

ANNEX C

Contextual factors

This section provides data on administrative and institutional features of each country, including: the composition and electoral system of the legislature, the structure of the executive branch, the division of power between one central and several regional or local governments, and key characteristics of the judicial system. It also provides basic data on population and GDP for 2011 and data on the number of municipalities, provinces, states and/or regions.

Political and institutional frameworks influence who formulates and implements policy responses to the challenges currently facing governments. For example, the type of electoral system employed has a number of potential consequences on the nature and tenure of government, including the diversity of views represented and the ability of the legislature to create and amend laws. Major differences in legislative institutions can affect the way a country's bureaucratic system works. The extent that power is shared between the legislative and executive branches, exemplified by the system of executive power (parliamentary, presidential or dual executive), the frequency of elections and term limits, the ease of constitutional amendments, and the ability of the judiciary to review the constitutionality of laws and actions, set the constraints within which policies and reforms can be enacted and implemented. The way that governments are structured, including the division of responsibilities vertically (across levels of governments) and horizontally (between departments or ministries), is a key factor underlying the organisational capacity of government. Different structures and responsibilities require different sets of competencies, including oversight, monitoring and evaluation and co-ordination.

While many contextual factors are products of a country's historical development and cannot be easily changed by policy makers, they can be used to identify countries with similar political and administrative structures for comparison and benchmarking purposes. In addition, for countries considering different policies and reforms, the indicators can illustrate structural differences that may affect their passage and implementation.

Methodology and definitions

With the exception of data on population and GDP, all information is from LAC country constitutions and websites. Population and GDP data are from the *IMF World Economic Outlook Database* (IMF WEO) (October 2013), except for data for Mexico and Chile which are from *OECD National Accounts Statistics* (database).

Federal states have a constitutionally delineated division of political authority between one central and several regional or state autonomous governments. While unitary states often include multiple levels of government (such as local and provincial or regional), these administrative divisions are not constitutionally defined.

Under the parliamentary form of executive power, the executive is usually the head of the dominant party in the legislature and appoints members of that party or coalition parties to serve as ministers. The executive is accountable to parliament, who can end the executive's term through a vote of no confidence. Several countries with parliamentary systems also have a president, whose powers are predominately ceremonial in nature. Under the presidential system, the executive and members of the legislature seek election independently of one another. Ministers are not elected members of the legislature but are nominated by the president and may be approved by the legislature. The dual executive system combines a powerful president with an executive responsible to the legislature, both responsible for the day-to-day activities of the state. It differs from the presidential system in that the cabinet (although named by the president) is responsible to the legislature, which may force the cabinet to resign through a motion of no confidence.

Data on the frequency of governments cover the period between 1 January 1992 and 31 December 2012. A coalition government is defined as the joint rule of executive functions by two or more political parties. The number of governments is determined by the number of terms served by the head of the executive branch (where a term is either defined by a change in the executive or an election that renewed support for the current government). Data on the frequency of coalition governments are only applicable for countries that have a parliamentary or dual executive.

A ministry is an organisation in the executive branch that is responsible for a sector of public administration. Common examples include the Ministries of Health, Education and Finance. While sub-national governments may also be organised into Ministries, the data only refer to central government. Ministers advise the executive and are in charge of either one or more ministries, or a portfolio of government duties. In most parliamentary systems, ministers are drawn from the legislature and keep their seats. In most presidential systems, ministers are not elected officials and are appointed by the president. The data refer to the number of ministers that comprise the cabinet at the central level of government and exclude deputy ministers.

Bicameral legislatures have two chambers (usually an upper house and a lower house), whereas unicameral legislatures are composed of only a lower house. Electoral systems are usually characterised as single member (first-past-the-post or preferential and two-round) or multi member (proportional representation or semi-proportional representation). The types of electoral systems are defined as follows:

- Under first-past-the-post, the winner is the candidate with the most votes but not necessarily an absolute majority of votes.
- Under preferential and two-round, the winner is the candidate who receives an absolute majority (i.e. over 50%) of votes. If no candidate receives over 50% of votes during the first round of voting, the preferential system makes use of voters' second preferences while the two-round system uses a second round of voting to produce a winner.
- Proportional representation (PR) systems allocate parliamentary seats based on a party's share of national votes.
- Semi-proportional systems feature attributes of both single-member and PR systems. They allow two votes per person: one for a candidate running in the voter's district and one for a party. As in PR, party seats are allocated proportional to the party's share of national votes.

Data on the frequency of elections reflect statutory requirements. In reality, elections may be held more frequently in parliamentary systems if governments collapse. Judicial review refers to the ability of the courts or a separate body to review the constitutionality of laws and actions. It is usually enshrined in the constitution. In countries with limited judicial review, the courts only have the ability to review the constitutionality of specific types of laws or actions or under specific circumstances.

Argentina

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	40.6
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	709.0
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Federal
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	24
Local	528
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	8
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	10
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	8
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	14
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	14
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	Yes
Frequency of elections (in years)	6
Size – number of seats	72
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	257
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Barbados

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	0.3
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	6.8
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	Not applicable
Local	12
System of executive power	Parliamentary
Head of state	Monarch
Head of government	Prime minister
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	No
Term limit (years)	Not applicable
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	5
Number of coalition governments	0
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	4
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	19
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	15
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	21
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	30
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	No judicial review

Brazil

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	196.7
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	2 270.4
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Federal
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	27
Provincial	Not applicable
Local	5 564
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	8
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	7
Number of coalition governments	2
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	24
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	24
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	Yes
Frequency of elections (in years)	8
Size – number of seats	81
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	513
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Chile

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	17.2
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	348.8
Member of the OECD	Yes
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	15
Provincial	54
Local	345
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	4
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	5
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	21
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	22
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	8
Size – number of seats	38
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Single – First Past the Post
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	120
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Limited judicial review

Colombia

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	46.1
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	470.1
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	33
Local	1 099
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	8
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	6
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	16
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	16
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	102
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	166
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Limited judicial review

Costa Rica

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	4.6
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	54.7
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	7
Local	81
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	4
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	6
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	6
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	20
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	21
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	57
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Dominican Republic

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	10.1
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	92.4
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	32
Local	157
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	8
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	6
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	19
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	19
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	Yes
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	32
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	195
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Limited judicial review

Ecuador

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	14.4
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	139.8
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	24
Local	1 500
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	8
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	11
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	10
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	29
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	38
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	137
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Limited judicial review

El Salvador

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	6.3
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	44.4
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	14
Local	262
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	5
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	5
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	13
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	13
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	3
Size – number of seats	84
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Guatemala

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	14.7
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	74.3
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	22
Local	334
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	4
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	8
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	8
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	12
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	12
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	158
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Haiti

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	10.0
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	12.2
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	10
Local	140
System of executive power	Dual executive
Head of state	President
Head of government	Prime minister
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	10
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	15
Number of coalition governments	2
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	15
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	16
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	19
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	Yes
Frequency of elections (in years)	6
Size – number of seats	30
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Single – two rounds
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	99
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Limited judicial review

Honduras

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	7.8
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	35.6
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	18
Local	298
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	4
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	7
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	7
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	16
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	17
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	4
Size – number of seats	128
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Limited judicial review

Jamaica

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	2.8
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	24.4
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	Not applicable
Local	14
System of executive power	Parliamentary
Head of state	Monarch
Head of government	Prime minister
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	No
Term limit (years)	Not applicable
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	8
Number of coalition governments	0
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	6
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	18
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	16
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	21
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Single – First Past the Post
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	63
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Mexico

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	115.7
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	1 890.9
Member of the OECD	Yes
State structure	Federal
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	32
Provincial	Not applicable
Local	2 438
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	6
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	5
Number of coalition governments	Not applicable
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	18
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	17
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	6
Size – number of seats	128
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi member – Semi-proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	3
Size – number of seats	500
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Panama

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	3.6
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	50.1
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	10
Local	76
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	5
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	7
Number of coalition governments	2
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	7
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	13
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	13
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi member – Semi-proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	71
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Paraguay

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	6.6
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	40.2
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	2
Provincial	18
Local	246
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	5
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	7
Number of coalition governments	2
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	7
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	11
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	11
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	45
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	80
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Peru

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	30.0
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	298.6
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	25
Provincial	195
Local	1 841
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	5
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	8
Number of coalition governments	0
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	18
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	18
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	130
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review

Suriname

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	0.5
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	6.3
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	10
Local	62
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	No
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	5
Number of coalition governments	1
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	4
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	17
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	17
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	No
Membership based on regional considerations?	Not applicable
Frequency of elections (in years)	Not applicable
Size – number of seats	Not applicable
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Single – Preferential
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	51
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	No judicial review

Uruguay

Population mid-2011 estimate (in millions)	3.4
GDP in 2011 (PPP in USD billion at current prices)	50.7
Member of the OECD	No
State structure	Unitary
Number of tiers of government	
State/regional	Not applicable
Provincial	19
Local	89
System of executive power	Presidential
Head of state	President
Head of government	President
Existence of term limits for presidents	
Is there a president?	Yes
Term limit (years)	5
Governments at the central level between 1992 and 2012	
Total number of governments	5
Number of coalition governments	1
Number of executives serving non-consecutive terms	5
Number of ministers at the central level of government (2013)	13
Number of ministries or departments at the central level of government (2013)	13
Upper house (central government)	
Existence	Yes
Membership based on regional considerations?	No
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	31
Lower house (central government)	
Electoral system	Multi-member – Proportional
Frequency of elections (in years)	5
Size – number of seats	99
Existence of system of judicial review of the constitutionality of laws and actions	Judicial review



From:

Government at a Glance

Latin America and the Caribbean 2014: Towards Innovative Public Financial Management

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264209480-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD/Inter-American Development Bank (2014), "Contextual factors", in *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2014: Towards Innovative Public Financial Management*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264209480-40-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.