 2018 to 0.51% of GDP in 2023); implementation of subsidized housing and long-term mortgage programmes for low-income families; regularization of informal settlements, legalization of occupancy and incorporation of such settlements (or their residents) in urban development plans; and adoption of policies that ensure that every socioeconomic group has equitable and sustainable access to basic services in all areas. In addition, governments should adapt public policies to meet emerging challenges, for example by promoting and integrating the use of renewable and other clean energies and improving infrastructure to withstand the effects of climate change. Integrated urban planning, environmental sustainability and technology innovation must be recognized as indispensable elements of future public policies to ensure that basic services are not only available but also sustainable and efficient.

B. Progress in policy approaches to non-contributory social protection in Latin America and the Caribbean

As mentioned, social realities and public policies in the countries of the region have changed and advanced substantially in the past 30 years. There have been particularly notable developments in non-contributory social protection policies, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, which have a direct bearing on the characteristics of the region's institutional frameworks for social policy. Indeed, this is the area of social policy in which transformations have been the most profound, including the evolution of social authority and the legislation by which it is governed, and improvements to management models, technical and operational capacities and financial sustainability.

The Washington Consensus recommendations of the 1980s had a pronounced influence on the 1990s. For social policy, these recommendations included redirecting the use of limited resources by focusing on the poorest segments of the population, through instruments such as Chile's *ficha CAS* social protection records, Colombia's System for the Identification and Classification of Potential Social Programme Beneficiaries, Costa Rica's System for the Identification of Target Populations and the Dominican Republic's Unified Beneficiary System. According to Cecchini and Martínez (2011), "A priority concern was management efficiency, associated with fiscal discipline requirements, which over time came to be a major additional—but not the sole— component in the objective of maximizing the impact or effectiveness of programmes. So, not only was it important to spend in order to produce goods and services, but to spend wisely to achieve the desired objectives." This was coupled with a "market rationale for social services that included the promotion of demand-side subsidies"; seeking to encourage competition among public and private service providers, including the distribution of resources through procurement and competitive bidding processes to fund publicly and privately administered programmes and projects.

During this period, safety nets expanded, and social investment funds proliferated, taking on a prominent role in social administration, as autonomous and temporary State agencies focused on developing programmes and projects to combat poverty and, compared to line ministries, a more flexible mechanism for allocating public resources to invest in primary healthcare centres, basic education, and water and sanitation (Cecchini and Martínez, 2011; Martínez and Maldonado, 2019). These programmes and projects, covering limited populations, time frames and scopes of action, became the dominant mode of administration during those years, although they were generally not well-integrated in the form of comprehensive policies. The approach made it possible to boost the development of targeting tools, primarily to avoid inclusion errors, and to strengthen capacity-building to assess the impact of these initiatives.

In the mid-1990s, social authority and institutional frameworks were a major topic of discussion in social policy circles, in particular their positioning vis-à-vis economic authority. There was an emphasis on management models aimed at organizing social programmes more effectively and efficiently and incorporating assessment, monitoring and participant registration tools (Franco and Székely, 2010). Social investment funds played a significant role in that regard, paving the way for later social authorities and for non-contributory social protection, in particular. Indeed, in most countries, the social development ministries of today can trace their origins back to these earlier funds and authorities.

In the final years of the twentieth century, a growing interest in decentralization produced a shift towards resource and project management models with a higher degree of autonomy from central governments. This included outsourcing or subcontracting to private and non-governmental organizations, increasing their participation in the administration of resources and the implementation of various social services. An emblematic example in the area of contributory social protection is the rise of individually funded pension systems and private health insurance.

The region's experiences with social investment funds and conditional transfer programmes in the 1990s gave way to the progressive development of institutional frameworks for policy to fight poverty and provide access to services for the exercise of social rights (Cecchini and Martínez, 2011). As discussed in detail further on, currently, 23 of the 26 countries with available information have ministries established by law that are specifically dedicated to social development and inclusion policy, and 33 of the countries of the region also have collegiate authorities, in the form of high-level cabinets, for social development policy.

Likewise, there have been significant social development and protection changes over the past three decades in terms of policy approaches and scope. Some of the shifts characterizing this period are set out below.

- (i) **From the fight against poverty to inclusive social development.** This change expanded the focus of social development to include not only people living in poverty but also the groups who are vulnerable to poverty and middle class as priority target populations, as informed by regional experience with the high levels of socioeconomic insecurity and volatility associated with escaping poverty and extreme poverty. The definition of poverty was also broadened, looking beyond income to adopt a multidimensional perspective that considers rights and capacities. This approach to measuring poverty is currently in use in 11 countries (ECLAC, 2025b).

The concept of inclusive social development itself has a multidimensional perspective; indeed, the goal of ending poverty applies to the entire population, not just those currently living in poverty. To achieve inclusive social development requires economic and social progress that enables all people “to live free from poverty and achieve a level of well-being that aligns with high, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and that enables the development of skills in conditions of freedom and dignity, with full exercise of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and opportunities for recognition and participation to address social divides and inequalities” (ECLAC, 2025c, p. 4).

Thus, strategic development priorities have been integrated into a broader approach encompassing the complementary social policy objectives of addressing poverty, vulnerability, unequal rights and participation.

(ii) From specific targeted programmes to universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems. The most important aspects of this change include the following:

- From targeted services to universal rights. In the past, targeting was restrictive in nature: its primary focus was to prevent errors of inclusion and provide more uniform—and, presumably, more efficient—services just for the poor, excluding from the registries anyone who did not meet “beneficiary” requirements. In recent decades, that approach has expanded to provide a more efficient and differentiated range of services and to achieve the universal exercise of rights. This universal focus seeks to address differences from the outset, offering differentiated services to close gaps.
- From safety nets to social protection systems. In the 1990s, the idea of social protection was associated with safety nets, or mechanisms for delivering temporary social assistance to poor people not covered by social security, in order to help them weather economic crises. This concept is still evolving, but the prevailing view is that social protection is a function of government aimed at providing universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, and that these systems should ideally cover the whole population under either contributory or non-contributory components or both (Arenas de Mesa, 2023).
- From conditional transfers to guaranteed income. Conditional income transfer programmes, in particular to help cover food, health and education costs for the poor, have a long history in the region. Their massive expansion between 1990 and 2010 significantly improved coverage. In the past 10–15 years, the focus of these programmes has broadened, expanding target populations and reevaluating the concept of conditionality. One factor behind these shifts is the practical matter of institutional frameworks struggling to meet the demand for services that such conditionalities generate; then there is the larger question of whether rights should be subject to conditions at all. This has sparked discussions on whether a guaranteed universal basic income is needed to ensure a dignified life for all, free from poverty.
- From access to social services infrastructure to care policies. The goal of having adequate infrastructure to deliver quality social services to the poor, in accordance with the priorities established by social investment funds, continues to pose major challenges for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the focus has shifted away from implementing programmes or projects in isolation and towards a public policy approach aimed at creating comprehensive social protection systems that encompass service provision and stakeholder participation. This has given rise to new goals and management models that seek to coordinate services and address emerging challenges, such as the design of comprehensive care policies. Several countries of the region are developing such policies, which are a core component of social protection systems.

(iii) From systems based on targeting “beneficiaries” to systems based on the use of data and social household registries for decision-making. This is an area in which social development ministries have played a leading role. The targeting systems of the 1990s have gradually evolved into systems that use data and social household registries for decision-making. These new systems seek to mitigate errors of inclusion with respect to those requesting services and integrate multiple sources of data covering the entire population. They help to identify unmet demand and provide a better understanding

of the specific needs of different segments of the population to support follow-up and policy design. Under the earlier approach, each programme and sector kept its own registry; the current approach, in contrast, promotes the interoperability of information systems, incorporating data from multiple sectors and administrative records. The result has been a move away from beneficiary registries (demand focus) and towards information systems that identify and seek out target populations (supply focus).

In addition, there has been a gradual expansion of evaluation and monitoring in the region, which, in the 1990s, were relatively limited, with oversight focused primarily on spending and coverage. Not all countries' systems have reached the level of maturity and coordination needed for such an undertaking, but all are aware of the need to expand systems and improve linkages between the various components of each programme and between stakeholders from different sectors and levels of social policy administration, in particular those participating in social protection systems.

(iv) From results assessments based on spending efficiency to assessments based on the cost-effectiveness, sufficiency and financial sustainability of social investment. There is growing recognition of the need to allocate resources, according to the funding capacity of each State. For example, there has been a rising trend in income transfer programmes for households, in terms of both coverage and public expenditure: in 2022, conditional and other continuous transfer programmes covered 27.1% of the regional population, compared to just 3.6% in 2000. In the same period, non-contributory pension system coverage increased from 3.4% to 31.0% of the population aged 65 and over in 23 countries of the region (ECLAC, 2024a). On average, public expenditure on conditional and continuous cash transfers increased from 0.06% of GDP to 0.26% of GDP in 20 countries of the region, and average expenditure on non-contributory pensions almost tripled in 24 countries (from 0.15% of GDP to 0.42% of GDP).

Mindful of the current challenges and existing sufficiency gaps impeding sustainable progress on poverty eradication, the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed on the need for a regional standard of public investment —namely a minimum of 1.5%–2.5% of GDP or 5%–10% of national social spending— to secure viable and sustainable funding for non-contributory social protection programmes, with a view to eradicating poverty (ECLAC, 2025d). This agreement reflects regional consensus on the urgent need to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1.

Central government social spending has also evolved in the region, both in GDP terms and as a share of total expenditure, demonstrating the considerable priority given to spending on social issues. Between 2000 and 2023, central government social spending increased in GDP terms by an average 3 percentage points in Latin America (from 8.4% to 11.5%) and 1.2 percentage points in the Caribbean (from 9.7% to 10.9%). In the same period, social spending as a share of total central government expenditure rose from 45.4% to 53.3% in Latin America and from 38.6% to 41.3% in the Caribbean. Investment in social protection in Latin America also rose notably, from 3.2% to 4.4% (see box I.4).

Box I.4

Growing social investment and the implementation of an investment standard

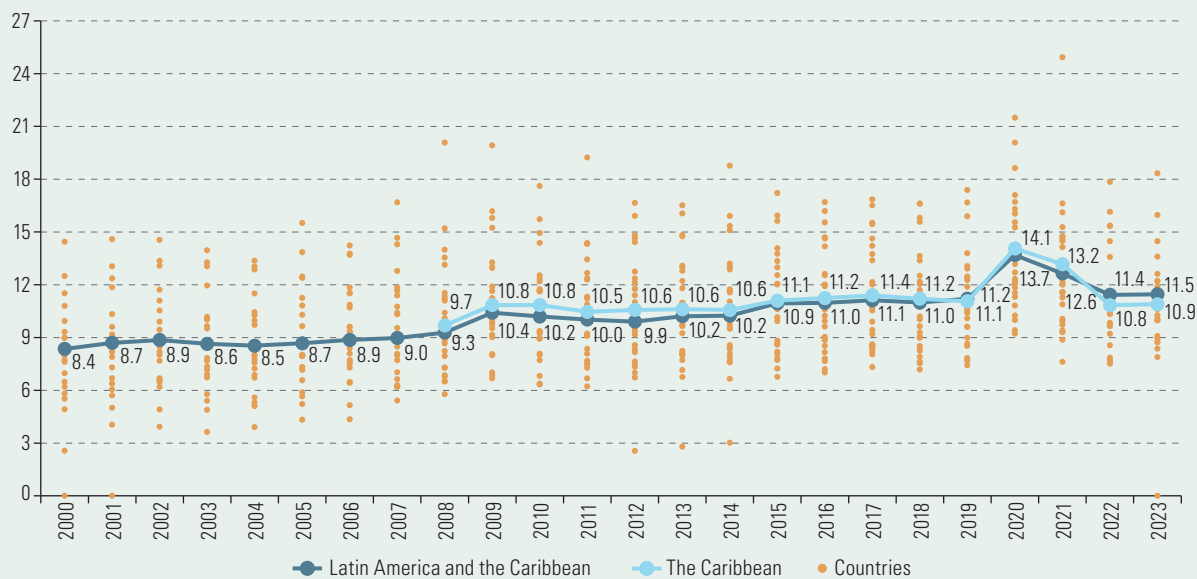
In 1995, Heads of State and Government gathered at the World Summit for Social Development committed to “giving high priority to social development in the allocation of public spending and ensuring predictable funding for the relevant programmes” (United Nations, 1995, p. 79), promoting “basic social programmes and expenditures, in particular those affecting the poor and the vulnerable segments of society” and protecting them “from budget reductions, while increasing the quality and effectiveness of social expenditures” (United Nations, 1995, p. 19). To that end, the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development included the commitment to “ensuring that when structural adjustment programmes are agreed to they include social development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and enhancing social integration” (United Nations, 1995, p. 19).

At the time, structural adjustment programmes were being implemented in several countries of the region and considered for replication in others. Steep cuts to social spending, primarily between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, led to a social investment approach focused exclusively on the poorest segments of the population and on sectors—like education and health—that offered few incentives for private sector involvement.

In the 1990–1991 biennium, the average annual public social spending of 17 countries of Latin America was US\$ 358 per capita at 2018 prices (8.1% of GDP); that figure rose to US\$ 469 in the 1994–1995 biennium (9.6% of GDP) and US\$ 551 between 2000 and 2001 (10.8% of GDP). These figures show the effort undertaken by most Latin American countries to increase resource allocation for social issues. Still, social spending as a share of public expenditure, which increased by 3.5 percentage points (from 42.3% to 45.8%) in the first half of the 1990s, rose by just 0.2 percentage points in the second half, to 46% (ECLAC, 2009).

Although comparable information for subsequent years is not available owing to changes in the classification of public expenditure, the adoption of international classifiers of expenditure by function and the harmonization of institutional coverage of fiscal expenditure data, figure 1 shows that central government social expenditure continued to increase in the region over the course of the 2000s. The new comparable data series shows a systematic increase in social spending, which went from 8.4% of GDP and 45.4% of total central government expenditure to a respective 10.4% and 51.1% in 2009. That was an exceptional year for social spending owing to the spate of government measures adopted in response to the global financial crisis: per capita spending in 2009 rose to US\$ 747, compared to US\$ 501 in 2000 (ECLAC, 2024a).

Latin America and the Caribbean (24 countries):^a central government social spending, 2000–2023^b
(Percentages of GDP)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2024). *Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024* (LC/PUB.2024/21-P).

Note: Simple averages. Data for the Plurinational State of Bolivia refer to central administration spending, and data for Peru refer to general government spending.

^a Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay. The Caribbean: Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

^b In the 2022 and 2023 averages, data for the Plurinational State of Bolivia are from 2021; in the 2023 average, data for Brazil and Panama are from 2022.

Social spending was exceptional that year in GDP terms and as a share of total expenditure, but that level of spending was normalized in the years that followed: most countries of the region carried on in that vein, as evidenced by the relative stability of expenditure between 2009 and 2019. During that period, social spending ranged between 9.9% and 11.2% of GDP and between 50.1% and 53.1% of total public expenditure (these figures

did not exhibit a clear upward trend, but there was an increase in per capita expenditure, to US\$ 1,040 in 2019). Another exceptional year came in 2020, when spending climbed again under the economic and social measures that were adopted in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and extended in one form or another until 2021. However, cutbacks were initiated by 2022, bringing social spending back down to 11.5% of GDP, 53.3% of total public expenditure and US\$ 1,086 per capita in 2023.

In the Caribbean, a data series for seven countries from 2008 onward shows trends similar to Latin America, although social spending in the Caribbean was lower as a share of GDP, and especially so as a share of total expenditure (10.9% of GDP and 41.3% of total expenditure in 2023), while per capita social spending was much higher (US\$ 1,616) (see ECLAC, 2024a).

Despite the increases in spending, the magnitude of the region's social problems, in particular poverty (26.8% of the population in 2024), suggest that spending remains insufficient. In that regard, ECLAC prepared a regional proposal within the framework of the sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which includes the target of achieving a minimum standard of investment in non-contributory social protection in order to advance towards eradicating poverty and achieving Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda (ECLAC, 2024b). The proposal defines an investment standard for the region, allocating resources for social development ministries or equivalent institutions in the amount of 1.5%–2.5% of GDP or 5%–10% of total public expenditure, again to ensure viable and sustainable funding for non-contributory social protection programmes with a view to eradicating poverty.

Source: United Nations. (1995). *Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Report of the World Summit for Social Development (A/CONF.166/9)*. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/CONF.166/9>; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC]. (2009). *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2008 (LC/G.2402-P)*; ECLAC (2024a). *Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024 (LC/PUB.2024/21-P)*; ECLAC (2024b). *Reducing Inequality and Pursuing Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges, Priorities and Key Messages in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development (LC/MDS.6/3)*.

Lastly, conceptions of funding for social policy have also developed in a positive direction: previously considered a current expenditure, social funding has come to be viewed as an investment, with observable effects not just on individuals participating in social programmes but on the economy as a whole. Moreover, the price of ignoring social problems includes rights violations and substantial economic costs, as clearly illustrated by the findings of studies by ECLAC and the World Food Programme on the cost of hunger and of the double burden of malnutrition (Martínez et al., 2024).

C. Institutional frameworks for social policy in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1990

Social institutional frameworks provide fundamental infrastructure for implementing quality social policies in pursuit of inclusive social development (Martínez and Maldonado, 2019). It is important, therefore, that they reflect States' formal commitment to guaranteeing rights in all spheres and providing the structures, financial and human resources and management tools necessary for the effective enjoyment of those rights, through sustainable and inclusive public policies. ECLAC (2024f) has stressed the need to strengthen institutional capabilities, in particular technical, operational, political and prospective capabilities (TOPP). In the same vein, the four dimensions of institutional frameworks for social policy should be strengthened simultaneously: (i) legal and regulatory; (ii) organizational; (iii) technical and operational; and (iv) financing (Martínez and Maldonado, 2019).¹²

¹² These four dimensions complement one another: the legal and regulatory dimension refers to the legal framework and principles that underpin the policies and actions of the authorities; the organizational dimension refers to formal structure and decision-making mechanisms and, consequently, coordination among the different political stakeholders; the technical and operational dimension refers to the regular instruments and procedures involved in carrying out policies in an efficient, effective, transparent and participatory manner; and the financing dimension refers to the scale and evolution of public resources allocated to fund these policies (Martínez and Maldonado, 2019).

The first step in this regard is for countries to ensure the incorporation of rights-based and gender perspectives in regulations derived from ratified international agreements and in their constitutions and national legislation. These formal commitments should be complemented by organizational frameworks with clearly defined mandates and effective horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms, tools for management and policy implementation based on transparency and accountability, and sufficient and sustainable social investment.

This section briefly summarizes two key aspects of the institutionalization of non-contributory social protection policies in the past 30 years, with a special emphasis on the legal and regulatory dimension and the organizational dimension of institutional frameworks for social policy,¹³ and the role of such frameworks during that period.

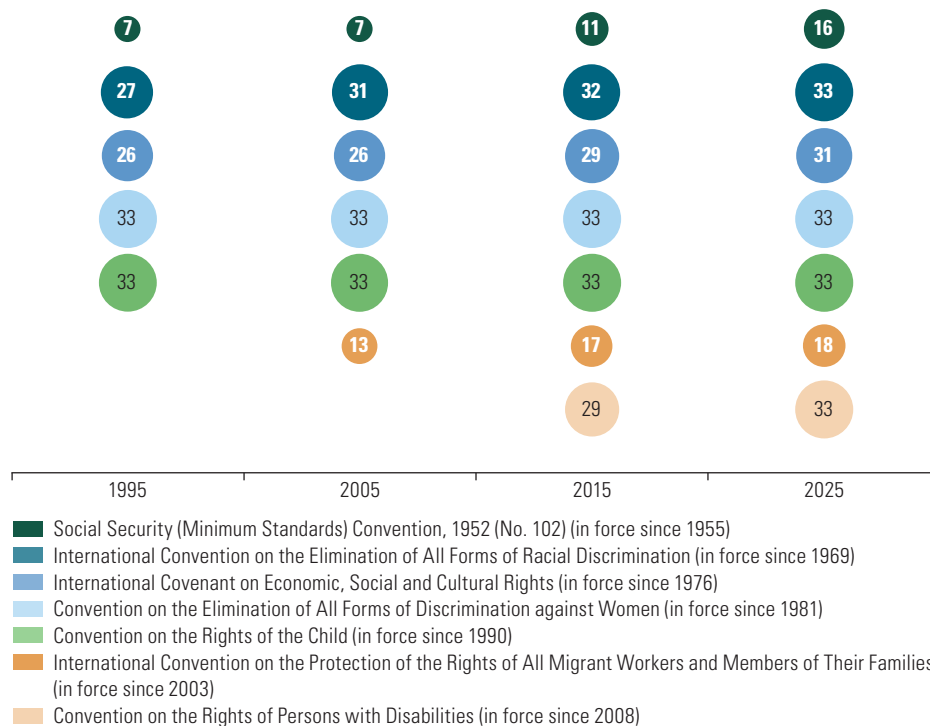
1. Adoption of agreements and formation of social development ministries

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a high level of ratification of inclusive social development agreements (see figure I.21). The number of ratifications up to 1995 is particularly notable in a decade of intensive ratification of key instruments relating to broad social rights coverage, stronger commitments to human rights, and recognition and prioritization of the rights and well-being of specific population groups, such as children, women, migrants, Afrodescendants, older persons, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples (ECLAC, 2020).

Figure I.21

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries): ratification of or accession to international treaties involving inclusive social development rights, 1995–2025

(Cumulative number of countries per decade)



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of official information from the countries; the database *Institutional Framework Database for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean*. <https://dds.cepal.org/bdips/en/>; and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

¹³ For more information on the region's institutional frameworks for social policy and their four dimensions, see the document *Institutional Frameworks for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean: a Central Element in Advancing towards Inclusive Social Development* (ECLAC, 2023b), presented at the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

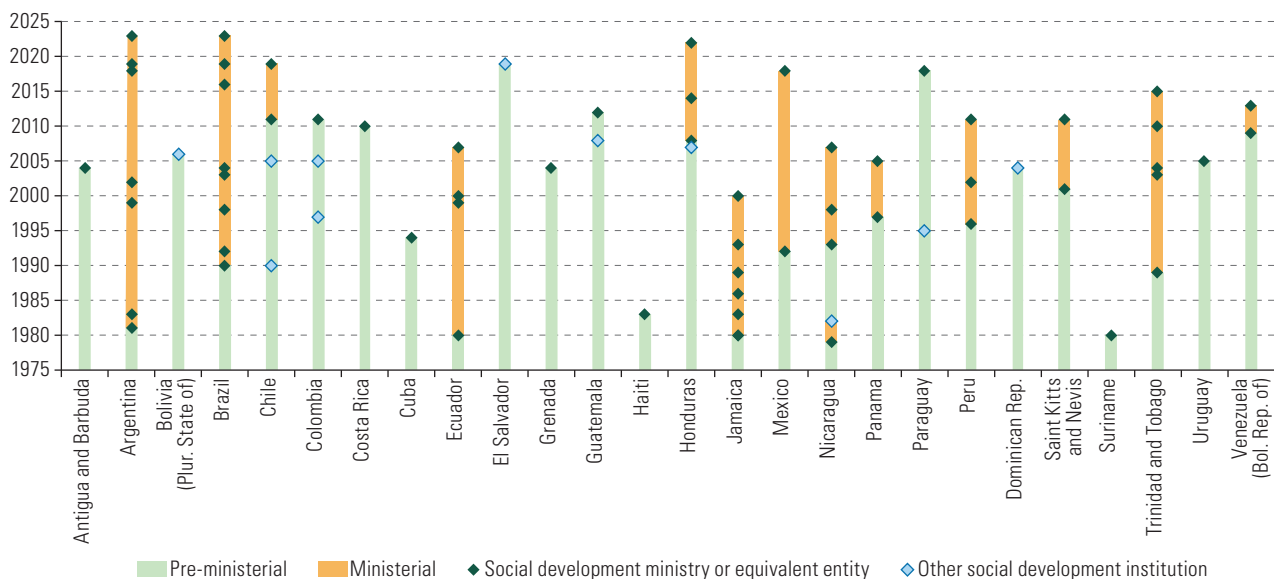
The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is especially notable for its swift ratification by countries. This relatively recent instrument (in force since 2008) has spawned national legislation and entities specializing in the rights of persons with disabilities. On the other end of the spectrum, the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) of ILO has the fewest ratifications.

This accumulation of commitments coincided with the emergence of new actors in the area of inclusive social development (ECLAC, 2023b). In Latin America and the Caribbean, many public agencies have been established to handle matters of social development since the late twentieth century (see figure I.22). This reflects the region's commitment to designing social policies to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and increase access to social protection for the general population and specific sectors (ECLAC, 2023b).

However, unlike with other social agencies, such as those dedicated to education, health and work, the organization of these social development institutions is more unstable, as seen in their changing ranks, mandates, names and remits (ECLAC, 2023b). Of the 26 countries of the region with available information, 23 have at least one social development entity at the ministerial level. Most of these ministries have broadened their mandates to serve specific population groups, such as children, young people, Indigenous Peoples, women and persons with disabilities, and have taken on a central role in providing access to non-contributory social protection (ECLAC, 2023b).

Figure I.22

Latin America and the Caribbean (26 countries): evolution of ministries or other entities dedicated to social development, 1975–2025



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2023). *Institutional Frameworks for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean: a Central Element in Advancing towards Inclusive Social Development* (LC/CDS.5/3); from official information from the countries and *Institutional Framework Database for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean*. <https://dds.cepal.org/bdips/en/>.

Note: Diamonds mark the establishment of a social development ministry or equivalent entity, or a change to ministry or entity names or functions.

In summary, legislative progress on social rights since the 1980s includes the ratification of major international agreements and the diversification and specialization of regulatory frameworks to attend to new issues and population groups. The evolution of social development ministries or equivalent entities implies important challenges for escaping the trap of high inequality and low social mobility and social cohesion in Latin America and the Caribbean; the relative instability and a lack of better technical, human and financial capacities must be overcome to strengthen the four dimensions of institutional frameworks for social policy.

2. The role of supranational institutional frameworks in the past three decades

Since the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, the human rights and development agenda has changed significantly worldwide. The concept of sustainable development was introduced at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in 1992, recognizing the importance of the social dimension of sustainable development alongside its economic and environmental dimensions. The World Summit for Social Development, in 1995, stressed the need to adopt a broad focus that included all public policy sectors to achieve social development objectives. The Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, established specific targets with quantitative benchmarks. The 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015, included an extensive list of Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators, emphasizing the interdependence of sustainable development dimensions and the importance of institutional factors and means of implementation. The 2030 Agenda has since been reinforced by the Pact for the Future (United Nations, 2024), adopted by Member States in 2024 with a view to renewing commitments and strengthening the multilateral system and its institutions, taking into account global challenges and opportunities. Priority actions in the social dimension include a commitment to invest in people in order to end poverty and build trust and social cohesion.

In the Pact for the Future, Heads of State and Government expressed concern at persistent inequalities within and between countries and decided to secure an ambitious outcome at the Second World Summit for Social Development.

Human rights treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OAS, 1988) and the various conventions, protocols and recommendations of ILO (ILO, 2025), have provided pivotal support in this process and in the development of institutional frameworks for social policy, having laid the strategic legal foundations underpinning commitments, targets and policy design for social development and decent work in numerous countries and regions.

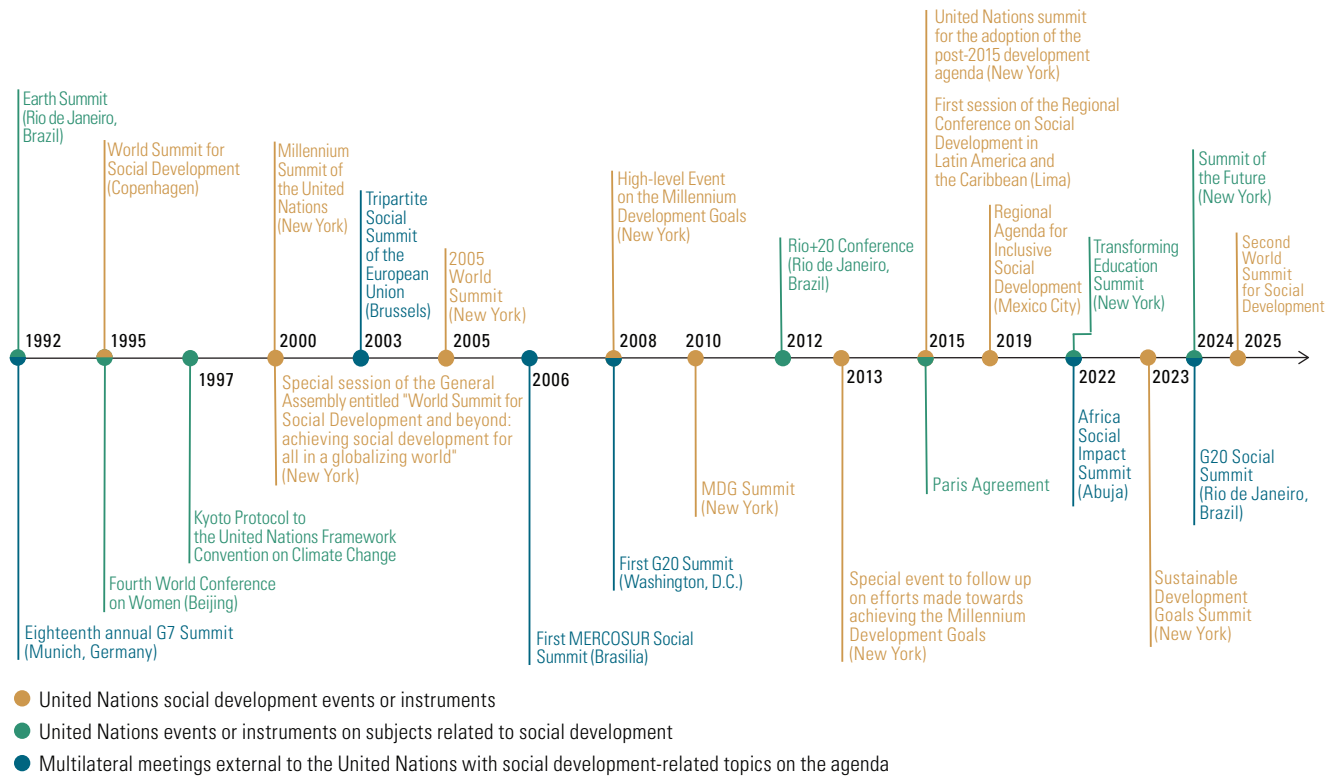
In addition, global processes and forums for follow-up and multilateral cooperation, developed under the auspices of the United Nations in fulfilment of mandates from Member States, have provided a key institutional framework for the advancement of inclusive social development policies worldwide. The Economic and Social Council is a prominent example, along with its subsidiary bodies and commissions, including the Commission for Social Development, which is tasked with following up on the agreements that emerged from the World Summit for Social Development, and the high-level political forum, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Social development has also been a central issue in several regional integration processes and at numerous multilateral meetings (see diagram I.2) which, over time, have created spaces for social institutional frameworks in different regions. The European Union, the Group of 20 (G20), the Group of Seven (G7), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Central American Integration System (SICA) have all addressed social issues in their agendas. For example, the European Union adopted the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017, establishing 20 guiding principles in three main areas: equal opportunities, fair working conditions and social inclusion. G20 and G7 discussions, meanwhile, have included matters relating to education, health, social protection and gender equality.

Latin America and the Caribbean has made substantial contributions to global discussions on inclusive social development and social inequality in various cooperation bodies, ministerial forums and conferences specializing in these areas, such as the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, established primarily for social development ministries to collaborate on public policy and institutional development. In 2019, the Conference adopted the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, a political and technical instrument to support the achievement of the social targets of the 2030 Agenda in the region. The Regional Agenda includes four strategic axes (universal and comprehensive social protection systems; policies to promote social and labour inclusion; a strengthened social institutional framework; and regional cooperation and integration) and 56 lines of action.

Diagram I.2

Main social development agenda milestones, 1992–2025



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Beyond the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, Latin America and the Caribbean has also made contributions in areas like education, health and labour inclusion. Efforts to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education are reflected in the Buenos Aires Declaration (UNESCO, 2017), the “Education 2030” implementation road map for Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 2018) and the Santiago Declaration (UNESCO, 2024). The *Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030: A Call to Action for Health and Well-Being in the Region* (PAHO and WHO, 2017) and the Declaration of Astana (WHO, 2018) have promoted universal access to health and strengthened primary care. Labour inclusion initiatives have, for example, promoted decent work and addressed challenges related to youth employment and informality, with an emphasis on the importance of paid and unpaid care work (see United Nations Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC], 2024; ILO, 2023 and 2024).

Over time, the social development agenda has increasingly recognized the need to address inequality and strengthen social institutions to achieve inclusive social development. Global, regional and national efforts have been especially helpful in building a more robust policy agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean and supporting concrete measures in key areas, such as social protection, education, health and labour inclusion.

CHAPTER



Emerging challenges and opportunities for inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

- A. Technological changes and digital inclusion
- B. Climate change and vulnerability to disasters
- C. Demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transitions
- D. Migration on the rise
- E. Social cohesion and governability in the face of multiple forms of violence, organized crime and conflicts
- F. The global context: crisis and uncertainty

A comparative analysis of well-being and inclusive social development levels in recent years, the type of policies behind their achievement and the characteristics of existing institutional frameworks for social policy offers an overview of conditions in the countries of the region heading into the Second World Summit for Social Development. Possible future scenarios for regional and global inclusive social development constitute an important point of discussion, as do the risks and opportunities associated with decisive action to fulfil the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Pact for the Future. A brief overview of emerging issues deemed vital for the region in this regard is presented below.

A. Technological changes and digital inclusion

Rapid digitalization, the rise of new technologies and artificial intelligence are transforming societies and economies at the regional and global levels. While these advances offer enormous potential to improve productivity, service quality and social well-being, they also pose considerable challenges for inclusive social development, given that they entail “changes in the demand for certain human skills” and affect “all areas of human endeavour, such as work, health, education, access to social services, citizen participation and access to information” (ECLAC, 2024c, p. 44).

Among these challenges is making sure that all people can take advantage of digital opportunities. In an increasingly digital world, access to information and communications technology and the effective use thereof have become essential to social, economic and political participation. The region has made little progress in the area of meaningful connectivity—encompassing connectivity access and quality as well as digital devices and digital skills—which threatens to deepen existing inequalities and prevent broad swathes of society from reaping the benefits of the digital age. Meanwhile, social interaction online can give rise to new forms of inequality. It is therefore necessary to strengthen policies that address the protection of rights in the digital age, digital social protection and digital skills-building to ensure that all people can exercise the rights and enjoy the well-being provided by digital economies and societies, leaving no one behind.

One of the most worrying effects in the region relates to labour inclusion. Automation, robotization and the advent of generative artificial intelligence are changing the nature of productive development and work, and education and training systems must adapt in response. Digital skills and lifelong learning are crucial to prepare workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

B. Climate change and vulnerability to disasters

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world when it comes to disasters and the effects of climate change. Extreme weather events, such as storms, floods and droughts, are increasingly frequent and intense, causing major human and economic losses.

Exposure and vulnerability to climate change-related disasters are especially challenging for the economies of small island developing States, such as those in the Caribbean, which shoulder enormous costs in terms of human life and physical infrastructure.

Disasters also disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population, exacerbating existing inequalities. The resilience of communities and social protection systems must therefore be strengthened to overcome these challenges. This requires a comprehensive approach that integrates social protection with climate change and disaster management to ensure a dual institutional and social resilience (ECLAC, 2024c).

C. Demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transitions

The three transitions that the region's population has undergone in recent decades will only intensify in the years to come. They, too, bring opportunities and formidable challenges, which must be considered from a systemic and future-oriented perspective.

The demographic transition, and the associated decline in fertility rates, is reducing the dependency ratio, which translates into a temporary demographic dividend for most countries. However, in view of ongoing population ageing, there are also long-term pension, care and health system challenges to consider.

The epidemiological transition involves an increase in noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, which have become the leading cause of death in the region. The larger burden on health systems as a result calls for a focus on preventing and monitoring these diseases through universal access to primary healthcare, basic services and vaccination.

The nutritional transition—including the region's double-burden of malnutrition, where undernutrition exists side by side with overweight and obesity—represents significant additional challenges, in this case for food and social protection systems. Some meaningful progress has been made in reducing child undernutrition, but both food insecurity and obesity remain major problems with severe consequences for health, education and productivity.

D. Migration on the rise

Migration flows within Latin America and the Caribbean have grown significantly and become more diverse in recent years, owing to economic crises, political conflicts, vulnerability to violence, disasters and family reunification, among other factors (Maldonado et al., 2018).

These flows have both positive and negative effects on countries of origin and destination alike. For example, through their work and consumption, migrants can contribute economically in their destination countries, and their presence can foster cultural exchange. However, they can also create a strain on public services and face discrimination and exclusion. Meanwhile, the remittances that so benefit countries of origin come at a significant cost in terms of human capital flight.

Against this backdrop of increasing human mobility, adopting a rights-based approach to managing the migration process that ensures social protection and inclusion for migrants in all its phases is fundamental.

E. Social cohesion and governability in the face of multiple forms of violence, organized crime and conflicts

Violence in all its forms is a major obstacle to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region where one of the highest homicide rates in the world is affecting public safety, social cohesion and governability.

With the steady expansion of drug cartels and criminal groups, organized crime poses a growing challenge to the authority of the State by competing with it and, in certain sectors, taking over its functions, thereby eroding trust in public institutions (ECLAC, 2019). Addressing this situation requires public policies

for crime prevention —rather than crime response alone— built on proactive social and labour inclusion and reintegration measures that reinforce equal rights.

Gender-based violence and violence against children are also especially serious problems requiring urgent attention in the form of comprehensive policies that tackle the structural causes of violence, prioritize prevention and protect victims.

In addition, there is a need for strategies specifically aimed at improving social cohesion, so that policies to boost the population's economic and social well-being are linked to measures that improve the effectiveness, accountability and functioning of institutions, as well as participation in decision-making and democratic governance.

F. The global context: crisis and uncertainty

In addition to the issues discussed above, the significant impacts of global crises in the social, political and economic spheres have shaped the region's recent history and show no signs of abating. These events and processes range from the COVID-19 pandemic —and the resulting food and fuel price crises caused by supply chain disruptions and their effects on global food systems— to geopolitical, economic and trade uncertainty and the resulting cutbacks to resources for international cooperation.

In light of the above, the backdrop for the Second World Summit differs substantially from that of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development which, though not immune to economic crisis, was nevertheless a time of international rapprochement: the cold war had ended, China's intense economic expansion was under way and all the global repercussions in the three decades since had yet to come.

Developing countries in the region and the world face greater challenges in achieving the financial sustainability of inclusive social development policies and, by extension, the commitments of the 2030 Agenda. Faced with this complex scenario, the countries of the region must uphold these commitments, pursue the social targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen forums for cooperation, reaffirming the importance of synergy between the three dimensions of sustainable development —social, economic and environmental— and regional integration.

The world and the region have been through periods of crisis and uncertainty before, and while today's advanced state of interdependence and connectivity poses new challenges, the region is equipped with a wider and better array of tools to address the social impacts of crises. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have institutional frameworks for social policy that can certainly be improved, but they are undeniably better prepared now than in decades past to face challenges and make progress on inclusive social development.

CHAPTER



Towards a global pact for inclusive social development

- A. Proposals from the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean
- B. Areas complementary to the work of ministries of social development to be considered in a global pact for inclusive social development
- C. The proposals in light of the preparation of the political declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development

This section presents a summary of the main proposals prepared by the region for analysis at the Second World Summit for Social Development. It includes both the vision of ministries of social development and additional recommendations encompassing other areas of social policy, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the challenges and proposals that must be considered in working towards a global pact for inclusive social development. Also included are messages which countries around the world have discussed, through their representatives to the United Nations, and contributions from within the United Nations system to the work and agreements of the Summit.

A. Proposals from the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Taking into consideration the issues presented throughout the document, which have been analysed and discussed in the framework of the deliberations of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Presiding Officers of the Conference have proposed key messages for consideration at the Second World Summit for Social Development, centred around agreement on a pact for inclusive social development (ECLAC, 2025c).

A brief summary of these proposals, structured around four points, is set out below:

- (i) Combating inequality, poverty and hunger: a priority for the region and the world.** This objective is a priority for attaining inclusive social development. Although the scourges of poverty and hunger are long-standing, they are surmountable. The region's hallmark inequality and low social mobility and cohesion are an economic development trap that shows up in well-being gaps (wealth and income distribution) and in gaps in access to social rights (education, health, social security and housing) and political rights (participation and recognition). Efforts are needed to tackle emerging gaps that constrain inclusive social development, linked to climate change, ageing, migration, new forms of violence, organized crime and the technological transformation. It is thus essential to move ahead with multidimensional inequality measurements. Global agreements such as the Pact for the Future and the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty present an opportunity to drive achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 10, while strengthening North-South and South-South cooperation in order to leave no one behind.
- (ii) Social protection systems: comprehensive care policies and quality public policies to leave no one behind.** Building linkages between social inclusion and social protection policies is important to achieve inclusive social development, focusing on:

 - Universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, including contributory and non-contributory components, labour market regulations and care, adopting a universalist approach that is sensitive to differences, in line with the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development adopted in 2019.
 - The importance of quality social policies that are effective, efficient, sustainable, transparent and participatory.
 - The central role of care systems amid ongoing social and demographic transformations, as an ethical imperative, and the right of all persons to give and receive care, reducing the gender inequality associated with the burden of care and unpaid work.
 - Labour inclusion as the master key to reducing inequality, fostering upward social mobility and ensuring the exercise of rights. To this end, there is a need to invest in productive development policies and regulation to shore up markets, foster economic growth, create dynamic labour markets and advance formalization of employment, with sound labour institutions that protect workers' rights and promote decent work.

- Social protection for dealing with disasters, the negative impacts of which have been exacerbated by climate change. In particular, institutional and social resilience must be strengthened to ensure effective and timely disaster responses, protect human lives and livelihoods and support recovery.
- Policies to counter violence and foster social cohesion, recognition and participation. High levels of interpersonal violence, organized crime, gender-based violence and violence against children and adolescents are affecting public safety, social cohesion and the exercise of rights. The recommendation is to implement comprehensive social cohesion strategies that, together with policies to enhance well-being, foster participation and recognition and curb violence through prevention, victim protection, justice and reparation, and by building peaceful, inclusive societies.
- Institutional frameworks for social policy, the cornerstone of inclusive social development. Robust institutional frameworks are essential for ensuring the exercise of rights, the provision of public goods, the implementation of quality social policies and public participation. The prerequisites include appropriate regulatory frameworks, efficient and transparent institutions, participation and accountability mechanisms, capacity to coordinate and implement policies and sustainable financing.

(iii) Action for inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Based on the work and agreements of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the following points are especially important:

- The Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, with its four axes and 56 lines of action, grounded in multilateral cooperation, as a reflection of what can be accomplished through social dialogue.
- Social investment with a spending standard and financing commitments for non-contributory social protection, aiming for “the countries of the region, through their ministries of social development or equivalent entities, to increase spending on non-contributory social protection policies to a target of at least 1.5%–2.5% of GDP or 5%–10% of annual public spending, with a view to ending poverty” (ECLAC, 2024c, p. 63). The need for sustainable financing for social policy, understood as an investment with impacts on reducing poverty and inequalities and on economic growth and environmental protection, is reaffirmed.
- Regional commitment to inclusive social development, given that, in order to sustainably achieve the policy and financial objectives of inclusive social development, broad agreements and social dialogue are required, along with fiscal agreements to allocate sufficient and sustainable resources (ECLAC, 2024c). Against this backdrop, it is both possible and necessary “for the region, with government leadership and the participation of a wide range of public and private stakeholders, to actively commit to the implementation of the inclusion and social protection policies required to achieve, at the earliest, a minimum level of well-being and ensure dignity and the exercise of the social rights of all, making it a priority to achieve the targets of Goals 1, 2 and 10 on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and the reduction of inequalities by 2030” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 18).

(iv) Towards a global pact for inclusive social development. Given that the foregoing calls for concerted international efforts, the following proposals are put forward:

- A global pact for inclusive social development, leaving no one behind. The three dimensions of sustainable development are interdependent and progress does not rely on any territory, country or region alone. Gaps in well-being and the exercise of rights in developing countries are everyone’s responsibility. Moreover, without inclusive social development, there is no democracy, social cohesion or enabling environment for sustainable economic growth. For that reason, and “in keeping with the recent experience of the Pact for the Future, the international community, at the Second World Summit for Social Development, is encouraged to adopt a global pact for inclusive social development to realize the social commitments agreed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It would be a pact that brings together all countries, with a vision for strategic investment, cooperation and mutual benefit; one that takes up the cause of many different rights and prioritizes action with tangible pathways and has the resources to account for the obstacles and gaps that limit their attainment; a pact with comprehensive public policies and a universalist approach that is sensitive to differences, and is financially sustainable and sufficiently resilient to address recurrent crises wheresoever they arise” (ECLAC, 2025d, pp. 18–19).

- Social investment. Increased resource mobilization and multilateral cooperation are needed for inclusive social development. This will require changes to the international financial architecture, a key theme of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, held in 2025 in Seville, Spain. Advances in innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms for social protection are also a prerequisite. International financial institutions and developed countries are called upon to commit financing for policies geared towards inclusive social development, to provide access to innovative financial instruments, and to offer facilities such as investments backing sustainable development strategies. “In turn, developing countries must commit to making their best efforts with respect to fiscal institutional frameworks and efficient management of public resources to ensure transparency and the sustainability of financial support. South-South, North-South and interregional cooperation agreements present opportunities for meaningful progress in this area and should be leveraged” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 19).
- Institutional frameworks for social policy: new metrics for decision-making on investment and on development policies. Strengthening institutional frameworks for social policy is a collective, vital effort for public policy design and implementation. There is a need to adjust the decision-making model, incorporating metrics that align with sustainable development, which, in addition to criteria on efficiency (profit and productivity), includes distribution criteria and procedures to measure the environmental footprint (carbon emissions and biodiversity) and the social footprint (social and labour inclusion and the exercise of rights). The experiences of the financial sector and private corporations in environmental protection and fair trade show that this is achievable and beneficial.
- Implementation of the Global Digital Compact for progress towards inclusive social development. Digital technologies are transforming the world, with immense potential benefits for well-being. However, strengthened international cooperation is needed to close the digital divide, which affects developing countries in particular (United Nations, 2024, annex I). The aims and commitments of the Global Digital Compact must be built into the global pact for inclusive social development.
- Strengthening of multilateralism and cooperation to encourage the sharing of experiences, technical knowledge and institutional learning. In keeping with the agreements of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, “the call to strengthen international cooperation capacities and to translate multilateralism into public policy action for inclusive social development and leave no one behind is thus reaffirmed” (ECLAC, 2025d, p. 20).

Lastly, the document draws attention to the accelerated pace of the transformations under way and underscores the need to convene the next World Summit for Social Development without waiting another 30 years. In line with the deadline for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it proposes holding the Third World Summit no more than five years after the Second World Summit, to examine progress and setbacks, define priorities and alternatives, and reach agreement on a shared path forward. The experiences of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and of the sessions of the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Convention on Biological Diversity reveal the importance of holding meetings more frequently and ensuring that the population is better informed of progress and challenges.

B. Areas complementary to the work of ministries of social development to be considered in a global pact for inclusive social development

Advancing towards a global pact for inclusive social development that addresses the multiple dimensions of poverty, hunger and inequality entails more than universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems. These must be complemented by inclusion policies to ensure well-being and access, and others that focus on service provision for the exercise of social rights, especially in the areas of education, health, housing, water and sanitation, under the purview of various State bodies other than ministries of social development or their like.

In the area of education, investment is essential to foster upward social mobility. “Improvements in education access, progression and completion notwithstanding, the countries of the region face a dual challenge: (i) accelerating progress and reducing gaps in coverage and completion rates; and (ii) improving education quality to reduce inequality and support social mobility” (ECLAC, 2025e, p. 12).

It is proposed to invest in early childhood education, improving infrastructure and promoting the professionalization of teaching personnel; to ensure secondary education completion as a baseline for progress towards young people’s inclusion and social mobility; to step up efforts to streamline the school-to-work transition; and to improve lifelong learning systems, in keeping with labour market requirements (ECLAC, 2025e).

In the area of health, ensuring universal access is essential, as is linking it with the other components of social protection, fostering social participation and focusing on the social determinants of health. Primary healthcare strategies must also be strengthened, combined with a robust disease prevention and health promotion component and investment in physical and mental health (ECLAC, 2025e).

Also critical are policies to secure the right to decent housing, with appropriate spaces that ensure physical security and reduce overcrowding, as well as access to drinking water, sanitation, energy, communication and Internet service, along with public spaces for a healthy environment.

Reaffirming the commitment to institutional strengthening and financial sustainability is vital for high-quality public policies in these areas, thereby fostering their adequate development and the resilience needed to deal with disasters, which hit the most vulnerable and marginalized population the hardest.

In short, a global pact for inclusive social development means developing public policies that ensure social and labour inclusion, high-quality education and healthcare, housing, basic services and care, joined up with comprehensive, universal, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, and supported by institutional frameworks for social policy in line with the prerequisites for a welfare state to tackle the scourges of poverty, hunger and inequality. In this framework, cooperation and multilateralism are critical for the viability and sustainability of these proposals, leaving no one behind.

C. The proposals in light of the preparation of the political declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development

The policy priorities and proposals presented in this document are very much aligned with countries’ proposals in the draft political declaration for the Second World Summit for Social Development. The draft emphasizes the importance of advancing towards a more just, inclusive and sustainable world, recommits to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and its Programme of Action, and calls for greater momentum towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2025).

The draft document is in line with regional priorities, highlighting poverty eradication, full, productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration as pillars of social development (United Nations, 2025, p. 1).

The policy proposals contained in this document are far-reaching and complement the vision of the draft declaration in several areas. Regarding poverty eradication, both proposals recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty, the importance of universal social protection systems and the need for financial sustainability to secure the resources to implement poverty eradication policies.

With regard to labour inclusion, the document contains proposals for strengthening inclusion through the formalization of employment and universal, comprehensive social protection systems, taking into account the multiplier effects of the care economy and the challenges of the energy and technological transitions. The document also calls for support for implementation of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, the strengthening of labour institutions and labour market policies, and the adoption of macroeconomic policies to underpin the creation of decent work.

Regarding social inclusion, although the draft declaration maintains the concept of “social integration” used in Copenhagen, it aligns with the vision for inclusive social development through its emphasis on the commitment to fostering inclusive, equitable and cohesive societies grounded in human dignity, solidarity, tolerance and full participation for all (United Nations, 2025, p.5). The draft declaration also addresses the challenges posed by the demographic and technological transitions, the need to invest in early childhood development, persons with disabilities, culture and social cohesion, and gaps related to racism and xenophobia. It notes the importance of institutional strengthening through social development policies with a holistic approach, recognizing the family as the central enabler of social development.

The draft declaration includes various sectoral policy proposals, most of which are consistent with those put forward in the proposed pact for inclusive social development.

Moreover, the proposals for the global pact for inclusive social development align with the priorities and proposals made by the inter-agency task force to support preparation of the Second World Summit for Social Development, which produced three synthesis briefs containing key messages on the three pillars of sustainable development: social inclusion, eradicating poverty, and full employment and decent work for all (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025).

The key action areas for social inclusion include anchoring policy responses for social inclusion in human rights; investing in people to ensure universal access to quality education, health, care and support, among other services; ensuring access to rights-based, universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection; creating an enabling environment where macroeconomic and social policies work together; building inclusive, participatory, accountable and transparent institutions and governance systems; and generating better data to leave no one behind, now and in the future (Inter-agency task force to support preparation of the Second World Summit for Social Development, 2025a).

The key action areas for eradicating poverty include ensuring that macroeconomic policies are aligned with social goals; investing in productive employment and decent work; guaranteeing universal access to comprehensive social protection systems; investing more—and investing better—to guarantee universal access to quality education and lifelong learning, healthcare, and other essential services; investing in rural communities and agrifood systems; and advancing gender equality (Inter-agency task force to support preparation of the Second World Summit for Social Development, 2025b).

With regard to full employment and decent work for all, the key action areas include promoting a whole-of-government and multi-stakeholder approach; fostering full and productive employment, including through industrialization; creating just, inclusive and equitable transitions for all; investing in decent work; achieving universal social protection, including social protection floors; tackling inequalities across all dimensions; engaging the private sector; ensuring a multi-stakeholder approach to follow-up; and leveraging good practices and supporting capacity development (Inter-agency task force to support preparation of the Second World Summit for Social Development, 2025c).

In short, the proposals made by the inter-agency task force to support preparation of the Second World Summit for Social Development overlap significantly with those of the global pact for inclusive social development. Despite certain differences in nuance, there is a high degree of consistency in the priorities associated with poverty, hunger and inequality, the approach—grounded in human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—and the need for linkages among high-quality public policies and universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems, with suitable institutional frameworks and governance.

The alignment between regional perspectives and ongoing global efforts indicates that the region’s proposals should be welcomed at the international level. However, this will only be attainable with sufficient political backing for an implementation capable of both catering to the urgency of the current context and laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable processes. In this regard, there is all the more reason to call upon the international community, in line with the Pact for the Future (United Nations, 2024), to establish a global pact for inclusive social development to revitalize its commitments, keep the focus on current challenges and consider those of both the near future and the longer term, to leave no one behind.



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Statistical annex

Table A1.1

Latin America (18 countries): trends in total poverty and extreme poverty rates, by income, 2000–2023

(Percentages)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Total poverty																							
Argentina ^a	40.9	46.7	62.4	50.0	43.1	37.9	31.5	30.3	27.1	25.2	25.6	23.3	22.1	21.6	25.0	...	21.5	19.3	22.7	26.0	33.0	28.4	30.1	30.1
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	67.4	64.0	66.8	...	65.7	66.6	63.5	59.4	46.5	42.0	...	36.3	35.9	34.3	33.7	34.7	35.1	34.9	33.1	31.0	32.3	29.0	...	...
Brazil ^b	...	38.4	37.8	38.8	36.8	34.4	29.1	27.8	25.3	23.8	...	21.0	18.5	18.1	16.5	18.8	20.9	21.2	20.4	20.2	18.4	24.4	19.6	16.1
Chile	42.8	...	...	40.0	...	...	35.6	...	...	28.5	...	24.8	...	15.8	...	13.2	...	10.7	...	...	13.9	...	8.1	...
Colombia ^c	...	...	53.8	52.4	52.3	49.6	...	...	44.6	43.3	39.3	36.0	34.5	32.3	29.9	29.5	29.7	28.6	28.6	30.4	38.4	33.8	34.5	32.7
Costa Rica ^d	27.5	27.7	28.1	24.6	27.7	25.3	24.8	20.5	20.1	21.4	19.0	19.4	18.6	18.1	17.5	17.4	16.5	15.4	16.1	16.5	19.4	17.3	16.6	15.9
Dominican Republic ^e	32.5	32.3	33.6	40.6	50.0	44.9	42.1	39.7	41.6	39.4	40.0	39.3	38.3	38.1	32.9	29.6	26.7	23.5	20.9	19.0	21.8	22.5	20.4	18.2
Ecuador	...	53.5	...	48.7	...	40.4	35.6	35.2	34.7	35.5	32.7	29.2	26.6	26.4	23.4	23.9	24.3	23.6	24.2	25.7	30.6	28.6	25.7	25.3
El Salvador	49.1	50.6	48.8	49.5	49.7	51.6	49.1	48.3	...	50.1	49.8	...	48.0	44.2	44.5	42.6	40.4	37.8	34.5	30.4	30.8	30.3	29.8	27.9
Guatemala	53.7	...	...	...	...	...	42.7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	50.5	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras ^f	...	57.4	...	...	62.9	64.5	...	...	...	51.0	53.7	55.7	61.2	59.1	55.4	55.2	53.2	...	55.8	52.3	...	...	...	56.0
Mexico	48.8	...	46.4	...	42.8	...	37.3	...	43.0	...	44.5	...	44.4	...	45.2	...	37.6	...	35.5	...	37.4	...	28.6	...
Nicaragua	...	65.1	...	...	...	62.7	...	...	...	58.3	...	...	...	...	46.3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Panama ^g	29.8	36.8	34.0	33.8	33.3	32.9	32.9	30.0	26.8	27.1	...	23.1	...	21.5	18.6	18.2	16.7	15.6	14.6	14.6	...	15.7	14.3	14.3
Paraguay ^h	...	37.7	47.9	41.9	40.1	34.4	41.1	35.9	35.0	34.4	32.5	31.6	26.2	22.9	22.3	23.4	24.0	21.6	19.5	19.4	22.3	20.9	22.8	19.6
Peru ⁱ	...	45.1	43.3	63.5	43.6	46.8	41.3	35.8	31.8	28.8	24.6	23.1	20.9	20.5	19.5	19.0	19.1	18.9	16.8	15.4	28.4	18.6	17.2	18.3
Uruguay ^j	10.9	16.1	20.7	27.3	27.7	25.7	...	19.3	14.2	11.5	9.7	6.9	6.1	5.7	4.5	4.1	3.6	2.6	2.9	3.0	5.0	4.8	4.4	4.5
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	44.2	43.0	51.7	57.2	50.8	43.0	31.3	25.2	24.7	24.2	24.9	26.0	20.9	27.3	28.3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Extreme poverty																							
Argentina ^a	10.3	13.6	21.1	11.2	8.0	6.4	5.1	5.5	4.3	4.3	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.4	...	2.9	2.9	3.2	3.9	6.2	4.0	3.9	4.0
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	38.1	32.2	35.1	...	28.1	36.9	34.4	31.2	21.4	19.3	...	15.7	16.5	15.6	14.9	14.6	16.7	16.4	14.8	12.0	13.5	10.0	...	...
Brazil ^b	...	7.4	6.3	7.6	6.4	5.1	4.1	4.7	4.3	4.3	...	4.4	3.9	4.5	3.3	4.0	5.3	5.7	5.6	5.8	5.1	8.3	5.3	3.6
Chile	6.3	...	...	5.6	...	...	3.9	...	...	3.7	...	3.1	...	2.0	...	1.7	...	1.4	...	...	4.5	...	2.1	...
Colombia ^c	...	...	23.8	21.9	21.3	19.6	...	...	20.7	19.4	16.4	14.4	13.8	12.3	11.2	10.8	11.4	10.4	10.3	12.4	18.6	14.4	16.8	15.9
Costa Rica ^d	4.9	5.3	5.4	4.4	5.5	4.5	4.4	3.0	3.6	4.3	4.1	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.1	4.6	4.2	3.3	4.0	3.4	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.5
Dominican Republic ^e	9.5	8.4	11.6	12.4	20.8	18.0	15.0	13.0	15.0	13.3	13.2	11.6	12.6	11.6	9.7	9.2	7.0	5.7	4.6	3.9	5.6	5.2	5.1	4.9
Ecuador	...	20.2	...	16.3	...	13.2	9.8	10.3	10.8	11.4	10.0	9.1	8.7	6.8	5.9	7.0	7.5	7.0	6.5	7.6	10.8	7.6	6.9	7.4
El Salvador	17.5	19.1	18.7	17.7	16.4	19.6	15.1	13.2	...	17.1	15.9	...	12.7	11.8	11.7	10.4	10.7	8.3	7.6	5.6	8.3	8.4	8.7	8.6
Guatemala	16.9	...	...	...	...	...	10.4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	15.4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras ^f	...	27.3	...	...	30.3	31.4	...	...	...	19.6	19.5	21.6	25.3	22.7	19.2	19.0	18.8	...	19.4	20.0	...	...	...	23.1
Mexico	13.8	...	10.4	...	8.8	...	6.8	...	11.8	...	12.7	...	12.9	...	13.0	...	8.4	...	7.7	...	9.2	...	6.2	...
Nicaragua	...	35.8	...	...	...	26.9	...	...	...	23.1	...	...	...	...	18.3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Panama ^g	13.1	19.2	16.2	16.3	15.5	14.4	16.0	13.6	12.8	10.8	...	10.6	...	9.5	8.0	8.1	7.4	6.9	6.8	6.6	...	5.7	6.6	6.5
Paraguay ^h	...	13.2	17.6	13.7	10.8	10.1	17.1	14.3	12.1	13.2	12.7	13.3	9.6	7.1	7.7	7.3	7.9	6.0	6.5	6.2	6.0	6.0	8.9	7.3
Peru ⁱ	...	16.3	14.9	25.9	14.7	16.1	13.6	11.7	10.8	8.6	7.0	6.7	6.3	5.8	5.1	5.4	5.2	5.0	3.7	3.0	8.6	3.9	3.3	4.2
Uruguay ^j	1.2	2.8	4.3	5.9	5.7	4.7	...	2.6	1.1	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	4.8	4.4	7.2	9.2	8.0	9.1	5.1	3.7	4.7	4.5	4.9	5.7	5.1	9.0	12.0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

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

^a Data refer to urban areas. October figures used for 2000–2002; fourth-quarter figures used for 2003–2008 and 2016; second-half figures used for all other years.

^b September figures used for 2000–2015; yearly figures used from 2016 onward.

^c Comparable series used for 2002–2005, 2008–2021, and 2022 and 2023.

^d Comparable series used for 2000–2009 and 2010–2023.

^e March figures used for 2000–2016; yearly figures used from 2017 onward.

^f May figures used for 2000–2013; June figures used from 2014 onward.

^g August figures used for 2000–2013; March figures used from 2014 onward.

^h Comparable series used for 2001–2016 and 2017–2021 (fourth-quarter figures); yearly figures used from 2022 onward.

ⁱ Fourth-quarter figures used for 2001 and 2002; May–December figures used for 2003; yearly figures used from 2004 onward.

^j Data for 2000–2005 refer to urban areas.

Table A1.2

Latin America (18 countries): trends in income concentration, 2000–2023

(Gini index)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Argentina ^a	0.487	0.505	0.498	0.467	0.438	0.429	0.443	0.437	0.413	0.413	0.411	0.406	0.395	0.393	0.393	...	0.393	0.391	0.391	0.404	0.395	0.391	0.378	0.402
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	0.635	0.604	0.612	...	0.550	0.634	0.604	0.586	0.513	0.511	...	0.471	0.474	0.480	0.471	0.454	0.464	0.461	0.438	0.430	0.449	0.418	...	...
Brazil ^b	...	0.576	0.570	0.562	0.554	0.552	0.548	0.543	0.536	0.533	...	0.526	0.523	0.522	0.514	0.511	0.532	0.534	0.540	0.538	0.519	0.537	0.514	0.515
Chile	0.514	...	...	0.507	...	...	0.488	...	...	0.482	...	0.476	...	0.476	...	0.462	...	0.462	...	...	0.488	...	0.445	...
Colombia ^c	...	...	0.567	0.549	0.554	0.550	...	...	0.572	0.557	0.555	0.545	0.534	0.536	0.534	0.521	0.518	0.510	0.520	0.529	0.555	0.529	0.563	0.553
Costa Rica ^d	0.479	0.499	0.497	0.482	0.486	0.476	0.489	0.498	0.491	0.512	0.492	0.500	0.502	0.508	0.498	0.496	0.500	0.496	0.493	0.495	0.490	0.501	0.484	0.480
Dominican Republic ^e	0.510	0.495	0.498	0.506	0.504	0.507	0.525	0.495	0.489	0.496	0.480	0.484	0.469	0.484	0.449	0.457	0.433	0.432	0.442	0.432	0.405	0.395	0.381	0.387
Ecuador	...	0.538	...	0.601	...	0.522	0.520	0.534	0.496	0.485	0.490	0.458	0.468	0.470	0.449	0.462	0.450	0.444	0.454	0.456	0.466	0.466	0.447	0.442
El Salvador	0.509	0.514	0.508	0.501	0.483	0.504	0.474	0.470	...	0.478	0.454	...	0.438	0.453	0.434	0.425	0.420	0.399	0.405	0.406	0.421	0.406	0.402	0.414
Guatemala	0.636	...	...	...	...	...	0.558	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.535	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.494
Honduras ^f	...	0.532	...	...	0.565	0.568	...	...	...	0.502	0.519	0.551	0.552	0.515	0.481	0.469	0.480	...	0.481	0.494	...	...	...	0.471
Mexico	0.528	...	0.506	...	0.505	...	0.500	...	0.513	...	0.510	...	0.499	...	0.502	...	0.491	...	0.464	...	0.452	...	0.441	...
Nicaragua	...	0.568	...	...	...	0.526	...	...	...	0.463	...	...	...	...	0.495	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Panama ^g	0.564	0.575	0.572	0.569	0.563	0.550	0.562	0.539	0.528	0.530	...	0.528	...	0.524	0.502	0.499	0.495	0.505	0.501	0.506	...	0.520	0.496	0.493
Paraguay ^h	...	0.561	0.584	0.560	0.532	0.524	0.535	0.537	0.516	0.503	0.527	0.535	0.489	0.495	0.522	0.494	0.497	0.503	0.474	0.473	0.452	0.447	0.470	0.462
Peru ⁱ	...	0.519	0.544	0.548	0.510	0.525	0.517	0.518	0.495	0.488	0.471	0.463	0.457	0.453	0.446	0.449	0.452	0.448	0.439	0.429	0.464	0.423	0.414	0.417
Uruguay ^j	0.441	0.464	0.474	0.474	0.476	0.463	...	0.468	0.453	0.447	0.438	0.413	0.391	0.397	0.392	0.392	0.391	0.390	0.391	0.392	0.397	0.402	0.401	0.404
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	0.392	0.420	0.418	0.401	0.401	0.433	0.404	0.391	0.379	0.381	0.364	0.368	0.384	0.388	0.378	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).^a Data refer to urban areas. October figures used for 2000–2002; fourth-quarter figures used for 2003–2008 and 2016; second-half figures used for all other years.^b September figures used for 2000–2015; yearly figures used from 2016 onward.^c Comparable series used for 2002–2005, 2008–2021, and 2022 and 2023.^d Comparable series used for 2000–2009 and 2010–2023.^e March figures used for 2000–2016; yearly figures used from 2017 onward.^f May figures used for 2000–2013; June figures used from 2014 onward.^g August figures used for 2000–2013; March figures used from 2014 onward.^h Comparable series used for 2001–2016 and 2017–2021 (fourth-quarter figures); yearly figures used from 2022 onward.ⁱ Fourth-quarter figures used for 2001 and 2002; May–December figures used for 2003; yearly figures used from 2004 onward.^j Data for 2000–2005 refer to urban areas.

Table A1.3

Latin America and the Caribbean (29 countries): secondary education completion rate among young people aged 20–22^a, 2000–2023
(Percentages)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Antigua and Barbuda	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	89	...	...
Argentina	57	57	58	58	58	58	59	61	62	63	57	63	63	62	62	...	63	63	63	64	64	...	...	...
Barbados	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	94	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Belize	...	...	...	...	...	...	13	...	...	...	...	21	...	...	...	43	...	...	...	...	...	45	...	...
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	45	52	47	51	52	60	56	64	67	65	...	67	68	77	67	70	74	75	76	77	80	82	...	...
Brazil	...	37	41	44	46	48	50	51	54	57	...	59	59	60	61	63	64	64	66	69	73	73	74	74
Chile	66	...	67	74	...	...	80	...	...	80	...	81	...	83	...	85	...	86	...	...	87	...	93	...
Colombia	50	...	54	54	57	58	...	...	61	61	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	73	73	73	75	75	75	75
Costa Rica	36	38	36	39	39	38	41	40	41	43	48	50	52	53	55	53	56	58	59	62	65	69	78	78
Cuba	...	...	...	...	...	...	70	...	...	...	79	...	...	...	86	...	...	...	...	65	...	...	...	...
Dominica	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	77	...	...
Dominican Republic	39	38	39	44	43	47	49	51	53	53	57	59	56	58	63	61	63	62	63	66	64	63	66	65
Ecuador	...	43	...	48	...	50	51	52	55	58	58	65	67	66	65	67	69	70	72	74	73	79	81	80
El Salvador	39	42	43	39	42	43	45	45	...	47	49	...	52	53	54	56	57	57	59	59	64	60	63	61
Guatemala	20	...	...	...	...	...	25	...	...	...	...	25	...	...	34	26	...	...	...	...	...	...	26	48
Guyana	43	...	...	...	...	...	49	...	...	55	...	...	...	...	56	...	...	...	...	62	...	...	...	...
Haiti	5	...	...	8	...	12	...	...	...	...	...	...	12	...	...	...	...	16	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras	...	22	...	...	22	24	25	...	...	33	35	38	38	42	37	43	43	...	38	42	...	...	...	44
Jamaica	...	87	...	...	...	78	...	...	...	...	...	82	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	90	87	...
Mexico	33	...	39	...	41	...	44	...	45	...	48	...	51	...	52	51	55	...	59	...	62	...	64	...
Nicaragua	...	26	...	...	...	29	...	...	...	33	...	...	...	...	41	...	...	...	...	...	...	56	...	...
Panama	49	47	48	51	50	53	55	56	57	58	57	59	...	60	60	61	63	64	67	66	...	74	74	75
Paraguay	...	37	38	42	39	44	52	49	50	54	50	55	61	59	62	62	60	63	64	69	67	66	70	73
Peru	62	61	63	65	69	67	72	74	75	75	78	80	81	82	82	82	83	86	87	87	89	89	89	90
Saint Lucia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	83	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Suriname	15	...	...	...	...	...	18	...	...	...	25	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	23	...	...	...	41	...
Trinidad and Tobago	74	...	...	...	...	...	80	...	...	...	...	82	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	80	...
Uruguay	35	36	36	37	37	37	...	...	33	34	34	37	34	35	35	35	36	39	40	41	...	49	49	52
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	43	46	46	48	49	53	57	61	63	66	68	70	69	71	70	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

^a For countries where the official primary school starting age is 6 years and the total duration of primary and secondary school is 11 years, the rate refers to the population aged 19–21.

Table A1.4

Latin America (17 countries): contributory pension system coverage among the economically active population, 2000–2022

(Percentages)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Argentina	44.5	42.5	36.7	36.5	38.6	42.6	46.2	49.4	51.4	51.3	52.0	54.4	55.5	56.9	58.0	58.9	58.5	58.8	58.5	57.2	53.7	54.7	56.5
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	7.9	8.2	9.0	8.1	9.5	11.6	11.6	11.3	10.9	11.7	12.4	13.0	13.6	14.4	12.2	12.5	14.0	15.9	15.8	15.5	13.8	14.1	14.0
Brazil	40.0	41.6	41.7	44.3	45.6	47.6	48.6	51.4	54.9	56.2	59.9	63.3	65.5	67.4	68.2	66.0	62.3	60.2	59.7	60.4	58.4	61.3	63.2
Chile	48.3	48.0	47.0	47.5	47.0	49.9	50.9	54.3	55.1	54.6	57.3	58.8	62.1	62.0	62.0	62.0	61.5	61.1	62.7	61.9	59.4	63.0	62.8
Colombia	23.8	23.3	23.7	23.5	21.3	22.3	24.0	25.7	26.9	27.1	27.3	27.2	27.3	25.9	29.6	28.9	27.3	30.2	32.8	35.5	33.8	35.6	36.6
Costa Rica	48.7	45.9	45.7	45.8	45.8	47.0	50.0	54.2	58.4	57.3	60.6	61.5	62.3	62.5	62.6	62.0	63.4	64.5	65.1	64.7	62.1	64.0	66.1
Dominican Republic	17.6	17.6	17.6	17.6	18.0	18.1	23.4	26.0	25.3	31.4	32.3	32.7	33.0	34.0	36.1	37.5	39.1	40.7	42.3	41.0	37.1	40.7	41.3
Ecuador	25.0	24.9	24.1	23.3	23.6	24.1	25.4	26.6	29.8	31.9	35.6	39.7	42.7	44.2	45.5	43.9	41.4	40.8	40.5	39.0	34.9	35.2	35.6
El Salvador	23.4	23.8	22.0	22.8	22.0	22.3	23.4	24.2	24.0	22.4	23.0	23.6	24.1	25.0	24.7	25.4	25.8	25.6	25.9	25.9	25.1	27.4	28.4
Guatemala	25.2	24.8	24.4	23.6	23.4	22.8	22.4	22.5	21.6	21.1	20.6	20.6	20.3	20.1	19.6	19.5	19.3	18.9	18.6	18.4	17.1	17.9	18.5
Honduras	18.7	18.6	18.3	20.2	20.5	22.1	21.3	21.9	21.5	19.5	19.2	19.1	19.0	19.0	18.8	18.7	18.2	17.9	17.7	17.0	16.0	16.5	16.3
Mexico	38.8	37.1	36.3	35.3	35.3	35.4	35.9	36.3	35.5	34.4	35.1	35.5	36.1	36.2	36.7	37.0	37.6	38.2	38.6	38.6	37.1	38.0	38.7
Nicaragua	16.1	15.8	15.3	15.3	16.3	17.3	18.8	20.0	21.1	21.0	21.7	22.8	23.9	25.1	25.8	27.4	29.6	30.8	26.9	23.6	22.7	23.6	23.5
Panama	53.5	50.5	48.3	47.6	47.8	50.1	53.0	56.7	58.0	61.2	61.9	63.7	64.6	62.8	62.5	62.2	62.3	62.4	63.6	63.2	49.5	53.0	60.2
Paraguay	14.3	13.8	12.9	13.1	13.1	13.5	14.2	14.9	16.4	18.0	19.3	20.5	21.6	22.5	23.2	23.2	23.8	24.5	24.2	24.5	23.8	24.2	25.1
Peru	11.3	11.8	12.3	13.3	13.0	13.1	14.0	16.6	17.2	19.2	20.9	22.1	24.8	26.0	25.9	26.4	25.9	27.7	27.7	28.4	25.1	27.0	28.0
Uruguay	58.8	56.2	52.4	53.2	57.2	61.1	64.9	68.3	72.0	73.1	76.4	79.4	82.2	84.3	85.0	84.3	83.0	83.6	84.0	84.1	82.5	83.0	86.0

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of administrative data from the countries and Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division, Estimaciones y proyecciones de la fuerza de trabajo: Revisión 2022.

Table A1.5

Latin America and the Caribbean (31 countries): trends in the maternal mortality ratio, 2000–2020

(Number of deaths per 100,000 live births)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Antigua and Barbuda	51	47	41	44	43	34	35	34	39	37	31	31	30	29	23	27	21	21	19	19	21
Argentina	72	72	71	79	73	63	61	63	59	57	55	50	45	43	42	39	40	38	34	33	45
Bahamas (The)	61	63	66	69	72	74	79	86	86	89	79	101	101	82	97	84	79	77	77	82	77
Barbados	48	49	47	45	43	43	42	40	54	53	53	53	52	51	49	49	48	47	47	47	39
Belize	86	86	76	78	80	72	64	56	46	39	33	33	28	32	38	49	59	72	78	86	130
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	284	261	253	251	236	230	218	220	211	187	184	178	179	175	163	165	161	164	171	176	161
Brazil	68	68	72	69	70	70	71	72	70	68	64	62	57	61	62	62	63	60	59	61	72
Chile	33	34	32	32	29	27	29	28	26	24	23	20	19	18	16	16	15	15	15	15	15
Colombia	93	94	93	83	82	82	82	83	73	71	71	71	71	70	70	70	70	71	63	65	75
Costa Rica	39	37	36	37	32	31	29	28	27	26	27	24	24	23	24	20	19	19	18	19	22
Cuba	47	47	45	39	41	43	46	45	42	40	41	40	41	41	41	39	41	40	39	40	39
Dominican Republic	79	69	70	75	81	87	85	89	92	93	92	93	91	93	96	99	102	104	109	103	107
Ecuador	120	116	111	98	94	92	90	88	88	86	76	73	72	72	65	66	70	69	71	74	66
El Salvador	49	47	39	39	35	35	36	37	34	36	36	37	38	39	41	44	42	45	45	39	43
Grenada	42	40	36	34	41	32	30	29	29	27	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	24	21	20	21
Guatemala	152	140	143	145	140	149	135	136	136	125	123	120	118	109	107	107	103	95	98	100	96
Guyana	190	190	173	180	172	172	177	168	150	145	148	142	136	133	131	128	127	123	118	110	112
Haiti	400	417	389	373	429	363	343	366	383	394	403	424	384	392	389	391	388	351	359	349	350
Honduras	82	77	73	77	72	75	77	77	81	73	73	72	65	65	68	67	62	64	65	67	72
Jamaica	83	87	87	86	82	86	94	92	96	95	88	80	83	90	101	97	98	101	91	93	99
Mexico	57	57	57	52	53	53	54	56	57	51	51	50	49	49	50	52	49	52	56	58	59
Nicaragua	169	174	164	166	166	158	135	125	112	104	98	95	92	91	81	79	77	76	74	75	78
Panama	66	64	62	62	59	53	54	54	53	54	55	54	53	52	50	49	49	49	47	51	50
Paraguay	148	147	132	130	127	127	114	110	107	104	100	99	85	81	77	80	69	69	70	70	71
Peru	113	106	102	98	101	97	90	87	84	80	76	73	72	71	65	65	62	61	63	72	69
Saint Lucia	87	80	67	67	83	82	79	80	80	80	73	74	75	74	72	80	64	64	61	72	73
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	76	63	61	61	53	54	50	47	39	45	45	45	45	45	40	36	35	35	60	65	62
Suriname	278	274	260	250	229	190	192	181	169	153	138	131	131	133	135	125	105	99	98	100	96
Trinidad and Tobago	74	67	58	65	57	56	56	54	54	45	47	44	41	37	35	31	29	28	28	26	27
Uruguay	27	24	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	18	20	19
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	92	107	100	109	107	95	96	97	105	110	112	118	119	124	119	126	150	175	179	177	259

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, CEPALSTAT, on the basis of United Nations, Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, and World Health Organization. (2023). Trends in maternal mortality 2000–2020: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division.

Table A1.6

Latin America and the Caribbean: live births attended by skilled medical personnel, 2000–2023

(Percentages)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Antigua and Barbuda	99.9	100.0	...	99.0	100.0	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	100.0	...	...	99.0	...	...	...
Argentina	99.1	98.4	98.9	98.7	99.1	99.1	99.4	99.4	94.8	97.9	95.0	97.1	98.2	97.0	99.6	99.6	98.4	93.9	99.5	99.6	98.8	...	...	...
Bahamas (The)	99.0	99.0	99.0	99.0	98.0	98.7	99.0	98.4	98.5	98.9	99.1	99.1	98.9	98.6	98.9	98.0	99.0	...	99.0	99.0	...	...	...	...
Barbados	98.0	...	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	100.0	98.9	98.6	98.9	98.0	99.1	...	99.0	98.0	98.4	...	...	...
Belize	90.2	...	97.0	...	87.8	89.3	95.8	90.7	94.9	93.5	94.0	96.2	93.7	93.0	93.1	93.5	96.8	95.3	94.8	95.3	94.6	...	...	...
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	67.3	56.0	65.1	59.0	60.8	61.9	64.6	63.9	71.1	67.0	70.4	84.0	81.8	83.9	83.7	87.5	89.8	85.4	83.1	80.6	73.6	94.3	71.5	...
Brazil	98.6	98.3	98.5	98.4	98.6	98.6	97.0	98.6	98.8	98.9	98.9	99.0	99.0	98.0	98.4	98.2	98.6	98.7	98.8	98.4	98.4	98.2	...	...
Chile	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.7	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.9	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.7	99.7	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.8	...	...	...
Colombia	86.1	93.1	94.5	95.0	95.6	90.7	97.1	97.8	98.1	98.6	94.8	99.2	98.7	98.7	98.9	99.0	95.9	99.3	98.4	98.8	97.8	97.5	98.0	...
Costa Rica	96.6	98.0	98.5	98.2	98.5	98.5	98.6	98.7	99.1	99.1	95.3	98.4	98.9	99.0	99.2	90.0	98.8	98.7	98.5	99.0	99.2	98.8	...	...
Cuba	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.4	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	100.0	99.9	99.9	...	...
Dominica	100.0	...	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.0	...	94.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	...	...
Dominican Republic	97.6	...	97.8	...	...	...	95.5	97.8	...	...	...	98.7	98.8	98.6	90.0	99.6	99.8	...	...	99.2	...	...	...	...
Ecuador	70.9	71.4	73.7	75.1	76.4	78.6	80.6	85.6	89.3	85.6	88.6	90.5	92.1	93.6	95.0	94.4	94.2	95.7	96.0	97.2	96.3	...	...	...
El Salvador	...	...	...	92.4	...	87.2	89.6	93.1	95.5	97.5	98.0	99.0	99.5	99.8	98.0	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.6	99.3	98.1	...
Grenada	100.0	...	...	100.0	...	100.0	...	98.8	...	100.0	...	100.0	99.0	99.0	99.0	99.0	99.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	...	...
Guatemala	41.4	41.4	41.4	...	...	...	...	31.4	...	51.5	52.3	...	58.7	62.8	67.0	65.5	69.8	69.6	...	...	...	...	...	...
Guyana	82.9	93.8	...	...	95.9	96.7	96.6	80.9	96.0	87.4	...	...	97.3	98.3	85.7	95.8	94.3	96.7	95.1	95.0	97.6	...	...	...
Haiti	23.8	...	...	...	...	26.1	26.1	...	...	...	...	...	37.3	48.6	...	...	...	41.6	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras	...	55.7	...	...	...	...	66.3	...	...	...	...	...	82.8	...	...	72.0	79.0	74.0	...	94.1	...	...	...	...
Jamaica	95.9	...	96.9	...	...	96.7	...	93.0	...	98.3	95.3	99.1	99.5	99.7	85.7	99.7	99.7	99.7	99.7	99.7	99.8	99.8	...	...
Mexico	88.6	88.0	88.9	89.6	90.3	91.1	93.4	92.7	93.3	95.3	94.5	95.3	99.6	96.1	99.7	97.7	98.0	96.6	92.1	89.4	88.7	85.1	87.5	...
Nicaragua	...	66.9	72.6	74.1	76.0	78.6	79.3	73.7	85.3	...	88.0	89.7	87.0	92.4	95.6	94.0	94.1	94.1	...	...	...	...	...	...
Panama	90.5	92.1	94.2	92.5	91.3	91.1	91.0	91.5	91.8	88.6	92.7	93.5	94.3	91.4	93.4	96.3	94.6	94.2	92.9	95.0	95.0	92.5	...	...
Paraguay	85.0	85.9	85.8	85.9	77.2	87.5	90.5	90.6	87.2	93.8	95.6	95.8	95.7	96.8	93.9	96.3	95.5	97.3	97.7	92.2	91.2	91.2	...	...
Peru	59.3	...	...	...	...	...	71.0	...	79.4	82.5	83.8	85.0	86.7	89.1	90.0	91.6	92.4	93.6	93.7	94.4	95.7	94.9	94.6	94.8
Saint Kitts and Nevis	99.4	...	99.5	...	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.6	100.0	...	...	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	...
Saint Lucia	100.0	...	98.0	99.0	100.0	100.0	97.9	100.0	100.0	...	98.5	...	98.7	...	99.9	99.1	...	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	...
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	100.0	100.0	...	100.0	99.2	98.9	98.3	98.8	99.2	99.0	100.0	98.7	98.6	99.3	99.5	99.5	98.1	99.0	...	...
Suriname	70.9	...	...	...	...	...	86.5	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	...	...	...	99.1	90.0	...	...	98.4	...	...	100.0	...	...
Trinidad and Tobago	96.0	99.5	98.7	99.7	99.7	...	96.9	...	99.5	...	...	98.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	...	...	...	98.8	...
Uruguay	99.7	99.6	99.7	99.7	99.5	99.9	99.9	98.6	99.6	99.7	99.8	99.5	99.9	98.2	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	...	...
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	94.0	...	...	95.0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	98.1	96.0	...	99.5	99.3	99.3	99.1	98.7	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, CEPALSTAT, on the basis of United Nations, Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database.

Table A1.7
Latin America and the Caribbean: Internet users, 2005–2022
(Percentages of population)

Country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Antigua and Barbuda	27	30	34	38	42	47	52	58	63	68	70	73	84	90	96	96	96	...
Argentina	18	21	26	28	34	45	51	56	60	65	68	71	74	78	80	86	87	88
Bahamas (The)	25	26	27	32	34	43	65	72	72	77	78	80	81	83	91	93	94	...
Barbados	53	55	58	61	65	65	67	71	72	75	76	80	82	83	83	83	86	...
Belize	17	24	25	26	27	28	31	31	34	39	42	45	47	50	57	60	62	...
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	5	6	11	13	17	22	30	35	37	35	38	40	44	44	48	60	66	...
Brazil	21	28	31	34	39	41	46	49	51	55	58	61	68	70	74	81	81	81
Chile	31	35	36	37	42	45	52	55	58	61	77	84	82	85	85	86	90	...
Colombia	11	15	22	26	30	37	40	49	52	53	56	58	62	64	65	70	73	73
Costa Rica	22	25	28	32	34	37	39	48	46	53	60	66	72	74	81	81	83	83
Cuba	10	11	12	13	14	16	16	21	28	29	37	43	57	63	68	71	71	...
Dominica	39	39	40	41	42	48	49	50	51	58	65	67	70	72	73	77	81	...
Dominican Republic	12	15	18	21	28	31	38	42	46	50	54	64	68	75	80	82	85	...
Ecuador	6	7	11	19	25	29	31	35	40	46	49	54	56	58	59	71	76	70
El Salvador	4	6	6	10	12	16	19	20	23	25	27	29	34	44	51	55	63	...
Grenada	21	21	22	23	24	27	30	32	35	52	53	53	54	61	70	75	78	...
Guatemala	6	7	7	8	9	11	12	16	20	23	29	35	38	42	44	48	51	...
Guyana	6	9	14	18	24	30	30	31	31	32	34	36	37	58	79	82	85	...
Haiti	6	7	7	8	8	8	9	10	11	11	14	23	27	33	33	36	39	...
Honduras	7	8	9	10	10	11	16	18	18	23	27	30	32	36	39	44	48	...
Jamaica	13	16	21	24	24	28	37	34	37	40	42	44	55	68	71	79	82	...
Mexico	17	20	21	22	26	31	37	40	44	44	57	60	53	57	70	72	76	...
Nicaragua	3	3	4	5	7	10	11	14	16	18	20	25	30	38	45	53	57	...
Panama	12	17	22	34	39	40	43	40	44	45	51	54	60	62	64	66	68	...
Paraguay	8	8	11	14	19	20	25	29	37	43	50	53	61	65	69	74	77	76
Peru	17	21	25	31	31	35	36	38	39	40	41	46	51	55	60	65	71	75
Saint Kitts and Nevis	34	39	44	49	56	63	63	64	65	68	76	77	81	80	80	80	80	...
Saint Lucia	22	25	28	30	31	33	34	46	49	53	57	62	66	72	77	78	78	...
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	9	12	16	21	31	34	37	40	44	47	49	52	54	56	74	80	85	...
Suriname	6	10	14	21	31	32	32	35	37	40	43	45	49	54	57	62	66	...
Trinidad and Tobago	29	30	32	35	44	49	55	58	60	62	65	68	71	75	79	79	79	...
Uruguay	20	29	34	39	42	46	51	55	58	62	65	66	70	81	83	86	90	90
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	13	15	21	26	33	37	40	49	55	57	58	60	62	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Digital Development Observatory, on the basis of International Telecommunication Union, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database (July 2023), Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG) and its own data (2000–2022).

Table A1.8

Latin America and the Caribbean (27 countries): central government social spending, 2000–2023

(Percentages of GDP and of total public expenditure)

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Argentina	9.0	8.9	7.7	7.3	7.7	8.0	8.4	9.0	9.1	11.2	11.1	11.3	12.1	13.0	13.0	14.1	14.2	14.6	13.4	12.9	17.1	14.7	13.6	12.6
Bahamas (The)	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.2	5.2	6.2	6.5	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	7.0	8.5	7.2	7.4	10.2	14.6	10.3	8.9
Barbados	...	...	...	...	...	...	13.8	14.7	15.2	16.2	15.7	14.3	15.9	16.5	15.9	17.2	15.5	15.5	15.6	13.1	18.6	16.6	15.3	13.6
Belize	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10.1	10.4	10.3	10.5	10.7	11.0	11.6	12.0	12.0	12.2	12.2	12.3	16.0	11.6	9.7	10.0
Bolivia (Plurinational State of) ^a	11.5	12.4	13.3	13.3	12.9	12.4	11.8	11.7	11.5	13.0	12.3	11.2	11.0	10.9	11.6	12.5	12.6	11.6	12.0	12.4	16.3	14.5	...	...
Brazil	12.5	13.0	13.1	13.0	13.4	13.8	14.2	14.3	14.0	15.2	14.4	14.4	14.8	14.8	15.3	15.6	16.7	16.9	16.6	16.7	21.5	16.1	16.1	...
Chile	14.4	14.6	14.5	14.0	13.0	12.5	11.5	11.8	13.5	15.8	14.9	14.3	14.6	14.7	15.1	15.9	16.2	16.5	16.6	17.4	20.1	24.9	17.8	18.3
Colombia	8.3	9.2	9.9	9.5	10.3	10.8	10.7	11.4	11.3	13.3	12.2	12.3	12.3	12.8	12.9	13.0	12.5	13.4	12.5	12.5	15.5	14.8	11.6	12.2
Costa Rica	9.0	8.5	8.7	8.8	8.3	8.0	7.7	8.0	8.8	10.1	11.7	11.3	11.8	11.8	11.7	12.0	11.9	12.0	11.7	11.9	12.1	11.6	10.3	10.0
Cuba	...	...	9.4	10.0	10.4	15.5	11.5	16.7	20.1	19.9	17.6	19.2	16.6	10.9	10.6	10.1	14.6	14.2	9.3	10.1	12.7	9.3	9.2	...
Dominican Republic	5.5	6.4	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.9	6.5	6.6	7.3	6.7	6.3	6.2	7.3	8.1	7.6	7.8	7.7	8.0	7.6	7.7	12.3	8.9	8.6	8.7
Ecuador	2.6	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.9	4.3	4.4	5.4	6.5	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.2	9.2	8.5	8.6	9.0	9.2	9.1	10.5	11.8	10.9	10.8	11.3
El Salvador	7.7	8.2	8.2	7.7	8.0	8.5	8.1	6.2	6.9	9.2	7.7	7.7	7.4	8.1	8.1	8.2	7.8	8.2	8.2	8.6	13.8	12.5	11.0	8.4
Guatemala	6.2	6.7	6.7	7.2	6.7	7.3	7.5	7.0	6.8	8.0	8.0	7.5	7.6	7.7	7.6	7.2	7.2	7.3	7.5	7.8	9.4	7.6	7.7	7.9
Guyana	...	...	...	...	7.6	8.0	9.3	8.5	7.3	9.5	8.9	7.5	7.0	7.1	8.6	7.7	8.9	9.4	10.0	10.9	12.2	11.3	7.7	9.1
Haiti	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2.5	2.8	3.0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras	7.6	8.2	8.5	10.1	9.7	9.6	9.6	10.4	10.4	11.1	11.6	10.7	10.8	10.9	9.5	8.7	8.9	8.4	7.9	7.8	9.2	9.9	7.8	8.7
Jamaica	7.0	7.9	9.1	8.5	8.6	8.5	9.6	10.3	11.1	11.2	11.0	10.7	10.5	10.3	10.0	10.7	10.6	10.5	10.2	10.4	12.1	11.5	11.6	11.9
Mexico	5.8	6.0	6.5	6.7	6.9	7.2	7.3	8.1	8.2	9.0	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.6	9.7	10.1	9.6	8.6	8.5	9.0	10.0	9.7	9.8	10.3
Nicaragua	6.5	5.7	6.6	7.8	8.0	8.6	8.7	9.0	9.2	9.8	9.3	9.1	9.5	9.7	10.2	10.6	10.6	10.7	11.2	10.6	11.3	12.0	10.6	11.1
Panama	8.1	8.9	8.0	6.9	7.2	6.6	7.6	7.7	7.9	8.0	9.0	8.4	8.3	8.0	7.9	8.1	8.2	8.4	8.4	8.5	10.8	9.4	7.5	...
Paraguay	8.0	7.3	6.7	5.4	5.3	5.7	6.4	6.3	5.8	7.0	6.4	7.3	8.6	8.2	8.3	8.8	8.5	8.6	9.0	9.6	11.5	10.1	9.6	10.0
Peru ^b	9.3	9.6	11.7	10.2	10.0	10.3	9.3	8.9	9.3	10.1	9.4	9.1	9.4	10.3	11.0	10.9	10.2	11.1	10.7	10.8	13.2	12.2	11.4	11.2
Saint Lucia	...	...	...	...	...	...	9.0	9.5	9.0	9.9	10.7	10.9	11.4	10.3	9.5	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.6	9.6	14.0	12.5	9.7	10.6
Trinidad and Tobago	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8.7	11.9	12.5	12.7	11.8	12.2	11.7	13.3	14.7	13.7	13.6	13.8	15.3	14.1	11.6	12.2
Uruguay	9.9	10.3	10.5	9.6	8.3	7.9	10.9	10.8	11.2	11.6	11.7	12.4	12.7	13.1	13.2	13.8	14.7	15.4	15.8	15.9	16.7	15.3	15.4	16.0
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	10.8	11.9	11.1	12.0	11.5	11.2	13.7	12.8	13.1	13.0	11.6	13.4	14.4	16.1	18.8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, on the basis of official information of the countries.^a Central administration coverage.^b General government coverage.

The Second World Summit for Social Development presents a landmark opportunity to analyse the current situation and take decisions that will enable effective and sustainable progress towards inclusive social development, so that all people are able to live free from poverty and achieve a level of well-being that aligns with high, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and that enables the development of skills in conditions of freedom and dignity, with full exercise of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and opportunities for recognition and participation to address social divides and inequalities.

This document contains a proposal for agreement on a global pact for inclusive social development, a message from the ministries of social development and equivalent entities in Latin America and the Caribbean to the world aimed at reinforcing the social commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The proposal is based on recent experience and aims to address the structural and emerging challenges shaping the social reality of the region, to build on the gains made in a sustainable manner and to seize the opportunities presented by the major changes that are under way at the global level.

