

## Allied health professionals

In addition to doctors, allied health professionals provide major health services for a wide variety of needs, supporting ancillary health outcomes tied to quality of care. As continuity of care and integrated care become key considerations in primary healthcare, new team-based organisational models of care place a greater emphasis on a wider range of providers, including dentists, pharmacists, and community health workers (OECD, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the importance of allied health professionals is heightened since the COVID-19 pandemic: the latest OECD research on primary healthcare in the region notes that an expansion of community health worker schemes may support improved health workforce availability where pressures on health system capacity persist (OECD, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>).

Across allied health professions, data availability was varied for countries in the region. Accounting for differences in population, several countries performed above the average for OECD member states in the share of practising dentists. With an average in the OECD observed at just under 7.2 dentists per 10 000 people, seven countries featured rates above this measure, ranging upwards of 16.7 dentists per 10 000 people in Cuba. Haiti featured the lowest number of dentists in the region, at just over 0.2 dentists per 10 000 people. For the 33 countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, an average rate of over 4.2 dentists per 10 000 people was observed (Figure 8.6).

Regarding pharmacists, an average of nearly 3.4 pharmacists was observed in the 20 countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region reporting data. Compared to the OECD average of just over 8.8 pharmacists per 1 000 people, only Costa Rica – an OECD member country – performed above, reporting over 12.0 pharmacists per 1 000 people. Jamaica reported the lowest rate of pharmacists in the region, at approximately 0.15 pharmacists per 1 000 people (Figure 8.7).

Community health workers (CHWs) comprise an essential component of the healthcare workforce in the Latin American and Caribbean region, with significant variation in their density as a result of varying roles in primary healthcare delivery across countries. Well above other countries in the region, Brazil reported nearly 16 CHWs per 10 000 people, while Guatemala reported the lowest figure among countries reporting data, at just over 0.1 CHWs per 10 000 people (Figure 8.8).

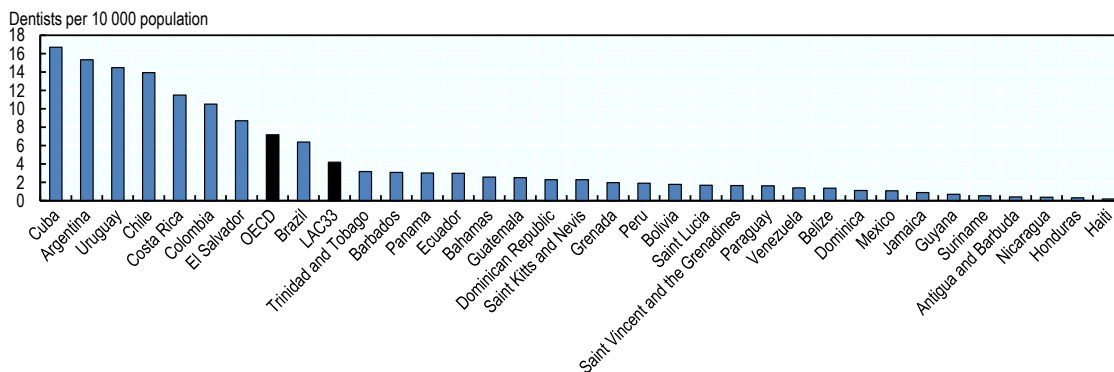
### Definition and comparability

Allied health professionals comprise several professions in OECD Health Statistics. Dentists include all practising providers licensed to practice, including stomatologists, dental, and maxillofacial surgeons, regardless of salaried or self-employed status. Interns under postgraduate dental specialist supervision are included. Dental students are excluded. Pharmacists include all practising professionals who prepare, dispense, or sell medicaments and drugs for patients and provide advice. Pharmacists working in hospitals are included. Pharmacists irrespective of salaried or self-employed status are included, as are foreign pharmacists licensed and actively practising in reporting countries. Community health workers are defined by the World Health Organization Global Health Observatory, including all community health workers in a given national area, either practising actively or registered in the health occupation.

### References

- OECD (2022), *Primary Health Care for Resilient Health Systems in Latin America*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/743e6228-en>. [2]
- OECD (2020), *Realising the Potential of Primary Health Care*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a92adee4-en>. [1]

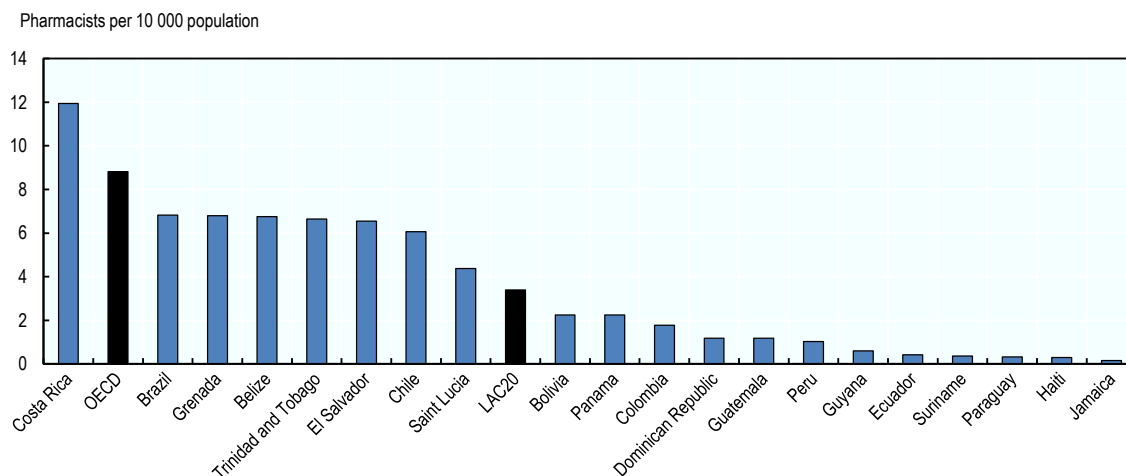
Figure 8.6. Dentists per 10 000 population, latest year available



Source: WHO GHO 2022; OECD Health Statistics 2022 for OECD average and Mexico.

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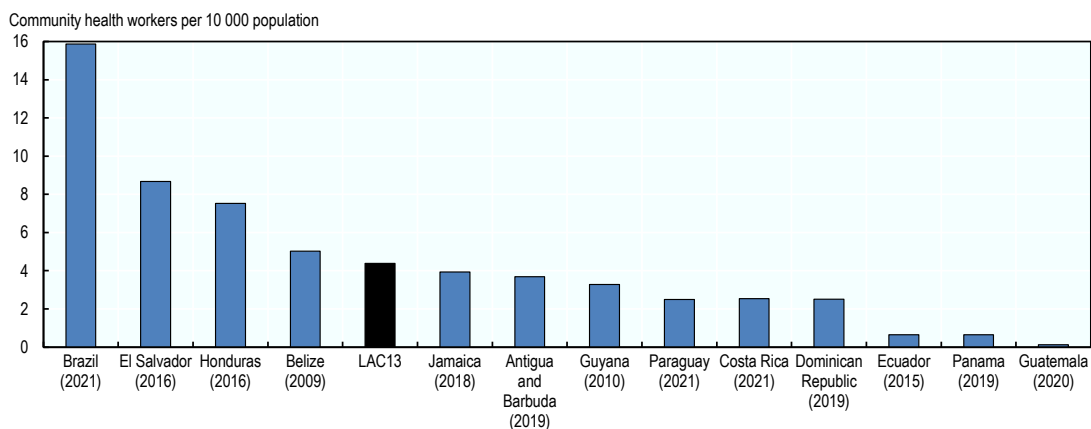
Figure 8.7. Pharmacists per 10 000 population, latest year available



Source: WHO GHO, 2022; OECD Health Statistics 2022 for OECD average.

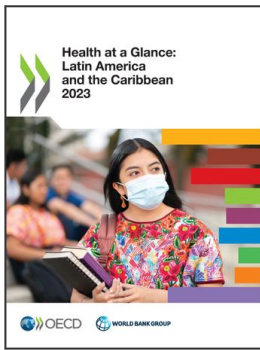
StatLink <https://stat.link/uj8kxr>

Figure 8.8. Density of community health workers, per 1 000 population, latest year available



Source: WHO GHO; Ministries of Health for Brazil and Costa Rica.

StatLink <https://stat.link/6cet4v>



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