CIMA

Latin America and the Caribbean

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EL SALVADOR: BETTER EDUCATION TO MORE CHILDREN IT'S WITHIN REACH

El Salvador has made significant advances in education in the last decade, with more and more children going to school. But many drop out young, and those who stay in school often receive an inconsistent and inadequate education. Greater and better investment is needed to tackle both of these challenges.

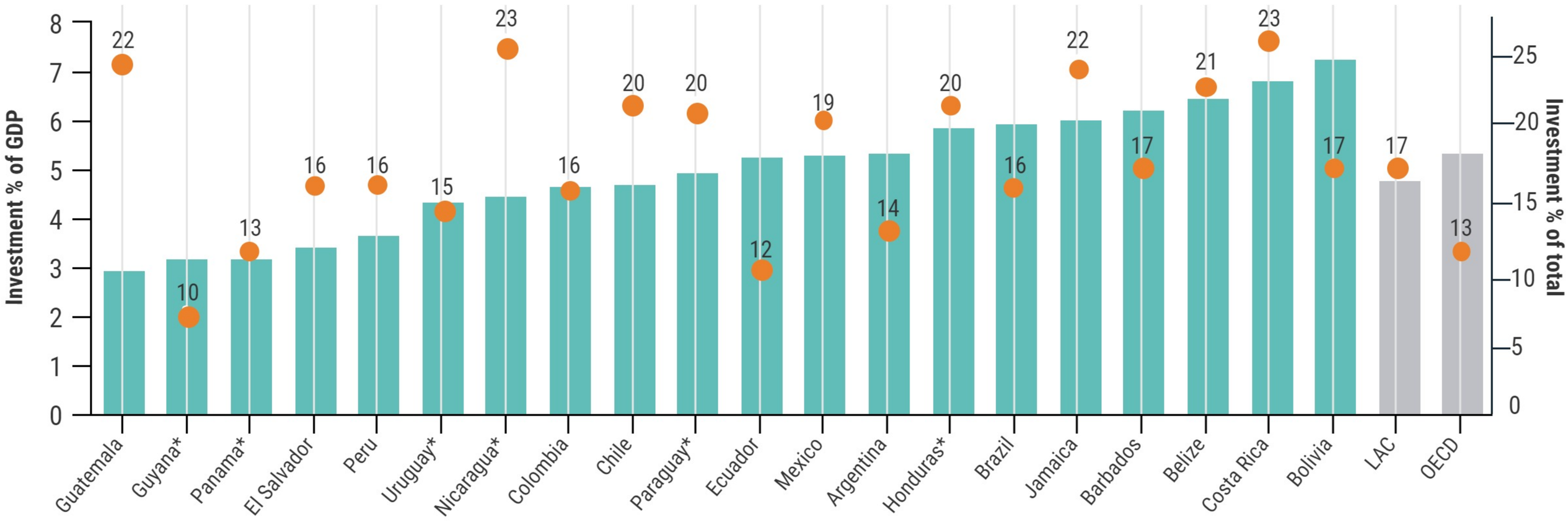
Investment in education is low, greater efforts in this area would increase opportunities for improvement

- El Salvador has taken great strides in this respect; public investment in education reached 16% of all public investment in 2014, close to the regional average of 17%.
- Nevertheless, as a percentage of GDP, public investment in education is low (3.4%), more than one percentage point below the regional average (4.8%) and has not changed since 2009.
- El Salvador is among those countries that allocate the fewest resources to education, just above Guatemala (2.9%), Guyana (3.2%) and Panama (3.2%).
- In terms of investment per student in elementary education, El Salvador spent 40% less (US$1200) than the regional average (US$ 2000) in 2014. For secondary education, El Salvador allocates US$ 872 to each student, which is 54% less than the regional average for the same year (US$ 1900), placing it among the three countries that invest the least amount per student in the region for both levels of education.

Greater investment would improve teacher training and make it more subject-specific

- Teachers set the standard of an education system, so their training is crucial .[1]
- In 2016, only 20% of the teachers had completed their undergraduate degrees (5 years of study), and 74% had completed teacher training (3 years of study).[2]
- The percentage of teachers who teach a subject in which they're specialized is quite low. For instance, only 6% of Math and Science teachers in elementary schools are specialized in that area.[3]
- This is due to a teacher selection process that prioritizes seniority and the right to switch positions over other factors. Thus, positions are often given to teachers who have not taught in years or who don't have the corresponding specialization.[4]
- In 2019, the National Teacher Training Institute will be launched with the aim of improving initial and continuing education for teachers, educational research and qualification requirements. [5]

INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA, 2014



Source: CIMA, BID, 2018.

Note: *Guyana (2012), Panama (2011), Uruguay (2011), Nicaragua (2010), Paraguay (2012), Honduras (2013)

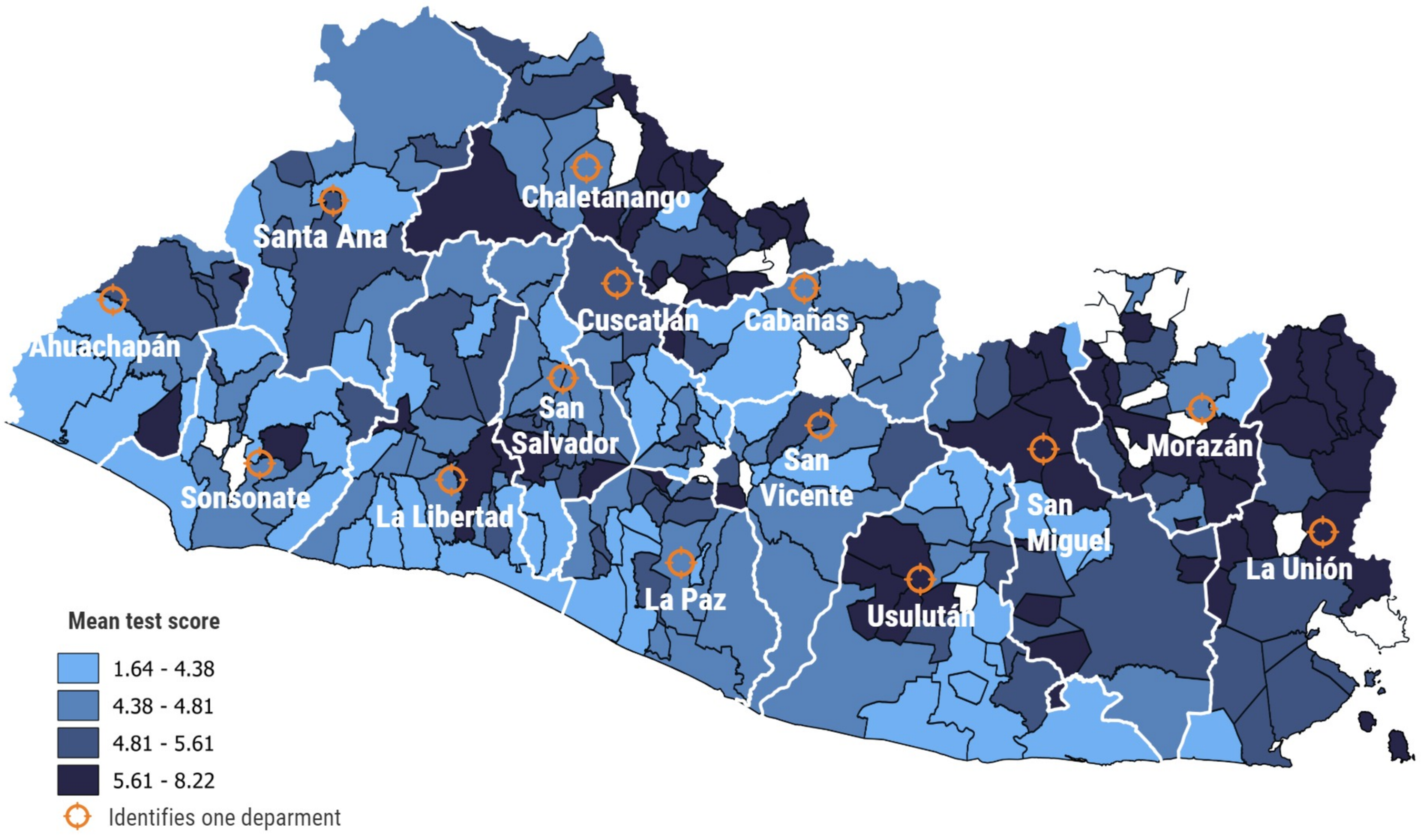
More investment could improve schools' performance, which is currently low and stagnant

- The learning and skills test for graduates of secondary education, called the PAES, assesses students upon completion of their basic education (at the age of 17) in Mathematics, Social Studies, Language and Literature, and Natural Sciences.
- Out of 10 points, the overall score in 2016 was 5.26. In the last decade, the mean test score did not exceed 6.20 and did not dip below 4.85 points.
- The level of achievement is divided into basic (0 to 3.75), intermediate (3.76 to 7.50) and high (7.51 to 10). In 2016, the distribution of performance in these levels was 31%, 45% and 24% respectively.
- Mathematics is the subject with the largest number of low-performing students. Almost half of students (46%) earned less than 3.75 points.
- According to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2007), out of a total of 59 countries, El Salvador is among the 5 countries with the lowest scores in Mathematics in 4th and 8th grade. For Science, El Salvador is among the ten countries with the lowest scores.

There are marked differences in the test results of schools, which can be related to their environment.

- On the PAES test, the 10% of schools with the best results obtain an average grade of 7.03, twice the average grade of the 10% of schools with the lowest results (3.58).
- Students in urban areas have an average of 5.22, which is 0.69 points more than their rural counterparts (4.53). In fact, 36% of the differences between schools are explained by the characteristics associated with their municipality.
- In 2016, students from private schools who took the PAES obtained a grade of 6.04, on average 1.11 points greater than students in public schools (4.93).
- Since 2009, the difference in student performance in public schools and private schools has almost doubled, going from 0.61 to 1.11 in 2016.
- According to the regional learning evaluation (SERCE, 2006), El Salvador obtained lower or similar results to the Latin American average; socioeconomic differences are as important here as in the other countries of the region. For example, in 6th grade Mathematics, wealthier students in El Salvador gained 35 points more than poorer students, compared to the regional average of 31 points.

MEAN TEST SCORE ON THE PAES BY MUNICIPALITY, 2016

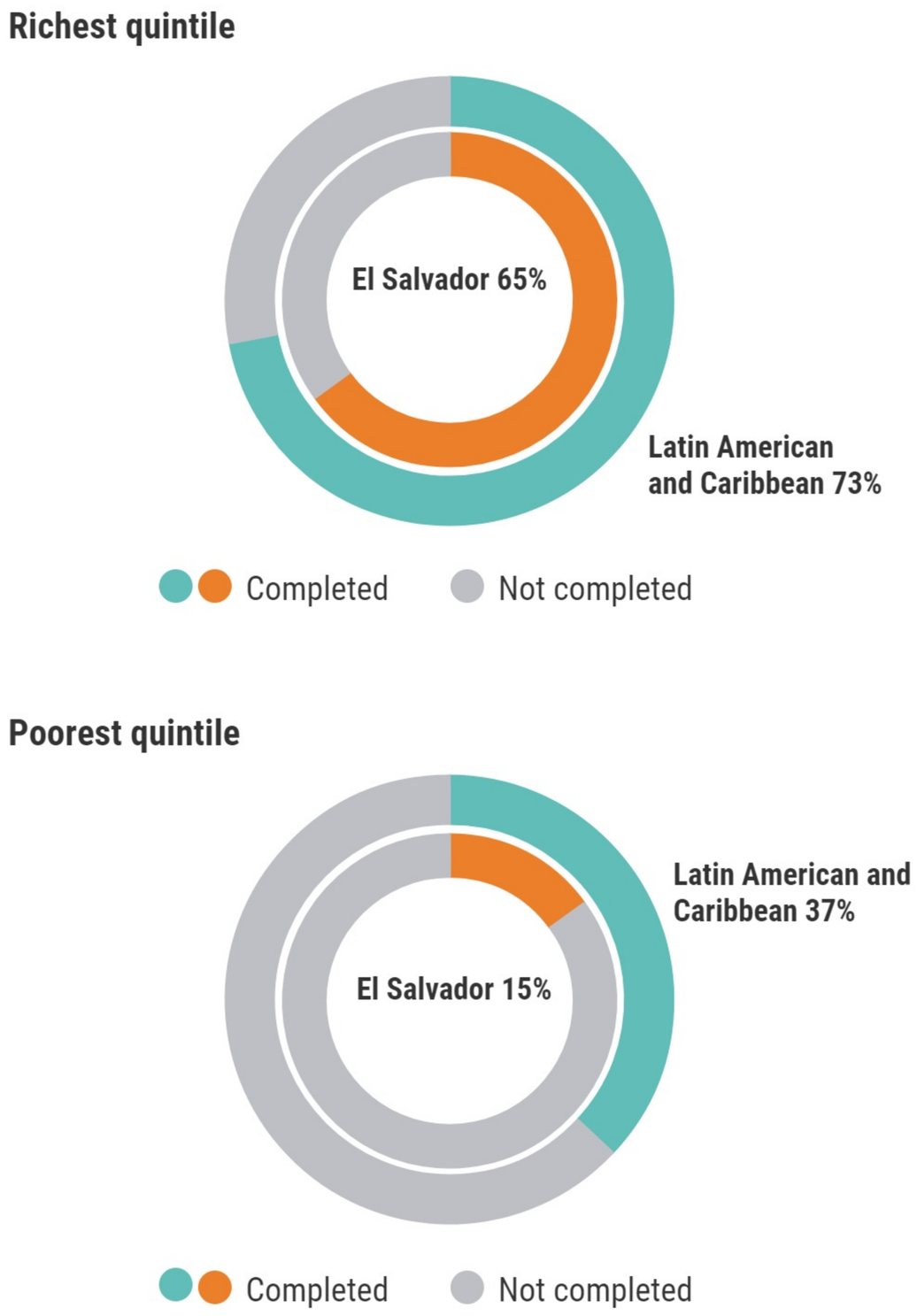


Source: Compiled from PAES 2016 results
Note: A municipality is a territory governed by a mayor and a pluralistic council. Not all municipalities contain schools teaching secondary education. The average per school is used. Maximum grade of 8.22 and minimum of 1.64

Greater investment could support children and help them complete formal education

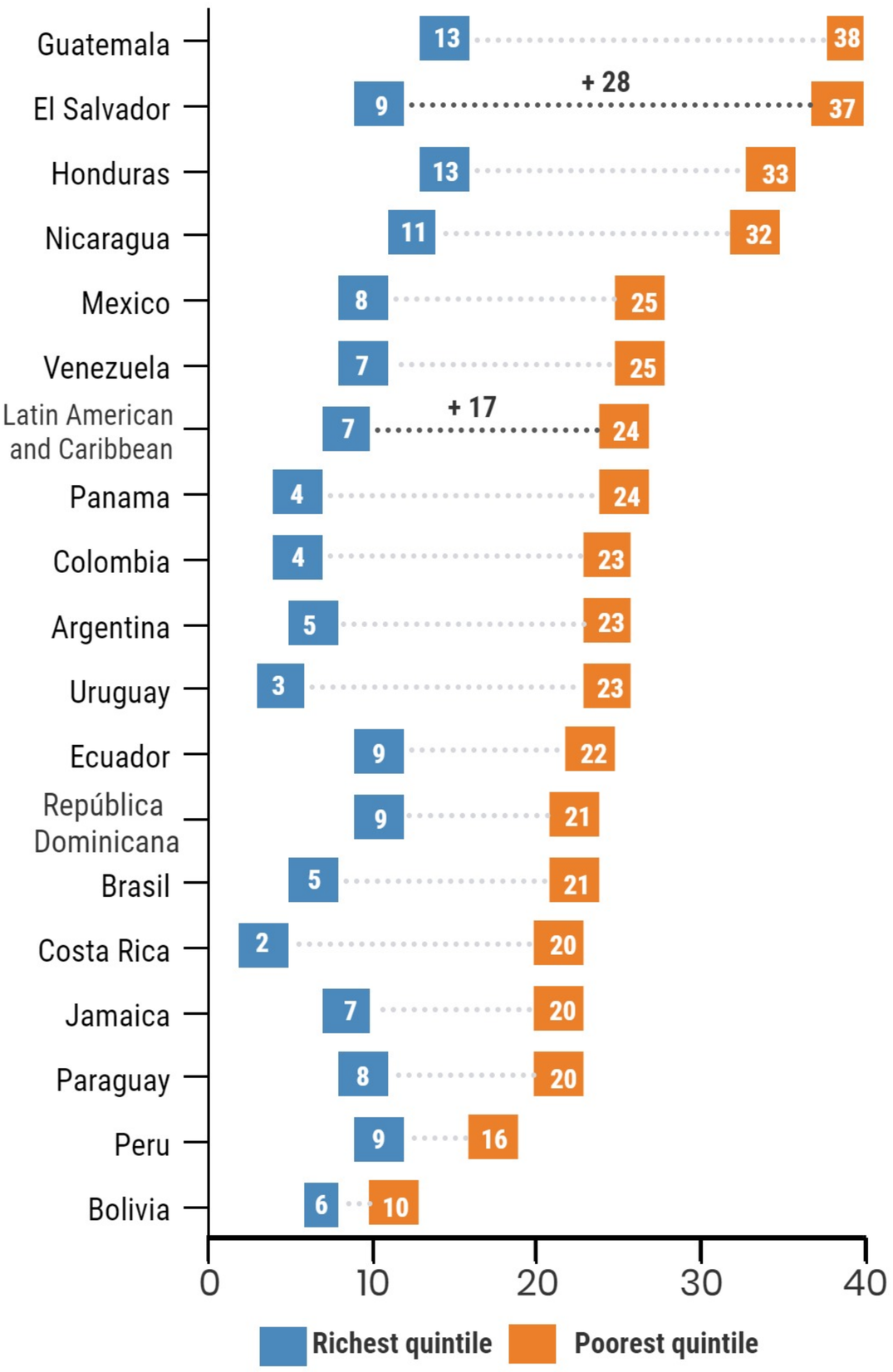
- From 2006 to 2014, elementary school attendance increased from 92% to 96%, exceeding the regional average of 94%.
- But the percentage of those who completed elementary education (52%) is much less than the regional average (73%), according to comparable data from 2014.
- Regarding secondary education, attendance rose from 51% to 60% between 2006 and 2014, while the regional percentage rose from 67% to 71% during the same period.
- In 2014, the proportion of students who completed secondary education was 34%, 18 p.p. less than the regional average (52%).
- Among the richest quintile, the proportion that completed secondary education in 2014 was 65%, while it was only 15% among the poorest. This represented a difference of 50 percentage points, 15p.p. greater than the regional gap between rich and poor (35 p.p.).

COMPLETION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, 2014



Source: CIMA, BID, 2018.
Note: Richest quintile represents the highest socioeconomic quintile, and the poorest quintile represents the lowest socioeconomic quintile.

% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DO NOT STUDY OR WORK, BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, 2014



Source: CIMA, BID, 2018.
Note: Richest quintile represents the highest socioeconomic quintile, and the poorest quintile represents the lowest socioeconomic quintile.

Once graduated, many young people could not find work or continue studying

- El Salvador, along with Guatemala, has the greatest proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 who do not study or work (23% in 2014), 7 percentage points higher than the regional average (16% in the same period).
- The percentage of poor young people who neither study nor work was 37 in 2014, 28 p.p. greater than the richest part of the population. In comparison, the percentage of those neither studying nor working in rural areas was 33%, 11 p.p. more than in urban areas.
- The gap between rich and poor in El Salvador (30 p.p.) is the greatest in the region (20 p.p. above average). The smallest gaps are found in Bolivia (1 p.p.), Peru (3 p.p.) and Ecuador (0.3 p.p.).

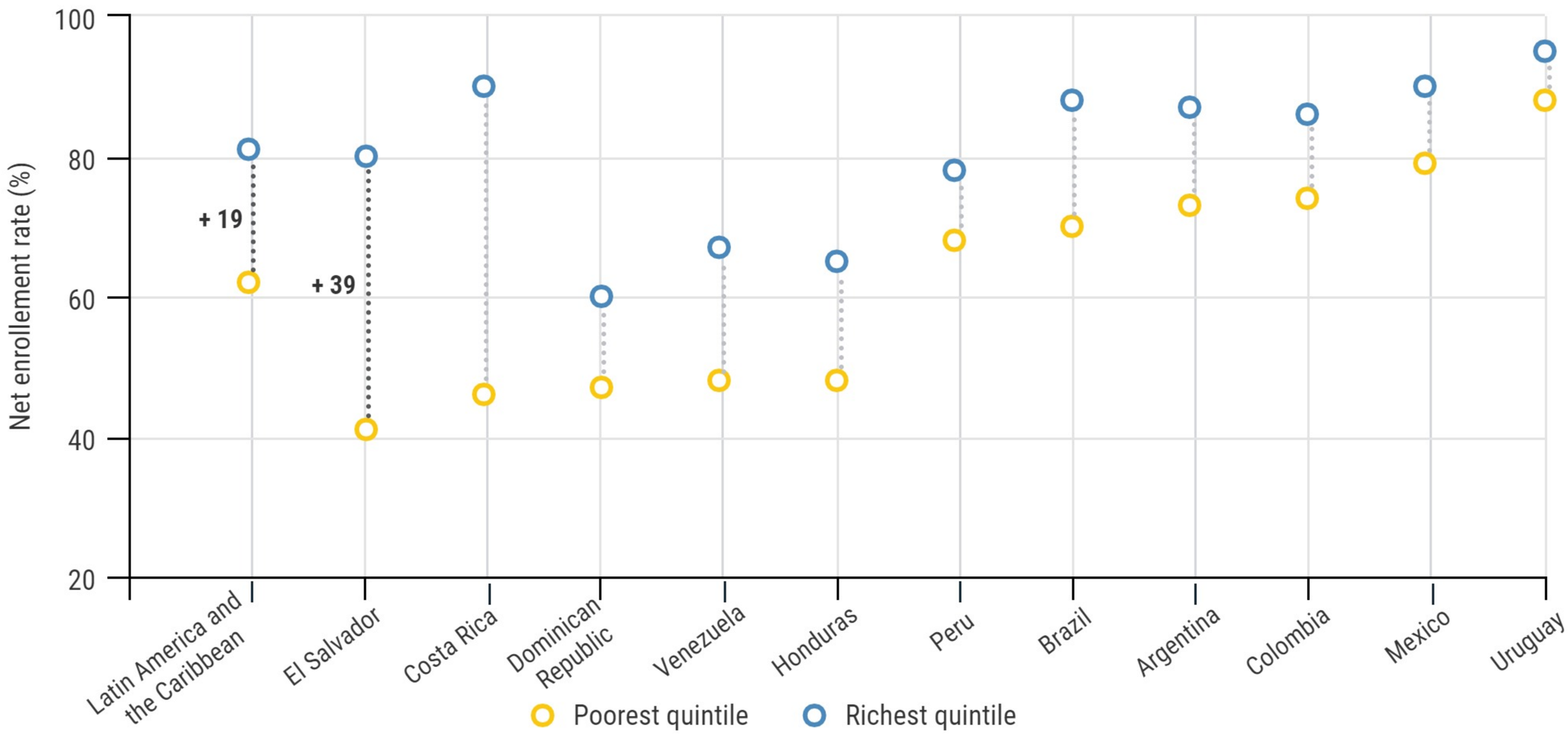
The budget for preschool is limited, and one of the lowest in the region

- In 2015, 7.2% of the education budget was aimed at preschool. In comparison, in Latin America and the Caribbean this was on average 8.1%, and in OECD countries, 9.3%.
- Most financial resources are focused on elementary (41%) and secondary (32%) education. The country dedicates much more resources to these levels of education than other countries in the region (the regional average is 36% and 29%, respectively). At the tertiary level, El Salvador invests 8% of its total budget, much less than the regional average of 21%.
- Investment in early education has fallen stagnant for over a decade. Since 2005, the preschool budget has not exceeded 10% of the total budget.

More investment would lead to improvements in preschool attendance rates, which are currently low and unequal

- Preschool attendance (ages 4 to 6) increased from 45% in 2006 to 55% in 2014. This remains 13 percentage points (p.p.) below the regional average (68%).
- In 2014, attendance levels of children under the age of 4 was less than 10%. In Chile, the leader in the region, this was 20%.[6]
- Among the wealthiest citizens, 80% of children between ages 4 and 6 attend preschool, while among the poorest only 41% attend (a difference of 39 p.p.).
- By area, preschool attendance in rural areas (45%) is 16 p.p. less than in urban areas (61%). This difference is greater than the regional average (10 p.p.).

NET ENROLLMENT RATE FOR PRESCHOOL BY SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL, 2014



Source: CIMA, BID, 2018.
Note: Richest quintile represents the highest socioeconomic quintile, and the poorest quintile represents the lowest socioeconomic quintile.

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