



2022

Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean

Transforming education as a basis
for sustainable development



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC



2022

Main messages

The region is facing a prolonged social crisis: urgent action is needed to address the silent educational crisis and forestall the risk of a lost generation

- **Cascading** external shocks, **slowdown in economic growth**, precarious **job recovery** and rising **inflation** are deepening and prolonging the social crisis.
- For 2022, the **poverty rate** is expected to stand at 32.1% of the population (201 million people) and **extreme poverty** at 13.1% (82 million people), exceeding pre-pandemic levels.
- In 2021, **inequality** (Gini index) was slightly lower than in 2020, returning to 2019 levels.
- One critical consequence of the pandemic is the **silent impact on education** stemming from the prolonged **interruption of face-to-face learning**, which is exacerbating **previously existing educational inequalities in access and quality**.
- This will have a **scarring effect** on the educational, labour and development trajectories of a generation of children, adolescents and young people, in particular the most vulnerable.

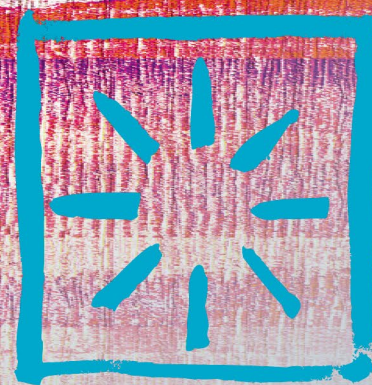
Transformative, inclusive, bold policies are needed now to progress in the construction of a strong welfare state

The “what”

- **Universal, sustainable social protection systems** that enable the full exercise of rights
- **Synergies between social protection, education, health and employment policies** in the face of volatility and uncertainty
- **Strategies to transform education and greater investment** to strengthen schools, learning, skills, **pedagogical processes and the digital transformation of education**
- **Inclusive, transformative social policies** that strengthen human and institutional capacities

The “how”

- **Consolidating multisectoral public policies** for social protection and resilience in the face of volatility and uncertainty
- **Incorporating a gender perspective**, progressing towards **comprehensive public policies and systems for care**
- **Strengthening social institutional frameworks** and the **sustainability of social spending**
- **Safeguarding social investment and spending** is more important than ever
- **Building a new social and fiscal compact for sustainable development**, social cohesion and stability

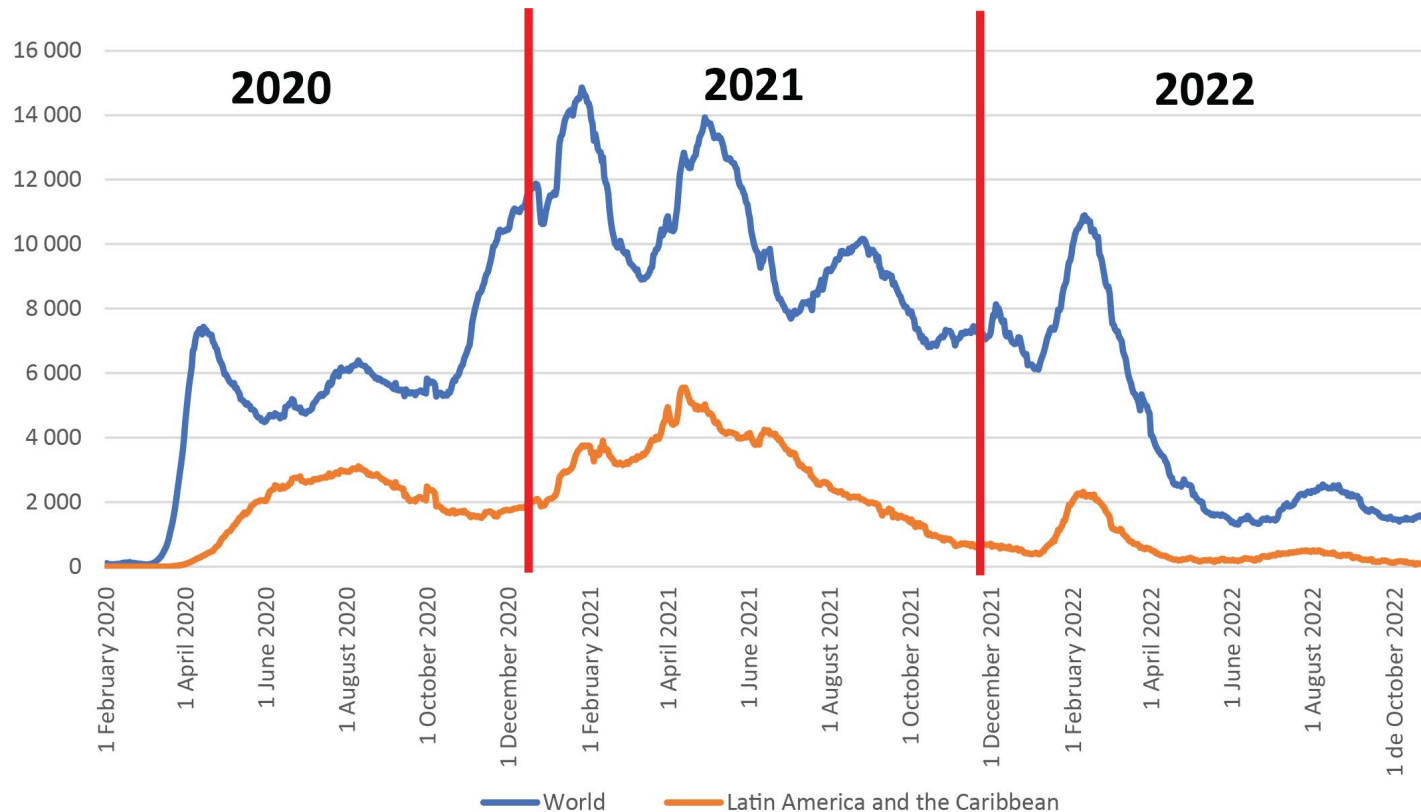


2022

The pandemic triggered a prolonged social crisis

Persistent pandemic impacts have deepened health inequalities: strengthening and transforming health care systems is urgently needed

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries) and world total: 7-day moving average of confirmed COVID-19 deaths (1 February 2020–4 September 2022)
(Thousands of persons)

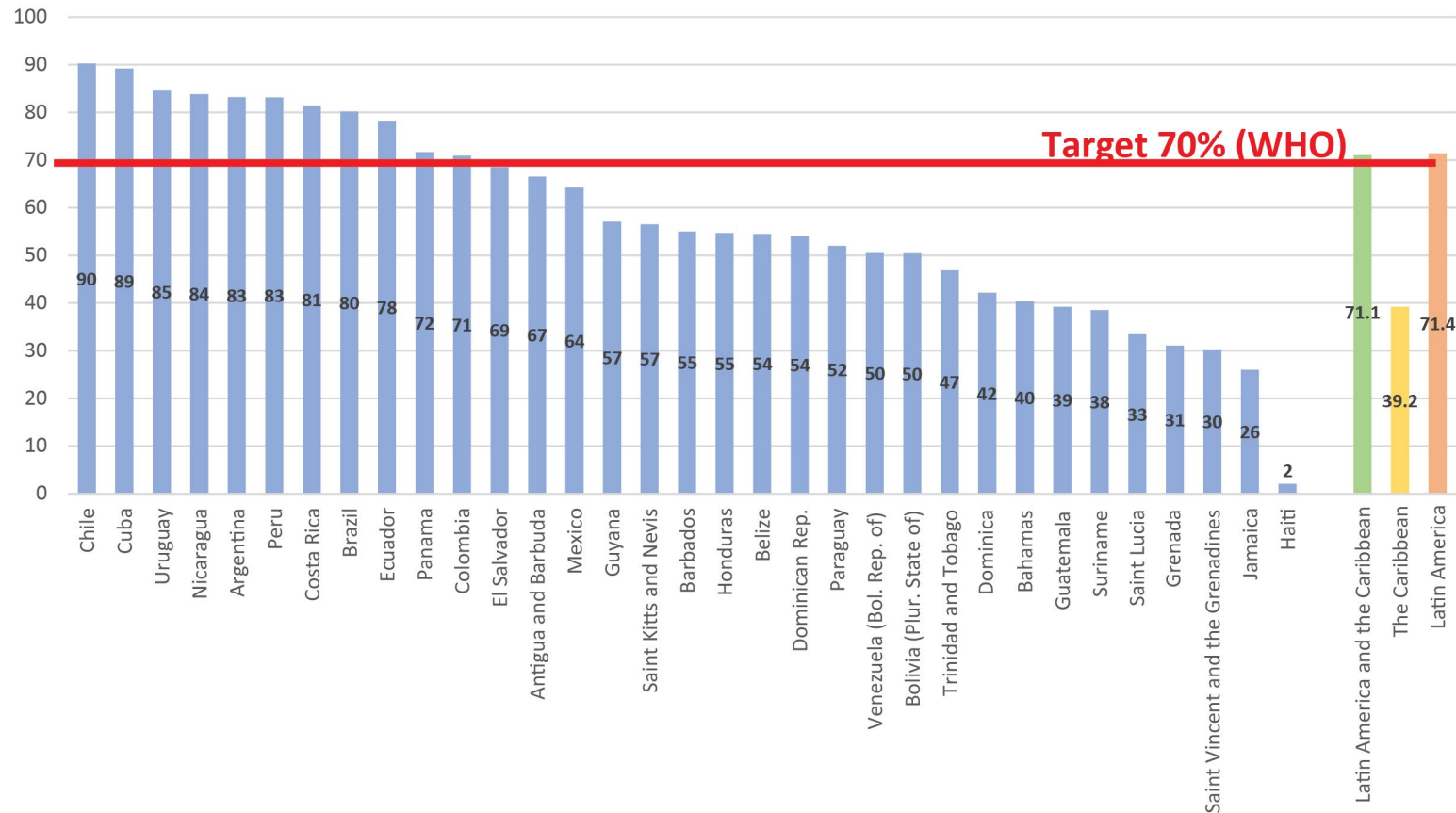


- Decline in COVID-19 death rates since the beginning of 2022
- However, **health care challenges remain:**
 - The result of **displacement of care** is a **build-up of delayed health needs**
 - The scope of the effects of **long COVID-19** is uncertain
 - Globally, it is estimated that **the incidence of the most common mental health disorders is up by 25% (WHO, 2022)**
- **Strengthening health care systems is therefore urgent**

Source: H. Ritchie Ritchie and others (2022), "Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)", Oxford, University of Oxford, October 2020 [online database] <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-testing>.

Profound inequalities in access to COVID-19 vaccines remain: 22 of the 33 countries in the region have yet to achieve two-dose coverage of 70% of the population

Latin America and the Caribbean (33 countries): people fully vaccinated
against COVID-19 (two doses) as of 17 November
(Percentage of total population)

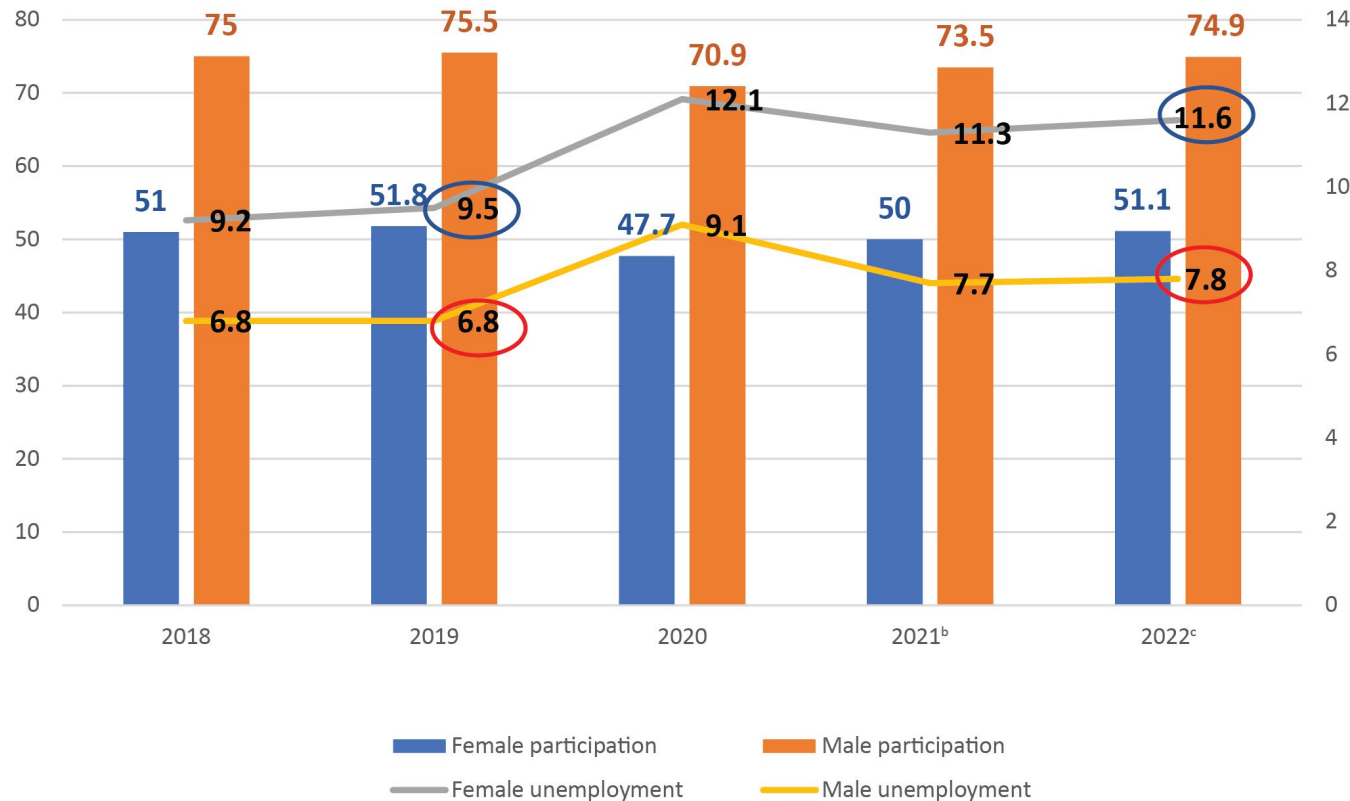


- In the region, **71.1% of the total population** fully vaccinated as of 17 November 2022, **71.4%** in Latin America and **39.2% in the Caribbean**
- Inequality in access to vaccines **remains a challenge:**
 - **11 countries in the region** had not met the WHO target of having 40% of the population fully vaccinated by the end of 2021
 - **22 countries in the region** had not met the WHO target of having 70% of the population fully vaccinated as of June 2022
- **Regional and subregional cooperation and integration** with guaranteed universal access to vaccination is urgently needed

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Our World in Data.

Lacklustre job recovery led by job creation in the informal sector

Latin America and the Caribbean (24 countries):^a labour force participation and unemployment rates, by sex, 2018–2022
(Percentages)



- **7 of 10 jobs created were in the informal sector**
- **Gender asymmetries** persist: female employment recovering more slowly. Female unemployment rate fell from 12.1% to 11.6%, male unemployment rate from 9.1% to 7.8%.
- Both male and female unemployment rates remain higher than before the pandemic
- Urgent need to bolster **strategies to reduce informality** and return to pre-pandemic levels of employment, with **decent work** and **access to social protection**

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official figures and projections.

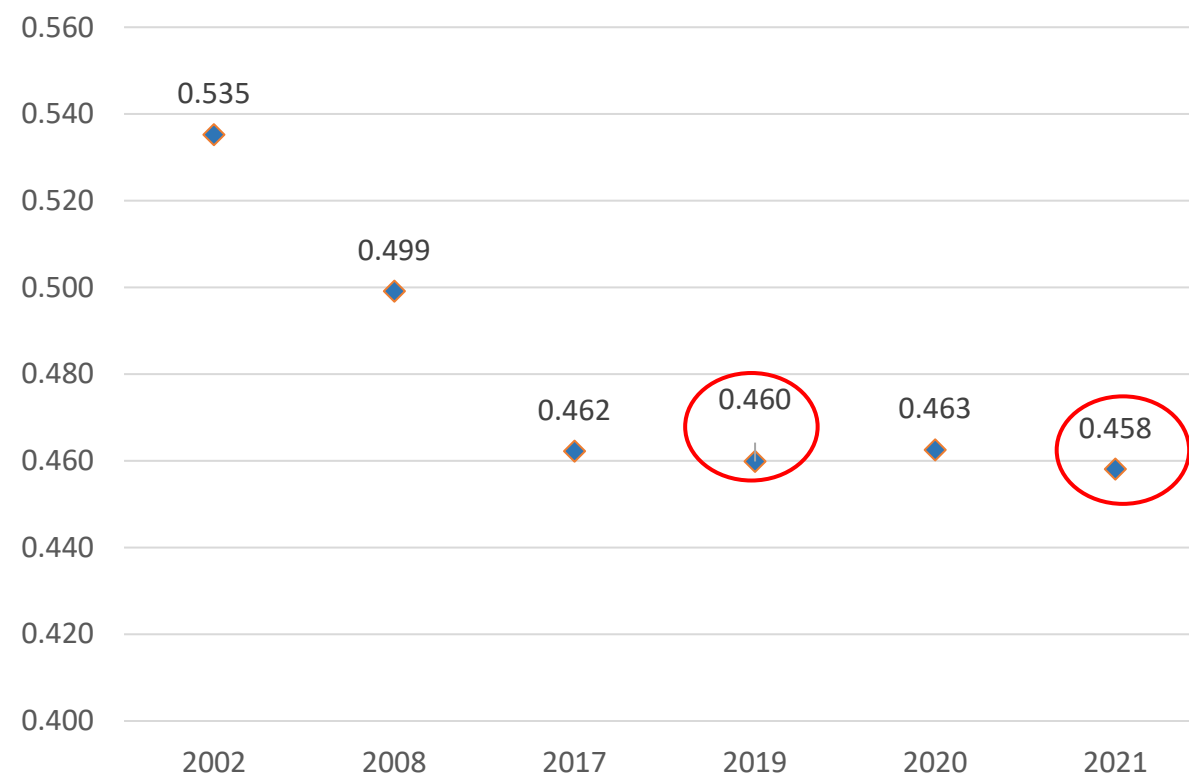
^a Weighted average for the following countries: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay. 2019 figures do not include the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

^b Preliminary figures.

^c Values projected for 2022 in ECLAC, *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022*.

Improvement in the Gini index seen since 2002 stalled in 2017 and the outbreak of the pandemic (2020) was a setback. Levels in 2021 were similar to 2019 levels

Latin America (15 countries): Gini index of inequality, 2002–2021



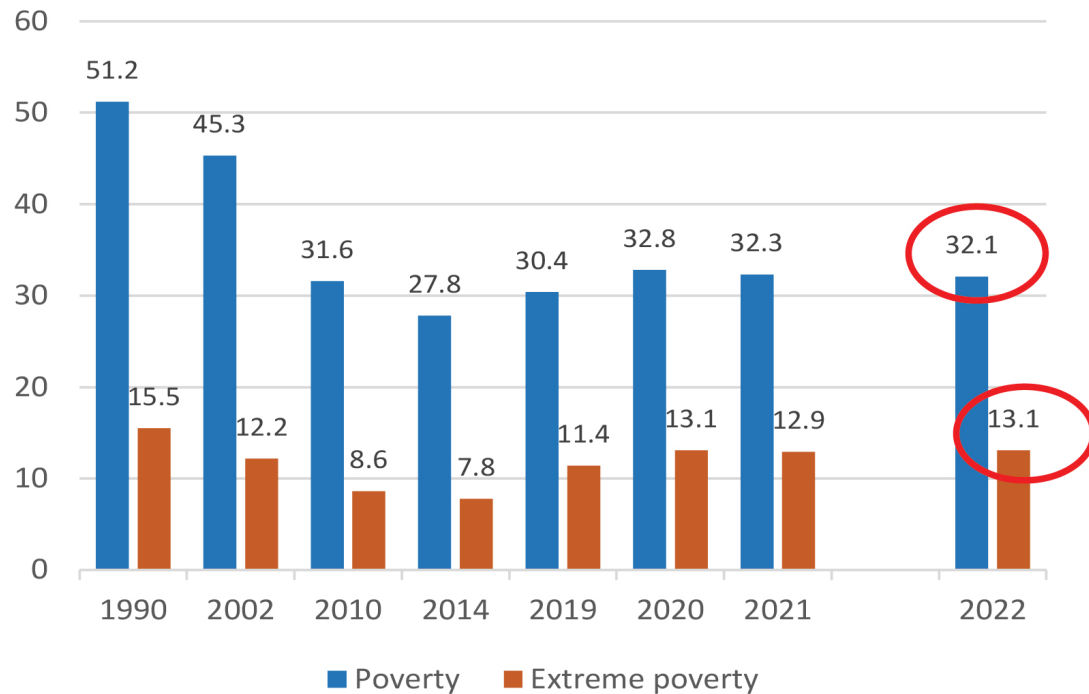
- The pandemic worsened income distribution in several ways:
 - In 2020, **fall in labour market participation and labour income**, in particular in the lowest strata, owing to pandemic-related restrictions
 - In 2021, **uneven recovery in employment and in household income**, with distinct trends depending on income quintile
 - In 2020 and 2021, effects of increases in **cash transfers** to address the health crisis and subsequent cutbacks

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

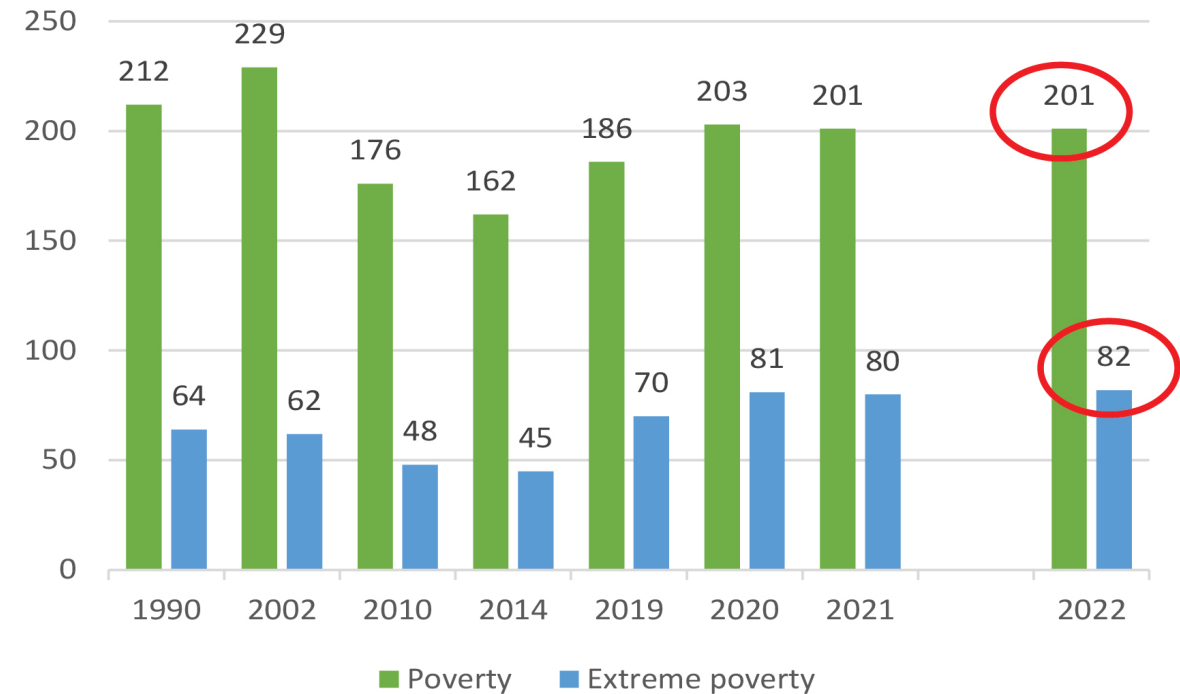
Poverty and extreme poverty remain above pre-pandemic levels after falling slightly in 2021. A slight increase in extreme poverty is projected in 2022

An estimated 201 million people (32.1% of the total population) are expected to remain in poverty in 2022, and the number of people living in extreme poverty is expected to rise to 82 million (13.1%), a result of the combined effect of growth rates, the job market and inflation

Poverty and extreme poverty in Latin America, 1990–2021
(Percentages)



Poverty and extreme poverty in Latin America, 1990–2021
(Millions of people)

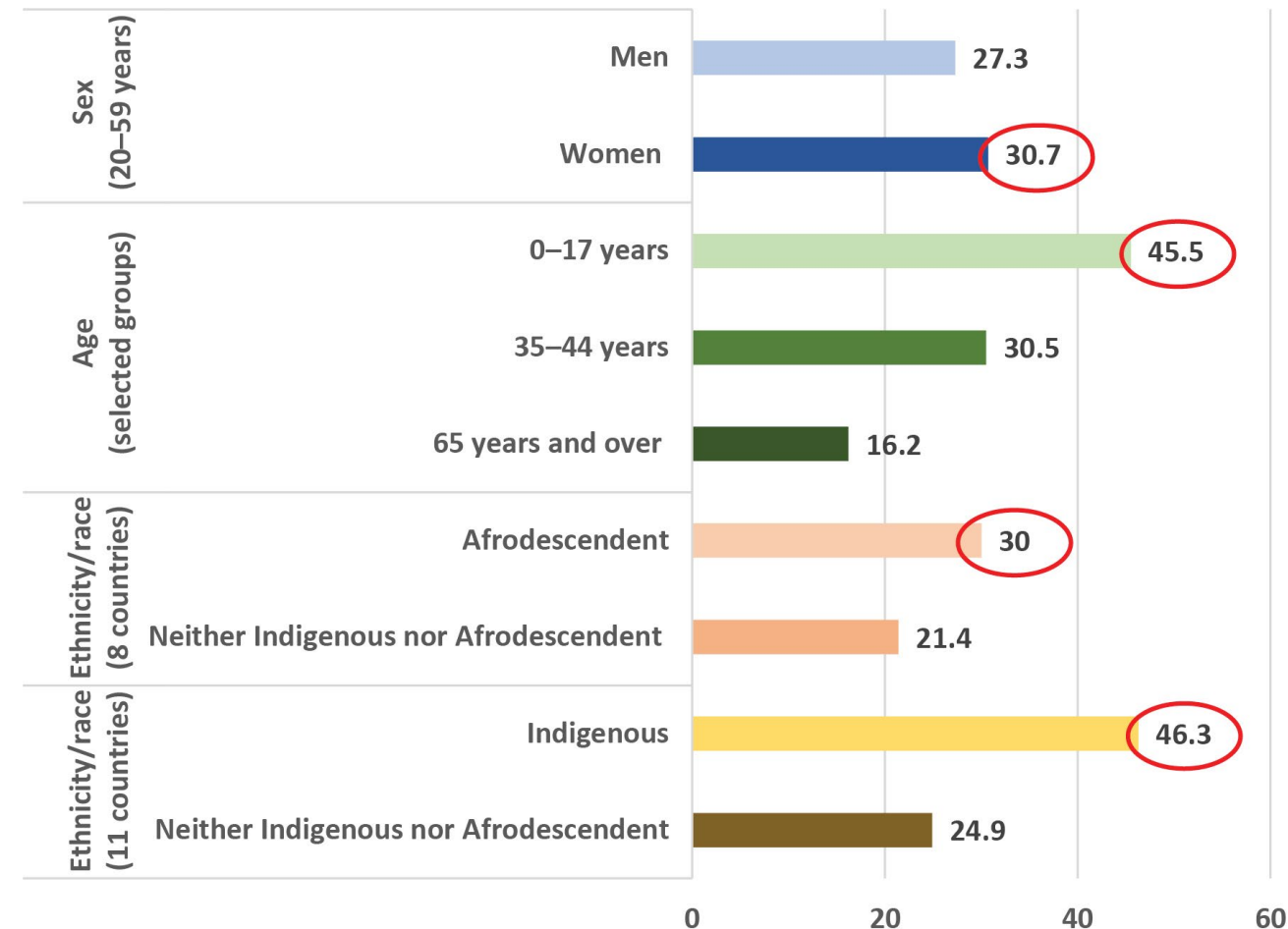


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG).

Note: 2022 figures are projections.

The poverty rate is higher in some population groups: more than 45% of children and adolescents live in poverty

Latin America: poverty rate, by sociodemographic characteristics, 2021
(Percentages)



- The poverty rate among **women** aged 20–59 is higher than among men in every country of the region
- **Children and adolescents** face higher incidence of poverty than other age groups
- Poverty rates are considerably higher among the **Indigenous and Afrodescendent populations**

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

In short, the pandemic triggered a protracted social crisis, with considerable setbacks in key social development indicators

Latin America and the Caribbean: social development indicators, 2019 and 2022
(Percentages and Gini inequality index)

	2019	2022
Poverty ^{a/}	30.4	32.1
Extreme poverty ^{a/}	11.4	13.1
Inequality ^{b/}	0.456	0.452
Unemployment ^{c/}	7.9	9.4
Unemployment – men ^{c/}	6.8	7.8
Unemployment – women ^{c/}	9.5	11.6

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

a/ Figures for 2022 are projections and include 18 countries in Latin America.

b/ The figure for 2022 is from 2021 and includes 15 countries in Latin America.

c/ The figures for 2022 are estimates published by ECLAC in the *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022* (LC/PUB.2022/9-P), Santiago, 2022.

- The region has not yet recovered from the devastating impact of the pandemic, with significant setbacks in poverty and unemployment rates.
- The projected rate of extreme poverty for 2022 (13.1%) would represent a reversal of a quarter century of progress for the region.
- Projected unemployment for 2022 would represent a 22-year setback, affecting women particularly severely, with their unemployment rate rising from 9.5% in 2019 to 11.6% in 2022.

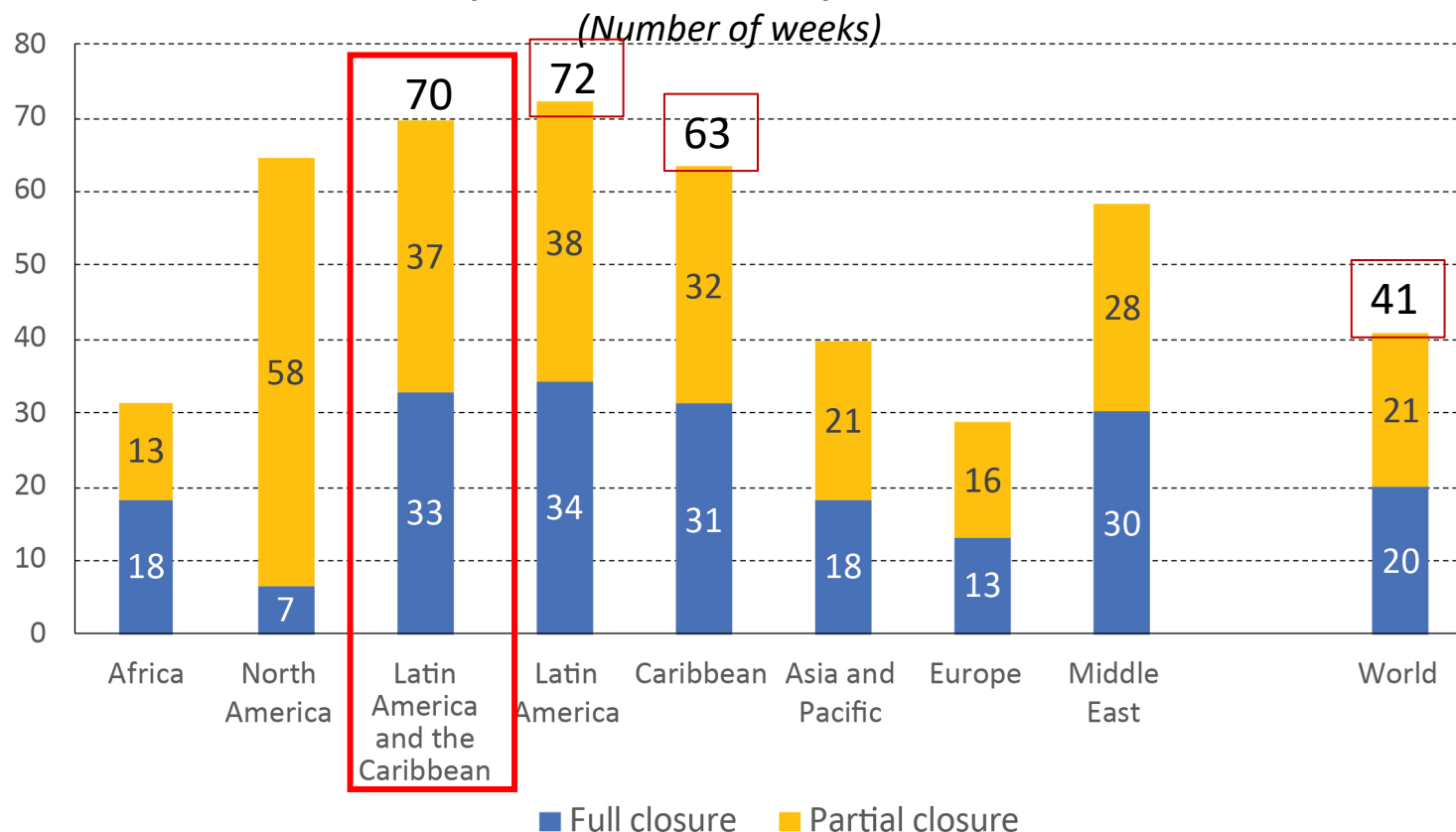


2022

The silent crisis in education

Latin America and the Caribbean had the **longest period of disruption to education** in the world

Duration of full or partial closure of the face-to-face education system (primary and secondary education), February 2020–March 2022



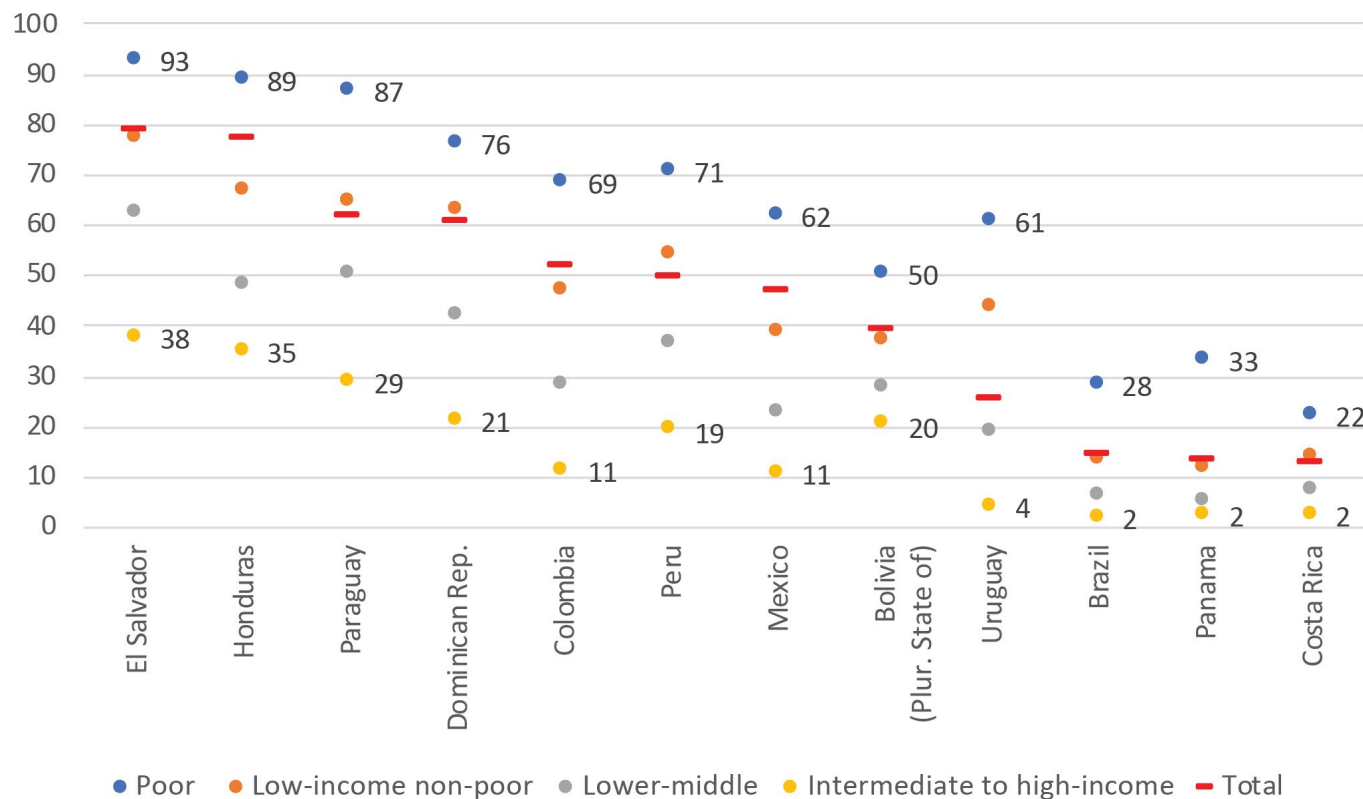
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), COVID-19 Education Response [online database] <https://covid19.uis.unesco.org/data>; M Huepe, A. Palma and D. Trucco, “Educación en tiempos de pandemia: una oportunidad para transformar los sistemas educativos en América Latina y el Caribe”, *Social Policy series*, No. 243 (LC/TS.2022/149), Santiago, ECLAC, 2022.

- The disruption of face-to-face schooling lasted an average of **70 weeks in Latin America and the Caribbean, making it the longest in the world (29 weeks longer than the world average of 41 weeks).**
- On average, in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, **full closures lasted 33 weeks and partial closures 37 weeks** between February 2020 and March 2022.
- **Closures lasted longer in Latin America (72 weeks) than in the Caribbean (63 weeks).**

Continuity of education was limited by inequalities in terms of Internet access, devices and digital skills

Latin America (12 countries): lack of a household Internet connection by income stratum, population aged under 18, around 2021^a

(Percentages of under-18s in households with no Internet connection)



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

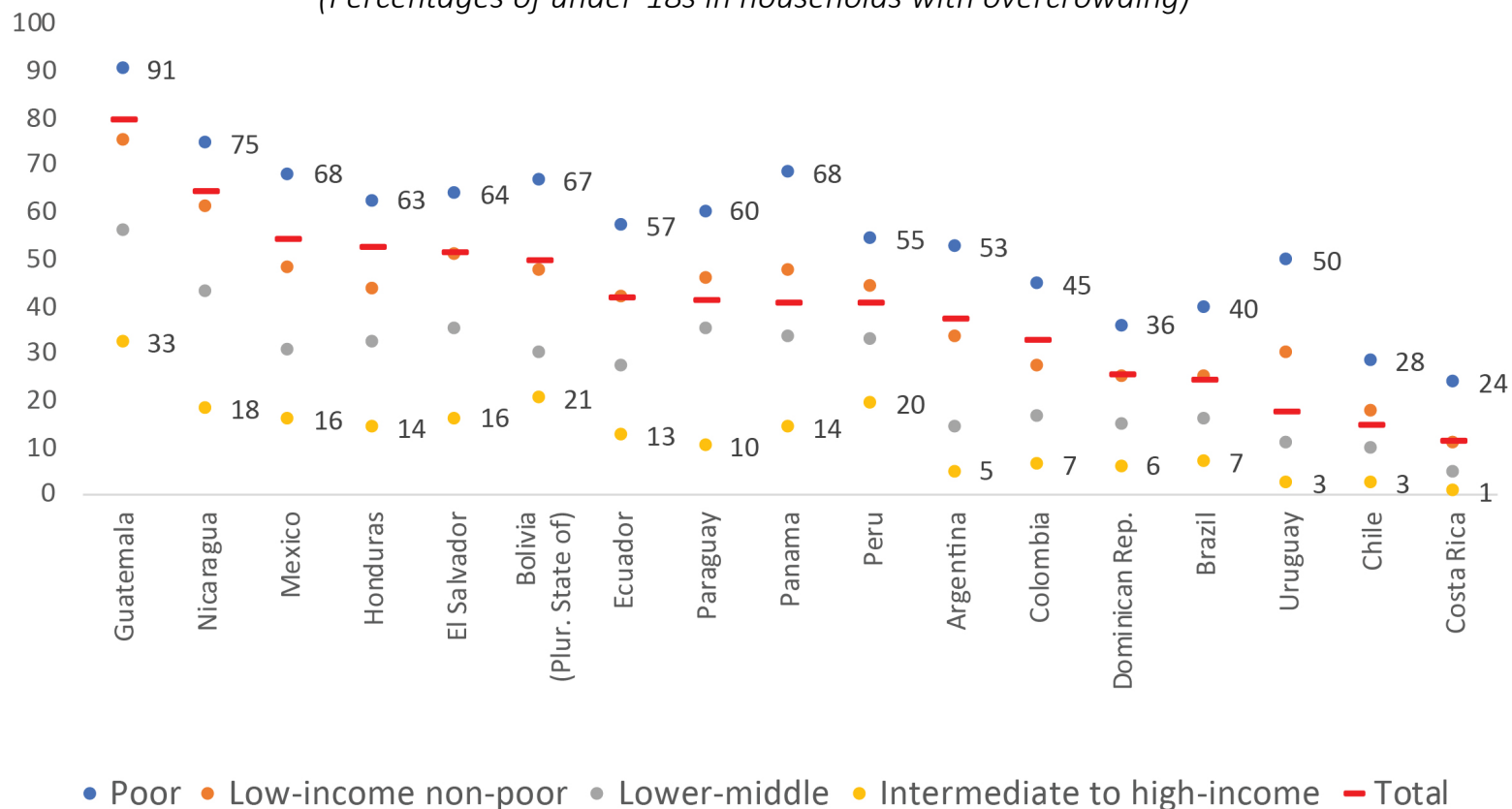
^a No household Internet access through a PC, laptop or mobile phone. Countries are ranked by the overall proportion lacking a household Internet connection.. The data are for 2019 in the cases of Brazil, El Salvador and Honduras and for 2020 in that of Mexico.

- In 8 of 12 countries in the region, **more than 60% of under-18s living in poverty** have no Internet connection, and in 3 countries the percentage is over 80%.
- **The type of device used to access the Internet** also affected the continuity of education: clear differences between mobile phone and a PC.
- Shortages of devices has led to **hoarding of digital technology, even by connected households.**
- Another barrier was a **lack of digital skills** among students and the wider educational community.

Socioeconomic level and the related multiple disadvantages limit educational opportunities for young children and adolescents

Latin America (17 countries): overcrowding by income stratum, population aged under 18, around 2021^a

(Percentages of under-18s in households with overcrowding)



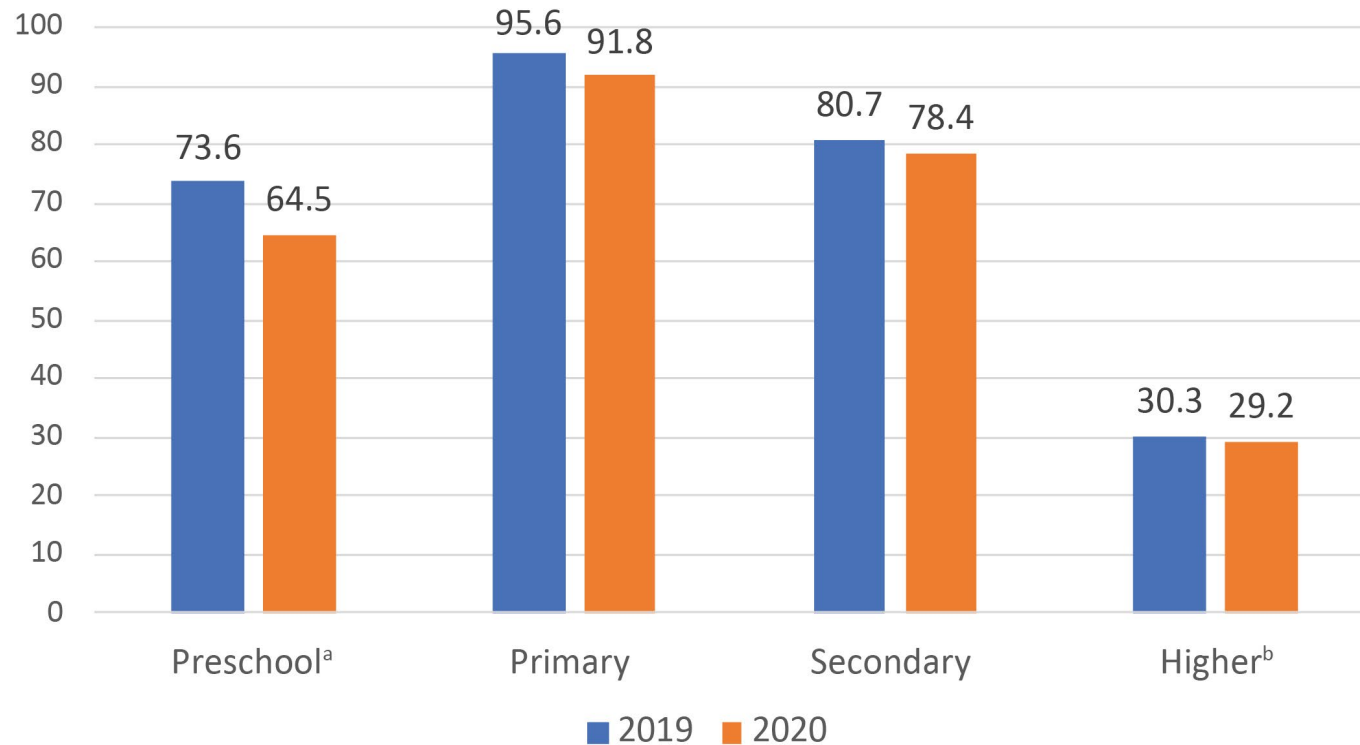
- In 12 countries of the region, **50% or more of children and adolescents living in poverty reside in overcrowded households.**
- **In some countries this not only affects the poorest but also the non-poor low-income and lower middle-income populations.**
- **The effects of overcrowding include hindrance of schoolwork, thus affecting learning and education outcomes.**

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

^a The countries are ranked by the incidence of overcrowding in the population aged under 18. The data are for 2014 in the cases of Guatemala and Nicaragua, 2019 in those of Brazil and Honduras and 2020 in those of El Salvador and Mexico. Overcrowding is understood to mean too few rooms for a household, based on its demographic makeup. According to this definition, one room is required for every two people for the head of the household and their partners, children of the same sex aged 12–17, and children aged under 12, while one room is required for children aged 12–17 of different sexes and persons aged 18 and over.

Attendance declined at all levels of education: the largest falls were in pre-primary

Latin America (13 countries): attendance rates by level of education, 2019 and 2020
(Percentages)



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

Note: Simple average of Argentina (urban areas), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

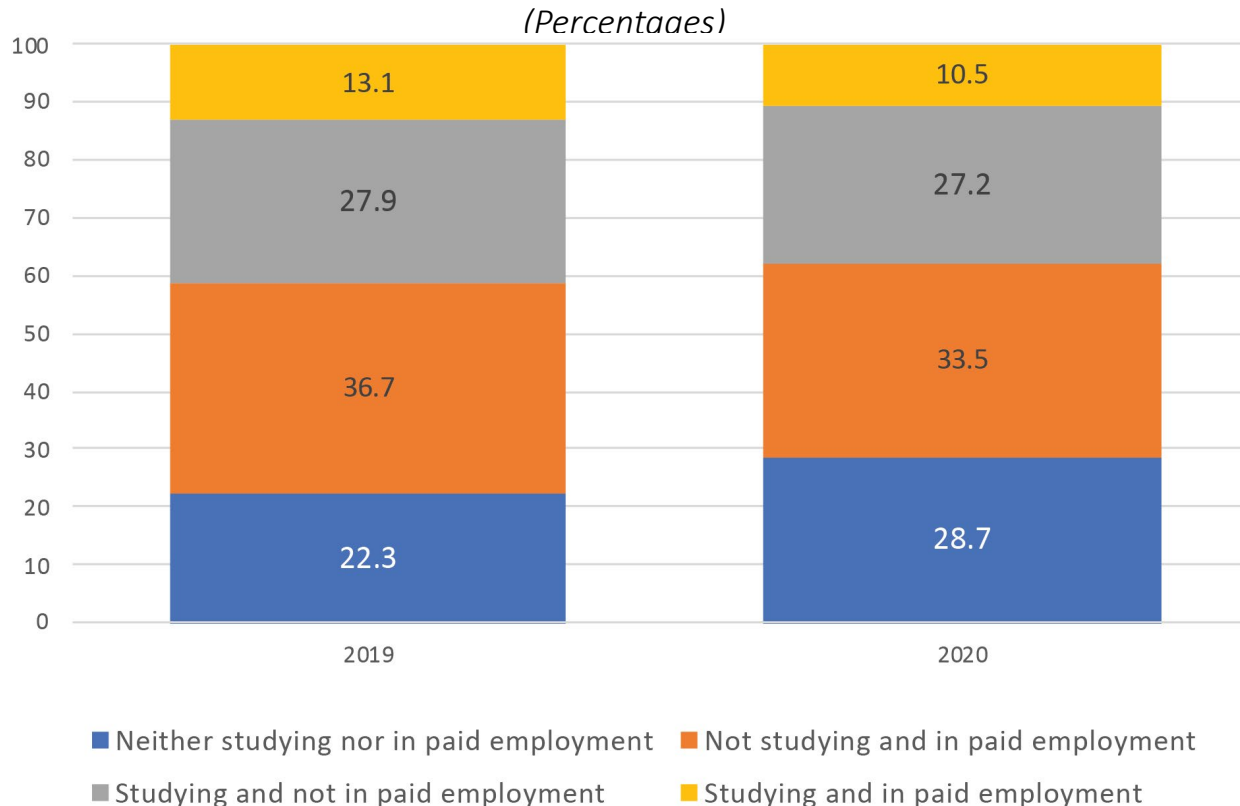
^a 8 countries and children from up to three years from the official age to enter primary school (around 3 years old)

^b 12 countries

- Sharper fall for the youngest learners in pre-primary: a drop of **more than 9.1 percentage points** for children aged 3
- **In primary education attendance fell 3.8 percentage points** from 2019 to 2020 and in **secondary education** it fell by **2.3 points**
- **In higher education attendance fell just 1.1 percentage points**
- The higher the level of education, the smaller the fall in attendance
- **Maintaining the continuity of education remotely is more difficult at lower education levels**

Risk of a **permanent scar**: in terms of the education and careers of the youngest generations

Latin America (13 countries)^a: education and employment status of young people aged 18–24 years, 2019 and 2020



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

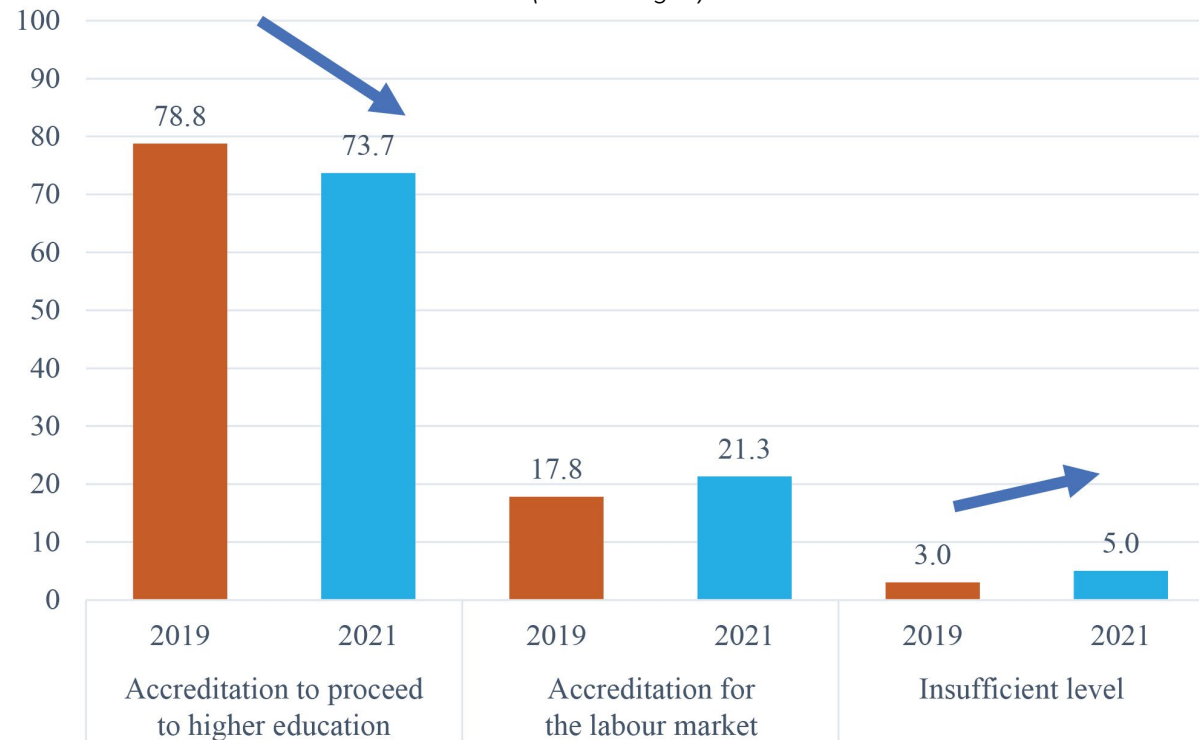
^a Simple average of Argentina (urban areas), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

- The percentage of young people aged 18–24 neither studying nor in paid employment **rose from 22.3% to 28.7%**
- **Young women are more severely affected** (36% neither studying nor in paid employment, compared to 22% of young men)
- The schooling deficit and delay in joining the labour market **affect careers and income throughout life**
- Measures are urgently needed to foster **the inclusion of young people in the labour market** (decent work) and support for their transition from education to work, with access to comprehensive care policies

Risk of a **permanent scar**: the effects in terms of loss of learning can already be seen in the Caribbean

The Caribbean (20 countries and territories):^a performance of secondary students in the English A examination of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), based on the level of accreditation achieved, 2019 and 2021

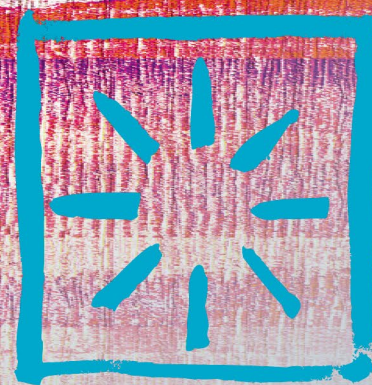
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of data from the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC).

^a Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saba (2019 only), Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martín, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Eustatius, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos Islands.

- The first signs of the impact on outcomes has been seen in measurements of learning at the end of secondary education in the Caribbean
- The proportion of **students accredited to proceed to higher education fell by 5 percentage points**
- The proportion of students who obtained an **insufficient level** to be accredited rose from **3% to 5%**

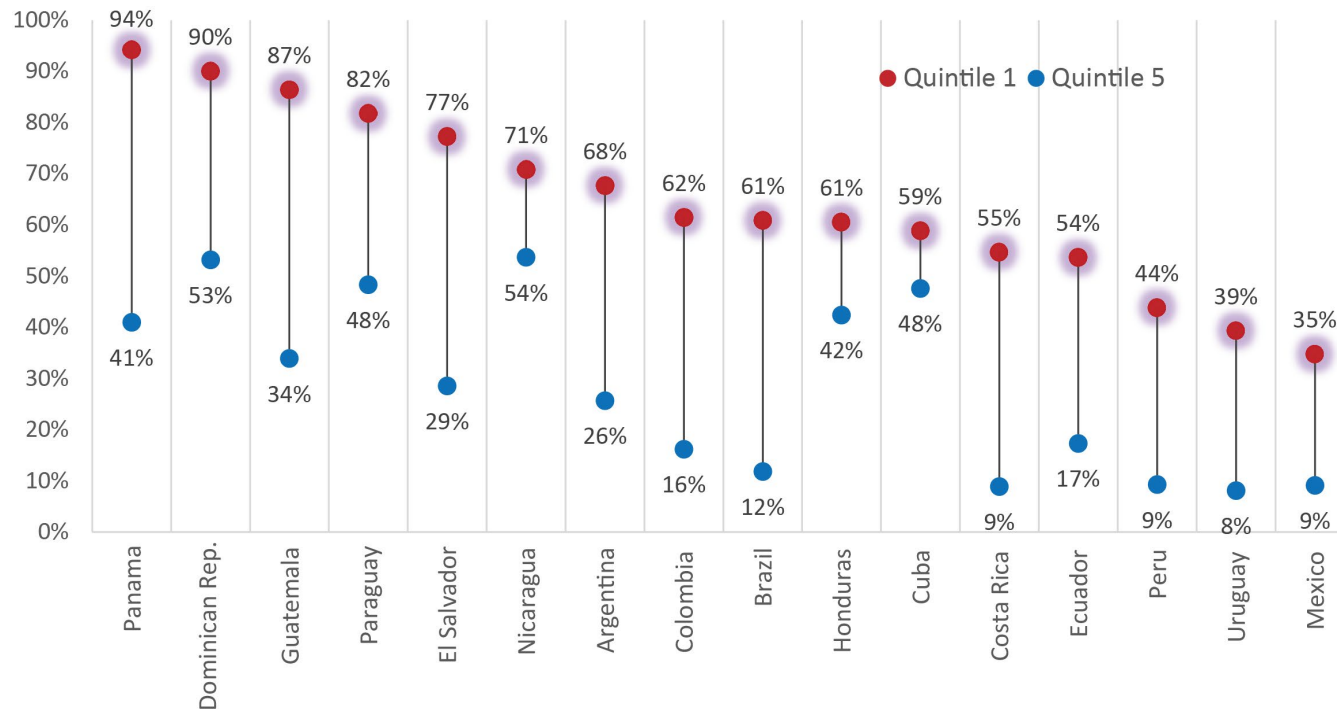


2022

The effects of the pandemic on education
have compounded an existing crisis
in educational inclusion and quality

Even before the pandemic, there were large **learning gaps** in Latin America

Latin America (16 countries): proportion of sixth-grade students at the lowest proficiency level in mathematics (levels 1 to 4),^a by income level (first and fifth quintiles), according to ERCE 2019
(Percentages)



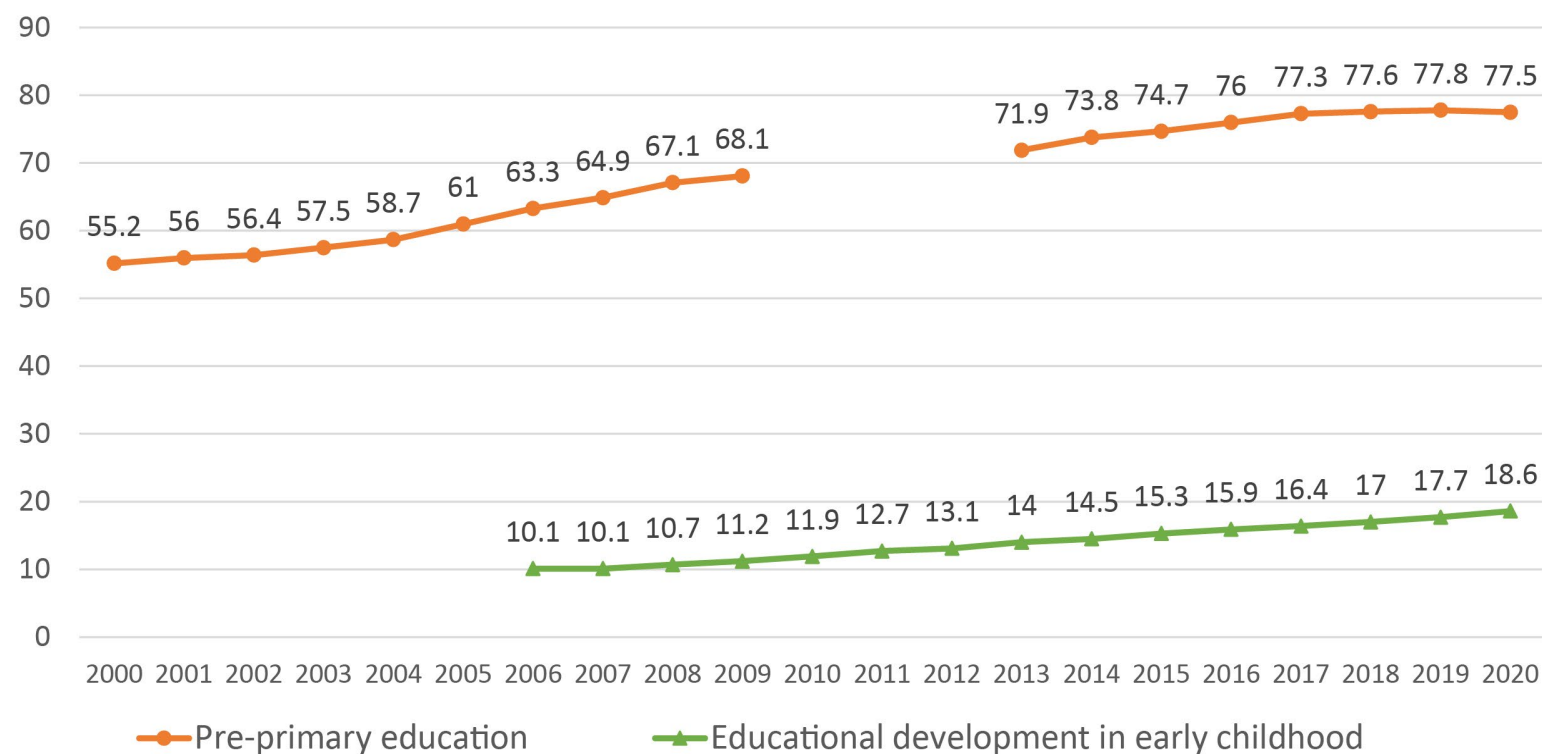
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE), 2019.

^a The minimum proficiency level is the benchmark of basic knowledge in a domain. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Los aprendizajes fundamentales en América Latina y el Caribe, evaluación de logros de los estudiantes: Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (ERCE 2019)*, Paris, 2021, in the framework of monitoring Goal 4 in Latin America and the Caribbean, this benchmark is equivalent to a level II in third-grade reading and mathematics tests and level III in sixth-grade reading and mathematics tests.

- In 2019, in 13 of the 16 countries, 50%–94% of students with the lowest income level (**quintile 1**) **did not achieve the minimum level of proficiency in mathematics in primary school**
- Differences are substantial at the lowest level of proficiency between students with the lowest income level (quintile 1) and students with the highest income level (quintile 5), in several countries
- On average, learning outcomes in primary education **did not improve from 2013 to 2019**
- In 2019, just **17%** of students in **sixth grade** achieved minimum proficiency in **mathematics** and **31%** in **reading**

The region was making progress on **access** to pre-primary education, but it is insufficient and uneven

Latin America and the Caribbean: gross rate of registration (coverage) in pre-primary and early childhood education, 2000–2020
(Percentages)



- Coverage in **pre-primary education** (3–5 years) was **77.5% in 2020**, 22 percentage points higher than in 2000.
- That coverage in 2020 was much higher than coverage for educational development programmes for **early childhood** (0–2 years), which was just **18.6%**, and had improved by just **8 percentage points since 2006**.
- **Large gaps remain, in terms of socioeconomic levels and territories** (urban/rural).
- **These coverage issues must be urgently addressed.** Exclusion of these populations **perpetuates structural inequalities** and hinders equal opportunities.

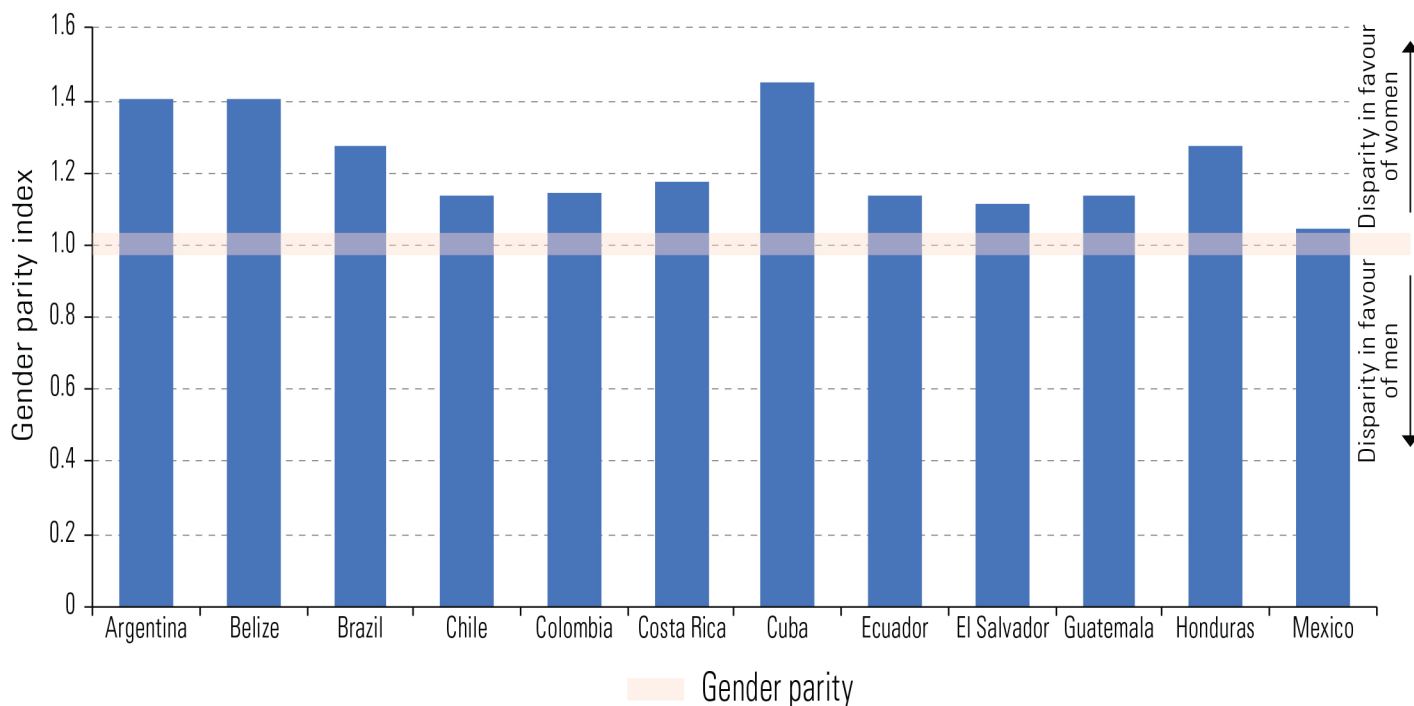
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/United Nations Children's Fund)/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO/UNICEF/ECLAC), *Education in Latin America at a Crossroads: Regional Monitoring Report SDG4 - Education 2030*, Paris, 2022; UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) data" [online] <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org>; "UIS Developer Portal" [online] <https://apiportal.uis.unesco.org/bdds>.

Exclusion from the education system weighs more heavily on some population groups

Based on ethnicity and race	Based on migration status
• A smaller percentage of Indigenous students complete secondary education than students who are neither Indigenous nor of African descent. • Students of African descent are also at a disadvantage in all the countries for which data are available (with the exception of Panama). • Progress in addressing the barriers of access to education faced by Indigenous and Afrodescendent students and in intercultural education is crucial.	• Migrant children and adolescents (especially those who are unaccompanied) are disproportionately excluded from the education system, at alarming levels in some countries. • The pandemic worsened the situation. • There is need of investment in inclusive education that meets the needs of students in situations of mobility, to guarantee the right to education.
Based on disability status	Early unions and adolescent motherhood
• Persons with disabilities are at a disadvantage and excluded from education system: as a result of barriers to accessibility, context and attitudes owing to the environment. • For countries for which data are available (just six in the region) the adult population completes 10 years of school on average, compared to fewer than 7 for persons with disabilities. • It is important to consider actions to overcome the existing inequalities and gaps.	• In the region, one in five women aged 20–24 years entered into child marriage or early union before the age of 18 in 2020. • The percentage is higher among disadvantaged social groups and these harmful practices violate children's rights. • Mothers with one child or in unions between the ages of 14 and 17 years record much lower attendance rates than young women without children or who are not in early unions.

Despite progress in women's access to, retention in and completion of education at all levels, big gaps remain in proficiency and disciplines

Latin America and the Caribbean (12 countries): gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education, adjusted gender parity index, 2019



In the region, women's participation in higher education exceeds that of men (adjusted gender parity index)

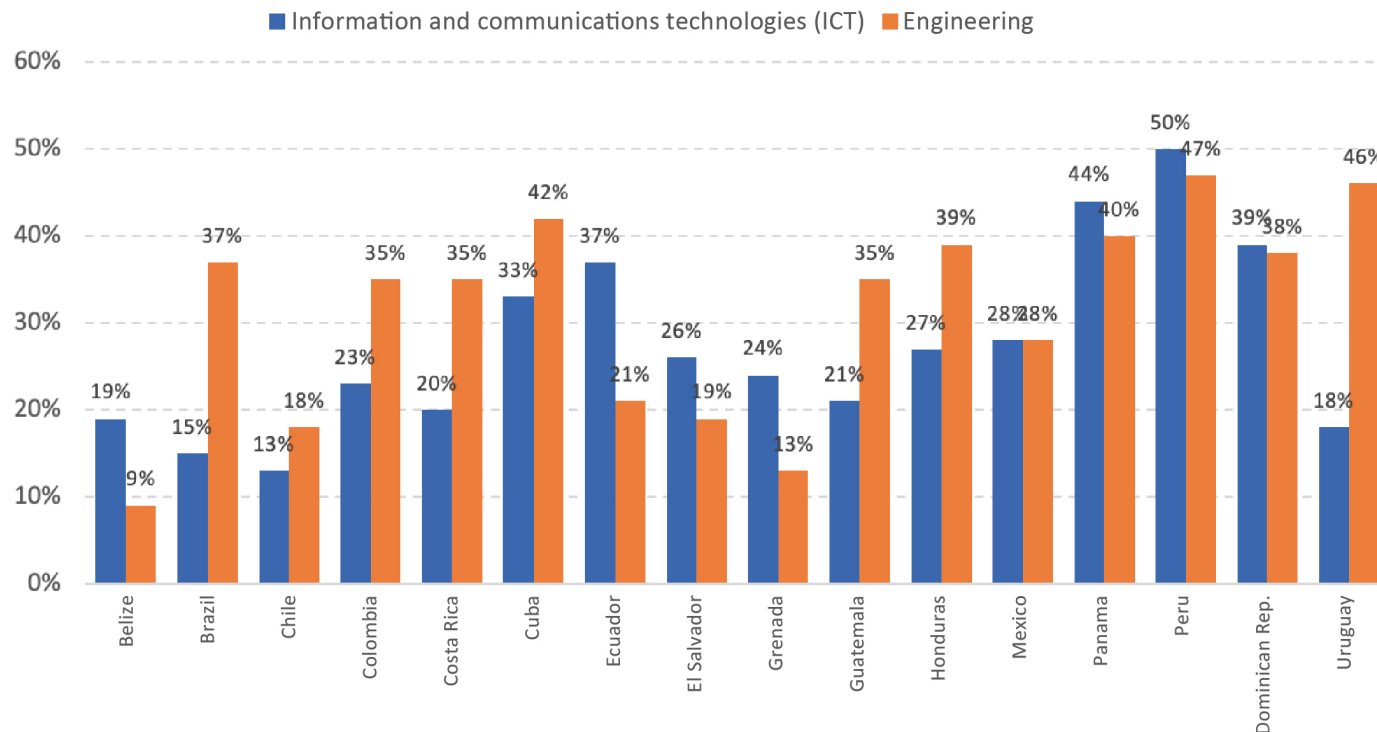
- However, there is a clear pattern of gender segregation by discipline that begins to appear at the basic education level.
- On average, **female students do not perform as well in mathematics and science** at the basic education level and these disparities worsen in the lowest income quintiles.
- In higher education, there are wide gender gaps in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Gender parity index (GPI)" [online] <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/es/node/5395>.

Women's enrolment in engineering and technology courses reinforces marked horizontal segregation

Latin America and the Caribbean (16 countries): share of women in total tertiary education graduates in engineering and information and communications technologies (ICT)

(Percentages)



- In most countries of the region, the proportion of female graduates in STEM is lower than 40%
- In engineering and ICT, women's participation is notably low. In ICT, women's participation is less than 30% in 11 of 16 countries.
- Women are concentrated in education, health, social sciences, arts and humanities.

Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education", *Global Education Monitoring Report*, Paris, 2020.



2022

The crisis is an opportunity to transform education in Latin America and the Caribbean

Overarching objectives of educational transformation

Learning to learn

Equip each student with key cognitive and socioemotional skills for the twenty-first century – early education is crucial.

Learning to live together

Prepare students to become active and responsible citizens, with respect for diversity, solidarity and nature. Help to create a culture of peace.

Learning to do

Ensure continuous learning throughout the life cycle, with a focus on training and retraining, digital literacy, and financial and STEM skills.

Learning to be

Instill the values, knowledge and skills needed to enjoy and live a meaningful, dignified and fulfilling life.

Source: United Nations, “Transforming Education: an urgent political imperative for our collective future. Vision Statement of the Secretary-General on Transforming Education”, 2022 [online] <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/sg-vision-statement>.

Lines of action for Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of the action tracks agreed on at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit 2022

Action track 1: Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools

1. Invest more in early childhood
2. Universalize secondary education in terms of both access and completion
3. Harmonize education with other public policy sectors
 - ❖ Health
 - ❖ Transport
 - ❖ Protection of household income
 - ❖ Care
 - ❖ Work

4. Dismantle the structural challenges of gender inequality
 - ❖ Eliminate gender stereotypes
 - ❖ Include the gender perspective, with a focus on the digital gender divide
 - ❖ Foster gender equality in STEM

Lines of action for Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of the action tracks agreed on at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit 2022

Action track 2: Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development

1. Develop cognitive and socioemotional skills
2. Strengthen higher education as the backbone of a policy of inclusion and sustainable development
3. Encourage education throughout the life cycle

Action track 3: Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

Enable teachers to reinvent themselves as change agents

1. Training and empowerment to implement innovations
2. Knowledge producers, facilitators and guides for understanding complex realities
3. Contribution to the integration of different types of knowledge (valuing intercultural perspectives, encouraging the preservation of Indigenous languages)

Lines of action for Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of the action tracks agreed on at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit 2022

Action track 4: Digital learning and transformation

Harness the digital revolution to the full for educational transformation involves the three Cs of digital learning:

1. Connectivity: narrowing infrastructure and equipment gaps
2. Capacities: advancing in the digital transformation of learning
3. Content: incentivizing development of platforms and content

Action track 5: Invest more, more fairly and more efficiently in education

1. This is the most important investment a country can make in its future: increase investment per student in real terms
2. Investment that reduces exclusion from education: rural areas, students living in poverty, ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples and persons of African descent
3. Greater efficiency requires better resource management, monitoring and evaluation
4. This all requires progress on a new social and fiscal compact that recognizes and strengthens the central role of education in the achievement of sustainable development with equality



2022

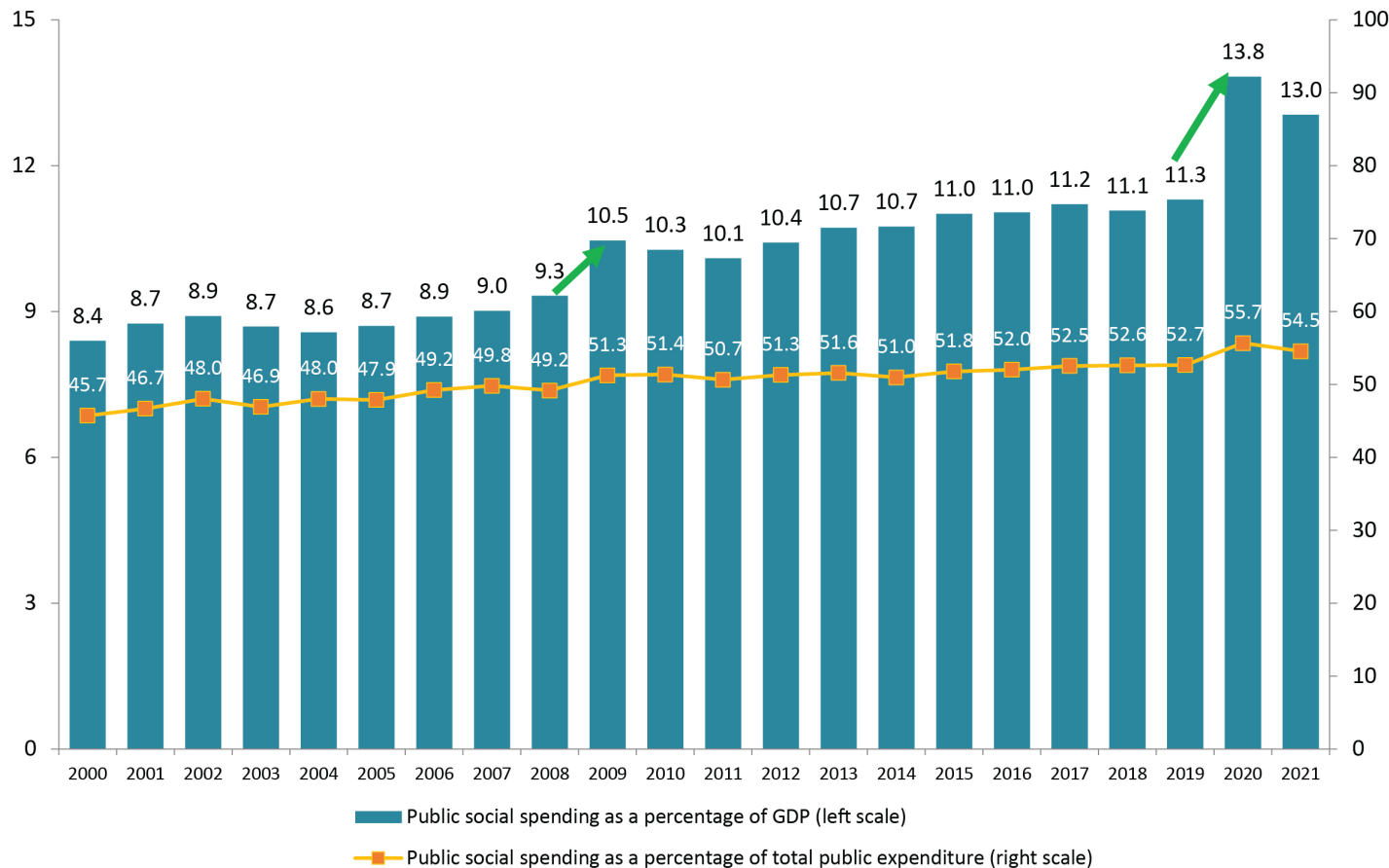
Urgent transformations call for strengthening of social institutional framework and social spending

The social institutional framework is crucial to the effectiveness of social policies and a cross-cutting element in the pursuit of inclusive social development

- **The social institutional framework determines** the capacities to design, implement and evaluate social policies and programmes.
- Strengthening this framework involves various dimensions:
 - **Legal and regulatory dimension** with adequate frameworks that guide the purposes and principles of policies
 - **Organizational dimension** with clear mandates and coordination
 - **Technical and operational dimension** for the effective implementation of policies
 - **Financing dimension** with sufficient and sustainable resources that enable quality social policies
- Progress has been made in the region, but significant challenges remain, especially in countries with fewer resources.

In Latin America, social spending amounted to 13% of GDP in 2021, lower than in 2020 but much higher than in the past two decades

Latin America (17 countries): central government social spending, 2000–2021^a
(Percentages of GDP and total public expenditure)



Central government social spending:

- Decreased by **0.8 percentage points of GDP**, on average, between 2020 and 2021.
- **Decreased as a share of total spending, from 55.7% in 2020 to 54.5% in 2021**, but remained the largest component.
- The challenge of **maintaining sustainable social spending levels** to address the impacts successive crises, along with the legacy of social gaps, remains.

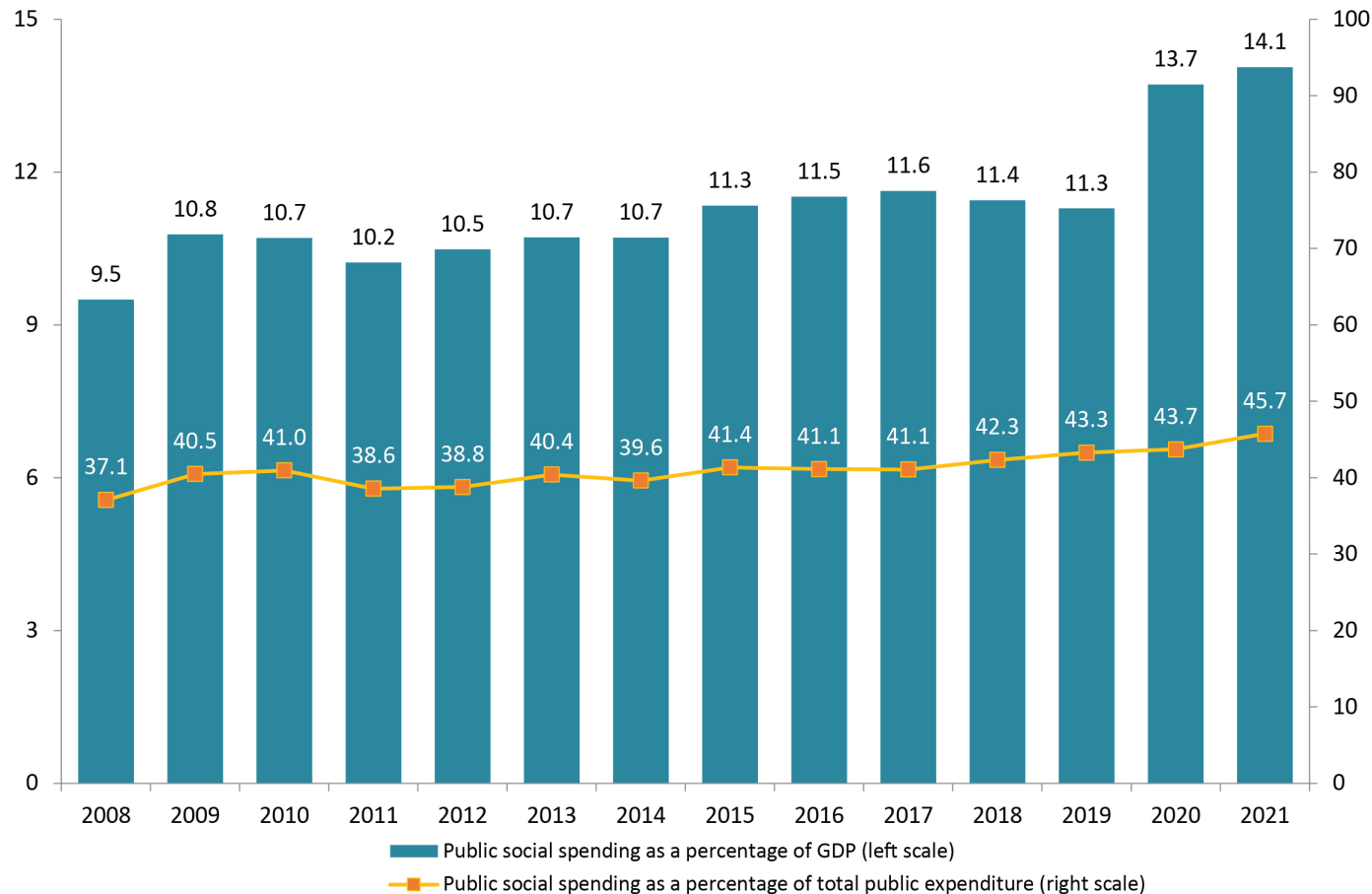
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official information from the countries.

^a The averages represent the arithmetic mean of the values for 17 Latin American countries: 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 coverage in the Plurinational State of Bolivia corresponds to central administration, and that of Peru corresponds to general government. Data for Panama and the Plurinational State of Bolivia refer 2020.

Note: This level of social spending is based on stronger growth in GDP than in social spending.

In the Caribbean, social spending was equivalent to 14.1% of GDP in 2021, a new record

The Caribbean (5 countries): central government social spending, 2008–2021^a
(Percentages of GDP and total public expenditure)



Central government social spending between 2020 and 2021:

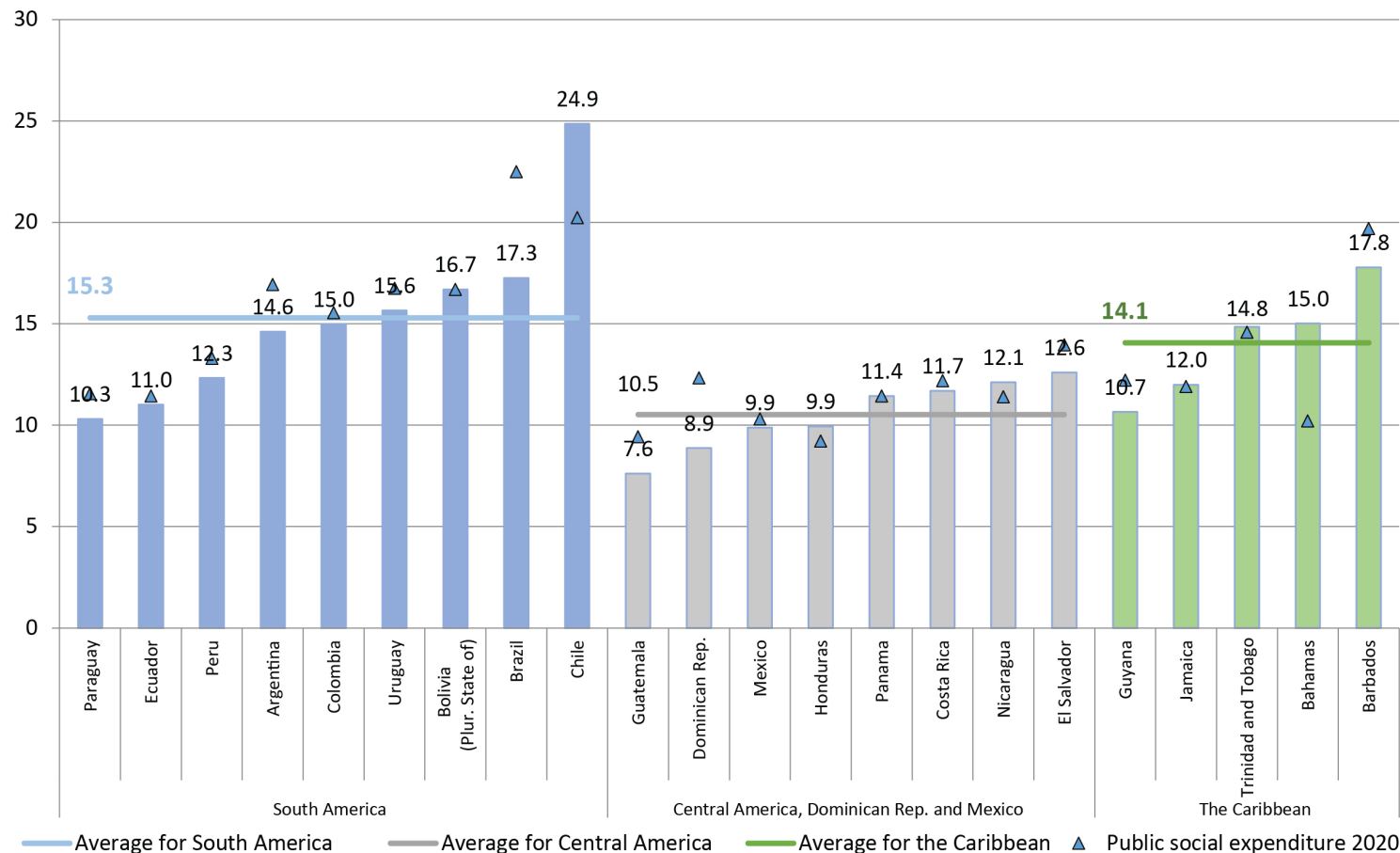
- **Rose by 0.4 percentage points of GDP on average.**
- As a share of total public expenditure (45.7%), remains **lower** than that of Latin American countries.
- **Average real growth of 10% in 2021**, with 30% increase in spending on social protection and 9% increase in spending on health.
- Financial challenges include **high debt levels** associated with successive crises caused by climate change and disasters.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official information from the countries.

^a The averages correspond to the arithmetic mean of the values for five Caribbean countries: Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Social spending remains heterogeneous across countries and subregions: more than 17% of GDP in some countries but below 10% in others

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (22 COUNTRIES): CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SOCIAL SPENDING, TOTAL AND BY SUBREGION, 2021^a
(Percentages of GDP)



- **South America** is the subregion with the **highest average level of social spending (15.3% of GDP)** and is the most heterogenous
- In the group comprising **Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Rep.**, central government social spending averaged 10.5% of GDP, this figure was 14.1% of GDP **in the Caribbean**
- **Per capita social spending averages:**
 - US\$ 1,529 for **South America**, 2.1 times that for the group comprising **Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Rep.** (US\$ 745)
 - US\$ 2,140 for **Caribbean** countries, where average **per capita social spending was highest**

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of official information from the countries.

^a Data for Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia and Nicaragua refer to 2018; and for Panama, data refer to 2017. Coverage for Bolivia (Plurinational State of) corresponds to central government and for Peru to general government. Data for Uruguay do not include the Social Security Bank (BPS). The 2020 levels of public social spending published in *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2019* are included for comparison purposes.



2022

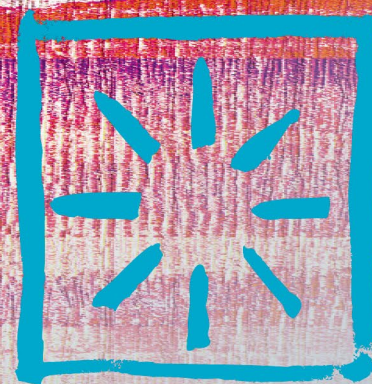
Progress towards inclusive social development will
require implementation of an ambitious,
transformative and inclusive agenda in the region

The social outlook for the region at end-2022: failure to reverse the impacts of the pandemic on poverty and extreme poverty and a silent crisis in education jeopardizes the future of the new generations

- **The region is facing a protracted social crisis** triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Despite progress in recent decades**, region had large debts in terms of **equality and quality of education** before the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Investing in education is one of the keys to inclusive growth and sustainable development.**
- It is vital to convert this **crisis into an opportunity for the transformation of education.**
- **Urgent need ensuring safe face-to-face attendance without leaving anyone behind**, especially the most vulnerable groups. Key actions in this regard include:
 - Restoring the **socioemotional well-being** of school communities
 - **Re-engaging students who dropped out** of school
 - Assessing and **recovering learning processes**
 - **Rethinking the competencies** to be developed in education
 - **Learning from innovations** in education
 - Harnessing the **digital revolution to the full** in education

The cascading crises at hand have exacerbated inequalities and deprivations: now is not the time for incremental change, but for transformative and ambitious policies

- **Transforming education** is an imperative to make the leap needed for growth, , tackling uncertainties and moving towards inclusive social development.
- **Need for intersectoral public policy efforts** that link the provision of education with health, employment and social protection, and that establish mechanisms to safeguard well-being and income in times of **volatility and uncertainty**.
- **Women's participation in the sectors that drive the economy** must be increased **to advance towards a care society** with gender equality.
- **Given the prolonged social crisis in the region**, it is essential to strengthen the **social institutional framework** and **social investment** in order to address the challenges identified.
- **New social compacts supported by fiscal covenants** are needed to make progress in strengthening democracy and social cohesion and ensure the financial sustainability of social protection systems in the region.



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Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean

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