

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean

Easy-to-read version



WORLD BANK GROUP

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Abstract

In Latin America and the Caribbean there are around 85 million persons with disabilities.

Until recently, their needs were not taken into account when making public policy.

Their lives and hopes were invisible.

This has changed in recent years.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have signed the **United Nations Convention**

On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

And they are slowly adapting their laws to end discrimination against persons with disabilities in education, in employment, health, participation and culture

But there is still a lot to do.

It is important for countries to have better data collection on the real situation of persons with disabilities and start applying the principles of **universal design**.

Inclusion is essential to make societies fairer, with more opportunities, and to meet the targets of the **Agenda 2030**.

In 2006 the countries started signing **this convention** to make disabilities more visible, to write laws that protect the rights of these people and to respond to their needs.

Universal design is a way of doing things so that the vast majority of people can have access to them.

This Agenda of the United Nations is a global agreement to achieve goals in relation with social justice, sustainability and climate action.

However, the data collected in this report indicates that in every part of Latin America and the Caribbean there is discrimination against persons with disabilities, who face barriers that prevent or limit their personal development.



If we compare their situation with the rest of the population, we see that persons with disabilities in this region:

- live in poorer households
- are at greater risk of social exclusion
- are more likely to live in places without safety or services
- are isolated in inaccessible built and virtual environments
- are not considered when decisions are made
- receive less education and training
- are often excluded from the labour market

According to this report, there are many persons with disabilities that live in extreme poverty and most of the homes where persons with disabilities live are vulnerable to falling into poverty.

Persons with disabilities are often excluded from the labour market, and the different public services and spaces.

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the fastest-aging regions, which is why there will be more persons with disabilities in the future.

This will make recovery more difficult after years of serious economic problems and the COVID-19 pandemic. To have a sustainable future and make the region stronger inclusion must be put at the centre of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This report contains the latest data collected about the situation of persons with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean, the difficulties they face and the causes of their exclusion.

It also contains the solutions that have been proposed and the advances made in the last 10 years, and it shows how much still remains to be done to achieve full inclusion.

This report is the basis for other public policy proposals, and raises the voice of persons with disabilities.



► Who are persons with disabilities?

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is «one who has physical, mental intellectual or sensorial **impairments** that may be permanent, and who, when faced with certain barriers, cannot take full part in society on the same terms as others».

This is when exclusion happens, because social barriers prevent persons with disabilities from taking part in community life and their own full development.

This report shows that these barriers are even higher for certain social groups who accumulate disadvantages, and who have far fewer opportunities: women, people living in rural areas, **indigenous peoples** and Afro-descendant people.

It is very difficult to know the situation of persons with disabilities in this region in the past, because countries did not collect this type of information until recently and each country did it in a different way.

Now countries are making progress to start collecting the same kind of information in the same way, following the recommendations of the Washington Group, created by the United Nations, which advises countries on how to collect information to measure disability.

An **impairment** is the absence, deterioration or loss of a function that affects the basic activities of a person.

Indigenous peoples are those that lived in this region thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans.

This is particularly useful to get a more accurate image of the situation of persons with disabilities and to plan public policies.

This report collects information about:

- how many persons with disabilities are in the region,
- their financial and educational situation,
- whether they have social support,
- where and how they live
- and whether they have access to public services, to the labor market and to participation spaces.

It also tells us if there is a link between disability and

- poverty,
- education,
- work,
- gender
- and ethnoracial identity.



The laws of 33 countries have been examined to see whether they follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The people who made this report spoke with organizations that support persons with disabilities, with national disability committees and representatives of these persons between 2020 and 2021.



The activism of persons with disabilities has been very important to advance in research and proposals.

But the data is incomplete, and the analysis is not final. The report only gives us an approximate idea of the situation of persons with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **There are around 85 million persons with disabilities In Latin America and the Caribbean.**
- **There is a person with a disability in 1 out of 3 households.**
- **Out of every 10 persons with disabilities, nearly 3 have a severe disability.**
- **Motor disabilities are the most common, followed by visual.**
- **There is very little information about psycho-social disabilities caused by mental illness, and about intellectual disabilities.**

► The inclusive approach

This report is based on the idea that poverty exists and persists because of the barriers imposed on certain social groups.

These barriers are based on the identity of the discriminated individuals, preventing the full development of their potential and their access to services, markets and participation in public life.

Persons with disabilities form one of these groups. There is a long list of prejudices that have made them invisible, marginalized them at school and in the workplace, and they have had to face negative attitudes that persist today in all societies. The exclusion of persons with disabilities does not have just one cause. Inclusion is intended to improve the view held by society of people who are disadvantaged by their identity, so that they maintain their dignity and to offer them better opportunities to take part in society.

Disabilities exist in all social groups and are independent of nationality and ethnicity, education, gender and age.

Although a person may never experience a disability, they may have friends, relatives or colleagues who have disabilities.



Disabilities are universal, but have different effects depending on where the person lives, their gender, their ethnoracial identity, their financial status, education and the social support they have.

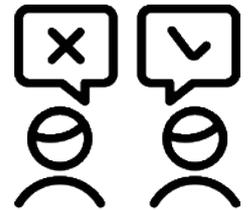
Some have more opportunities than others. This is also true for persons with disabilities.

That is why this report pays attention to gender, ethnoracial identity, where someone was born or lives and the links between these factors that can make their exclusion even worse.

Disability is distributed unevenly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This means that

- living in a rural area,
- being poor,
- being a woman,
- and being indigenous or Afro-descendant



increases the risk of having a disability and of the disability being severe.

The authors of this study do not have enough data to analyse the situation of other minorities with disabilities, such as the LGTBI+ collective or migrants.

But these are topics that must be researched soon.



► Environmental factors

This report also focus on environmental factors. These factors include, among others:

- natural and manufactured environments,
- products,
- access to information and communication technologies,
- public and private transport, add an orange point,
- the workplace,
- laws and institutions,
- social attitudes and perceptions.

Institutions are public or private organizations that shape a country's social policy: the state, schools, political parties, unions, companies, associations, etc. are all institutions.

The nature of environments influences the level of participation and the way in which people can participate.

The discriminatory prejudices and attitudes of a society are transferred to schools, where bullying becomes normal, and the workplace, where persons with disabilities are either not hired or promoted.

If there is no intervention on these negative perceptions, prejudices grow and negative attitudes become normal.

This is how the idea that persons with disabilities cannot work nor go to school or move around the city like other people becomes accepted as «natural».

► Poverty and access to services

Poverty and disability make each other worse: poverty aggravates disabilities, and disability makes poverty more extreme.

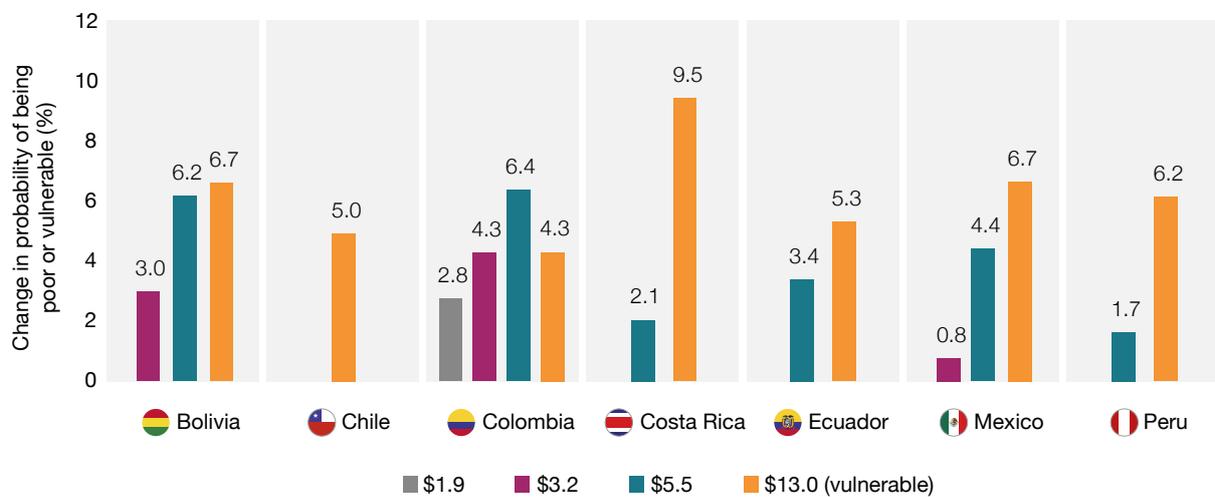
Studies in every country show that there are higher levels of disability when there is:

- lower income
- an environment of risk (natural disasters, violence, etc.)
- hazardous work (bad working conditions)
- no access to health services
- reduced access to education
- a situation with more barriers
- less inclusiveness



The study also shows that:

- 1 in 5 households in extreme poverty include at least one person with a disability.
- In all the countries studied, households with persons with disabilities have lower income than the others.
- In all the countries studied, households with persons with disabilities are more vulnerable than the others.



This last fact is alarming because persons with a disability often have additional basic expenses:

- medical bills,
- transport costs,
- special clothes, shoes or diets,
- technical support,
- adapted homes
- or professional treatments.

Poverty is always more severe for persons with disabilities who live in rural areas, or when disability affects women or ethnic minorities.

Most of the data in this report shows that the risk of poverty in a household where there is a person with a disability is much higher if indigenous or Afro-descendent people live there.

The countries with the highest risk are Bolivia (the risk increases by 13.1 percent), Mexico and Peru (in both it increases by 7.6 percent).

Chile managed to limit poverty among persons with disabilities thanks to financial support and programs to meet specific needs.

In other countries, like Mexico and Peru, persons with disabilities continue to have higher levels of poverty.



The truth is that out of every 10 households with a person with disabilities, 7 are in a situation of vulnerability. This means that, although they have some resources, they can easily fall into poverty if there is a financial crisis, a natural disaster or a pandemic.

In Costa Rica, for example, persons with disabilities are much more likely to be vulnerable.

In other words, although social policies have lifted these persons out of poverty, especially by giving them financial support, it is not enough to remove the risk of poverty.



The COVID-19 pandemic has made households that were just above the poverty level fall back below it, and the social progress that had cost so much to achieve was wiped away in a few months.

Besides receiving lower income, persons with disabilities have less access to utility services like running water, electricity and sewerage.

They also have less access to the Internet, computers and mobile phones.

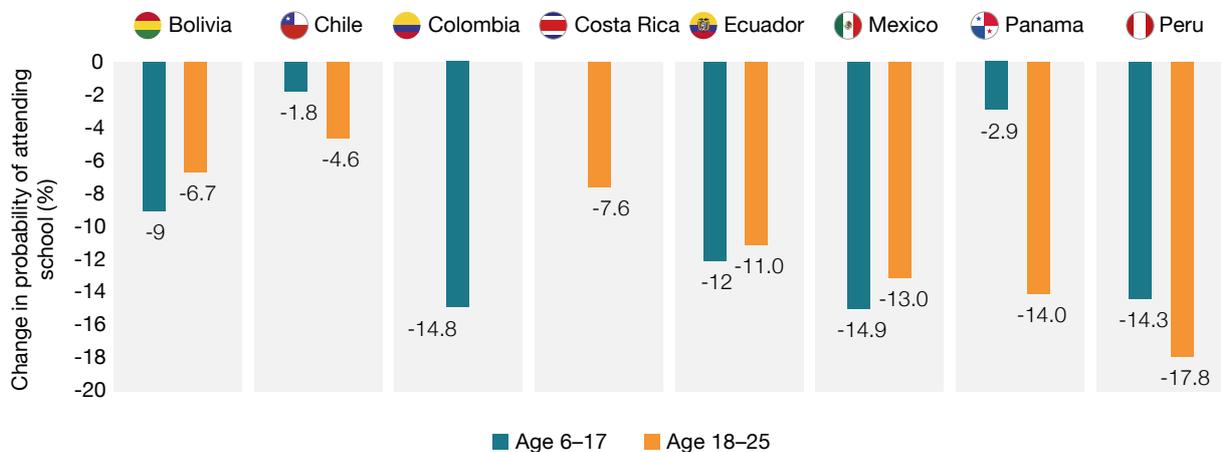
These problems of access during the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate effect on their options for education and employment.

► Access to education

Children with disabilities and young adults have always been denied the right to attend ordinary schools and were sent to special institutions that kept them separated, where they were often unable to develop their abilities and acquire the knowledge to lead an independent life. This continues for many even today.

In recent years, however, countries in the region have started to take measures to improve access and make flexible study plans.

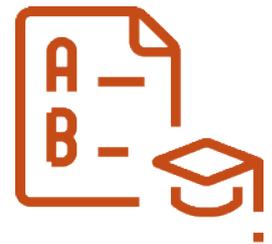
There are now 22 countries that have laws that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in schools, and more than 20 countries have laws that guarantee access to all levels of education for children with disabilities.



This is why there are more children with disabilities enrolled in schools now, a sign that progress is being made, however slowly, towards inclusive schools.

Some countries, such as Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay have greatly reduced inequalities between children with and without disabilities in primary education.

Despite these advances, illiteracy is 5 times higher among persons with disabilities than the rest of the population, and the number of children with a disability that do not attend school is 4 times higher than among children without disabilities.



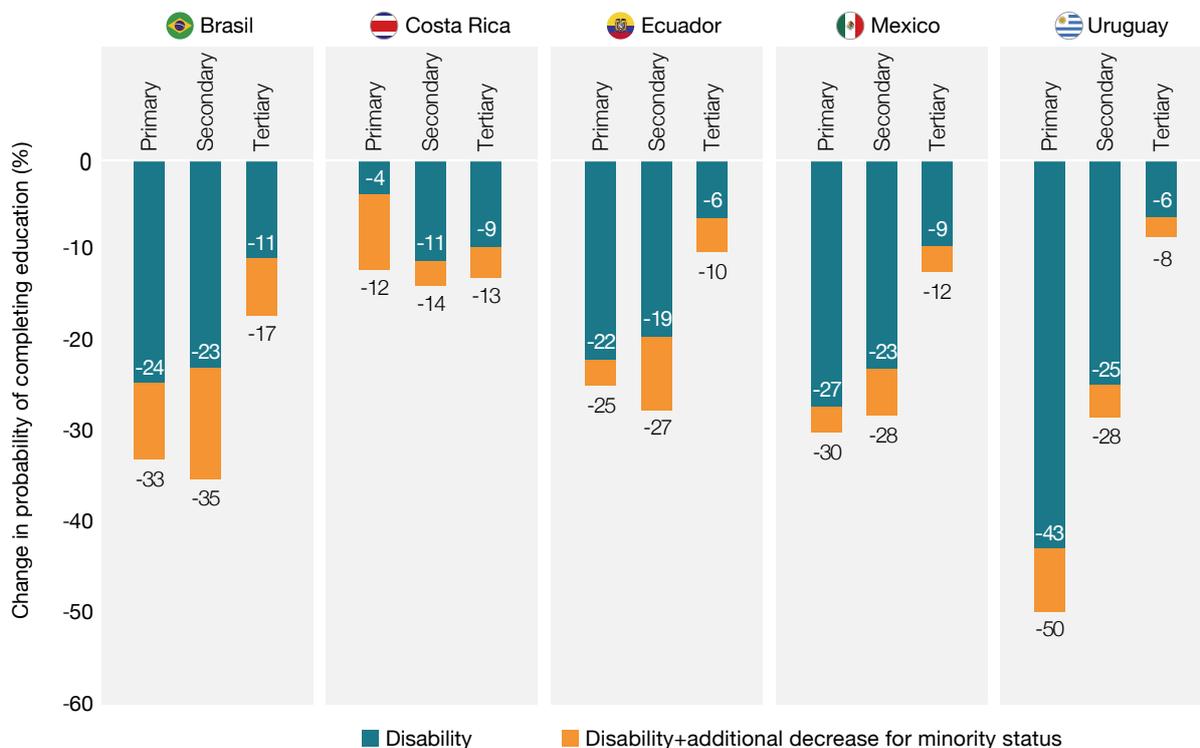
Besides, children with disabilities are much more likely to drop out of school, to skip classes, and suffer discrimination and violence at school.

There are very few places in Latin America and the Caribbean that offer inclusive education in early childhood, there are neither appropriate facilities nor programmes for inclusion. Discrimination towards persons with disabilities begins during childhood.

Inequality in education between students with and without a disability is even greater in secondary education:

- Children with a disability are 21 percentage points less likely to finish primary education than those without a disability.
- Children with a disability are 23 percentage points less likely to finish secondary education than those without a disability.
- Children with a disability are 9 percentage points less likely to finish university than those without a disability.

This difference becomes even greater when young persons with disabilities belong to an ethnic minority. The closure of schools caused by COVID-19 has worsened these inequalities.



There are many barriers to children’s development at school:

- special education schools do not have the resources that they need.
- there is a lack of access to learning materials;
- there is a lack of technological support,
- there is a lack of teacher training and preparation,
- there are weaknesses in school leadership to promote inclusive education.

Teachers are absolutely vital for offering quality opportunities for education to all students.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, school staff, including teachers, assistant teachers, volunteers and others, do not receive the professional training they need to work effectively with students with disabilities. Nor are they trained in the use of inclusive teaching practices, in designing study plans or the principles of universal design.

Students with disabilities often attend schools that are inaccessible, that do not meet their needs and are socially hostile. In other words, they are subject to discrimination and prejudices that affect their performance at school and their emotional wellbeing.

Stigmatization and invisibility have always been applied to disabilities, even in teaching materials.

A World Bank report on inclusive education examined 40 authorized, or government recommended history and language textbooks for primary and secondary education in 10 countries.

They counted 5,100 in these books but persons with disabilities only appeared in 83 images. 65 of these 83 images were in the same book from Ecuador while all the others had only 18.

There were no images in the textbooks from Uruguay and Venezuela, and they only found 6 images in the books from Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru.

A **stigma** is a feature, a condition or behaviour that makes people consider the people who have it to be inferior or worse than them, leading them to respond negatively to them.

What is more, the images of disability in the classroom materials were stereotypes, so that they did not represent real people.

This weakens and diminishes the sense of belonging and dignity of students with disabilities, and prevents all students in the classroom from learning important attitudes like empathy and tolerance.

The real experience of students with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean leaves them at a clear disadvantage. Without the capacity and awareness that the school should teach, people suffer severe long-term financial consequences, especially when trying to find good quality jobs.



► Access to the labour market

The labour market refers to the relations between persons who are looking for work and the companies that are looking for workers.

Persons with disabilities are excluded from the labour market: half of the **heads of households** with a disability are inactive, which means that they are not working nor looking for a job.

The level of inactivity among women with disabilities is even higher.

Around 57 percent of them are inactive, while among men it is 40 percent.

This does not mean that these persons exclude themselves from the labour market.

It means that there are certain barriers that prevent them from looking for a job and finding one.

These barriers mean that many competent people are unable to work.

Unemployment among persons with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean is similar to other parts of the world.

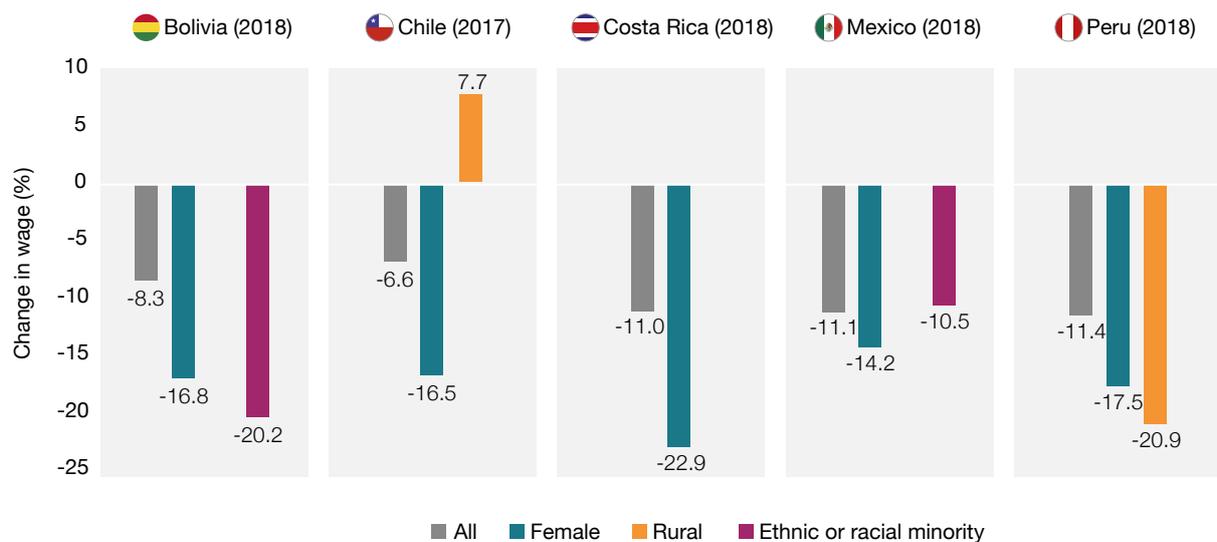
In this region, however, they receive lower salaries for the same kind of work, even when they have the same qualifications.

There are also major differences between countries in the same region.

The **head of the household** is the person who looks after the family group and takes the important decisions that affect the whole family.

For example, persons with disabilities in Costa Rica and Mexico earn between 6 and 11 percent less for the same type of job than persons without disabilities.

When we add other disadvantages related with identity, such as ethnoracial identity or gender, inequalities in salaries are even greater.



These inequalities in salaries affect the other members of the household, which have lower income when compared with households of persons without disabilities.

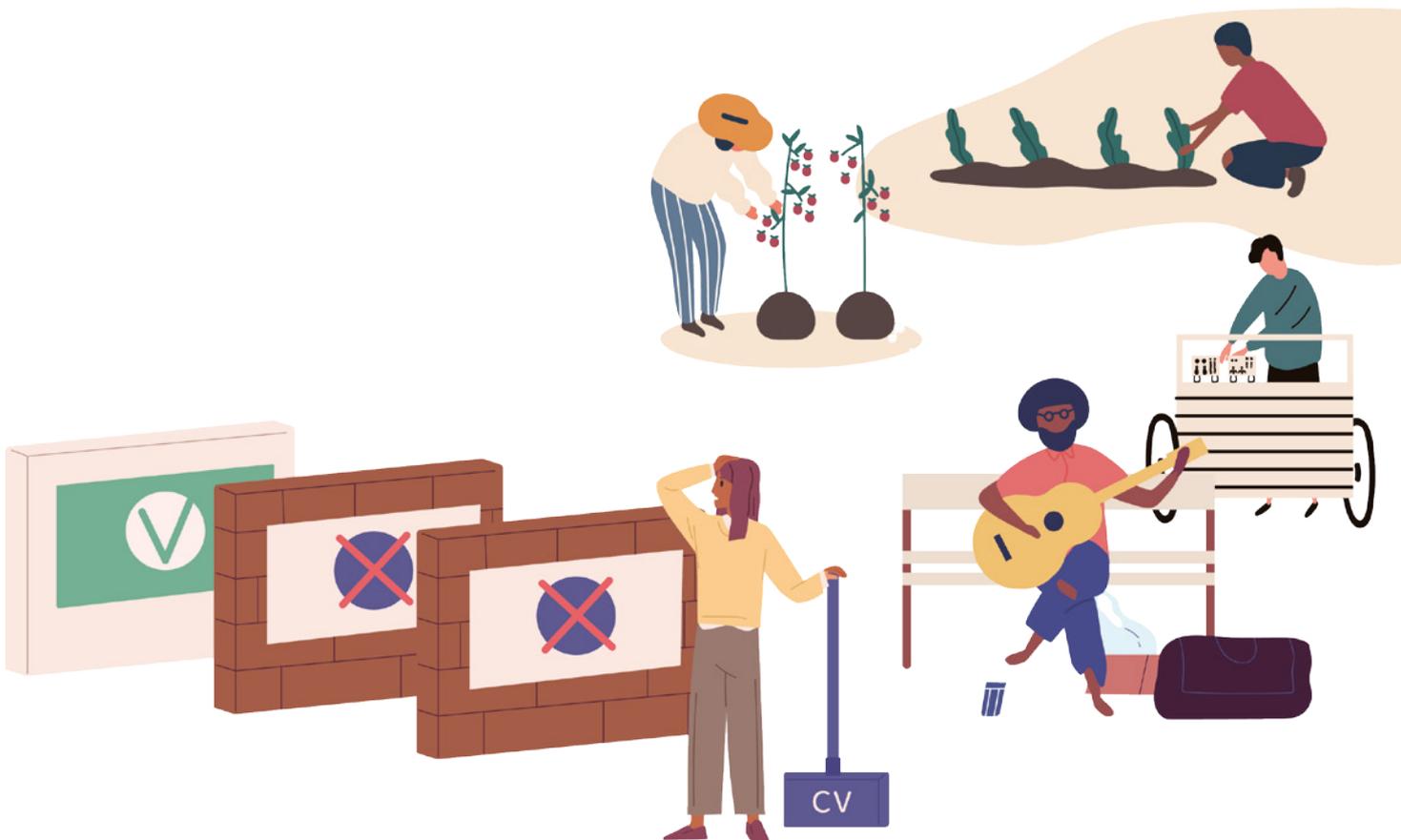
The absence of policies to encourage the independence of persons with disabilities not only deprives them of their income, but other members of the household as well, especially women, who generally do the unpaid work, such as caring for persons with functional dependence.

Between 5 and 7 out of every 10 female heads of households with a person with disabilities are unemployed, and this means that the income of the other members of the household are also lower.

Another important fact is that persons with disabilities often work in sub-standard conditions. Informal jobs, which means working without contracts or protection, are 11 times more common for persons with disabilities than the rest of the population.

An informal job means that they are excluded from social security, work-related pensions or health plans.

Besides, informal workplaces do not provide adaptations technical help nor support technologies, which increases the risk of suffering accidents at work.



► Towards an inclusive future

The exclusion of persons with disabilities is a complex phenomenon. There are many forms of disability and many factors that have an influence:

- built environments,
- environmental conditions,
- financial circumstances,
- and the social climate

which create specific circumstances that require appropriate solutions.

Inclusion is possible, but it is hard to overcome centuries of discrimination.

We are aware of how hard the challenge is, which is why we make no specific recommendations in this report, but raise general points that can become the basis for designing inclusive policies that respect the dignity and include a focus on persons with disabilities.

These basic points are explained in the following pages.



Raising the voices and recognizing persons with disabilities

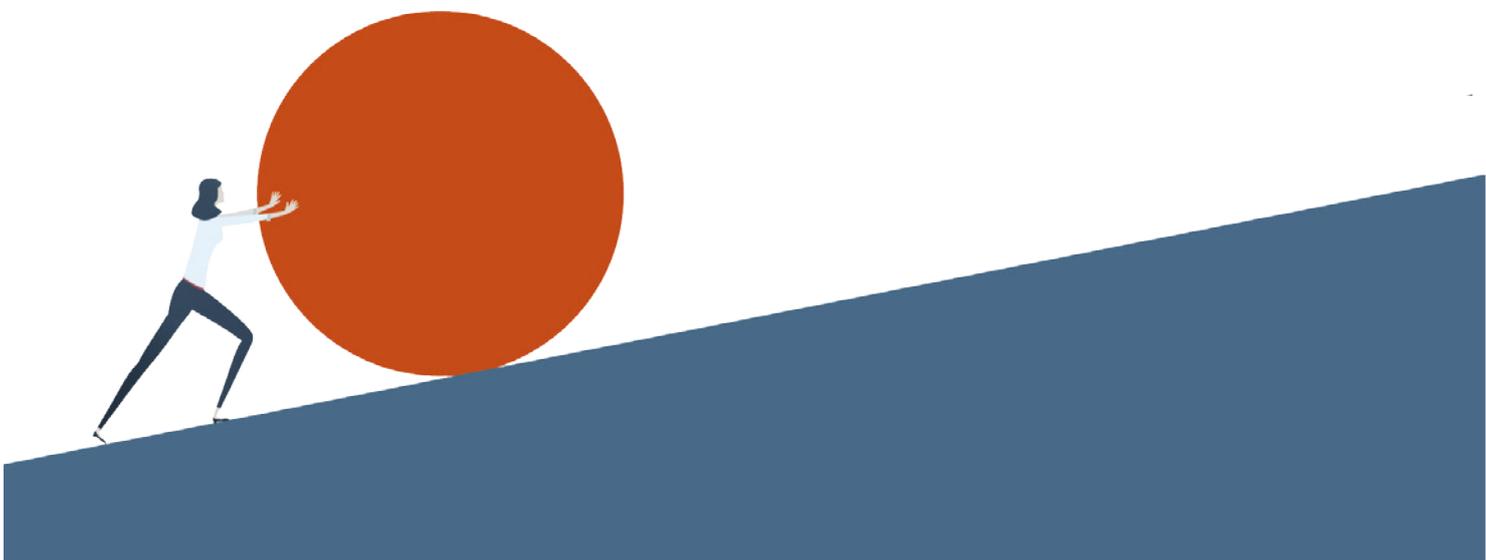
Persons with disabilities have fought to have their voices heard in debates about inclusion and development.

The situation in the region is changing, but there is still a lot to do to ensure real, full and effective participation.

One example of the work that remains to be done are the limits on legal capacity that still exist in many countries, especially for persons with intellectual or **psychosocial disabilities**.

These limits on the legal capacity of a person deprive them of their freedom and capacity to take decisions about their health, their money and their wellbeing, diminishing their dignity and fundamental rights.

Psychosocial disabilities are those which are caused by mental illnesses, like depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc.



This lack of capacity and recognition is also apparent in more subtle forms of discrimination, which seem harmless, and are found in some cultural aspects of life.

Little by little, these social and cultural dynamics lead persons with disabilities to believe that they cannot aspire to a good job, that they cannot go to school, that they should not be present in public spaces, and even more so when their dignity and safety are at risk.

The report says that discriminatory attitudes and beliefs are still prevalent in institutions, but also in private spheres, such as among neighbours or members of the same family.

These negative attitudes and beliefs that are included in the law and which are part of everyday relations transmit inappropriate ideas about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do and their potential contribution to society.

Raising the voice and recognition of persons with disabilities means that they must be present wherever decisions are made.

One example of this: some 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean deny persons with disabilities the right to be electoral candidates.

However, if persons with disabilities are denied participation in institutions, in social, economic, political and cultural life, it is hard for them to be represented and for their needs to be truly known.

Excluded groups must be heard and made visible to prevent prejudices from spreading.

When persons with disabilities are not visible, because they are separated at school and in the workplace, it reinforces mistaken ideas about disabilities and diminishes the possibility of building a more inclusive society.

To raise the voice and autonomy of persons with disabilities they must have the support of social movements that have the political will to make the necessary changes to the law.

Although many countries include protection and non-discrimination in their most recent legislation, they still have not made effective policies for employment, inclusive education nor health services.

To guarantee these rights so that persons with disabilities can make use of them, countries have to provide the means that are necessary to make this possible.

Governments must extend the forms of participation and support organizations of persons with disabilities.



The World Bank is encouraging the role of these organizations in the region to convene and enable participation.

We hope that this will open a dialogue between organizations and governments, civil society and the private sector and put disability inclusion at the center of the development agenda.

Starting with a robust and full diagnosis

If we are to design policies for inclusion, we need to have a good diagnosis of the real situation. And to make a good diagnosis, we need to gather data about disability and put an end to many years of invisibility.



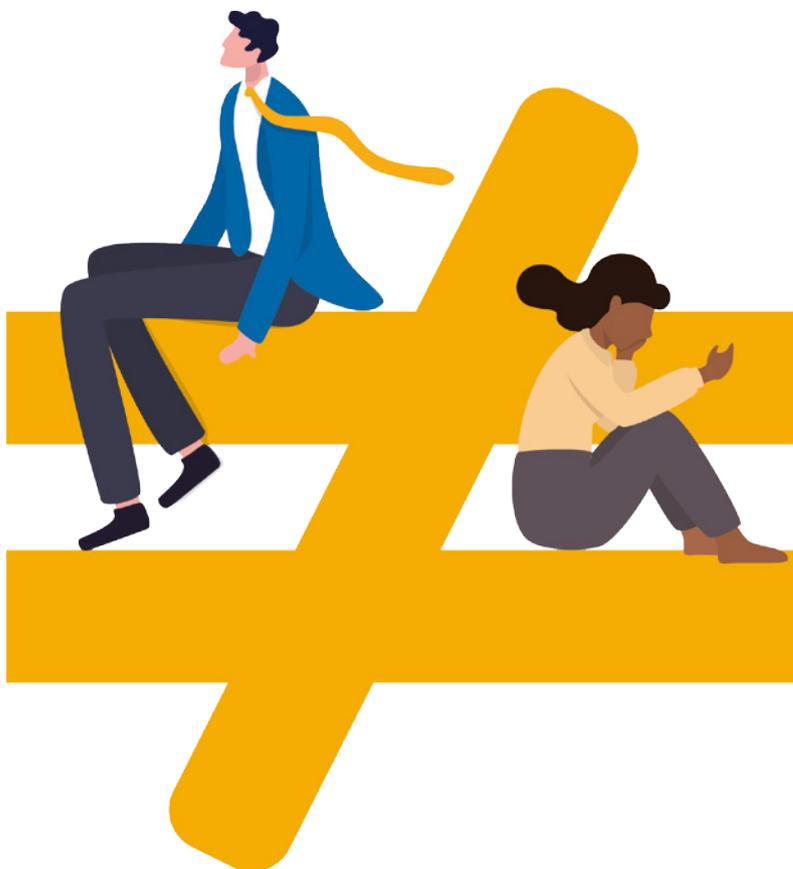
Gathering this data is a task that remains to be done and there are several difficulties:

- Making intellectual and psychosocial disabilities visible in the data.
- Including the recommendations of the Washington Group.
- Unifying criteria in official registries.
- The lack of data makes it impossible to understand how COVID-19 has affected persons with disabilities.
- Countries must make an effort to gather data using the same method to make it comparable.
- Countries must try to gather data on areas where there is a lack of information.
- Countries must gather data about relations between vulnerable minorities and disability.

We have to be careful about our terms to make a good diagnosis to avoid distorting the data. One example of this are the psychosocial and intellectual disabilities that bear a long-standing stigma.

We need to know exactly what the situation is, because it appears that persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities have even less access to health and social programs than other persons with disabilities. There is also a stronger tendency to put them into institutions and to imprison them, and they never appear in the agendas for inclusion.

Our experience in the region tells us that it would be very useful to include the training and preparation of interviewers as part of the data collection and run public campaigns to obtain better results.



Applying progressive policies

Since the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities we can see that there are many inclusive policies and programs:

- laws to guarantee non-discrimination and equality before the law,
- initiatives to enable access to services, the labour market and public spaces.
- elimination of inequalities through direct support, as in Chile and Costa Rica,
- fewer children with disabilities left outside the school system in Costa Rica and Uruguay
- measures to limit the loss of education during the pandemic, as in Chile and Peru.



Not all the inclusion policies for persons with disabilities have satisfactory results, because they often fail to take all signs of exclusion into account, nor do they connect the situation with others.

One example of this is the quota system for hiring persons with disabilities in the public sector and increasingly in the private sector too.

The quota system means that some jobs are reserved for persons with disabilities.

This quota system can strengthen access to good jobs and be a valuable symbol for diversity at work.

However, these quota systems are not enough because they have not been accompanied by other efforts at the same time in inclusive education nor job training for workers with disabilities.

For the quota system to function there must be many more people trained, which means they need to have secondary and university education, and there must be awareness campaigns to end prejudices about the capacity of these persons and the need for their inclusion.

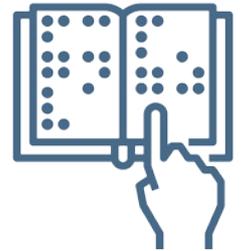
There must be money available to apply the programs and the institutions involved must be able to implement it. Clear policies are needed to move from rights to action, with clear objectives, and there must be oversight.

The path towards inclusive education teaches us important lessons about how things must be done, because inclusive education does not just mean that more children with disabilities attend ordinary schools.



There have to be major changes made to the system:

- to improve access in schools
- to design new, more flexible study plans
- to design new teaching materials
- to improve the training of school staff before and while they are employed
- to change opinions and foster a new climate in the classroom
- alternative spaces and learning contexts
- a transition towards more coordinated inclusion
- solid training in inclusive methods for teachers
- general training in the use of universal design for learning



Policies that deal with persons with a disabilities as a single homogeneous group cannot fight against exclusion, and policies that have a limited view of persons with disabilities cannot change the situation.

This is why teachers and schools cannot create inclusive education without the participation of the whole education community: teachers, trainers specialized in disabilities, councillors, volunteers, occupational therapists, speech therapists, students and families.

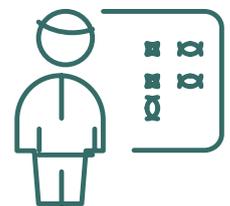
All inclusion policies for persons with disabilities must have clear and measurable objectives, sufficient funding and clear institutional responsibilities, which means saying what they are going to do and how, what resources they will have and who is in charge of them.

The governments of the countries in the region have included disability policies in the public sector.

Some 20 countries have created specialized national committees to work on the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

However, the lack of personnel and resources, and these committees' limited capacity for taking decisions means that they cannot do much to make meaningful changes.

That is why it is important to empower these committees and give them the resources they need so that they can apply the agreements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and extend the inclusion of disabilities to all levels of government, at national and municipal levels, and all sectors: education, employment, housing, services, etc.



Another prominent issue are the inclusion programs.

If we cannot see the results of what they do, we cannot know what impact they have, nor learn from their mistakes.

We cannot apply them in other places or adapt them.

And although in the last decade we have seen inclusion programs being put into practice, many of them have not been assessed for their impact or effectiveness.

If the resources are made available to make these assessments, the quality of the programs would improve. And we would have more detailed information about different areas.

Efforts should be directed towards specific objectives and sustained over time in order to fight against inclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we need to have stronger safety nets, networks that persons with disabilities in each country can use for dialogue and to collaborate.

It is also important to distinguish between groups of persons with disabilities who have distinct experiences and results, especially those persons who have historically had to bear other forms of exclusion.



Changing mental models and reducing stigma

To create a future that includes persons with disabilities we have to fight against the mental models and stigmas that exclude them.

A **mental model** is the way we represent the world.

We know that our mental models modify how people think about and recognize opportunities. Discrimination and prejudices affect people's capacity to identify opportunities and can lower their expectations or motivation to finish school or get a decent job, and even to receive the medical care they need.

Persons with disabilities have to deal with stigma and discriminatory mental models every day. For example, students with disabilities are victims of bullying at school much more than their classmates without disabilities. The hostile atmosphere of schools can make them drop out and even make their parents decide not to send their children to school.

Teachers are unlikely to properly teach students with disabilities if they believe that they are incapable of learning. Low expectations and the negative point of view that teachers hold about the assumed incapacity of students with disabilities to learn or make friends affects their education in the long-term.



Employers usually discriminate against candidates and workers with disabilities in a comparable way, because many of them believe that they do not have the skills required, or have problems to work or are less productive.

This prevents qualified people from having suitable jobs and creates glass ceilings at work, making professional development harder.

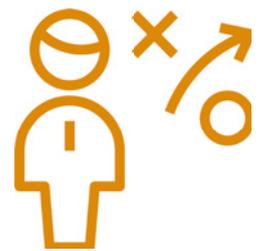
This is especially important because the negative mental models at school and in the workplace have a huge influence on the opportunities to earn income and escape poverty.

We must change our mental models and eliminate stigmas because they offend persons with disabilities and can lead to physical violence.

In El Salvador, more than half of children with disabilities have been victims of violence because of their condition. Women with disabilities suffer sexual aggression and gender-based violence to a greater extent than women without disabilities.

It is essential to pay attention to social prejudices and stigmas if inclusive policies are to be effective. For example, if we want to have an inclusive educational system, we have to change the mentality of the teachers and other school workers, parents and other students and create study plans and learning materials that show persons with disabilities in a positive light.

If we encourage respect in the learning environment we will be moving a little nearer to other social advances. There will also be other positive effects, like the chance to learn non-academic capacities and skills, such as empathy, collaboration, tolerance and a critical awareness of inequality.



Strengthening social resilience

Resilience is the capacity to withstand difficulties and show strength during crisis.

This report highlights the need to strengthen the resilience of persons with disabilities.

The best path to equality has always been education. Knowledge and skills allow people to make the most of opportunities and overcome crisis.

However, persons with disabilities spend fewer years at school, drop out earlier and often have to attend schools that are hostile or which do not meet their educational needs.

Policies to support their education will therefore benefit them, but also their homes and society in general. Education allows them to be more autonomous and independent, to have better jobs, participate more and be more active in public.



Supporting persons with disabilities will also make regions stronger.

For example, raising the autonomy and job security of persons with disabilities and making the job of caring for them a profession will directly benefit the women who are doing this work without being paid.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, women are responsible for 80 percent of housework, a burden based on stereotypes and gender roles: women are assumed to be the «natural carers» of others.

By promoting independent modes of living among persons with disabilities, we will help to relieve women of a burden of unpaid work and this will mean that there is more equality at school and in the labour market.

Inclusive policies for persons with disabilities benefit the persons they are aimed at, but they also benefit their families and the next generation.

We have to dispel the false idea that these policies only benefit a few people or that they cost too much in terms of money and resources.

The opposite is true.

Inclusion is more important than ever because this region has one of the fastest ageing populations anywhere in the world: there are more than 59 million people aged 60 or more in the region.

In 2050, however, there will be 196 million.

Because disabilities accumulate with age, the number of persons with a disability will also rise. Without inclusion, the development and progress of the societies of Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be sustained, because a lot of the people in these countries would face barriers to work, to use public spaces, to exercise their right to vote or live with higher levels of autonomy.

This is why the principles of access, reasonable adaptation and universal design should be more widespread and shape our spaces, services and markets. Because disability can affect us all at any time, inclusion will be useful for everyone in the future.



The publication of this report in 2021 coincides with the 15th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

By celebrating this significant achievement, we want this report to support the progress countries in the region are making towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to drive compliance with the obligations of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework and encourage achievement of the World Bank's 10 Commitments on Disability-Inclusive Development.

This report was written in a year of uncertainty and social suffering during a health crisis unlike any other in recent history and which has shown us once again the deep inequality that exists in the region.

We hope that the information in this report encourages debate in all countries about the best way to include persons with disabilities in the reconstruction that will follow the pandemic.



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