

How's Life in Latin America? Launch event and panel discussion

Thursday 28 October 2021, Virtual event coordinated from Paris

16.00 - 18.00: Paris

8.00 - 10.00: San José

9.00 - 11.00: Bogotá, Lima, Mexico City, Quito

10.00 - 12.00: Santo Domingo

11.00 -13.00: Asunción, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, São Paulo

The last two years have been seen widespread upheaval across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), with first the wave of social protests that emerged in late 2019, and swiftly followed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. While the region is still in a midst of an unfolding crisis, it is clearer than ever that people and their well-being need to be at the heart of government action in the LAC region, as elsewhere in the world. Implementing people-focused policies that aim to foster inclusive and sustainable well-being alongside economic growth requires a broader range of metrics than have traditionally been used to monitor national progress, describing people's current material conditions and quality of life, the distribution of outcomes across population groups, and the systemic resources that are needed to underpin the sustainability of people's well-being into the future. However, measurement alone is not enough to transform the way governments function, and taking a well-being approach to policy also requires long-lasting institutional change, and operational innovation.

This report, ***How's Life in Latin America: Measuring well-being for policy making***, is the result of a three-year project (led by the OECD Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity and the OECD Development Centre) which has aimed to explore well-being measurement and policy in the LAC region. It focuses on a selection of 11 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) to identify comparable and policy-relevant well-being metrics (based on the OECD well-being framework), as well as to highlight lessons for mainstreaming a well-being policy approach, from the LAC region and around the world. The project has been supported by the EU Facility for Development in Transition.

The report shows that when taking a long-term view over the first two decades of the 21st century up to the start of the pandemic, the gains in well-being in countries in the LAC region between 2000 and 2019 were considerable. For example, on average across the 11 focal countries, absolute poverty dropped from affecting 1 in 3 people in 2006, to 1 in 5 by 2019, while income inequality declined substantially over the same period. However, the pace of progress slowed considerably since the end of the commodity price boom in the mid-2010s. After 2014, the pace of reduction in income inequality and poverty slowed, while labour force outcomes and people's own perceptions of their living standards weakened. Further, many of the natural, human, social and economic capital resources that underpin the sustainability of well-being were already under threat or in decline, and structural problems such as high levels of informality and inequalities persisted to 2019. Women, children, elderly and youth, those living in rural areas, Indigenous and Afro-descendant people, and those with less education tend to experience worse outcomes and fewer opportunities, across multiple dimensions of well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic risks reversing many of the well-being gains achieved in recent decades, as well as deepening pre-existing challenges. The pandemic has touched every aspect of people's lives, emphasising the deep interlinkages between economic, social and environmental outcomes. It has served as a stark reminder that policy success cannot be defined in narrow income terms alone, and it has highlighted the value of more joined-up, multidimensional Development in Transition approaches.

A well-being approach to policy would support LAC countries in addressing the highly interconnected societal challenges they face. Building a shared vision of policy priorities, and using a common framework to identify countries' strengths and weaknesses, can improve both domestic policies and regional co-operation, through more effective international partnerships and peer-learning. Mainstreaming a well-being approach in Latin America will require broad public and political support, as well as institutional mechanisms that anchor well-being priorities into long-term government operations. Improvements in the availability of harmonised, disaggregated data on all policy-relevant aspects of well-being are also needed. This report aims to support future work and continued discussions between policy actors, statistical agencies and a wide variety of societal stakeholders to put people's well-being at the heart of government action in LAC.

Agenda

16.00 Introduction by **Katherine Scrivens**, Policy Analyst and Project Manager, OECD Centre for Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE)

Opening remarks:

- **Mario Cimoli**, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN ECLAC
- **Jorge de la Caballería**, Head of the South America and Regional Operations Unit, DG for International Partnerships, European Commission

16.20 Key findings, presented jointly by **Romina Boarini**, Director of the OECD Centre for Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE) and **Ragnheidur Arnadottir**, Director of the OECD Development Centre

16.40 Reactions and discussion moderated by **Federico Bonaglia**, Deputy Director of the OECD Development Centre

Speakers:

- **María del Pilar Garrido Gonzalo**, Minister of National Planning and Political Economy, Costa Rica
- **Miguel Ceara-Hatton**, Minister of Economy, Planning and Development, Dominican Republic
- **Viviana Casco Molinas**, Minister, Planning Secretariat of Paraguay
- **Bjarni Benediktsson**, Minister of Finance, Iceland
- **Juan Daniel Oviedo**, Director, DANE (National Administrative Department of Statistics), Colombia
- **Ana Patricia Muñoz**, Executive Director of Grupo FARO
- **Gonzálo Hernandez Licon**, Director, Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network

