



20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

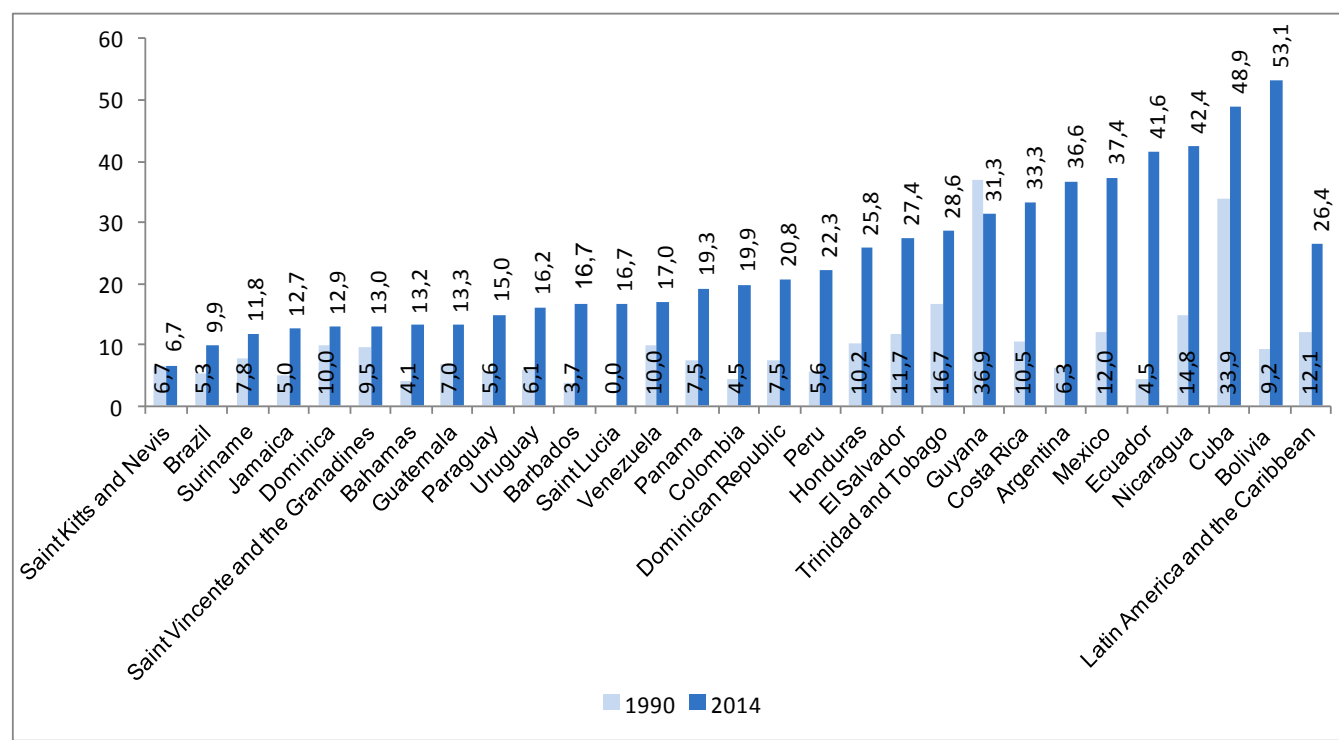
The situation of women in Latin America and the Caribbean has improved since 1995, when 189 countries signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Nonetheless progress has been mixed, heterogeneous, and inequality. Discrimination continues to affect many women in the region, preventing the achievement of full autonomy, which is fundamental to ensuring the respect, exercise and enjoyment of their human rights and to achieve equality.

In the area relating to **autonomy in decision-making** there has been progress thanks to institutional reforms in the executive, the legislature, the electoral and justice systems.

Almost all countries in the region have mechanisms for the advancement of women. These institutions have, over the past 20 years, tended to rise in the hierarchy of executive power, allowing a greater impact on policies for gender equality.

The presence of women in positions of political representation has in general increased significantly, although it is uneven among countries. The presence of women in parliaments in Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 12% around 1990 to 26% today. The adoption of quota laws in 14 countries in Latin America and parity laws in some countries have contributed to this achievement, but more needs to be done.

Latin America (18 countries) and the Caribbean (10 countries): Percentage of women in the national legislative body, ca. 1990 and ca. 2014

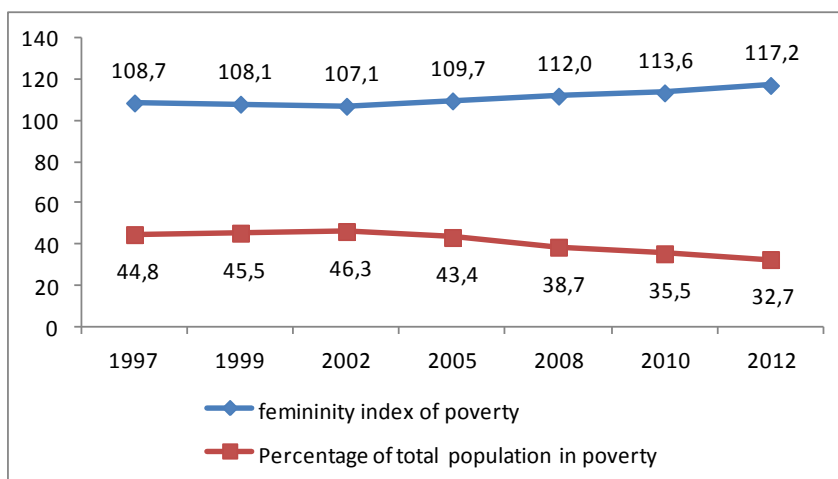


Source: CEPALSTAT

In **economic autonomy**, the participation of women in the labor market has increased in the region although there are differences between countries in intensity and speed. In all countries barriers in the labor market structure persist. According to data on the distribution of time between women and men, the costs of labor participation are individually borne by women, since women subsidize the care. Yet they are also overrepresented among those without their own income.

While in most countries in the region poverty has reduced, this is not so for women; by contrast the femininity index of poverty has increased.

Latin America and the Caribbean: evolution of poverty and femininity index of poverty, 1997-2012



Source: CEPALSTAT

In **physical autonomy**, today all countries in the region have laws to combat violence against women and 10 countries in the region have comprehensive laws on violence. However, the figures of violence show that efforts are still insufficient and that it is necessary to expand the action of States to prevent and address violence against women.

Most countries in the region still lack laws that precisely define reproductive rights and universal access to sexual and reproductive health.

Challenges:

Autonomy in decision-making:

- Strengthen gender mainstreaming
- Advance in the legal and institutional framework to ensure that women and men have equal access to all areas of decision-making not only at the state level, but also in the business, labor and union sectors

Economic autonomy:

- Overcoming gaps in employment and wages, insisting on legislative developments and the creation of a culture of equality
- Advance in policies that establish shared responsibility in the household and care tasks

Physical autonomy:

- Strengthen policies to address violence against women in the area of prevention, education and access to justice, in addition to the sanction and assistance to victims
- Ensure access to public reproductive health services and overcoming gaps in service delivery to guarantee the reproductive rights of all women, and in particular the poorest women

