

FAST FACTS

Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Key Statistics

Overview

The Latin American and Caribbean region consists of 44 countries and approximately 515 million people.

Poverty

A region rich in culture and resources, Latin America and the Caribbean unfortunately faces some of the greatest socio-economic inequalities in the world. Currently, the richest 10 percent of the population earns 48 percent of the total income, while the poorest 10 percent earns less than 2 percent. Approximately 222 million people (43 percent) in the region are poor, with 96 million (18 percent) living in extreme poverty.

Gender Equality

Although access to education, health and basic services has greatly improved for the entire region, it varies widely by income, ethnicity and gender. For example, 59 percent of indigenous women in Guatemala are illiterate as are 38 percent of indigenous women in Bolivia. Women are also subject to pervasive crime: an estimated 30 to 45 percent of women in the region have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence.

Social Cohesion

The past 25 years have been marked by enormous progress in the spread of democracy throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the region is still dealing with the after-effects of violent conflict in countries such as Guatemala, Haiti and Nicaragua. In parts of the region, political and social stability is threatened by persistent social and economic inequalities. In fact, according to "Latinobarometro 2007," support for democracy in the region decreased by 4 percent in 2007, reflecting growing pressures for reform that addresses the political, social and civic dimensions of democracy.

Citizen Security

Illicit trafficking of small arms has contributed to high rates of violent crime in the region. Currently, the homicide rate in Latin America and the Caribbean is higher than any other region in the world, and murder is a leading cause of deaths in urban areas of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, El Salvador and Mexico. An estimated 38 percent of the population has experienced crime-related violence.

Natural Disasters

Latin American and the Caribbean is the region second most prone to extreme flooding, landslides, earthquakes and droughts. On average, the natural-disaster rate in the region has grown 5 percent annually over the last three decades, and climate-related risks will increase the impact of natural disasters on the most vulnerable populations. While Caribbean nations such as Barbados and Haiti are susceptible to flooding and hurricanes, one third of Latin America faces increasing desertification and potential drought. More than 70 percent of the land in Argentina and Mexico is dry, and in Bolivia and Peru, the majority of the population lives on dry lands.



Fleeing floodwater in Haiti

UN/Logan Abassi

Call to Action

Women and indigenous populations must be given equal opportunities to justice, political participation, healthcare, education, and livelihoods, including access to land and credit.

Controlling the trade and proliferation of small arms and other light weapons is critical to ensuring both social and political stability throughout the region.

The effects of climate change and rapid urbanization must be addressed to reduce death, injury and economic loss as the result of natural disasters.

Prevention of conflict and conflict management are crucial to future human development in the region.



UNESCO/Victor Manuel Camacho Victoria

Women in Mexico learn to read and write.

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UNDP in Action

In Latin American and the Caribbean, UNDP:

- **Encourages social cohesion** through promoting economic and human development initiatives in the Northern Border Zone between Ecuador and Colombia, providing conflict management skills to local populations in Guyana, and assessing the underlying factors causing the rise of violence in Jamaica.
- **Promotes armed violence prevention** by assisting governments with small arms control, and raising public awareness of the problem in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Jamaica.
- **Helps communities prevent, prepare for, and recover from natural disasters** by improving governments' ability to prevent, reduce and respond to disasters in Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Peru; by coordinating aid and communications, assessing disaster damage, and developing livelihoods programmes following flooding in Guyana, Colombia and Ecuador; by creating jobs to rehabilitate the environment and reduce the risk of natural disasters in Haiti; and by providing emergency response funding and technical assistance following the impact of hurricanes in Barbados, the Caribbean small island developing states, El Salvador and Nicaragua.
- **Supports the participation of women and marginalized populations** in key decision-making processes by strengthening local networks and community organizations in Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador.
- **Promotes justice and rule of law** by supporting police and judicial reform and developing the capacity of justice institutions in Guatemala and Haiti.

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