

# Gender Equality in Latin America

Towards a better sharing  
of paid and unpaid work

Lessons learned from the Reviews of  
Chile, Peru, Colombia and Costa Rica



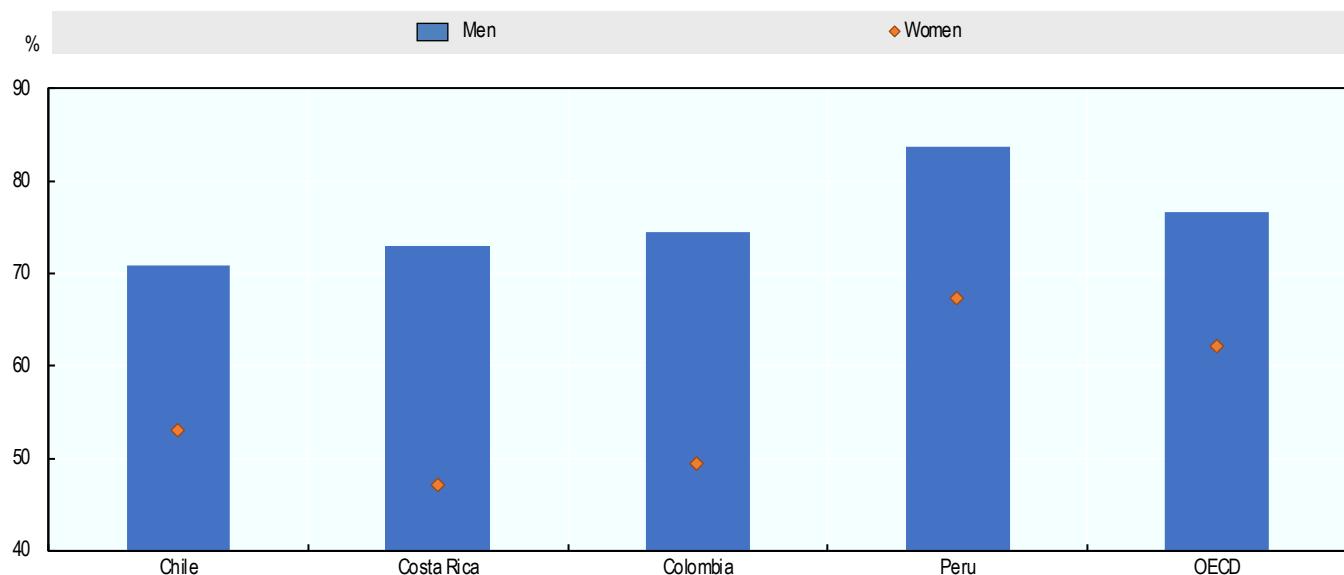
## Common challenges

### Persisting gender gaps in employment

Despite progress on educational women's educational attainment, substantial gender gaps in employment persist in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru. Women lag behind in terms of employment rates, full time employment, and entrepreneurship (see Figures 1-3).

- Women are less likely than men to be employed in Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru. Gender gaps in employment rates range from 1.4 in Costa Rica to 16.7 in Peru.

Figure 1. Employment rate by gender, aged 15-64, 2022



Note: For more information please refer to the OECD Database on Gender gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under <https://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/>.

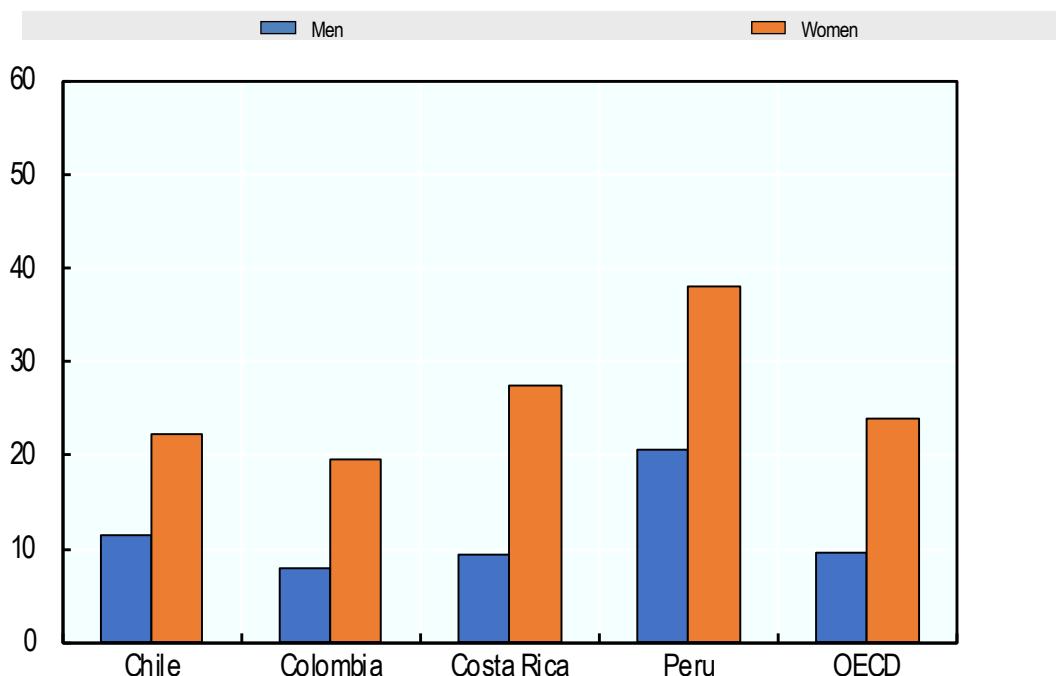
Source: OECD Employment Database (<https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm>) and ILOSTAT for Peru (<https://ilo.org/>)





- When employed, women more likely than men to work part-time: four in ten women employed in Peru, and three out of ten in Costa Rica work part-time, compared to one in ten for men.

**Figure 2. Part-time employment as a share of total employment by gender, 2022**



Note: For more information please refer to the OECD Database on Gender gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under <https://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/>.

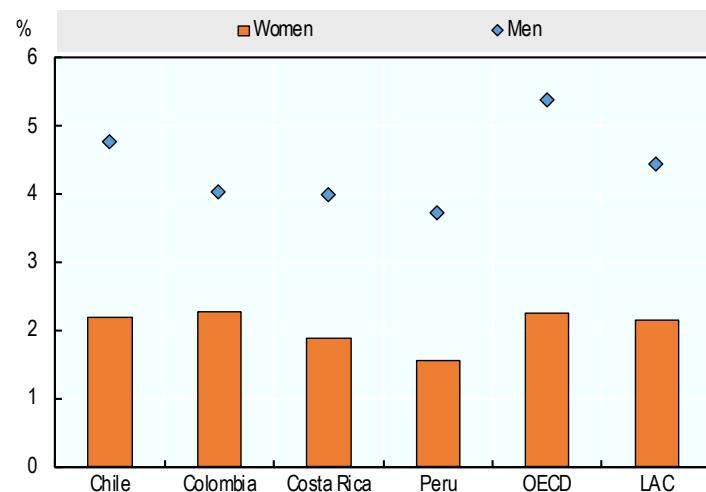
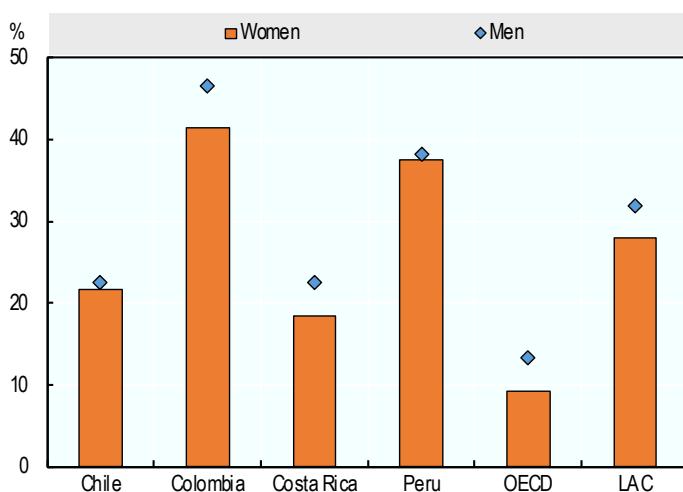
Source: Panel A: OECD Employment Database (<https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm>) and ILOSTAT (<https://ilo.org/>), Panel B: ILO Stat (SDG indicator 8.3.1 - Proportion of informal employment in total employment by sex and sector (%)), <https://ilo.org/>

- Working women are less likely to be entrepreneurs than men. They are under-represented both among own-account workers and employers. The gender gap is especially large among employers: between 8% and 21% of self-employed men are employers, while the share for women ranges between 38% in Peru and 27% in Costa Rica.

**Figure 3. Share of entrepreneurs by gender, 2021**

Panel A. Part-time employment (% total employment), 2022

Panel B. Informal employment (% total employment), 2022



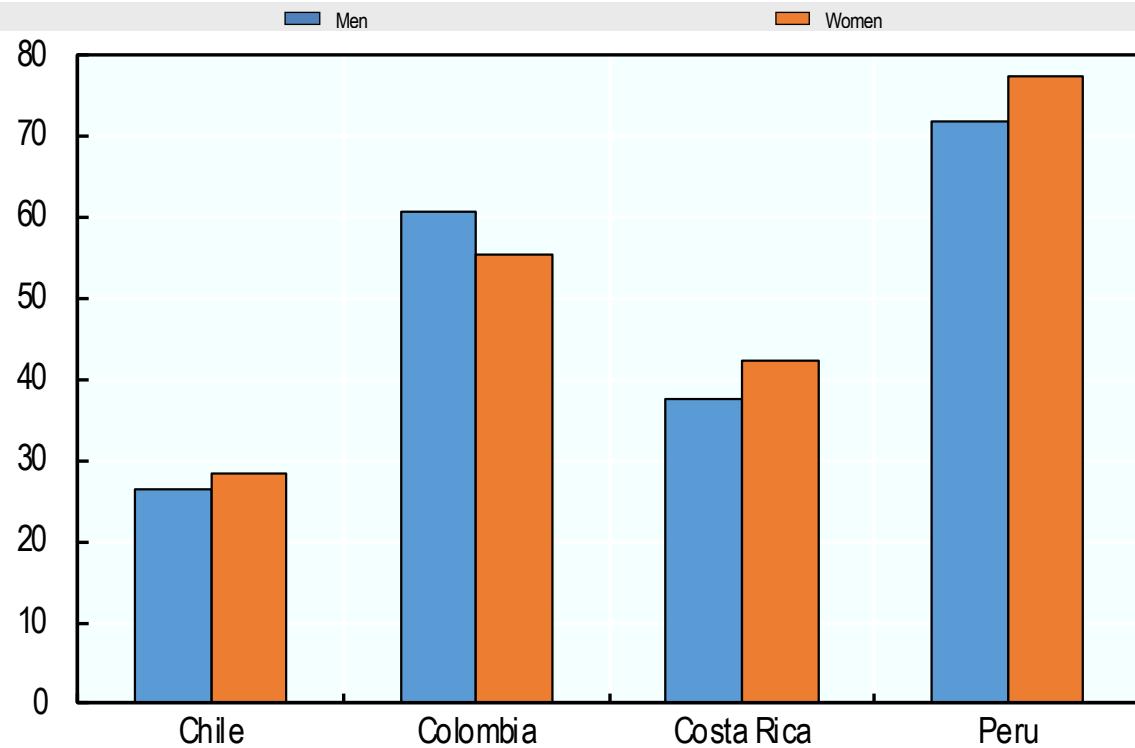
Source: OECD (2021), Gender Equality in Chile: Towards a Better Sharing of Paid and Unpaid Work, OECD Publishing, Paris  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/6cc8ea3e-en>.



Job quality is lower for women than for men. When employed, women are more likely to be in informal employment and have jobs of lower quality.

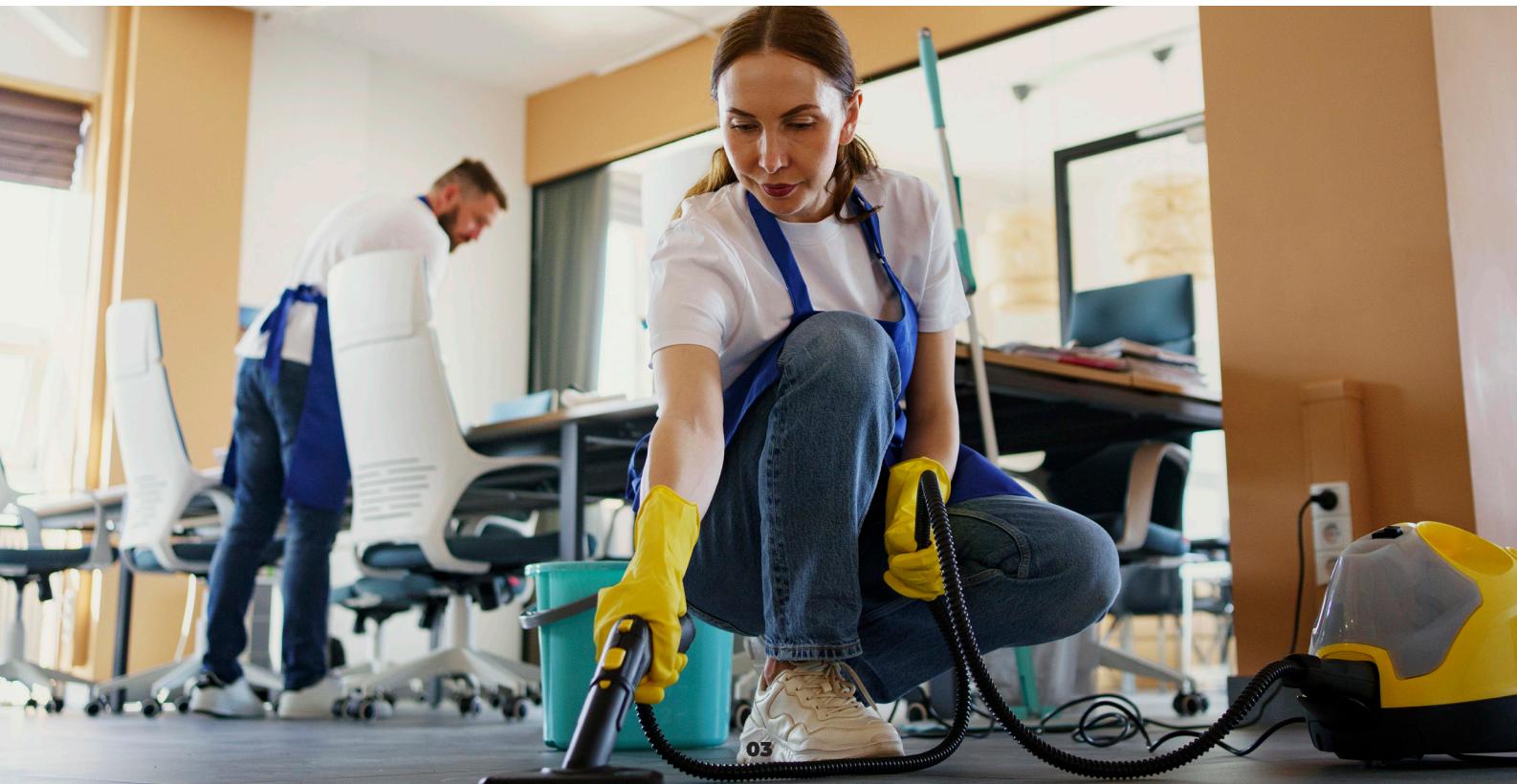
- A high share of women work informally, hindering access to job security, benefits, fair wages, social protection, and – ultimately – gender equality (Figure 4). The informal employment rate for women reached 78% in Peru, followed by 55% in Colombia, 42% in Costa Rica and 28% in Chile.

**Figure 4. Informal employment as a share of total employment by gender, latest year available**



Note: For more information please refer to the OECD Database on Gender gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under <https://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/>.

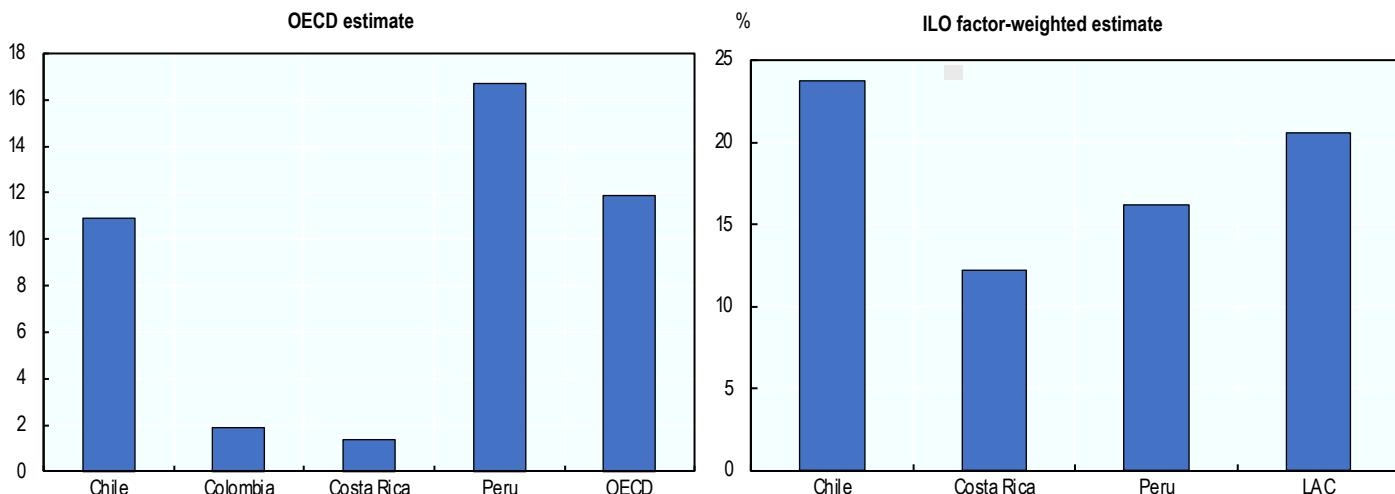
Source: OECD Employment Database (<https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm>) and ILOSTAT (<https://ilo.stat.ilo.org/>)





 The gender pay gap is large and persistent, resulting in lower savings and pensions that put women at a higher risk of poverty. The gender pay gap ranges from 1.4 in Costa Rica to 16.7% in Peru, compared to a 12.1% OECD average. When part-time workers are included in the estimate, the gender gap goes up and ranges from 16.2% in Costa Rica to 23.7% in Chile.

Figure 5. Gender pay gap, 2022 or latest year available



Note: The OECD pay gap is equal to the difference in the median monthly wages of male and female full-time employees. The ILO factor-adjusted pay gap is based on hourly wages and includes both part- and full-time dependent workers. It is equal to a population-size weighted sum of the gender pay gap for different subgroups defined by four education and age groups each, full- and part-time work status, and private versus public sector employment. For more information, please refer to the OECD Database on Gender gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under [www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/](http://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/).

Source: OECD, Gender equality in Costa Rica.

## High share of young women among NEETs

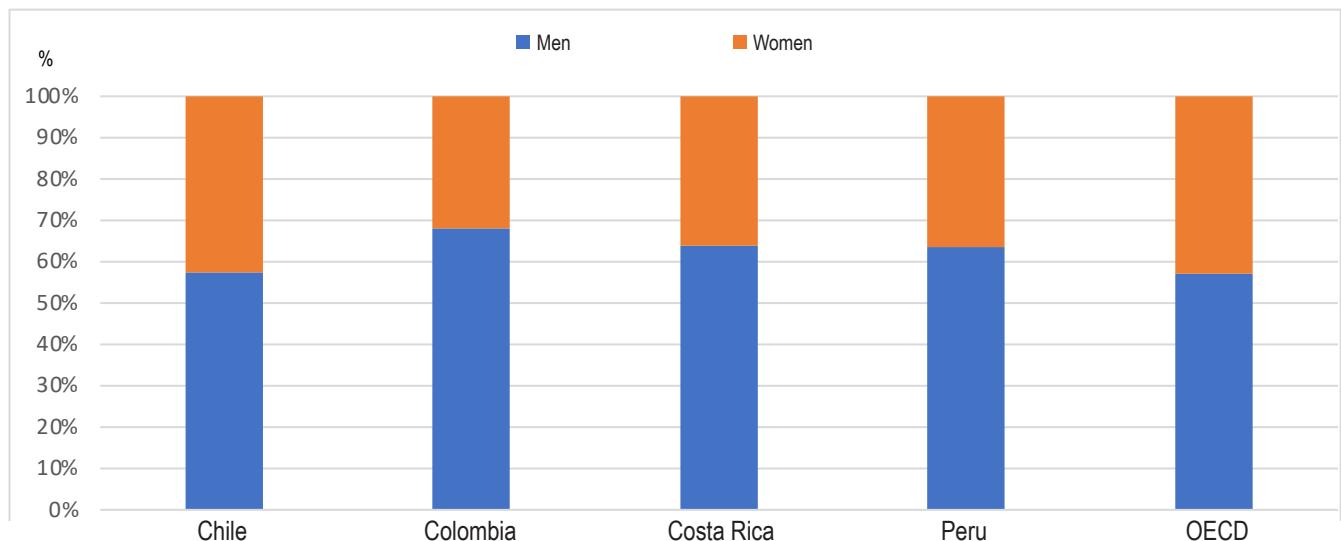
 The share of young women Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) is almost twice the OECD average across all four countries (Figure 5). This is a reason for concern given the higher risk of NEETs becoming socially excluded, having incomes below the poverty line, and lacking the skills to improve their economic situation.

 Young women in these countries are 1.7 times more likely to be NEETs when compared to men, higher than the OECD average of 1.3. This reflects multiple factors, including the disproportionate amount of time young women spend on unpaid care and domestic work relative to men. Many NEETs are likely to provide non-remunerated labour and contribute to the family and society in valuable ways.





Figure 6. Share of 15–29-year-olds Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET), by gender, 2022 or latest year available



Note: Data refer to 2022 except for Chile 2020 and Peru 2017.

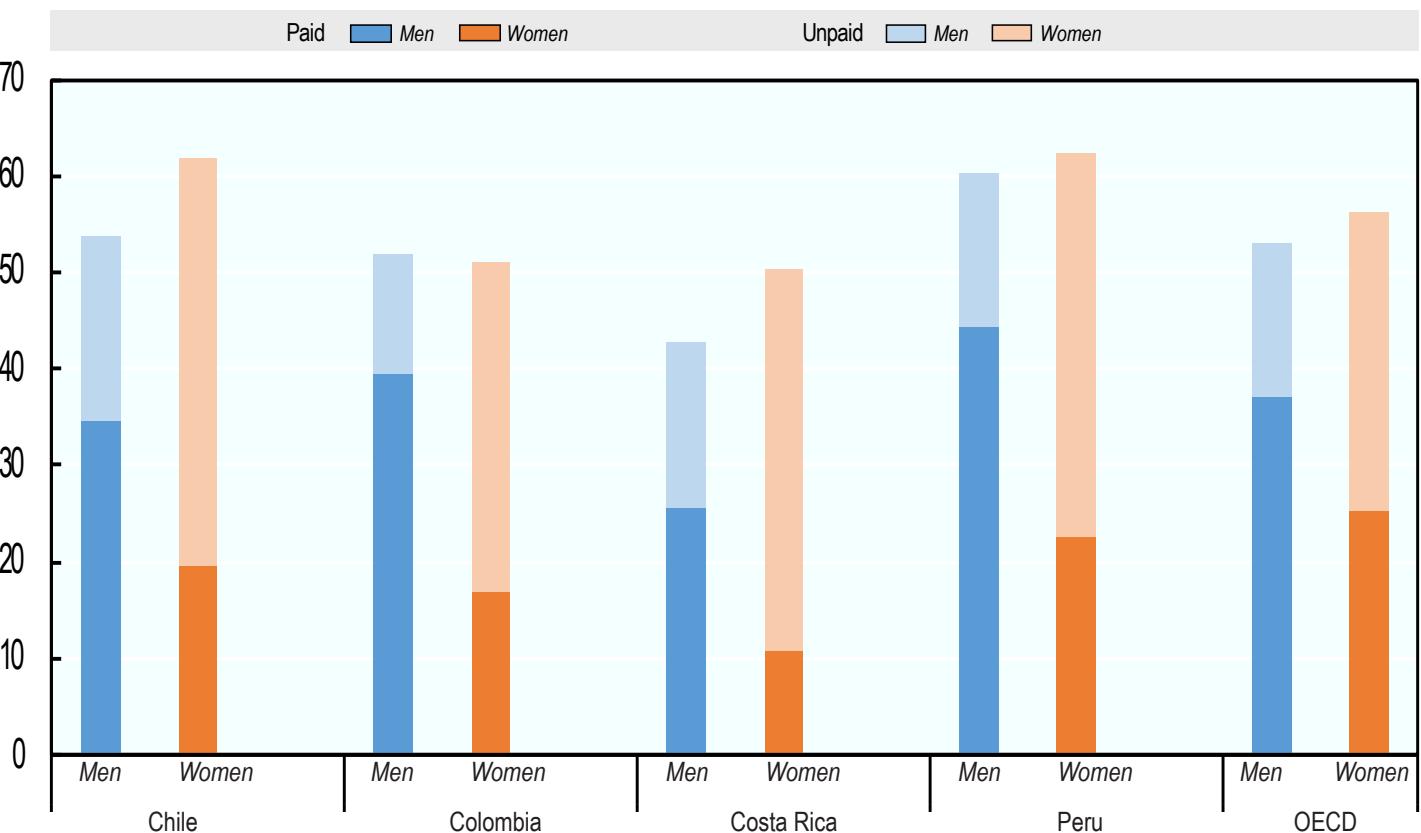
Source: Data for Peru refer to Encuesta Nacional de Hogares (ENAHO) otherwise OECD Database on Transition from school to work [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG\\_TRANS](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_TRANS). [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG\\_TRANS](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_TRANS).

## Unequal division of unpaid work

- ⌚ The burden of unpaid domestic and care work falls disproportionately on women. This impacts their ability to engage in paid work, contributing to the existing gender inequalities in the labour market (Figure 6).
- ⌚ In the four countries, women spend between 22 and 24 hours more than men on unpaid care and domestic work. This situates them significantly above the OECD average difference between men and women of 15 hours and hinders their labour participation and the amount of time they can allocate towards paid work.
- ⌚ Population ageing is likely to increase the burden of care in Latin America and will deepen gender gaps, unless a more equal distribution of paid and unpaid work among men and women is achieved

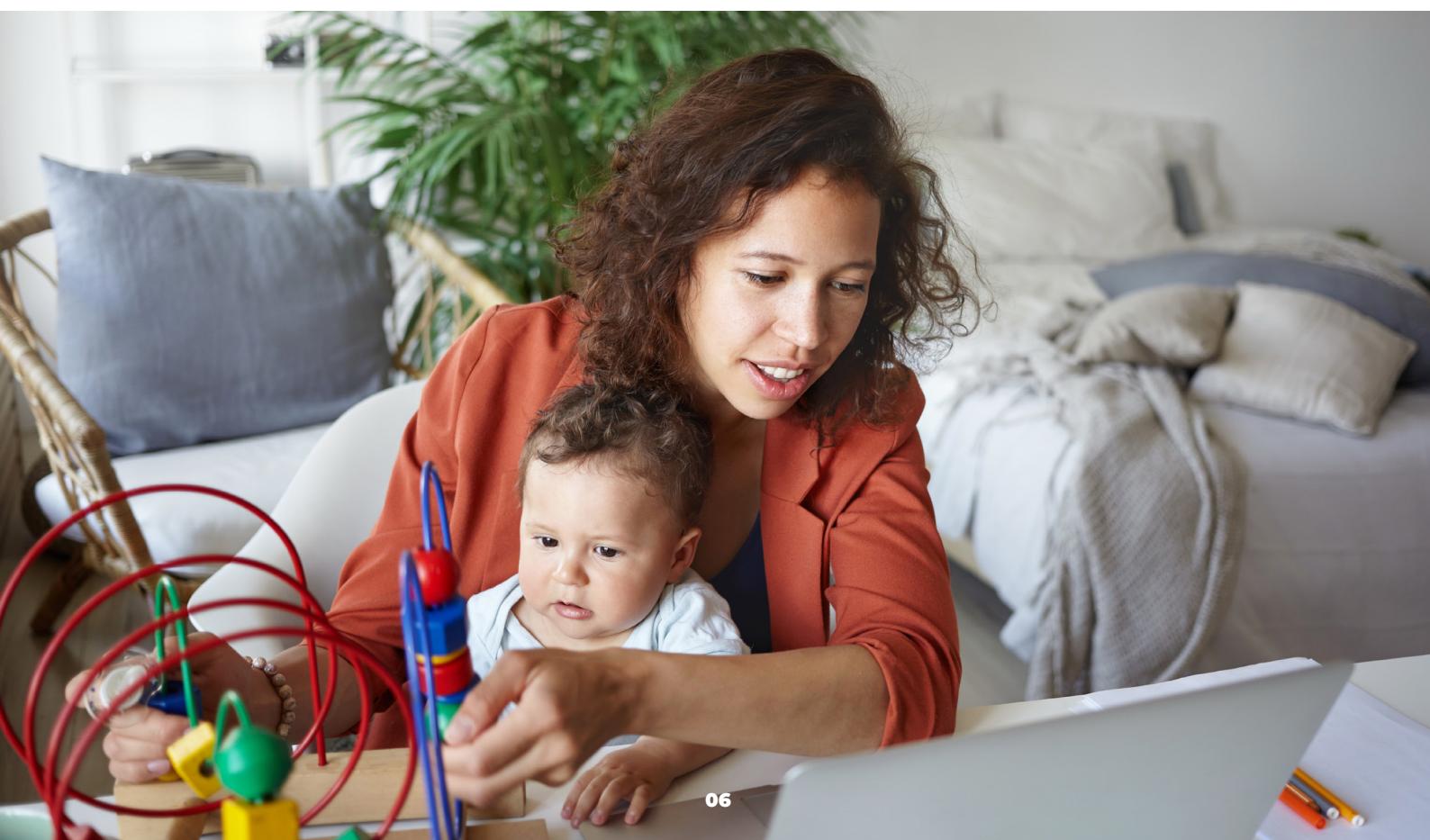


Figure 7. Adult (+15) unpaid care work by gender, 2021 or latest year available



Note: Given that the survey instruments of the time use surveys are not identical across countries, more attention should be paid to intra- than to cross-country comparisons. The reference year is 2021 for Colombia, 2017 for Costa Rica, 2015 for Chile, 2010 for Peru and around 2014 for the non-weighted OECD cross-country average. The OECD average refers to the entire population aged 15-64 and is calculated by multiplying daily time use values by seven. Panel B: The Colombian average for teenagers refers to 10-17 year olds. For more information, please refer to the OECD Database on Gender gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under [www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/](http://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/).

Source: OECD, Gender equality in Costa Rica (forthcoming).

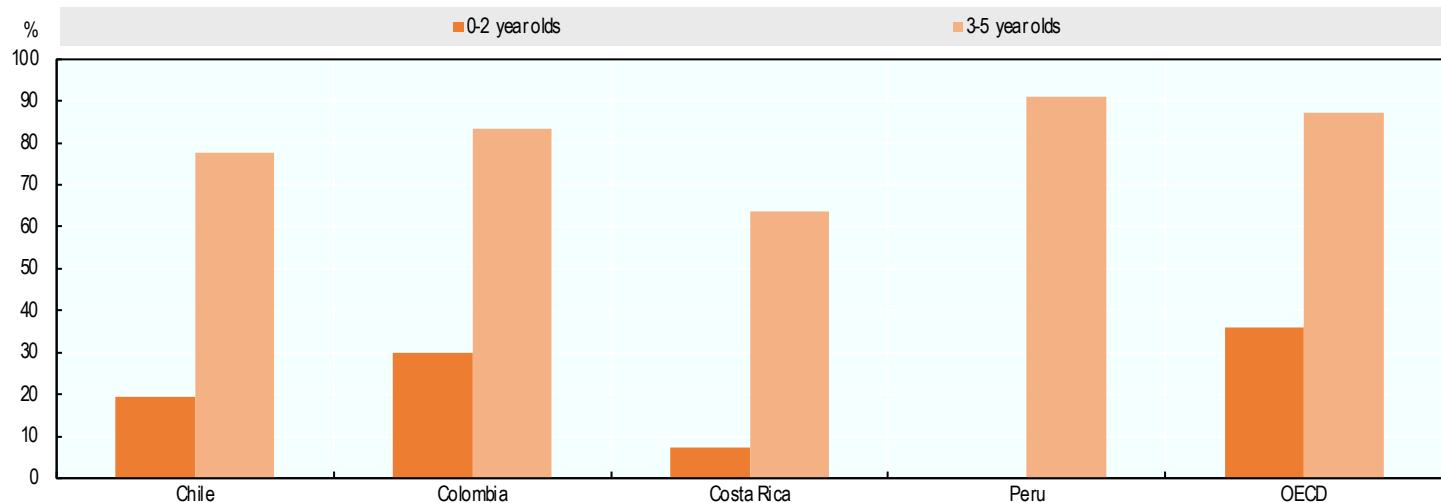




## Limited access to childcare and early childhood education

- Inadequate access to affordable and high-quality childcare services impacts women's participation in the labour force and exacerbates gender disparities in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru (Figure 7).
- Despite progress, access to early childhood education and care is still low in the region. For kids aged 0-2, enrolment rates go from 7.2% in Costa Rica to 29.8% in Colombia, compared to more than one in three children in the OECD. Enrolment rates are higher for 3-5-year-olds, but still lag behind the OECD average of 87.1%.
- This is principally due to lack of services and physical infrastructure, with strong variation across geographic areas and socioeconomic level. Wealthier households and those who live in urban areas can compensate for the limited supply of childcare centres by paying for private services such as daycare centres or a nanny. Lack of confidence in the quality of these services is also an obstacle to enrolment in childcare.

**Figure 8. Share of children enrolled in early childhood education, care services or primary education by age group, 2020 or most recent year**



Note: Data for Peru are not available for 0-2 year olds. For more information, please refer to the OECD Database on Gender gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under [www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/](http://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender/).

Source: Gender Equality in Costa Rica (forthcoming).



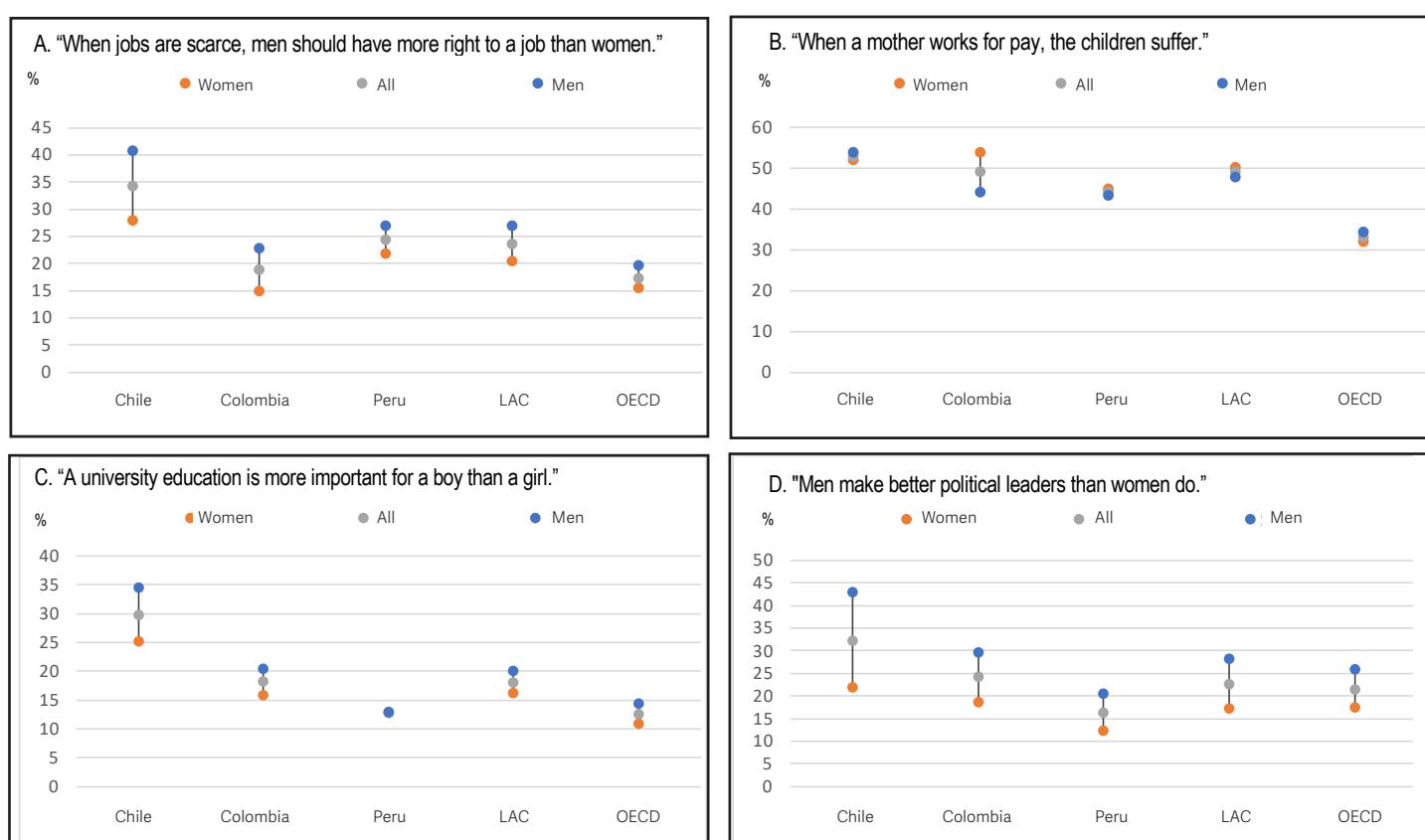


## Social norms and gender stereotypes

Deep-rooted social norms and stereotypes around gender roles influence women's rights and choices, including on the division of labour within households – perpetuating gender gaps in many domains (Figure 8).

- On average, in the four Latin American countries analyzed, 24% of the respondents declared that when jobs are scarce, men should have priority over women when finding a job. Almost half of the population believes that children suffer when their mother works for pay.
- 18% of respondents believed that higher education is more important for boys than girls, and 23% believe that men make better political leaders than women.

Figure 9. Share of respondents who agreed with the following statements, by gender



Note: Percentage of respondents who (strongly) agree. The Latin American average is based on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. The OECD (15) average is based on Australia, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States.

Source: Haerpfer et al. (2020), World Values Survey: Round 7 – Country-Pooled Datafile. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>



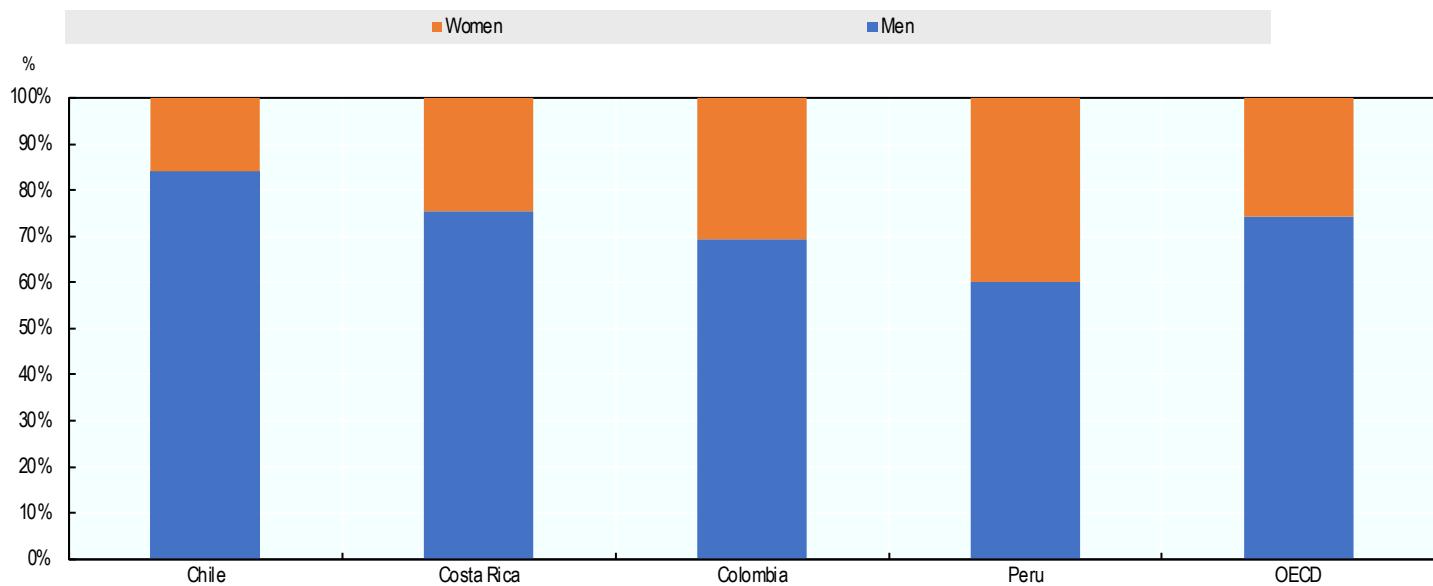


## Few girls enrol in STEM careers

The under-representation in STEM fields of study (acronym for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) can lead to lack of skilled professionals in growing professions and a suboptimal use of the available talent – putting countries at a disadvantage in today's global economy (Figure 9).

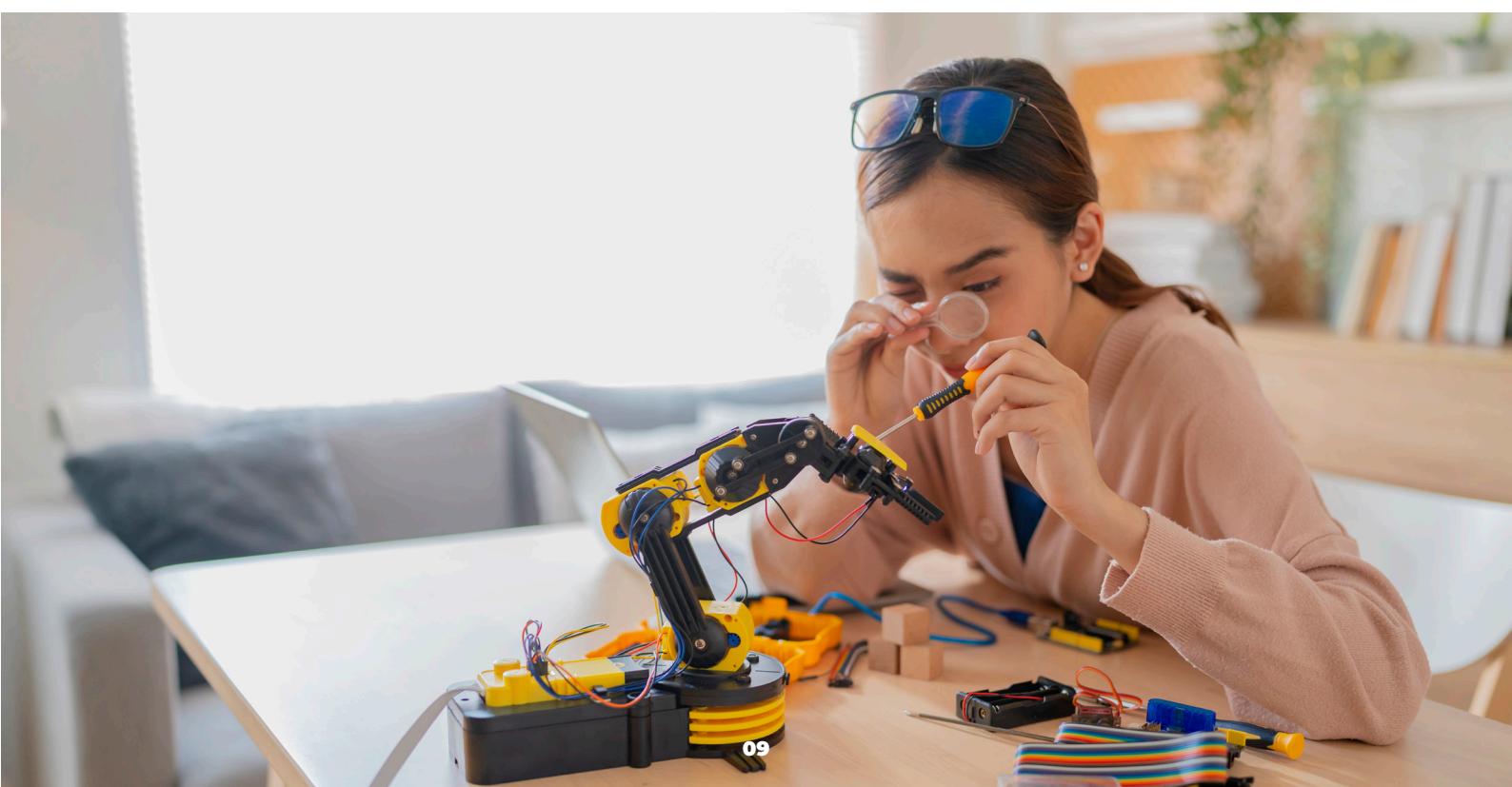
💡 As in other OECD countries, the share of women graduating in STEM subjects is well below the share of men. For example, in Chile the share of women remains 7.5% compared to men at 39.9%.

**Figure 10. Share of graduates from STEM careers by gender, 2021 or latest year available**



**Note:** All tertiary levels combined. STEM subjects include natural sciences, mathematics, statistics, information, and communication technologies, engineering, manufacturing, and construction. For more information please refer to the OECD database on Gender Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean under [www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender](http://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/gender).

Source: OECD Education at a Glance for Peru (2017): UNESCO Institute for Statistics Database (UNESCO Institute for Statistics).





## Policy avenues to address common challenges

Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru have well-developed legal and policy frameworks to promote gender equality. However, making further progress requires policies to promote a more equal sharing of work and care responsibilities and equally encourage girls and boys to participate in all fields of education. The OECD reviews identify key recommendations for employment, family and education policy.

### Supporting more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work

#### Key recommendations:

- 💡 Parental leave: Establish reserved weeks and extend paternity leave to increase its take-up. Make dates for maternity leave flexible, as it is currently highly constrained.
- 💡 Implement and promote flexible work options, including teleworking and different work schedules/hours.
- 💡 Promote access to comprehensive care systems, including early child and after-school care, as well as long-term or elderly care.
- 💡 Professionalise community programmes by formalising care workers to meet childcare needs for working parents. Making the sector more attractive will increase participation and allow parents to work in accordance with their schedules and seasonal work.
- 💡 Investing in long-term care.





## Good practices:

- 🔍 Paternity leave has been implemented in Chile, Colombia, and Peru. It ranges from 5 to 10 working days, despite being considerably lower than the OECD average of 40 days.
- 🔍 Chile's Crece Contigo programme extends childcare coverage to poor working mothers and student mothers. These groups belong to the 60% most vulnerable women according to the needs-adjusted income information about their household.
- 🔍 The introduction of the Act on Distance Work and Teleworking Law (April 2020) and the introduction of flexibility in the scheduling of working hours (introduced April 2024) strengthened flexible working arrangements in Chile.
- 🔍 Colombia's National Care System – a co-responsible model between the State, the private sector, and families aimed at reducing the burden of unpaid caregiving to women. The programme seeks to recognize and strengthen community care organizations and practices, as well as develop strategies to ensure the rights of caregivers, contributing to dignified living conditions (art. 7 of Law 2281).

## Promoting job quality for women

- 💡 Consider introducing pay transparency mechanisms.
- 💡 Expand parental leave to informal workers, while strengthening broader policies to promote job formalisation.
- 💡 Promote women in non-traditional careers and leadership positions, establishing targets for women's representation in private companies, in academic faculties and in public leadership.





## Promoting women's entrepreneurship

### Key recommendations:

- 💡 Support women's entrepreneurship through bundled measures with access to formal savings and banking services, alongside financial education and the acquisition of digital skills.

### Good practices:

- 🔍 All four countries have implemented initiatives aimed at providing women entrepreneurs with (access to) funding, skills (and) or networks.
- 🔍 Relevant programmes are: Chile's Mujer Emprende, Colombia's Fondo para la Promoción de la Autonomía y el Emprendimiento de la Mujer, and Costa Rica's Fondo de Fomento de Actividades productivas y de organización de mujeres, and Peru's Redes Regionales de Mujeres Emprendedoras y Empresarias.



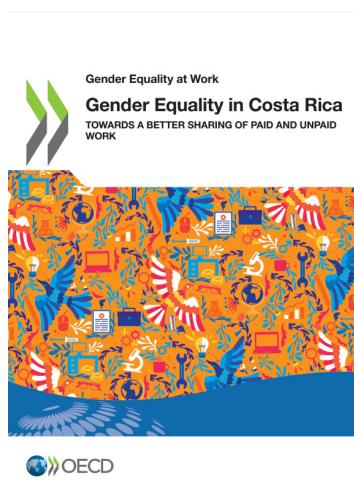
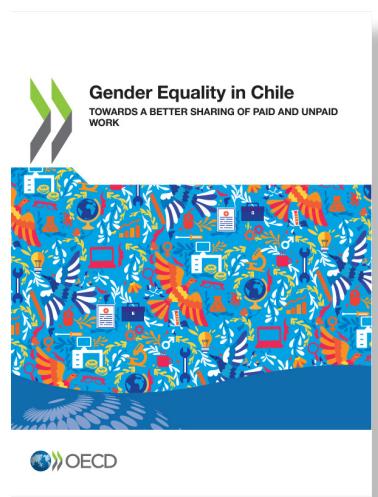
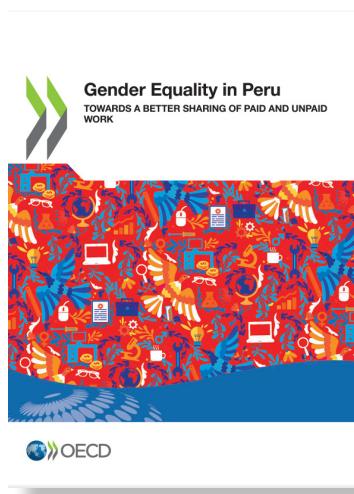
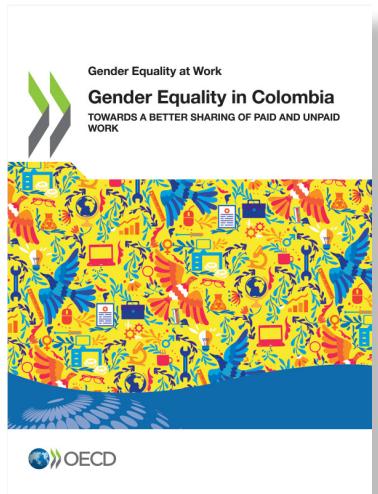
## Education

- 💡 Ensure access to quality education for all, strengthening cash-transfer programmes that reward low-income households for their engagement in their children's education, and communicating the benefits of completing studies.
- 💡 Implement teacher training to reduce the transmission of gender stereotypes in education and encourage girls, as well as boys, to pursue careers in which they are less represented.
- 💡 Scale up efforts to increase the interest of girls in STEM careers. Equip teachers with appropriate pedagogical tools to help students, and particularly girls, overcome anxiety and lack of confidence in their science and mathematics abilities.
- 💡 Promote and disseminate women role models and favour mentorship programmes.

### Good practices:

- 🔍 In 2020, the Peruvian Ministry of Education introduced a new national curriculum that outlines specific guidelines aimed at educating future generations on the significance of gender equality and ensuring equal representation of men and women in all facets of life. In Chile, since 2020 the Ministry of Science has a special Council for Gender Equity to promote gender equality in STEM and the "More Women in Science" campaign -launched in 2019- aims to boost female participation in male-dominated fields.





If your country would like to undertake this type of review please contact [LACRegionalProgramme@OECD.org](mailto:LACRegionalProgramme@OECD.org)

## References

OECD (2023), *Gender Equality in Colombia: Towards a Better Sharing of Paid and Unpaid Work*, *Gender Equality at Work*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9f829821-en>. [1]

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OECD (2024), "Gender Equality in Costa Rica: Towards a Better Sharing of Paid and Unpaid Work", OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6cda329d-en>. [4]





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