



5 GENDER  
EQUALITY



## SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup>

### Key regional statistics on SDG 5

- Time-use surveys from 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries show that women spend between one fifth and one third of their time on unpaid domestic and care work, compared with about 10% for men.
- Women's participation in the labour market increased by 5.3 percentage points between 1997 and 2007, but since then this uptrend has slowed.
- Depending on the country, between 12% and 66% of women who do not participate in the labour market care for dependants, compared with a figure of less than 6% for men.
- In 2017, unemployment among women and men in Latin America and the Caribbean stood at 10.4% and 7.6%, respectively, reflecting a difference of 2.8 percentage points.
- Although 15 countries have adopted measures to achieve wage equality between women and men, the average hourly wages of men remain higher than those of women: in the service sector, which accounts for the largest proportion of women in the labour market, women earn hourly wages 19.8% lower than men's.
- With regard to women's participation in business, the proportion of women in managerial positions increased by approximately 1 percentage point between 2013 and 2017, standing at 35.4% in the latter.
- Almost a third of women in the region do not have their own income, a situation that makes them vulnerable and economically dependent. In 2017, the regional average of women with no income of their own reached 29.4%, while for men it was 10.7%.
- In Latin America, the femininity index of poverty remained stable and high between 2012 and 2017, at around 113.
- To date, 13 countries have comprehensive laws to prevent, punish and eradicate gender-based violence that expand the frontiers of gender policies by involving parliaments, courts, the police, prosecutors and the health, education and labour sectors at national and subnational levels. However, legislative progress has not been sufficient to eradicate gender-based violence. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 21% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner in the last 12 months.

<sup>1</sup> The analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented here is the outcome of the discussions held within the framework of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, from 24 to 26 April 2019.



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## SDG 5

- In the region, more than 15,000 women in 16 countries have been victims of femicide in the past five years, most of them at the hands of their partners (intimate femicide).
- At least 3,790 women from 25 Latin American and Caribbean countries were victims of femicide in 2017. In the Caribbean, nine countries reported femicide data for 2017, totalling 84 deaths of women linked to gender-based violence.
- Between 1997 and 2018, women's participation in parliaments in the region increased from 12.1% to 30.7%.
- On average, women hold 25.7% of ministerial offices, and the number of female ministers has decreased in seven Latin American and two Caribbean countries compared to the previous government. Female ministers tend to be given portfolios linked to social issues, rather than those on political, economic and production matters.
- Of the eight Latin American and Caribbean countries holding presidential and legislative elections in 2019, only five will implement quota or gender parity laws.
- At the local and subnational levels, women account for 14.6% of mayors and 29.5% of representatives in local legislative bodies.
- Despite the increase in the number of women on the boards of directors of central banks in Latin America, they still did not account for more than 25% of board members in 2017.

### Key messages from the region on the issues addressed by SDG 5 and its targets

- Gender equality does not stem from a lack of education, but is defined by a lack of opportunities for women, for instance, to enter the labour market after having children.
- The gender approach facilitates the identification of cultural and social constructions that predispose society to naturalize situations of discrimination and exclusion.
- Although the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted regulations to eradicate violence against women and eliminate patriarchal practices, discourse and cultural patterns that limit women's autonomy and the full exercise of their rights, the region continues to reflect the highest incidence of femicide, especially in countries in Central America and the Caribbean.
- Latin America has the largest number of women elected to national parliament in the world. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Latin American and Caribbean countries are far from achieving gender parity in legislative bodies and other areas of politics. One of the biggest —and sometimes least visible— obstacles faced by women in politics is gender-based violence and intimidation.
- Many women who enter the labour market looking for work do not find it or obtain only low-quality jobs. In recent years, the slower rate of job creation has resulted in an increase in female unemployment, which is still higher than male unemployment.
- Public policies relating to labour must take the gender perspective into account, for example through the remuneration of domestic and care work.
- Poverty reduction has not benefited men and women equally. Women make up a higher proportion of those living in poor households.
- Adapting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the local situation and mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women in local spaces are essential for eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, governance and peace.



## Challenges and opportunities for the implementation, follow-up and review of SDG 5 and its targets

### Challenges

- In the region, the nature and seriousness of political harassment of women varies. This issue has only been addressed systematically in recent years, also through legislative progress.
- Women's labour force participation and their access to any form of income remain highly stratified among women of different socioeconomic levels.
- While the female labour force participation rate has improved in recent decades, this has not been matched by an increase in time spent by men on unpaid work, owing to discriminatory social, cultural and demographic factors.
- Even when more women complete secondary education than men, they still do not have the same employment opportunities.
- Women make up the majority of voluntary workers. It is therefore advisable to develop public policies that formally incorporate volunteerism.
- The Caribbean is still the only subregion that has yet to carry out a large-scale time-use survey to quantify unpaid work in order to comprehensively address the inequalities rooted in the sexual division of labour within the household.

### Opportunities

- With regard to decision-making autonomy, most Latin American and Caribbean countries have adopted quota and parity laws in the last two decades in an effort to reduce gender inequalities in politics.

## Lessons learned and good practices with respect to SDG 5 and its targets

- An important milestone in the fight against gender-based violence was the adoption of the Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence against Women by the competent national authorities of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention in 2015. The following year, the Committee adopted the Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women in Political Life, prepared by the Committee of Experts of the follow-up mechanism.
- The implementation of the measures of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 is key to creating the structural conditions, mechanisms and resources needed to guarantee women's rights and advance towards gender equality. At the national level, governments are using the Montevideo Strategy as a tool for formulating gender equality policies which are part of sustainable development strategies.
- In some countries of the region, ministries of women's affairs have participated in preparing the voluntary national reviews submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. One example is the review submitted by Uruguay in 2017, in which the National Women's Institute (Inmujeres) led the analysis of SDG 5, together with the National Institute of Statistics and the Office of Planning and Budget. For the review prepared by Ecuador in 2018, the government organized a participatory process which included women's organizations.





## Recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve SDG 5 and its targets

- To achieve gender equality, establish urgent and sustainable measures to address structural obstacles and the fundamental causes of discrimination against women.
- Create laws and regulations that foster gender equality and that are supported by sufficient resources and accompanied by responsibility for the commitments made in favour of women's rights in all areas.
- Step up efforts to analyse and share good practices relating to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in the region. Establish an understanding of this little examined phenomenon through clear data, which is also crucial to fighting impunity.
- Establish new legal frameworks on equality for women in the workplace and eliminate practices that are harmful to women in order to end gender-based discrimination.
- Provide women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes, which will fuel sustainable economies and sustainable societies.
- To achieve SDG 5, recognize and value unpaid domestic and care work through public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.
- Promote shared responsibility between men and women in the home, which is fundamental in a region where the sexual division of labour is one of the structural constraints preventing gender equality.
- Raise awareness on the issue of substantive equality of women and girls and position it on national, subnational and local agendas; recognize the gender approach as a pillar of territorial development and prosperity; recognize and promote entrepreneurship among women to foster women's leadership in consultations on public policy, social welfare and multilevel governance of local development; and thus initiate the structural and socioeconomic changes needed for women to participate in local economies with the same rights and on the same terms as men.
- Increase the number of women on boards to make progress towards pro-gender-equality macroeconomic policies and towards breaking down the barriers that prevent women enjoying autonomy.

