



## Education Policies Promoting Population Health: Where does Latin America Stand?

### **Education Policies: Mediating Effects on Health**

Policies that reduce access barriers to education and increase the quality of teaching mediate population health through different pathways. The health benefits of increasing educational attainment have been thoroughly documented by a large body of research.

- Completing a secondary education is associated with better physical and mental health, longer life expectancy, lower rates of depression, and a lower risk of experiencing cognitive impairment. <sup>1</sup>
- The socioeconomic advantages associated with higher educational attainment, such as income, better housing, and access to clean water and sanitation, have an important impact on the overall health of parents and children. <sup>2</sup>

Access to education is critical for girls' and women's opportunities.

- Each extra year of education is associated with a nearly 12% increase in a girl's future income. <sup>3</sup>
- The risk of infant mortality is also reduced when girls go to school: a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five. <sup>4</sup>

While there are many factors that determine access to education, one proven strategy for increasing access to education is eliminating tuition fees. Making school compulsory can also have an important impact by creating shared expectations that children will go to school rather than labor at home or elsewhere, and that governments will provide safe, accessible schools.

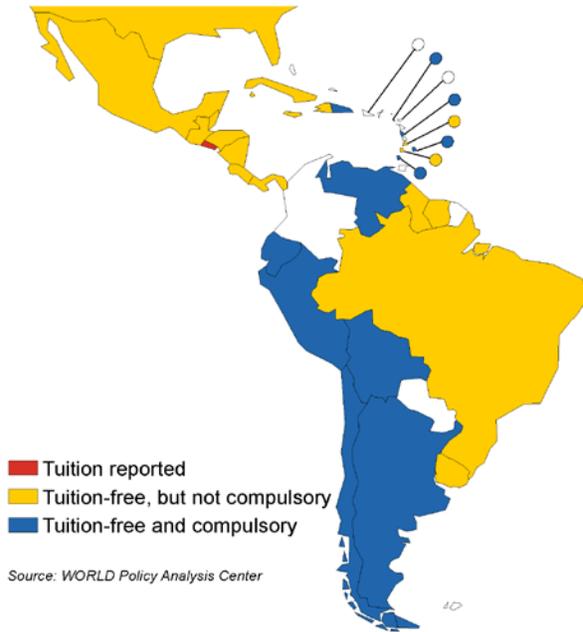
### **Areas of Strength**

- Every country in the region for which data are available provides tuition-free primary education, and with the exception of one country, all remaining countries in the region also make it compulsory.
- Schooling is free through the completion of secondary school in all but one country in the region.

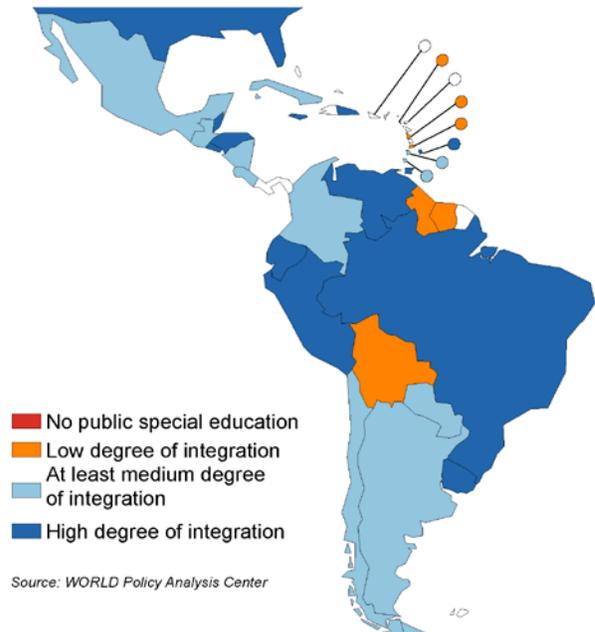
### **Areas Needing Action**

- In 15 of 31 countries in the region for which data are available, primary school teachers are not required to complete more than a secondary education; the same is true for lower secondary school teachers in 9 countries and upper secondary teachers in 8 countries.
- Completing secondary education is not compulsory in 19 of 30 countries in the region for which data are available.
- Only 12 countries, or 41% of the region, provide a high degree of integration for children with disabilities through a public school system, meaning that children with disabilities are able to be taught within the same classroom as other students.

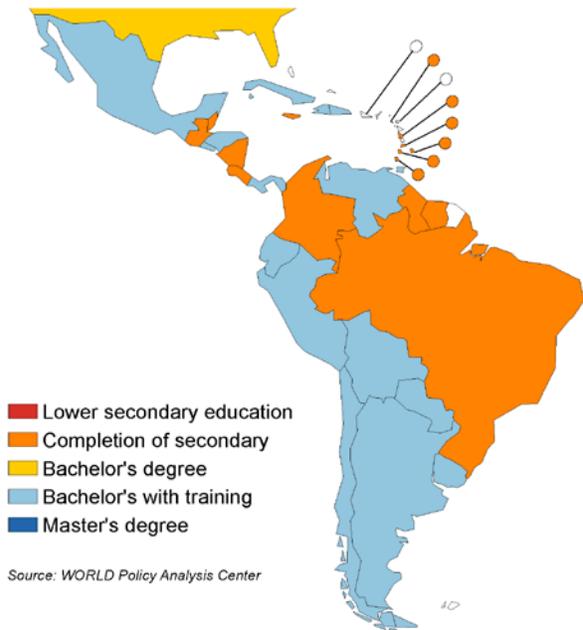
**Is completing secondary education tuition-free and compulsory?**



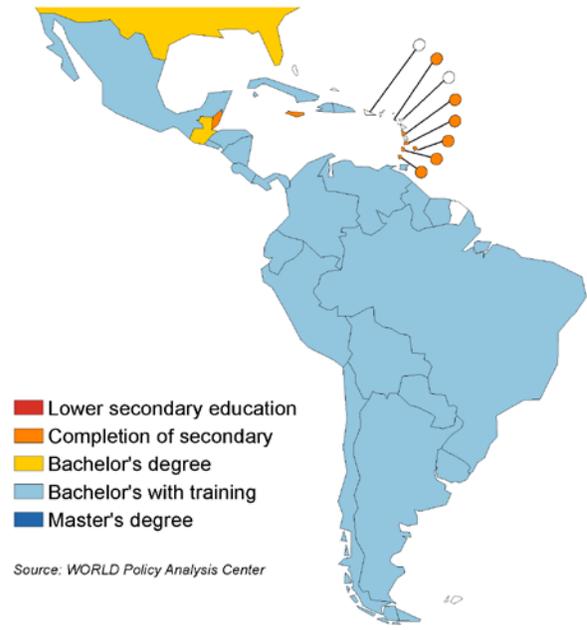
**Is inclusive education available for children with disabilities?**



**How much education must primary-school teachers complete?**



**How much education must upper-secondary-school teachers complete?**



Maps show policies in place as of June 2014. Findings reflect information available in country reports submitted by governments to UNESCO by that time. If you are aware of relevant policy updates, please contact Nicolas de Guzman at [ndeguzman@ph.ucla.edu](mailto:ndeguzman@ph.ucla.edu).

	<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	<i>Rest of the World</i>	<i>Countries for which data are available</i>
<b><i>Is primary education tuition-free and compulsory?</i></b>			
Tuition reported	0 (0%)	7 (5%)	
Tuition-free, but not compulsory	1 (3%)	11 (8%)	176
Tuition-free and compulsory	30 (97%)	127 (88%)	
<b><i>Is beginning secondary education tuition-free and compulsory?</i></b>			
Tuition reported	0 (0%)	24 (18%)	
Tuition-free, but not compulsory	4 (13%)	18 (13%)	167
Tuition-free and compulsory	27 (87%)	94 (69%)	
<b><i>Is completing secondary education tuition-free and compulsory?</i></b>			
Tuition reported	1 (4%)	39 (29%)	
Tuition-free, but not compulsory	16 (57%)	77 (58%)	161
Tuition-free and compulsory	11 (39%)	17 (13%)	
<b><i>How much education must primary-school teachers complete?</i></b>			
Lower secondary education	0 (0%)	11 (8%)	
Completion of secondary	15 (48%)	51 (37%)	
Bachelor's degree	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	168
Bachelor's with training	16 (52%)	66 (48%)	
Master's degree	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	
<b><i>How much education must lower-secondary-school teachers complete?</i></b>			
Lower secondary education	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	
Completion of secondary	9 (29%)	37 (28%)	
Bachelor's degree	1 (3%)	12 (9%)	165
Bachelor's with training	21 (68%)	74 (55%)	
Master's degree	0 (0%)	10 (7%)	
<b><i>How much education must upper-secondary-school teachers complete?</i></b>			
Lower secondary education	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	
Completion of secondary	8 (26%)	18 (14%)	
Bachelor's degree	1 (3%)	19 (14%)	164
Bachelor's with training	22 (71%)	80 (60%)	
Master's degree	0 (0%)	15 (11%)	
<b><i>Is inclusive education available for children with disabilities?</i></b>			
No public special education	0 (0%)	8 (6%)	
Low degree of integration	6 (21%)	14 (10%)	
At least medium degree of integration	11 (38%)	53 (40%)	163
High degree of integration	12 (41%)	59 (44%)	

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<sup>1</sup> A. Chevalier, L. Feinstein. Sheepskin or Prozac: The causal effect of education on mental health Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning Discussion Paper No. 71 (2006); A. Lievre, D. Alley, E. Crimmins. Educational differentials in life expectancy with cognitive impairment among the elderly in the United States *Journal of Aging and Health*, 20 (4) (2008), pp. 456-477; E. Roos, E. Lahelma, M. Virtanen, R. Prättälä, P. Pientinen. Gender, socioeconomic status and family status as determinants of food behavior *Social Science & Medicine*, 46 (12) (1998), pp. 1519-1529; D.P. Goldman, J.P. Smith Can patient self-management help explain the SES health gradient? *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99 (16) (2002), pp. 10929-10934

<sup>2</sup> J.G. Cleland, J.K. Van Ginneken. Maternal education and child survival in developing countries: the search for pathways of influence. *Soc. Sci. Med.*, 27 (12) (1988), pp. 1357-1368

<sup>3</sup> Patrinos H., and Montenegro, C. 2014. Comparable Estimates of Returns to Schooling Around the World. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7020. Washington: World Bank

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, "Education Counts: Towards the Millennium Development Goals" (UNESCO, 2010)