

# WHY ADOLESCENT GIRLS? WHY NOW?

A statistical snapshot of the  
state of adolescent girls in  
Latin America and the Caribbean

# OVERVIEW

Latin America and the Caribbean is home to more than 51 million adolescent girls aged 10-19. As they transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescent girls acquire the cognitive, emotional and social growth they need to lead and thrive. And equipped with the right resources and opportunities, each adolescent girl has the potential to make decisions about her life and well-being, and to shape her community's collective future. But adolescence is also a vulnerable life stage for girls characterized by rapid physical growth, the onset of menstruation, and the consolidation of harmful gender norms that expose girls to heightened and new risks, such as pregnancy and its attendant health risks, mental disorders, child marriage and early unions and intimate partner violence.

As this brochure highlights, adolescent girls in Latin America and the Caribbean face a range of challenges that jeopardize their rights to **quality health and nutrition, learning and skills-building opportunities, economic security and freedom from violence, exploitation, and harmful practices**. These challenges are often exacerbated for adolescent girls on the move. More than 900,000 adolescent girls aged 10-19 in the region are international migrants and refugees, living outside of their country of birth or citizenship (Figure 1). While their reasons for leaving home and crossing borders vary, and their living circumstances are diverse, migrant and refugee girls often face high barriers to accessing adequate healthcare, quality schooling and decent employment, as well as increased risks of gender-based violence.<sup>1</sup> As such, their distinct needs must be included in policies and programmes aiming to improve the lives of adolescent girls.

More than 900,000 adolescent girls in the region are international migrants and refugees

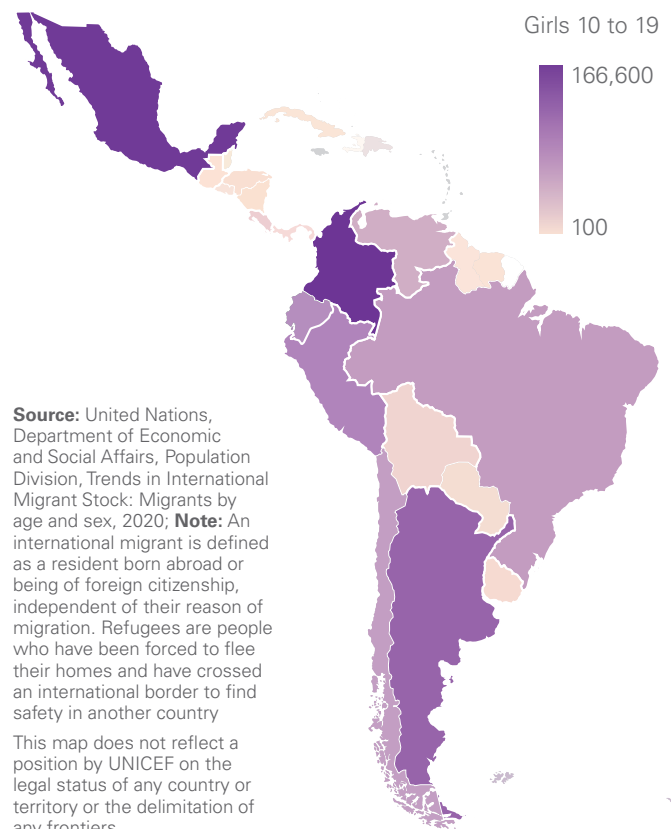
Using the most recently available data for Latin America and the Caribbean, notwithstanding notable data gaps, this brochure provides an evidence base for advocating for, and investing in, adolescent girls in all their diversity if the potential of girls- and the region's – is to be realized.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Uncertain Pathways: How gender shapes the experiences of children on the move*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.



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**FIGURE 1.** Number of international adolescent migrant and refugee girls aged 10-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020





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## ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Removing discriminatory laws and implementing policy frameworks that advance gender equality, including laws, regulations, policies, and monitoring mechanisms, are prerequisites for realizing the rights of adolescent girls. Using SDG indicator monitoring data, Figure 2 presents the extent to which countries have legal frameworks in place to promote and monitor gender equality in four areas of law, namely overarching legal frameworks and public life; violence against women; employment and economic benefits; and marriage and family (SDG 5.1.1). It also shows the extent to which countries have laws and regulations in place that guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education in four areas, namely maternity care, contraception and family planning, comprehensive sexuality education and information and HIV and HPV (SDG 5.6.2).

On average, the region has in place 86 per cent of legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality in marriage and family; 80 per cent of frameworks on violence against women; and 75 per cent on employment and economic benefits. The lowest level of achievement is in overarching legal frameworks and public life; on average, countries in the region have 68 per cent of the necessary frameworks in place. Countries in the region also have in place 80 per cent of enabling laws and regulations for HIV and HVP; 73 per cent for contraception and family planning; 71 per cent for comprehensive sexuality education and information and 70 per cent for maternity care. While these data indicate there are broadly supportive frameworks in place across the region that guarantee adolescent girls full rights, the remainder of this brochure demonstrates that these rights are yet to be fully realized.

On average, countries in the region have in place nearly 70 per cent or more of the legal frameworks crucial to achieving women's and girls' rights but these rights are not fully realized

**FIGURE 2.** Extent to which countries have legal frameworks on gender equality (SDGs 5.1.1 & 5.6.2), 2019-2022

COUNTRY	SDG 5.1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS THAT PROMOTE, ENFORCE AND MONITOR GENDER EQUALITY				SDG 5.6.2 LAWS AND REGULATIONS THAT GUARANTEE FULL AND EQUAL ACCESS TO WOMEN AND MEN AGED 15 YEARS AND OLDER TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION			
	OVERARCHING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PUBLIC LIFE	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS	MARRIAGE AND FAMILY	MATERNITY CARE	CONTRACEPTIVE AND FAMILY PLANNING	SEXUALITY EDUCATION	HIV AND HPV
<b>Latin America and Caribbean</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>80</b>
Antigua and Barbuda	30	44	60	91	-	33	0	75
Argentina	80	100	60	91	74	100	100	100
Anguilla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barbados	40	78	60	73	63	20	0	65
Belize	30	78	40	82	55	0	50	60
Bolivia	80	78	80	82	81	100	100	100
Brazil	80	89	80	73	-	-	-	90
British Virgin Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chile	80	100	80	64	-	100	-	100
Colombia	70	100	80	91	86	100	100	100
Costa Rica	90	78	80	100	79	92	50	100
Cuba	-	-	-	-	-	70	100	75
Dominica	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dominican Republic	70	89	90	91	-	-	-	-
Ecuador	90	89	80	100	75	100	100	100
El Salvador	100	78	90	100	75	100	100	100
Grenada	40	67	80	82	-	-	-	-
Guatemala	70	78	60	100	-	85	100	65
Guyana	-	-	-	-	81	67	100	100
Haiti	50	44	70	55	73	85	0	75
Honduras	90	78	60	100	75	67	100	85
Jamaica	50	78	50	91	88	85	100	45
Mexico	90	89	80	100	69	100	100	85
Nicaragua	70	56	70	91	69	67	100	75
Panama	80	89	80	100	61	100	0	100
Paraguay	80	89	100	82	73	100	0	100
Peru	80	78	100	82	56	93	100	100
Saint Kitts and Nevis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saint Lucia	-	-	-	-	36	22	50	30
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	-	-	-	-	75	93	100	70
Suriname	50	78	80	64	-	20	0	90
Trinidad and Tobago	70	78	80	91	27	0	100	10
Turks and Caicos Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uruguay	50	89	90	82	90	100	100	100
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	-	-	-	-	-	70	100	55

**Source:** Global SDG Indicators Database, 2023. **Note:** Data for SDG 5.1.1 are derived from an assessment of the country's legal frameworks completed by national statistical offices and/or national women's machinery, and legal practitioners/researchers on gender equality. Data for SDG 5.6.2 are reported by governments, including national statistics authorities and line ministries. The scores (between 0 and 100) represent the percentage of achievement for each area of law.

# ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH AND NUTRITION, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

**C**hildbearing during adolescence can have severe consequences for the health and well-being of adolescent girls. In Latin America and the Caribbean, **maternal conditions, such as haemorrhage, sepsis and obstructed labour, are among the top five causes of death among adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19.**

For those girls that survive, adolescent childbearing can have lifelong and intergenerational adverse consequences, undermining girls' schooling and economic status and the health, nutrition and future opportunities of their children.

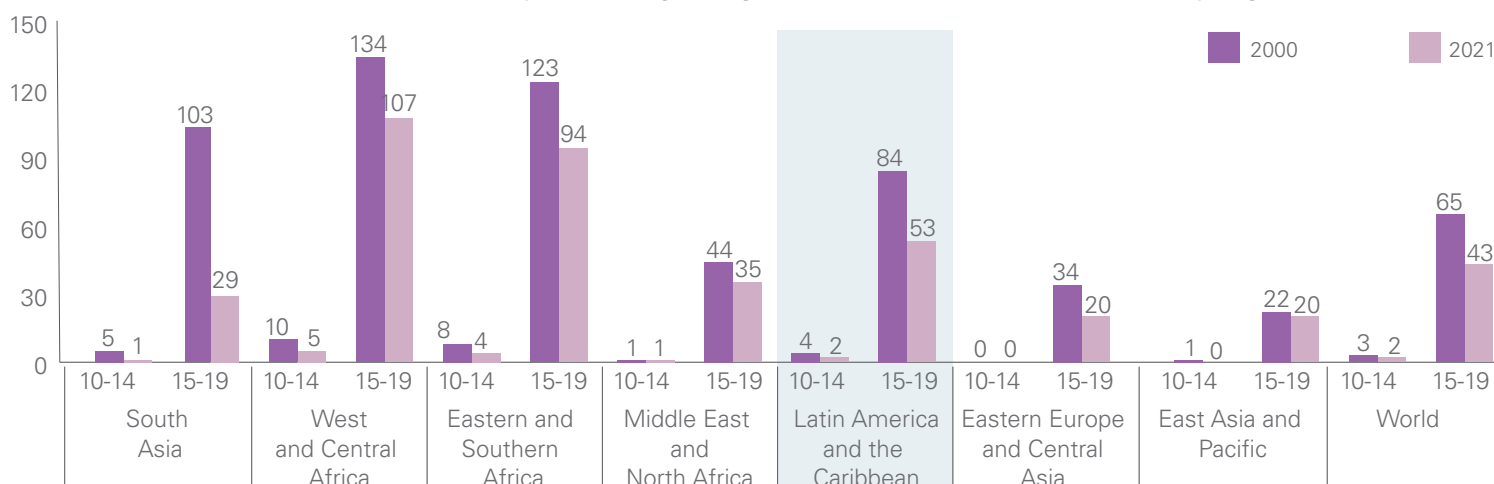
Since 2000, the adolescent birth rate among girls in the region aged 10-14 has halved from 4 to 2 births per 1,000 girls. Among girls aged 15-19, the rate has fallen from 84 to 53 births per 1,000 girls, a 37 per cent reduction. Still, the region's adolescent fertility rate is higher than the global average, trailing behind only sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 3). The highest rates are observed in Nicaragua, at 86 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 and 5 births per 1,000 girls aged 10-14 (Figure 4). Notably, Nicaragua has the second highest rate of child marriage in the region, suggesting that early marriage is likely a strong factor underlying adolescent fertility. In addition, girls from the poorest households as well as girls with lower levels of education are far more likely, on average, to give birth before age 18 than girls from the wealthiest households and girls with higher levels of education.



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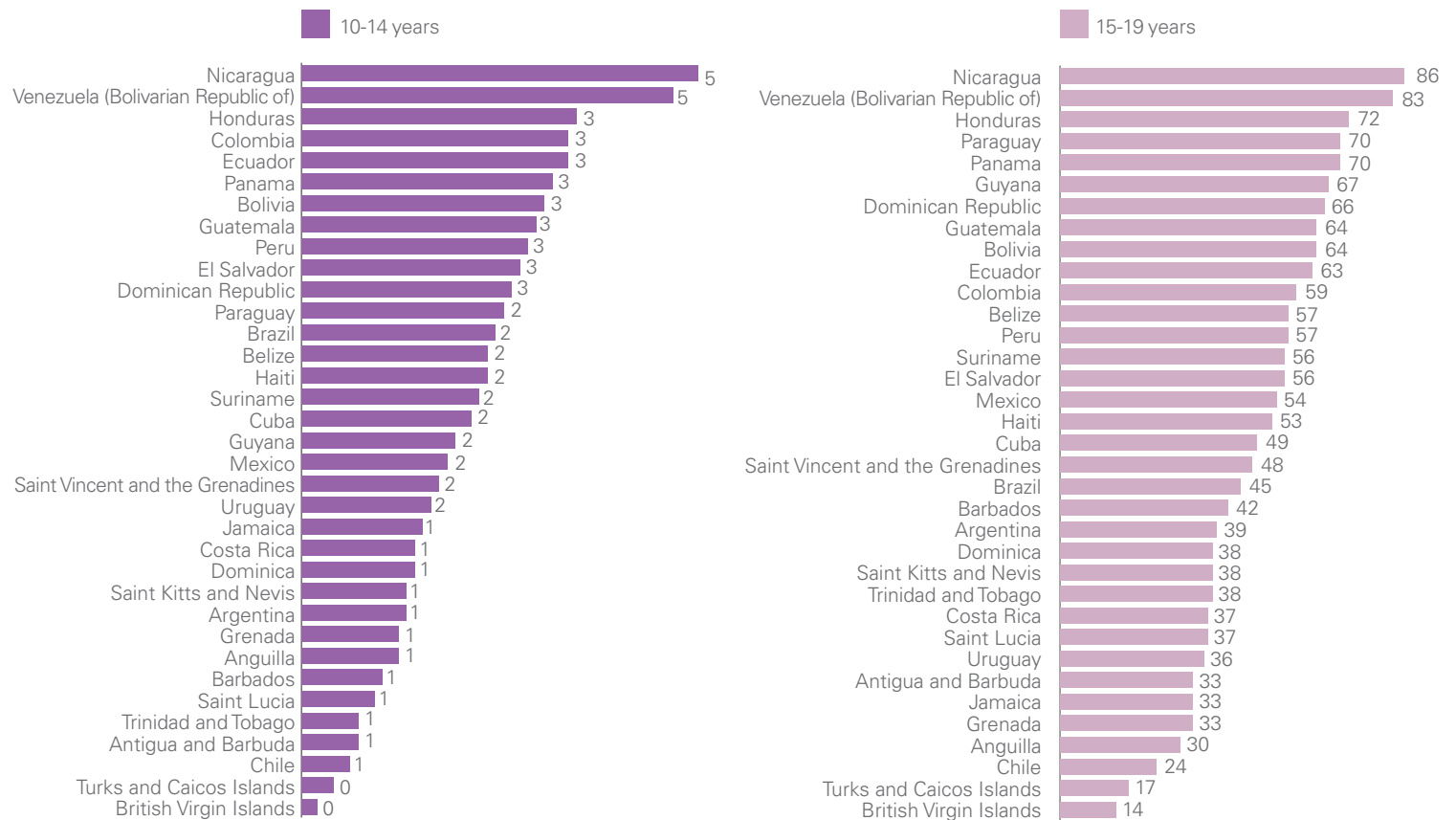
While the adolescent birth rate has decreased over the past two decades in Latin America and the Caribbean, the region's adolescent fertility rate is the second highest, worldwide

**FIGURE 3.** Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 girls aged 10-14 and 15-19) (SDG 3.72), by region, 2000 and 2021



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022.

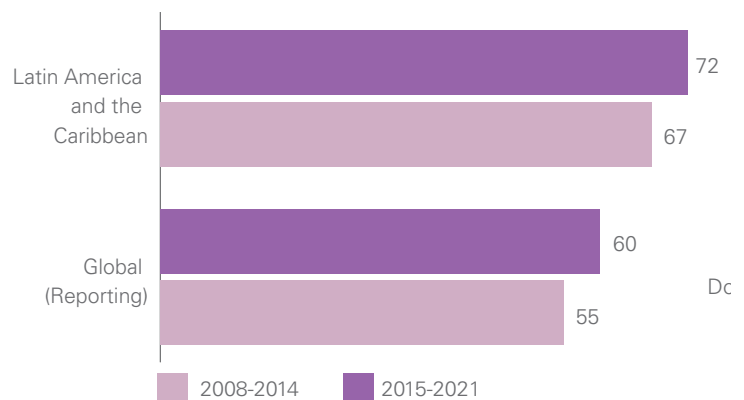
**FIGURE 4.** Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 girls aged 10-14 and 15-19) (SDG 3.7.2), by country, 2021



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022.

For many adolescent girls, pregnancies are neither planned nor wanted, but many adolescent girls' needs for family planning in the region remain unmet. While the proportion of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who have their need for family planning satisfied by modern methods is higher than the global average (72 per cent compared to 60 per cent), nearly 30 per cent of girls needs remain unmet (Figure 5). Wide variation is observed across countries, ranging from 17 per cent in Guyana to 87 per cent in Nicaragua (Figure 6). Notably, despite the high level of demand met in Nicaragua, the country also has the highest adolescent birth rate in the region. While further data collection and analysis are necessary to understand this paradox, it may be driven in part by an intentionality among older adolescent girls to become pregnant due to a range of reasons such as poverty, seeking recognition or a lack of alternative opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 5.** Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (SDG 3.7.1), Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008-2014 and 2015-2021



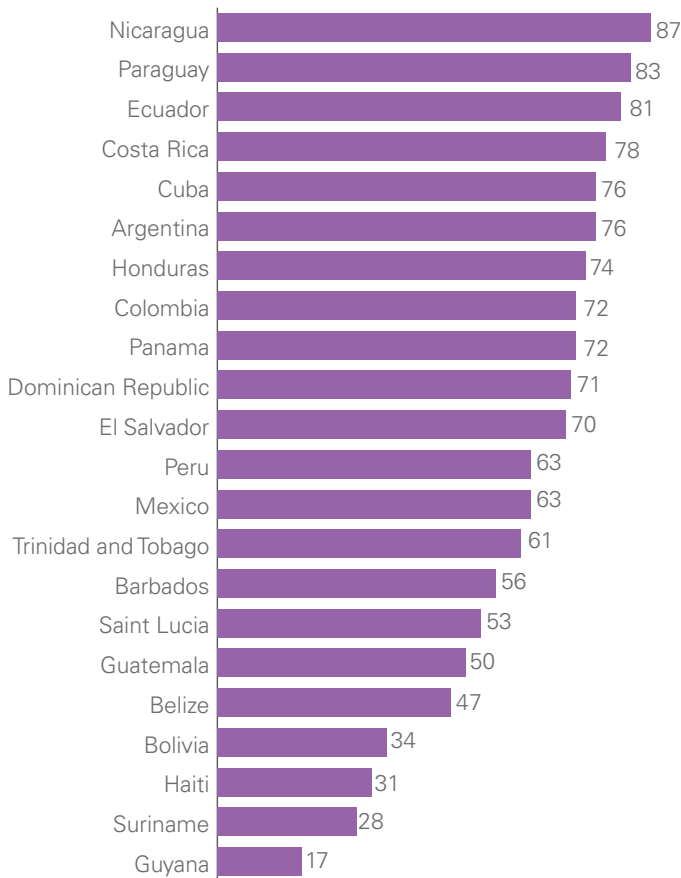
Source: UNICEF calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Contraceptive Use 2022. New York: United Nations.

Note: Also referred to as Demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods, SDG Indicator 3.7.1 is calculated as the proportion of adolescent girls and women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who are currently using, or whose partner is currently using, at least one modern contraceptive method among all adolescent girls and women of the same age who are using any method of contraception or who want to stop or delay childbearing but are not using any method of contraception.

Progress to meet adolescent girls' demands for family planning across the region has been slow, with nearly 3 in 10 girls' needs still unmet today

2 Reproducción temprana: Diferencias entre grandes regiones del mundo al inicio y al final de la adolescencia. 2017. CEPAL and UNFPA.

**FIGURE 6.** Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (SDG 3.7.1), by country, 2008-2021



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Contraceptive Use 2022. New York: United Nations.

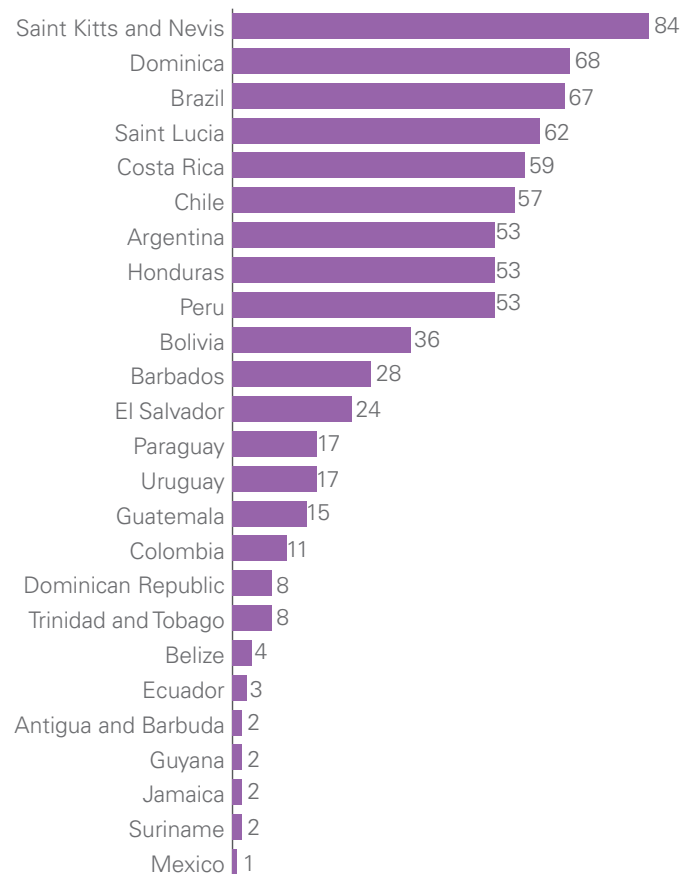


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The proportion of adolescent girls vaccinated against HPV varies widely in the region.

The HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccine helps protect against a number of cancers, notably cervical cancer, which is a leading cause of cancer deaths among women, worldwide. The proportion of adolescent girls in the region fully vaccinated against HPV varies widely, from only 1 per cent in Mexico to 84 per cent in Saint Kitts and Nevis (Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7.** Percentage of girls who received the last dose of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine per national schedule, by country, 2021

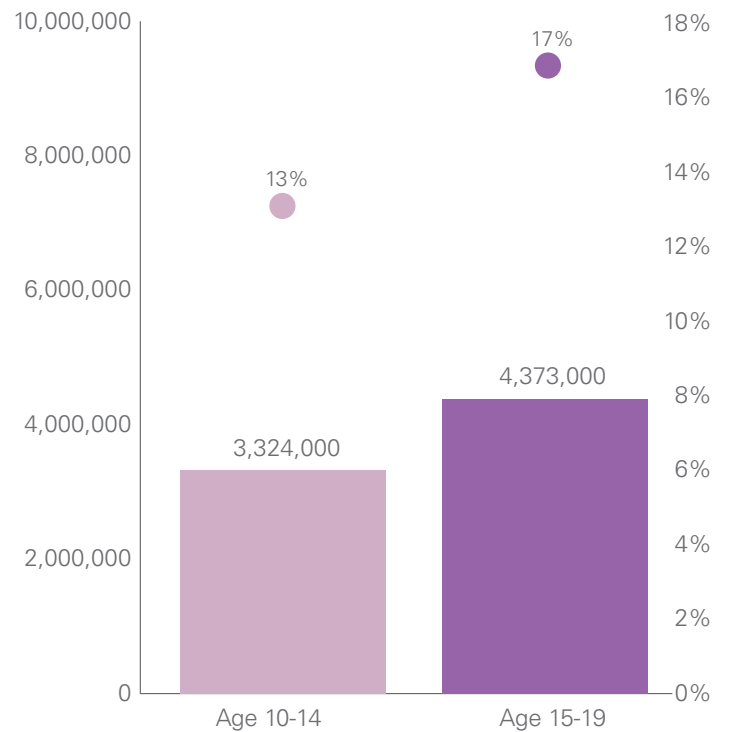


Source: WHO/UNICEF estimates of human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization coverage, 2021 revision.

Nearly 8 million adolescent girls aged 10-19 were living with a mental disorder in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2019

Mental health is equally as important as physical health to the well-being of adolescent girls. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 13 per cent and 17 per cent of adolescent girls aged 10-14 and 15-19, respectively, live with a mental disorder (Figure 8). This translates into nearly 8 million adolescent girls, the majority of whom suffer from anxiety and depression. Moreover, self-harm ranks among the top five leading causes of death among adolescent girls in the region, and the risk of suicide increases as girls age (Figure 9).

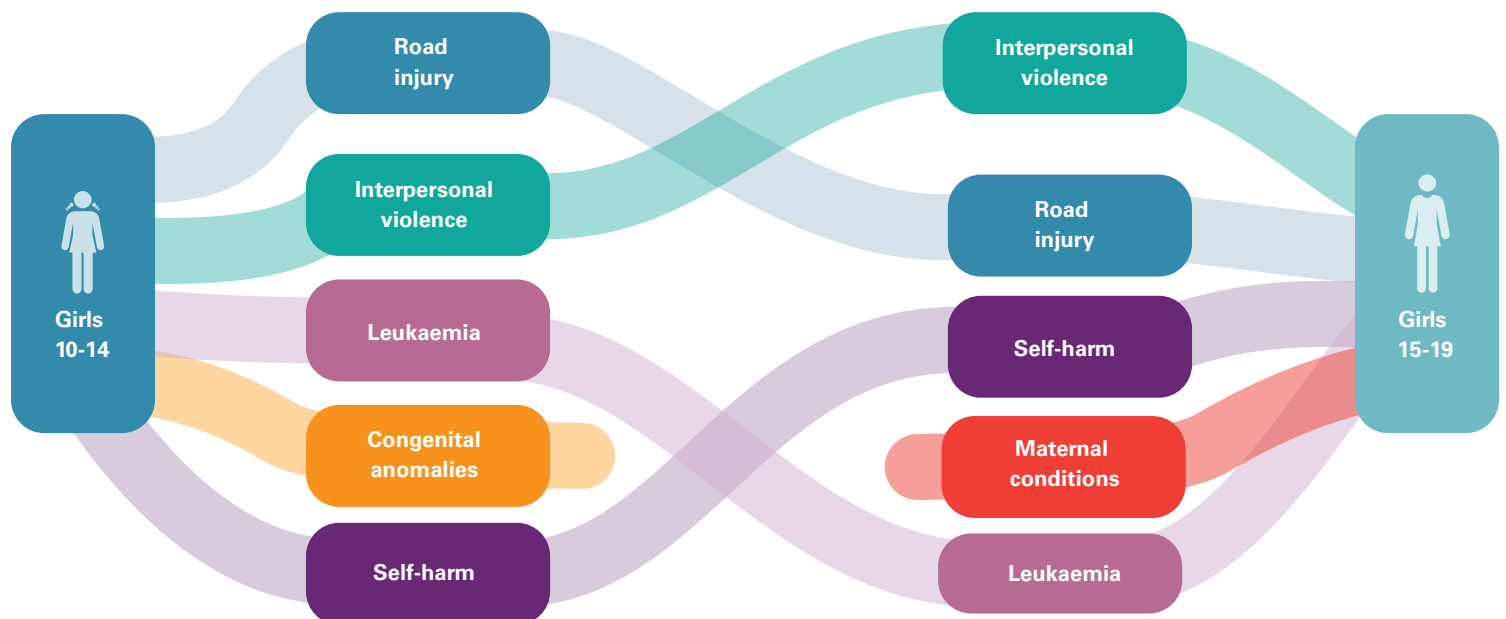
**FIGURE 8.** Prevalence and number of adolescent girls with mental disorders in Latin America and the Caribbean, by age group, 2019



**Source:** UNICEF analysis based on estimates from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), Global Burden of Disease Study, 2019; **Note:** Mental disorders comprise: depression, anxiety, bipolar, eating, autism spectrum, conduct, schizophrenia, idiopathic intellectual disability, attention deficit/hyperactivity (ADHD) and a group of personality disorders.

As adolescent girls age, their risk of suicide increases

**FIGURE 9.** Top 5 causes of death among adolescent girls in Latin America and the Caribbean, by age group, 2019



**Source:** WHO Global Health Estimates 2019: Causes of DALYs and mortality by cause, age, sex, by country and by region, 2000–2019 Geneva; 2019.



# ACCESS TO QUALITY LEARNING AND SKILLS BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

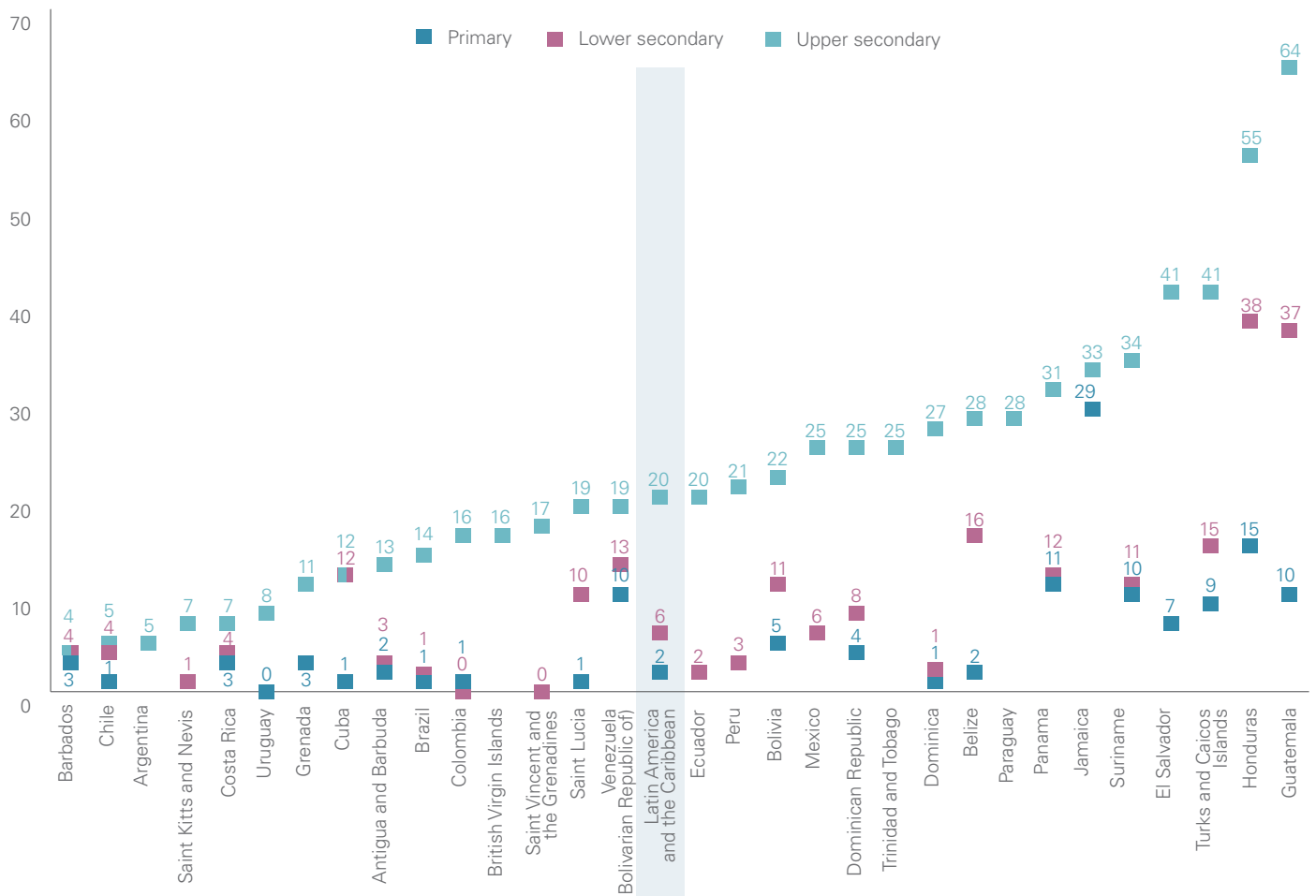


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Advancing girls' secondary education is one of the most transformative development strategies that countries can invest in for social and economic development. Schools also provide a critical platform to deliver essential services to adolescent girls, such as health promotion, comprehensive sexuality education, and menstrual hygiene management, and act as a protective measure against child marriage and early unions.

1 in 5 girls of upper secondary school age are out of school in Latin America and the Caribbean

FIGURE 10. Out of school rates of girls (SDG 4.1.4), by level of school, 2013-2022



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022.

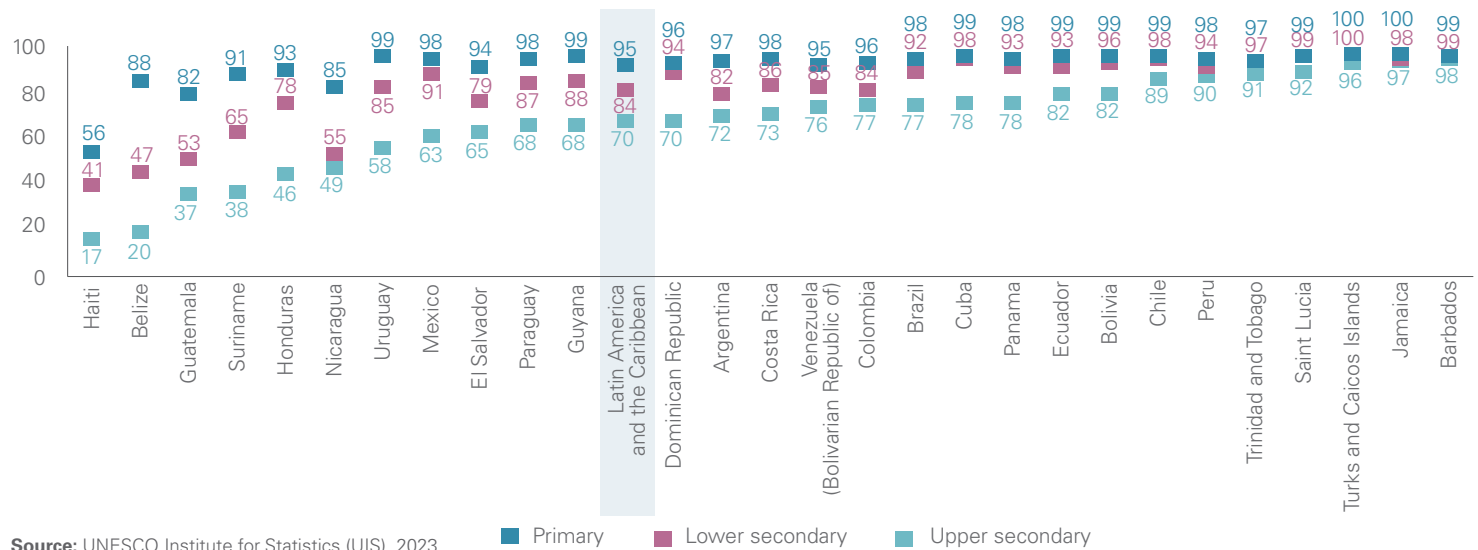
While only two per cent and six per cent of girls of primary school and lower secondary school age, respectively, are out of school, on average, in Latin America and the Caribbean, twenty per cent of girls and young women of upper secondary school age are not in school (Figure 10). In Guatemala and Honduras, the numbers are especially striking- 37 and 38 per cent girls are out of lower secondary, respectively, and 64 and 55 per cent are out of upper secondary, respectively.

Completion of secondary education brings significant benefits to girls and societies – from increased lifetime earnings to reductions in adolescent childbearing, child marriage, stunting, and maternal and child mortality. On average, 70 per cent of adolescent girls and young women complete upper secondary

school in the region, with wide variation observed across countries (Figure 11). For example, around 25 per cent or fewer girls and young women complete upper secondary school in Suriname, Guatemala, and Haiti compared to 75 per cent or more in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Chile, Saint Lucia, Turks and Caicos Islands and Barbados.

Girls' completion rates decrease as their level of schooling increases

FIGURE 11. Girls' completion rates (SDG 4.1.2), by level of education, 2014-2021



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2023.

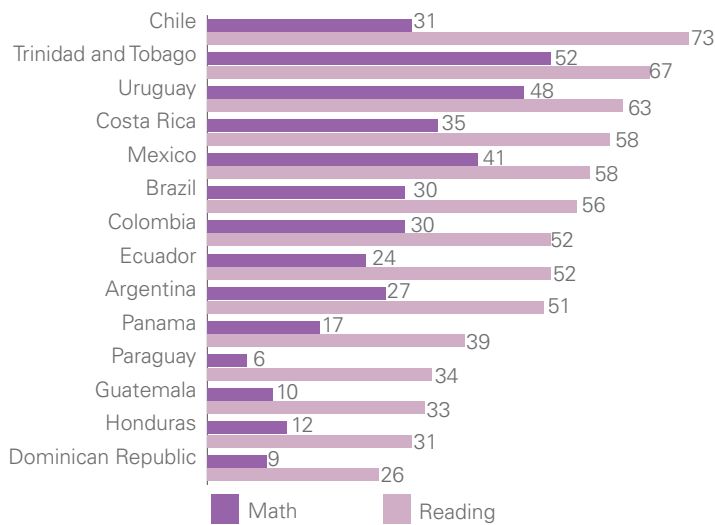
■ Primary ■ Lower secondary ■ Upper secondary



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In all countries in the region with data, girls are more likely to be proficient in reading than in math

**FIGURE 12.** Percentage of adolescent girls at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and math (SDG 4.1.1), by country, 2015-2019



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2023.

Even still, completing secondary school is insufficient if girls do not acquire a quality education, including proficiency in reading and math. Among all countries with available data in the region, adolescent girls at the end of lower secondary school perform significantly better in reading than in math – with fewer than 50 per cent of girls in all but one country (Trinidad and Tobago) and less than a third of girls in ten countries- achieving minimum proficiency in math (Figure 12).

Proficiency in math in secondary school is an essential building block for majoring in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields at the tertiary level of education and going on to build STEM careers. Yet, in all but one country (Peru) with data in the region, young women graduating at the tertiary level are underrepresented in STEM fields (Figure 13). In Ecuador, for example, where only 24 per cent of adolescent girls at the end of secondary school are proficient in math, young women comprise only about 30 per cent of STEM graduates at the tertiary level.



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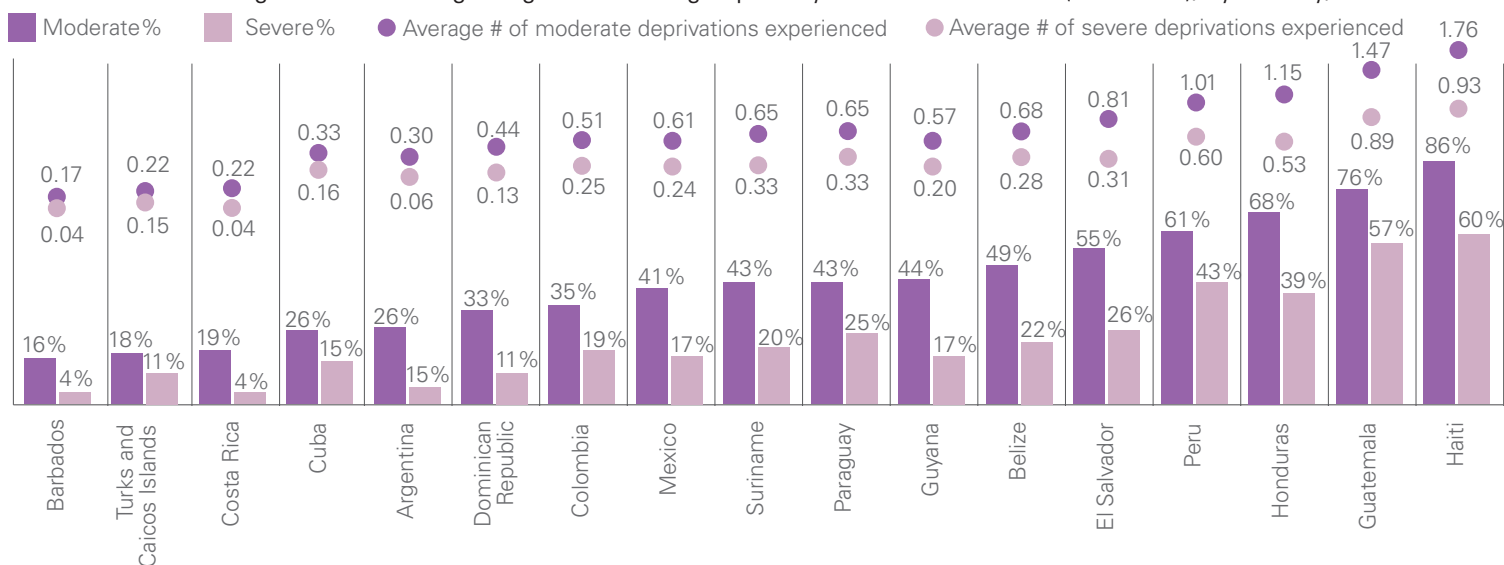
Young women in the region graduating at the tertiary level are underrepresented in STEM fields

**FIGURE 13.** Female share (%) of STEM graduates, by country, 2010-2018



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020; Note: The shaded area indicates the range of gender parity, defined as a share of between 45% and 55%.

**FIGURE 14.** Percentage of adolescent girls aged 10-17 living in poverty in all its dimensions (SDG 1.2.2), by country, 2010-2020



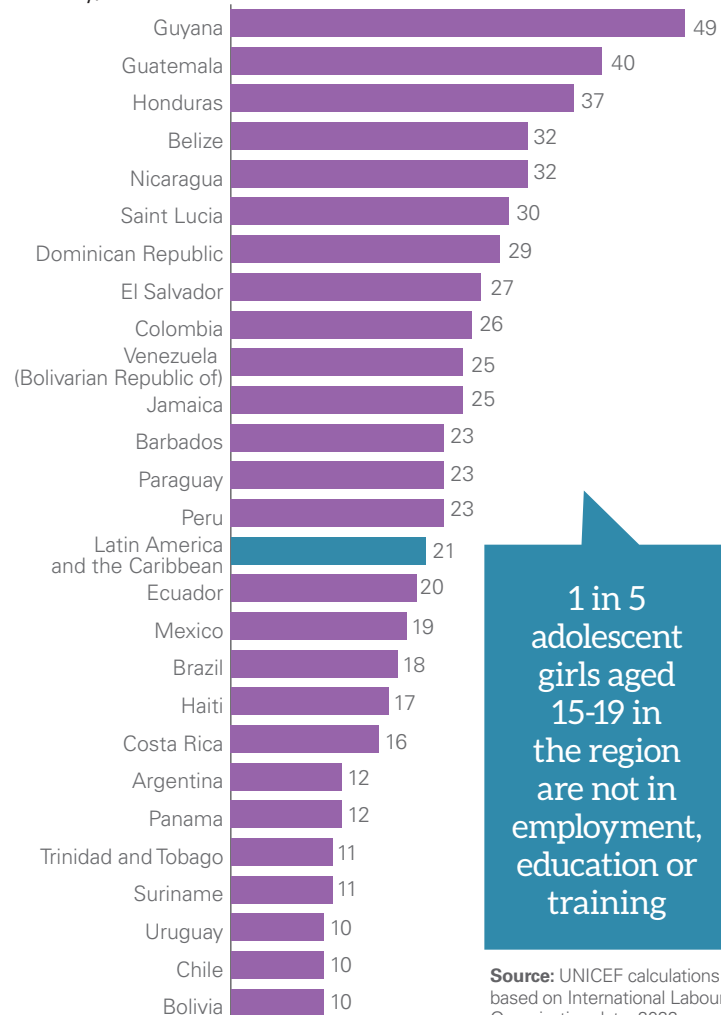
**Sources:** UNICEF calculations using Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS); **Note:** Deprivations refer to the lack of one or more of five dimensions for the 10-17 age group: health, education, water, sanitation and housing services. The calculation of moderate deprivations includes severe ones.

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

While data on adolescent girls' economic security are scarce, the right to live free of poverty and the ability to influence financial decisions that affect them are critical to adolescent girls' economic empowerment. In 14 of 17 countries in the region with data, more than 1 in 4 adolescent girls aged 10-17 live in moderate or severe multidimensional poverty (Figure 14). In Haiti, where the highest poverty rates are observed, 86 per cent of girls suffer moderate or severe material deprivations, and on average, they experience nearly two moderate deprivations.

Adolescent girls' economic security is also compromised when they do not have the opportunity to increase their future employability by developing skills through school or training or by gaining experience through current employment. On average, in the region, 1 in 5 adolescent girls are not in employment, education or training (NEET) with large variation observed across countries. For example, 10 per cent of adolescent girls in Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay are NEET compared to more than 40 per cent in Guatemala and Guyana (Figure 15). While data on time spent on unpaid care and domestic work among girls is limited, high NEET rates for adolescent girls and young women is often linked to their disproportionate engagement in unpaid work compared to adolescent boys and young men.

**FIGURE 15.** Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 not in employment, education or training (NEET) (SDG 8.6.1), by country, 2012-2021



1 in 5 adolescent girls aged 15-19 in the region are not in employment, education or training

**Source:** UNICEF calculations based on International Labour Organization data, 2022.

# FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION, ABUSE, AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

While data gaps on violence against adolescent girls in the region are notable, girls in Latin America and the Caribbean experience many grave manifestations of violence. For example, across Central America, girls aged 0-17 comprise the majority (58 per cent) of detected victims of trafficking in persons, most of whom are trafficked for sexual exploitation.<sup>3</sup> Adolescent girls and young women aged 15-29 account for 39 per cent of gender-related killings, of femicide, in the region.<sup>4</sup> And as shown in Figure 9

Nearly half a million adolescent girls are internally displaced in Latin America and the Caribbean due to conflict and violence

**FIGURE 16.** Top 5 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with the largest number of adolescent girls aged 10-19 living in internal displacement due to conflict and violence, 2022



**Source:** UNICEF analysis based on Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Global Internal Displacement Database (GIDD), 2022.



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earlier, interpersonal violence is the second leading cause of death among girls aged 10-14 and the first cause of death among girls 15-19, indicating that, as with self-harm, **the risk to girls of interpersonal violence increases as they grow older.**

An estimated 456,000 adolescent girls aged 10-19 years in Latin America and the Caribbean lived in internal displacement at the end of 2022, having fled or left their homes – some of them years ago – as a result, or to avoid the effects, of armed conflict, generalized violence or violations of their human rights. During 2022 alone, there were more than 40,000 new displacements of adolescent girls fleeing conflict or violence in the region. Colombia, a country marked with decades of conflict, is home to the largest number of internally displaced adolescent girls followed by Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Haiti (Figure 16). Moreover, during 2022, there were an estimated 100,000 new displacements of adolescent girls due to natural disasters - and with the climate crisis exacerbating both extreme weather events and slow onset impacts, more girls are likely to be displaced due to climatic factors in the coming years.

<sup>3</sup> UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022. Analysis based on 11 countries: Bahamas, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

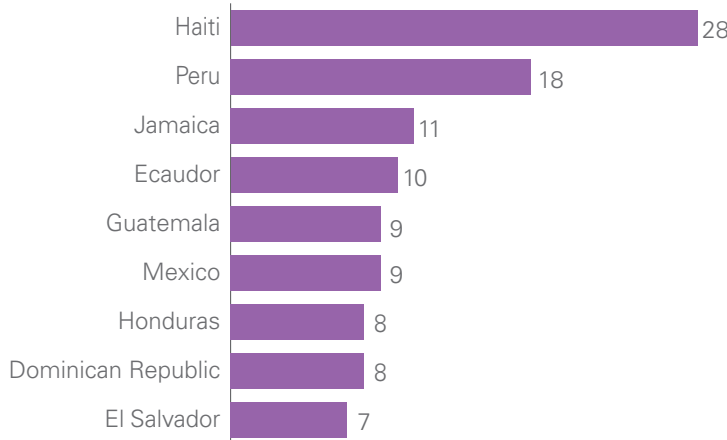
<sup>4</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of data from The Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. Analysis based on 16 countries and territories: Anguilla, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Uruguay.

Although data on intimate partner violence among adolescent girls are available for only nine countries in the region, the picture is concerning. Ten per cent or more of ever-partnered girls aged 15–19 years experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner during the past year in four of the countries (Figure 17). Moreover, these data likely underestimate the extent of intimate partner violence since girls often do not report due to shame and fear of retribution.

Yet, a bright spot: across the region, adolescent girls aged 15-19, on average, do not think intimate partner violence is acceptable. Only eight per cent report that a husband is justified in hitting his wife under certain circumstances - the lowest proportion among regions with available data (Figure 18).

Ten per cent or more of adolescent girls in Ecuador, Jamaica, Peru and Haiti have experienced recent intimate partner violence

**FIGURE 17.** Percentage of ever-partnered adolescent girls aged 15–19 years who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner during the last twelve months (SDG 5.2.1), by country, 2014-2021

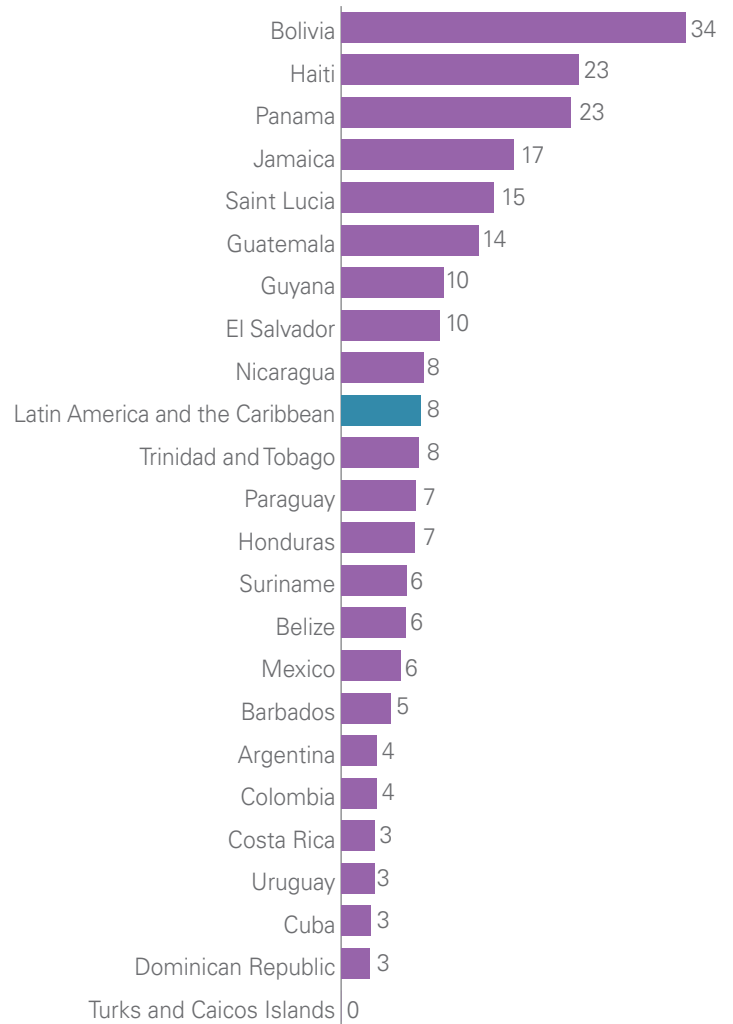


**Source:** UNICEF Global Databases, 2022, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), and other national surveys.

**Note:** Comparisons across countries should be done cautiously given differences in definitions used.

Fewer than 8 per cent of adolescent girls aged 15-19 justify wife beating

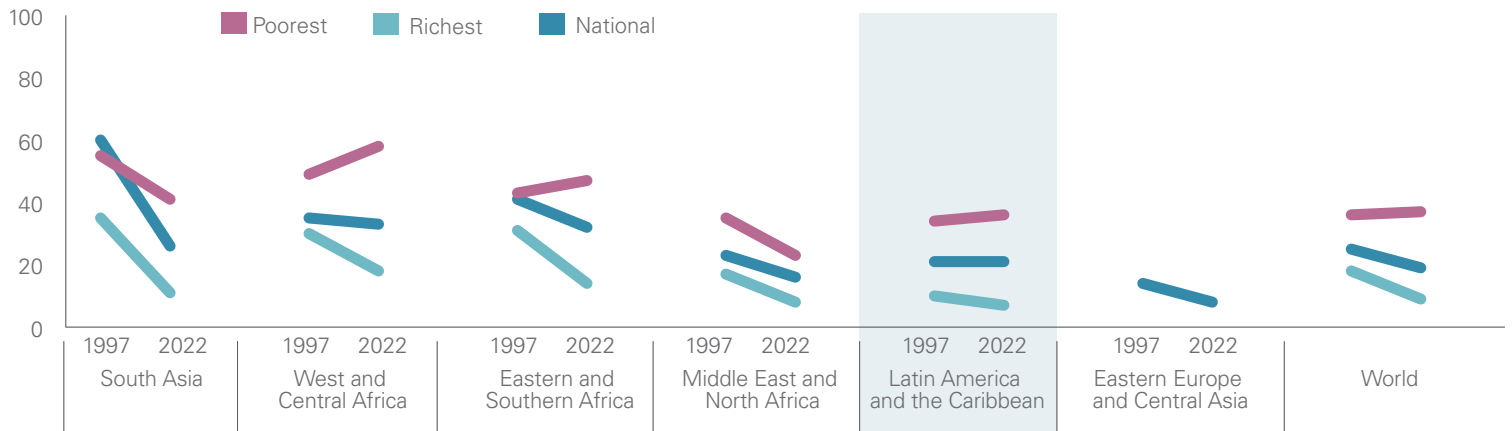
**FIGURE 18.** Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of four specified reasons, by country, 2011-2020



**Source:** UNICEF Global Databases, 2022, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), and other national surveys.

**Note:** Specified reasons are: if his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations.

**FIGURE 19.** Percentage of young women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 (SDG 5.3.1), by region, 1997 and 2022



Source: United Nations Children's Fund, Is an End to Child Marriage within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects. 2023 update, UNICEF, New York, 2023.

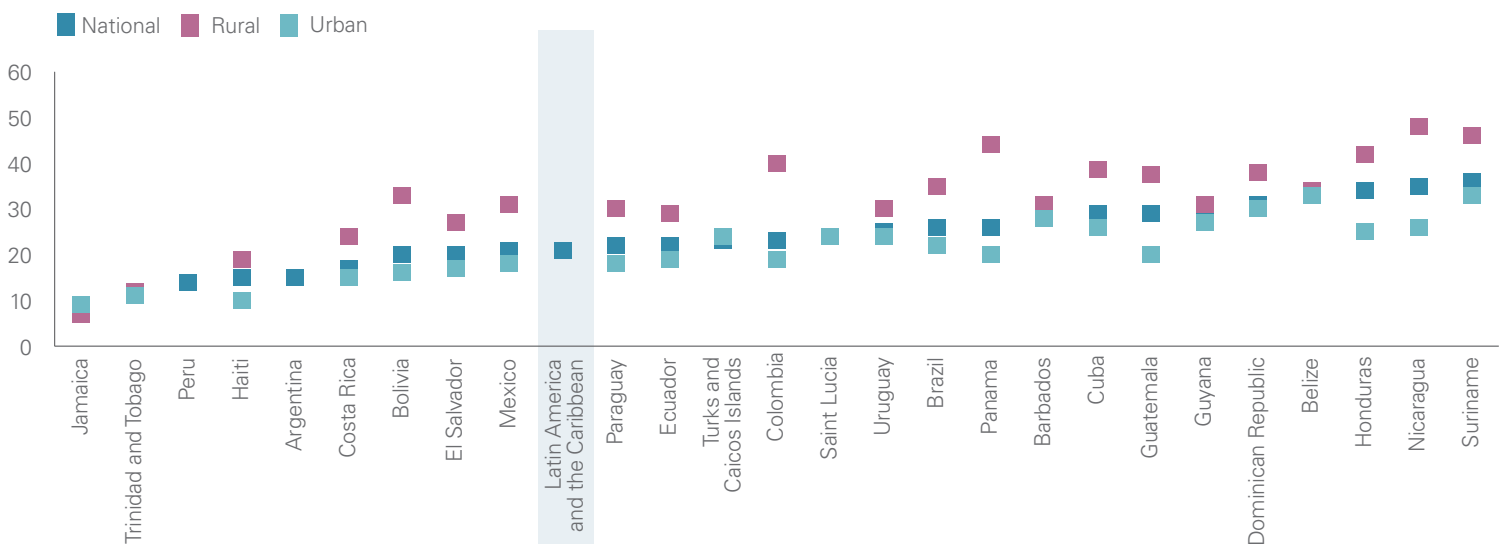
While globally, the practice of child marriage has declined over the past 25 years, no progress has been observed in Latin America and the Caribbean

A breach of girls' rights to their childhood, child marriage often compromises girls' healthy transition to adulthood by resulting in early pregnancy, social isolation, interruption of education, limited socio-economic opportunities and increased risk of domestic violence. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where child marriage often takes the form of an informal union in which a girl lives with her partner, progress to reduce the practice has not been observed

in the past 25 years. Currently, 21 per cent of young women aged 20-24 married or were in union before the age of 18. Moreover, the practice continues to be a phenomenon of the poor (Figure 19). Concerningly, by 2030, the region is expected to have the second highest prevalence, trailing only behind sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>5</sup> Across countries, wide variation is observed, ranging from 8 and 11 per cent in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, respectively, to 30 per cent or more in Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Suriname. In almost all countries with data, child brides are more likely to live in rural areas (Figure 20).

Young women in the region first married or in union before their 18th birthday are more likely to live in rural areas

**FIGURE 20.** Percentage of young women aged 20-24 married before age 18 (SDG 5.3.1), by residence, 2015-2022



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2023, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), and other national surveys.

# PRIORITIZING ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Investing in adolescent girls produces long-term results for girls and their communities. Yet historically, adolescent girls have not been at the forefront of development agendas in Latin America and the Caribbean - or indeed the world. Too often, adolescent girls fall through the gaps in interventions targeted at either women or children, or when adolescent girls are targeted, their needs are typically addressed in isolation. Even fewer programmes generate multiple outcomes for adolescent girls that are transformative, such as improving self-efficacy, voice, leadership and employability, or are delivered at scale, reaching thousands of girls.

Yet, as this brochure highlights, despite the establishment of legal and policy frameworks promoting gender equality, the status of adolescent girls in many countries in the region is bleak across a range of outcomes, including poverty and violence. Moreover, historical data indicate that progress for girls over the past two decades has not been observed (child marriage) or where gains have been made, more work to improve outcomes for girls is required (adolescent fertility). The brochure also calls to attention the notable data gaps on adolescent girls in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in the areas of gender-based violence, skills development, agency and leadership, gender norms, care work and economic empowerment.



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Extensive migration flows across the region mean that policy and programmatic responses to advance the rights and well-being of adolescent girls must be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of a large population of girls on the move. Lastly, increasing investments in the production, analysis and dissemination of high quality, timely, sex- and age-disaggregated data is needed to drive evidence-informed policy and programme decisions for adolescent girls. This includes data on afro-descendant and indigenous girls, girls living with disabilities, and girls who may be marginalized due to sexual orientation or gender identity. Qualitative methodologies that place girls and women at the centre of the data production process are equally critical investments since girls know best the barriers they face.

UNICEF is committed to prioritizing adolescent girls by launching its first ever Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy, 2022-2025.<sup>6</sup> With the aim of supporting adolescent girls to achieve their full potential, it articulates a plan for accelerated programming - with and for adolescent girls - that leverages UNICEF's existing work and comparative advantage to promote more multisectoral, context-specific, girl-driven, rights-based support that meets adolescent girls' diverse and overlapping needs.

This data brochure was prepared by the Data and Analytics Section of UNICEF (Lauren Pandolfelli and Mariela Giacomponello) in collaboration with the Gender Section of the UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (Denise Stuckenbruck and Ivonne Urriola Perez) in June 2023.

<https://www.unicef.org/lac/en>

## ADVANCING THE RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE REGION WILL REQUIRE:



**Equipping girls** with knowledge, skills and leadership opportunities so they are able to make decisions about their lives and fulfil their potential;



**Supporting girls**, especially the most marginalized, to access quality services when and where they need them through multisectoral approaches which recognize that girls' physical, mental, economic and social well-being are integrally interconnected;



**Enhancing partnerships** with diverse actors in the public and private sectors for transformative results at scale.

6 <https://www.unicef.org/reports/adolescent-girls-programme-strategy-2022-2025>