

WELAC



LACEA

The Status of Women in the Economics Profession in Latin America.

RESULTS FROM THE 2022 WELAC SURVEY

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Introduction

WELAC (Women Economist in Latin America and the Caribbean) was established in 2018 during the Executive Committee meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA) held in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Led by Raquel Fernández, **WELAC** is committed to monitoring and promoting the careers of women economists in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2022, the **WELAC** team conducted a comprehensive survey across 10 Latin American countries, targeting universities and research centers.¹ The survey aimed to gather data on the participation of women in the field of economics, covering Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.² The survey collected information on the gender composition of faculty in Economics Departments and research centers, both in public and private universities, as well as the representation of women among undergraduate and graduate students.

This survey is an integral part of a broader project, documenting and understanding the situation of women's academic careers in the field of economics in the region. It seeks to foster discussions on gender representation within the field and contribute essential data for the development of effective public policies.

This report presents the main findings derived from the responses of the **WELAC** survey, which were provided by 84 institutions. We begin by describing the survey and the sample, followed by an examination of the representation of women at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Finally, we analyze the gender representation within the professorship.

¹ The members of the **WELAC** team are Raquel Fernández (NYU), Ana María Ibáñez (IADB), Inés Berniell (CEDLAS), and Verónica Amarante (UdelAR). We wish to thank the IADB for their financial support and Belén Cañuelo and Malena Dolcet for their valuable research assistance.

² Ecuador was included in the initial list of countries, but we were unable to obtain responses from institutions there.

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First WELAC Survey of Academic Institutions

Conducting a survey to gather data on the gender composition of students and faculty members across multiple countries with diverse educational systems poses significant challenges. For this inaugural survey, we created a team of established female economists (“survey coordinators”) who acted as coordinators in each country.³ They played a crucial role as they selected the institutions in the country, contacted the latter, and helped harmonize the categories used in the analysis.

WELAC reached out to 111 institutions in 10 countries within the region and requested their participation in completing a short questionnaire. The questionnaire encompassed various aspects related to gender representation in economics departments and research centers. The collected data includes basic information about the type of institution, such as whether it is private or public, and data regarding the gender distribution of both faculty members and students at all levels of education within the participating institutions.

The fieldwork was conducted between June and September of 2022, with the data collected referring to the year 2022 for faculty and 2019 for students (pre-Covid).

2.1 Countries and Institutions Included in the Survey

The selection of institutions for participation in the survey was based on their significance as trainers of economists and their academic engagement in the field of Economics. To identify suitable institutions, we relied on official education statistics from each country, RePEc statistics, and recommendations provided by the country coordinators. Table A.1. in the Appendix provides the lists of institutions that responded the survey.⁴

³ We thank the 10 country coordinators that made possible to carry out this survey: Andrea Castellano (Argentina), Fabiola Saavedra Caballero (Bolivia), Renata Narita (Brazil), Jeanne Lafortune (Chile), Jimena Hurtado (Colombia), Laura C. Blanco (Costa Rica), Heidi Smith (Mexico), Roxana Barrantes Cáceres (Peru), and Marisa Bucheli (Uruguay).

⁴ The acronym RePEc stands for Research Papers in Economics.

To ensure accuracy and consistency in the collection and analysis of data among the 10 countries, a harmonization process was conducted in collaboration with the country coordinators. This process involved aligning definitions, methodologies, and survey implementation procedures across all participating countries. The harmonization efforts were instrumental in enabling effective comparison and aggregation of the collected data. Three general categories of professorship were considered in the harmonization process: high (Full Professor), medium (Associate Professor), and low (Assistant Professor). Collaboratively, the **WELAC** team and the country coordinators worked to reconcile the existing typologies of professorships within each country with the three general categories defined. The comprehensive details of this harmonization process for each country can be found in Table A.2. of the Appendix.

2.1.1 Institutions Included in the Final Sample

Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of the institutions that took part in the survey. The response rates across countries ranged from 64% (Peru) to 100% (Uruguay). A total of 84 institutions participated, out of the 111 that were invited to complete the questionnaire. Among these institutions, 33 were private, and 66 were listed in RePEc. They reported a combined total of 2362 professors in their permanent faculty, along with 197 PhD graduates, 939 Master's graduates, and 3954 undergraduate students who completed their Economics degrees in 2019.

The majority of the surveyed institutions are listed in RePEc, except for Costa Rica and Peru, which have a significantly lower proportion of surveyed institutions listed (7% and 43%, respectively). Notably, in each country, either the first or second-ranked institution in RePEc participated in the survey, indicating that the top research institutions at a country level are represented.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the institutions surveyed

Country	Invited (#)	Respondents (#)	Private	In RePEc	Ranking RePEc			Mean number of undergraduate students	Has a Master in Economics	Mean number of Master in Economics students	Has a PhD in Economics	Mean number of PhD in Economics students	Mean number of Faculty
					Mean	Min	Max						
Argentina	19	15	33%	73%	11	1	22	23	60%	15	53%	2	47
Bolivia	5	3	67%	67%	3	2	3	44	33%	2	67%	5	9
Brazil	21	15	14%	100%	17	2	29	68	93%	21	73%	14	34
Chile	12	9	63%	100%	12	1	21	66	67%	52	44%	2	30
Colombia	12	10	70%	100%	12	2	23	143	90%	32	60%	1	25
Costa Rica	7	6	67%	17%	1	1	1	79	33%	7	0%		8
Mexico	15	10	38%	91%	10	1	23	36	64%	11	18%	1	26
Peru	11	7	100%	43%	3	1	5	20	43%	13	14%	n/d	16
Uruguay	5	5	60%	80%	3	1	5	41	60%	11	20%	1	16
Venezuela	4	4	67%	50%	2	1	2	49	75%	16	50%	7	28

Note: The mean values are calculated by dividing the total number of students (professors) in each category by the number of institutions that provided information in the country. Values refer to the year 2022 for faculty and 2019 for (graduated) students.

3

The Status of Women in the Economics Profession

In this section we examine the representation of women along various stages of the economics career.

3.1 Proportion of Female Students

Among undergraduate students who completed their Economics degrees in 2019, the simple average proportion of females across the LAC countries in the sample is 42.2%.⁵ This percentage decreases to 38.6% among Master's degree students and is slightly lower at 33% among PhD graduates. These numbers are comparable to those in the United States. In 2019, in US Economics Departments without doctoral programs, the percentages for graduates that year were 35.6% for undergraduates and 36.8% for Master's degrees. In US Economics departments with doctoral programs, on the other hand, the percentages were slightly lower for undergraduates (33.4%) and 32.1% for PhD graduates.⁶

Figure 1 illustrates, for each country, the percentage of female students, BA and MA, who graduated in Economics in 2019. PhD graduates were not included in this analysis due to the limited number of observations per institution (see Table 1). Table 2 displays the simple average across the institutions surveyed for the country of the share of female graduates in Economics as well as the minimum and maximum value of this share. It also reports the share for the top 5 institutions of that country in RePEc. Although there are some variations between the values presented in Figure 1 and those in Table 2 due to differences in the sizes of institutions within countries, they both exhibit the same overall pattern.

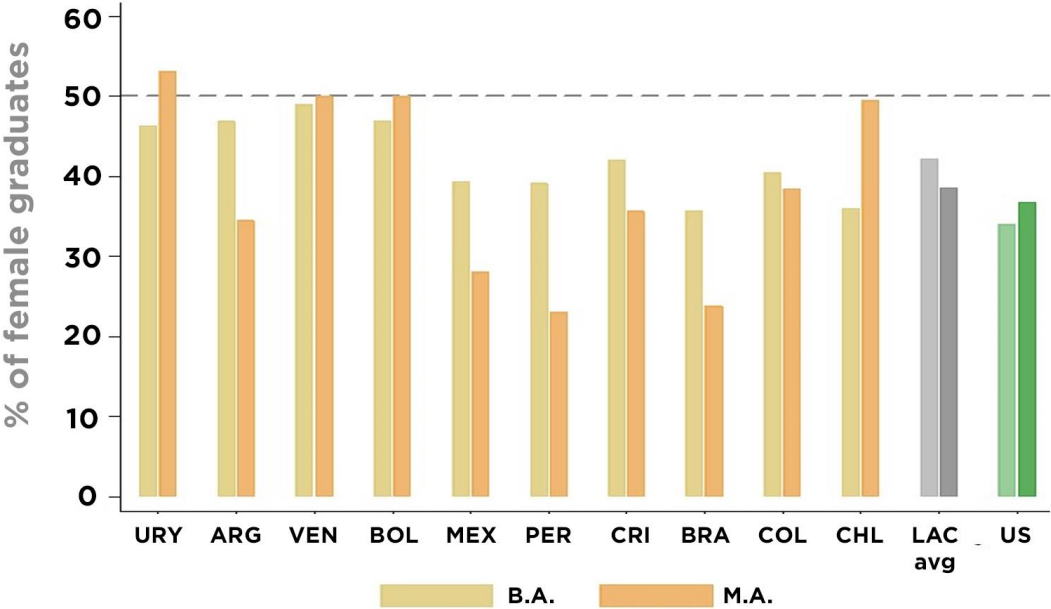
Figure 1 shows that the proportion of female undergraduate students is the lowest in Brazil (35.7%) and highest in Uruguay (49%), and in all countries it remains below 50%. In most countries the representation of females is even lower among Master's students compared

⁵ This value is calculated by dividing the total number of female students in that category by the total number of students in that category, all for one country. This value is then averaged across the countries in the sample to obtain the LAC average.

⁶ CSWEP Annual Survey 2019.

to Bachelor's students, except in Uruguay, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Chile where the percentage is close to 50%. Peru and Brazil have the lowest representation of female students among Master's graduates, with only one out of four graduates being female. The proportion of female B.A. students tends to be lower in the top 5 institutions, except in Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In the case of M.A. students, the share of female is always lower in the top 5 institutions.

Figure 1: Share of female graduates in economics (%)



Note: The percentage of female students for each country was derived by dividing the total number of female students reported across all institutions in the country by the overall number of students in that country. The LAC average value represents the simple average of these percentages across countries. The US value comes from the CSWEP Annual Survey 2019 and it is computed using both institutions with and without PhD programs in the case of BA, and only institutions without PhD programs in the case of MA. All values correspond to 2019.

Table 2: Share of female graduates in economics (%)

	B.A. GRADUATES				M.A. GRADUATES			
	Mean across institutions	Min	Max	Mean across top 5 in RePEc	Mean across institutions	Min	Max	Mean across top 5 in RePEc
Argentina	44.61	27.27	65.12	44.37	35.17	12.50	60.00	29.41
Bolivia	42.37	25	52.63	38.81	50.00	50.00	50.00	
Brazil	36.66	25	45.54	36.33	23.54	7.69	38.46	17.11
Chile	28.03	14.29	50	26.49	45.94	40	50	43.91
Colombia	43.23	29.71	50	43.95	38.10	26.92	53.57	37.61
Costa Rica	44.61	33.33	55.56		34.85	33.33	36.36	
Mexico	41.28	21.21	57.14	30.60	31.30	18.18	40.00	27.72
Peru	33.60	0*	63.16	47.66	24.35	21.43	27.27	
Uruguay	46.81	42.86	54.55	47.59	50.71	40.00	57.14	
Venezuela	47.82	39.13	54.32	54.32	73.33	46.67	100**	

Note: The percentage of female students for each country was calculated as the simple average of the share of female students per institution who graduated in 2019. *This is a small Peruvian institution, with only 2 B.A. students graduated in 2019. **This is a small Venezuelan institution, with only 2 M.A. students graduated in 2019. Some numbers are not shown due to confidentiality issues.

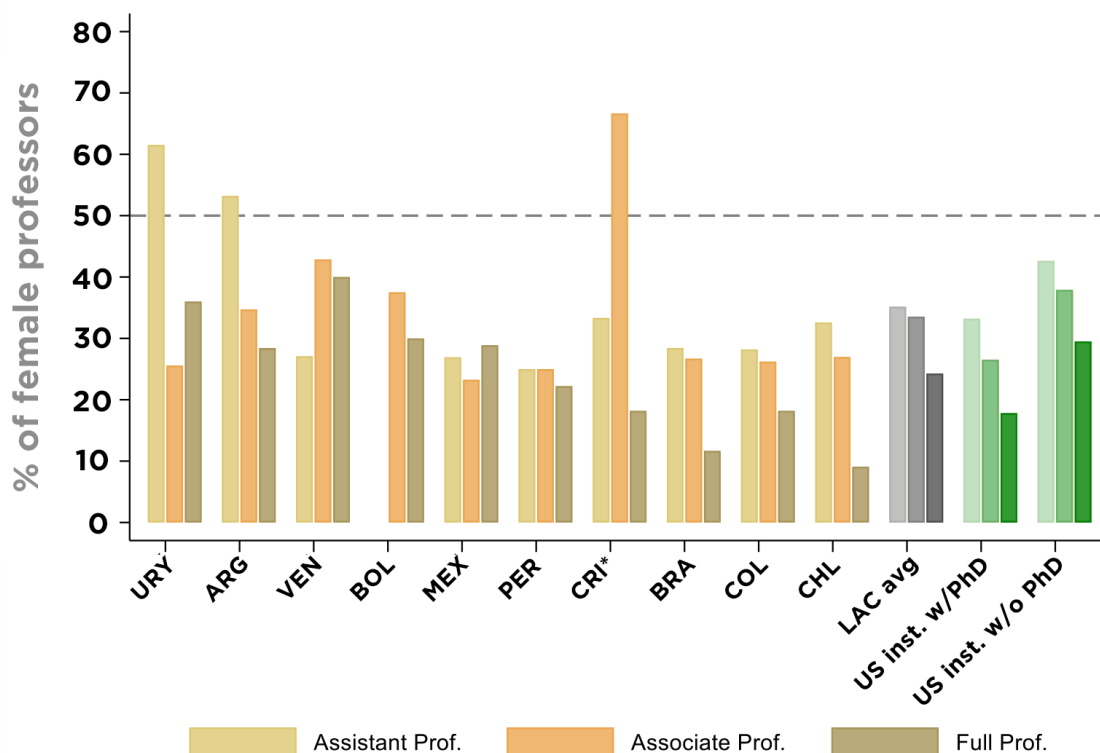
3.1.1 Gender Gaps in the Economics Faculty

Among the professors who held permanent positions in 2022, the simple average proportion of females in this category across our LAC countries was 35% for assistant professors, 33.5% for associate professors and 24% for full professors.⁷ These numbers are higher than those observed in 2022 US Economics Departments with doctoral programs which are, respectively 33.2%, 26.5%, and 17.8%. On the other hand, for those US Departments without doctoral programs, the percentages were higher than in LAC: 42.6%, 37.9%, and 29.5%, respectively.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of female professors in Economics for each country, while Table 2 reports the unweighted average of the proportion of female professors across all participating institutions within each country. Additionally, Table 2 includes the minimum and maximum values of this proportion for each respective country, as well as these shares in the top 5 institutions in RePEc.

⁷ This is calculated in the same fashion as the proportion of students. See footnote 5.

Figure 2: Female share of economics professors by rank (%)



Note: The percentage of female professors for each category was derived by dividing the total number of female professors in that category across all institutions in the country by the overall number of professors in that category. The LAC average value represents the simple average of these percentages across countries. The US value comes from the CSWEP Annual Survey 2022 report which presents the shares separately for institutions with and without PhD programs. All values correspond to 2022. *In the case of Costa Rica, the size of the institutions that participated in the survey is particularly small.

In all countries except Uruguay, Costa Rica and Argentina, the proportion of female professors is lower than 50% in each category. Only in Uruguay and Argentina is the share of female Assistant Professors greater than that of male Assistant Professors, and in Costa Rica the share of female Associate Professors is larger than the equivalent male share. In most countries (with the exception of Uruguay, Venezuela, and Mexico), the representation of female professors is the lowest among the full Professors. In some countries, such as Chile, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Colombia, the percentage of female full professors is below 20%. Moreover, in all countries except Uruguay, there is at least one institution where the proportion of female full professors is 0. The gender gaps in full professorship are even larger in the top 5 institutions, except in Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela.

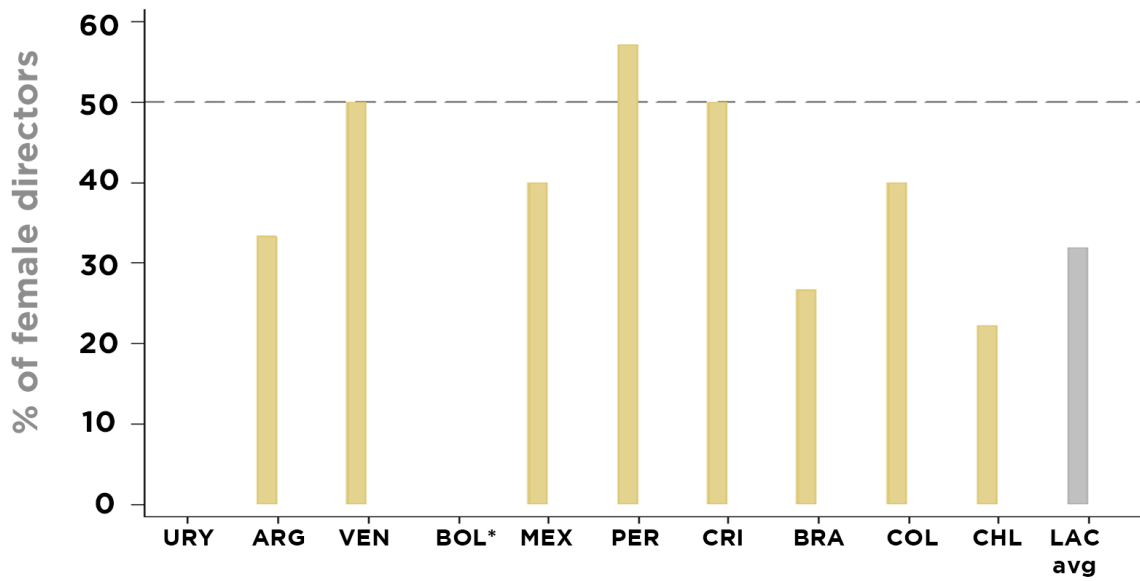
Table 3: Share of female professors (%)

	Full Professor				Associate Professor				Assistant Professor			
	Mean across institutions	Min	Max	Mean top 5 in RePEc	Mean across institutions	Min	Max	Mean top 5 in RePEc	Mean across institutions	Min	Max	Mean top 5 in RePEc
Argentina	32.24	0	80	15.76	41.17	0	80	24.21	57.16	17.24	100	33.71
Bolivia	30	0	50	20	32.73	20	45.45	45.45				
Brazil	12.96	0	50	9.56	27.90	0	83.33	38.33	31.26	0	66.67	29.12
Chile	5.56	0	22.22	11.11	15.08	0	47.37	14.16	35.69	7.14	75	56.73
Colombia	12.07	0	28.57	15.27	25.32		54.55	25.55	33.56	0	100	35.49
C. Rica	15.87	0	33.33		66.67	66.7	66.67		52.92	20	100	
Mexico	28.66	0	75	23.7	31.73	0	50.00	25	27.92	27.27	28.57	28.57
Peru	22.59	0	50	13.8	22.86	0	40	17.77	26.02	0	50	18.70
Uruguay	35.42	25	50	35.4	31.55	20.8	50	33.18	56.82	50	63.64	56.8
Venezuela	31.25	0	66.67	54.16	39.12	14.3	63.64	46.10	29.31	20	37.50	37.5

Note: The percentages of female professors in each category and for each country were calculated as the simple average of the share of female professors in each category across institutions. Some numbers are not shown due to confidentiality issues. All values correspond to 2022.

The underrepresentation of women is also evident among the department chairs of the interviewed institutions. Figure 3 displays the proportion of female chairs in the total number of chairs of the Departments of Economics (%). Among the 84 institutions that responded to the survey, only one-third of the chairs were women. This average did not exceed 50% for most countries (except for Peru, Costa Rica, and Venezuela) and is zero for Uruguay and Bolivia.

Figure 3: The percentage of female chairs of economic departments



Note: The percentage of women in chair positions in the departments of each country was calculated by dividing the total number of female chairs across all institutions in the country by the total number of institutions in the country that reported the gender of the chair. The LAC average value represents the simple average of these percentages across countries. All values correspond to 2022.

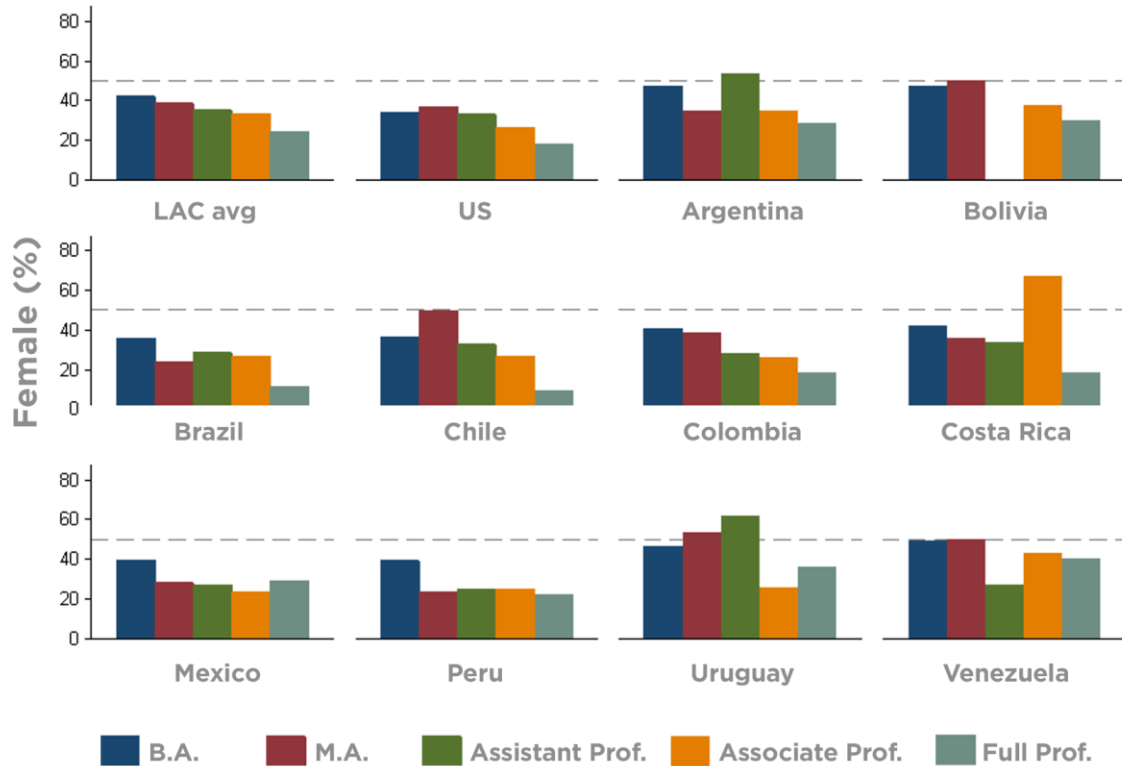
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The Pipeline: Academic Career Progression of Female Economists

Figure 4 depicts the proportion of women at each stage of the academic career, including Bachelor, Master, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor as a snapshot in 2019 for students and 2022 for professors. The first panel displays the results for the average share within each country (i.e., the total female divided by the total irrespective of sex), and demonstrates how, in general, the representation of women falls over the progression of their trajectory in academia.

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the initial underrepresentation of female economists in academia, as well as the reasons behind their attrition from the field throughout their careers, is of paramount importance. We are confident that this report will shed light on this issue and will hopefully serve as a catalyst for institutions to proactively take measures that attract more women to the field of economics and support the advancement of female economists already working in the region.

Figure 4. Career progression of female economists



Note: The percentage of female in each category and country were calculated by dividing the total number of females in each category across all institutions in the country by the overall number of individuals in that category within that country. The LAC average value represents the simple average of these percentages across countries. The US values come from the CSWEP Annual Survey reports 2019 and 2022 and are calculated for institutions with PhD programs in the figures for faculty, for all institutions in the case of B.A. students, and for institutions without PhD in the case of M.A. students. Values for students correspond to those who graduated in 2019 and values for faculty correspond to the year 2022. *In the case of Costa Rica, the size of the institutions that participated in the survey is particularly small.

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Appendix

Table A.1.

List of Institutions that Responded to the Survey

ARGENTINA

Universidad de San Andrés
Universidad Nacional de La Plata
Universidad Torcuato Di Tella (Departamento de Economía)
Universidad Torcuato Di Tella (Escuela de Negocios)
Universidad del CEMA
Universidad de Buenos Aires
Universidad Nacional de Tucumán
Universidad Nacional del Sur
Universidad Nacional de San Martín (IDAES)
Universidad Nacional de San Martín (CENIT)
Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata
Universidad Nacional de San Luis
Universidad Nacional de Cuyo
Universidad Nacional de Rosario
Universidad Nacional de Salta

BOLIVIA

Universidad Privada Boliviana
Universidad Católica Boliviana
Universidad Autónoma Gabriel René Moreno

BRAZIL

Fundação Getúlio Vargas
Universidade de São Paulo
Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro
INSPER
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
Universidade de São Paulo – Ribeirão Preto/USP
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco
Universidade Católica de Brasília
Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora
Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Universidade Estadual de Campinas
Universidade Federal do Paraná
Universidade Estadual de Maringá
Universidade Federal da Paraíba
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

CHILE

Universidad de Chile
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Instituto de Economía)
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Escuela de Gobierno)
Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez
Universidad Diego Portales
Universidad de Talca
Universidad Alberto Hurtado
Universidad de Los Andes (CHL)
Universidad Andrés Bello

COLOMBIA

Universidad de Los Andes (COL)
Universidad del Rosario
Universidad EAFIT
Pontificia Universidad Católica Javeriana
Universidad Nacional de Colombia
Universidad de La Sabana
Universidad Nacional del Norte
Universidad de Antioquía
Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano
Universidad del Valle
Universidad Industrial de Santander

COSTA RICA

Universidad de Costa Rica
Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica
Universidad Fideclitas
Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología
Universidad Latina de Costa Rica

MEXICO

Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México
Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas

El Colegio de México
Universidad Iberoamericana (EQUIDE)
Universidad de Guanajuato
Tecnológico de Monterrey (Depto. de Economía, Región Centro Sur)
Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana
Unidad Xochimilco
Universidad de Monterrey
Universidad de Guadalajara

PERU

Universidad del Pacífico
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Depto. Académico de Posgrado en Negocios)
Universidad de Piura
Universidad de Lima
Escuela de Posgrado GERENS
Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas

URUGUAY

Universidad de la República (Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Administración)
Universidad de la República (Depto. de Economía, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales)
Universidad de Montevideo
Universidad ORT
Universidad Católica del Uruguay

VENEZUELA

Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración
Universidad de Los Andes (VEN)
Universidad Católica Andrés Bello
Universidad de Carabobo

Table A.2.

Harmonization of Professorship Categories Across Countries

COUNTRY	HARMONIZED CATEGORY	COUNTRY'S SCALE
Argentina	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Asociados/as & Prof. Adjuntos /as Asistentes de docencia, ayudantes y auxiliares
Brazil	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Asociados/as Prof. Asistentes, Prof. Adjuntos /as y Auxiliares
Bolivia	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Plenos/as, Prof. Titulares & Prof. Investigadores/as Prof. Asociados/as & Prof. Adjuntos/as Prof. Instructores/as & Prof. Asistente
Chile	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Asociados/as Prof. Asistentes
Colombia	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Asociados/as Prof. Asistentes, Instructores/as & Auxiliares
Costa Rica	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Catedráticos/as Prof. Asociados/as & Prof. Adjuntos/as Prof. Instructores/as, Instructores/as académicos/as & Instructores/as licenciados/as
Mexico	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Asociados/as Régimen excepcional (Investigadores/as por México)
Peru	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Agregados/as & Prof. Adjuntos/as R Prof. Asistentes, Prof. Auxiliares
Uruguay	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Agregados/as, Prof. Adjuntos/as & Prof. Asociados Prof. Ayudantes & Asistentes
Venezuela	Full Professors Associate Professors Assistant professors	Prof. Titulares Prof. Asociados/as & Prof. Agregados/as Prof. Asistentes & Instructores/as

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