

CIMA

Latin America and the Caribbean

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TALIS 2024 | DO TEACHERS HAVE THE SKILLS TO TEACH IN MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS?

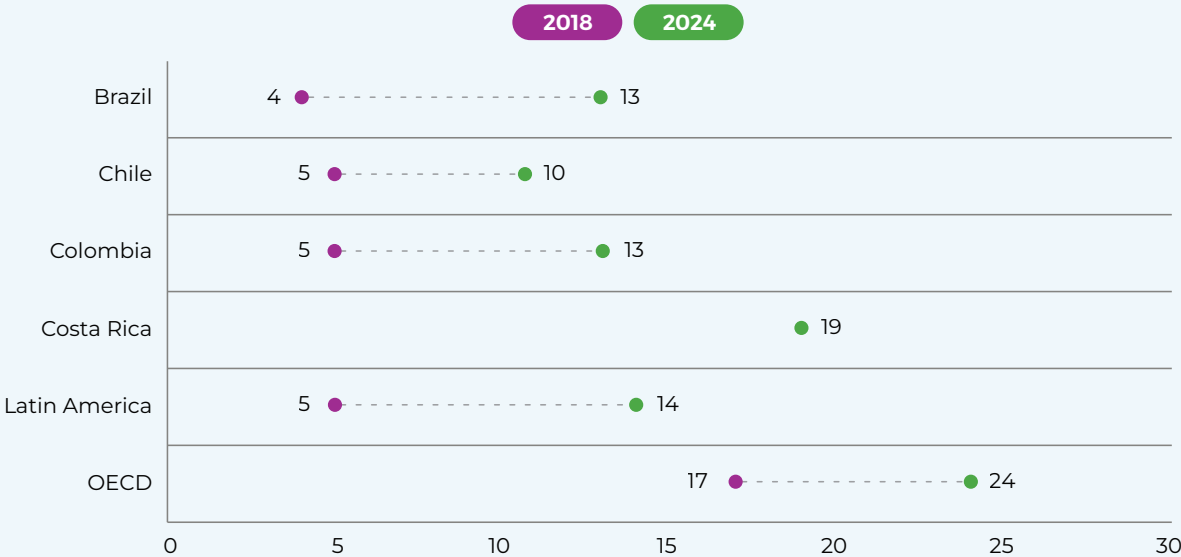
In many Latin American classrooms, students learn in a language different from the one spoken at home, including Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and migrant students. Supporting these learners requires teachers to adapt instruction, manage linguistic diversity, and develop strategies for multicultural education. Using TALIS 2018 and 2024 data, this brief examines how teachers report linguistic diversity in their classrooms and how prepared they feel to teach in multicultural and multilingual environments. Findings show that while most teachers report feeling confident, 73% also identify a need for further professional development in this area, suggesting that greater exposure to linguistically diverse classrooms may sharpen teachers' awareness of the limits of their own preparation.



Teachers report lower levels of linguistic diversity than in the OECD

- **Linguistic diversity in classrooms has increased over time.** Between 2018 and 2024, more teachers across the region reported students whose first language differs from the language of instruction, with the largest increase observed in Brazil (from 4% to 13%).
- **Part of the increase may reflect greater awareness among teachers of students whose first language differs from the language of instruction,** making linguistic diversity more visible in classrooms. Costa Rica illustrates this pattern: teachers report the region's highest share of linguistically diverse classrooms (19%) despite Indigenous peoples representing a relatively small share of the population compared with other TALIS countries (IWGIA, 2025).
- **This suggests that teacher awareness may play an important role in identifying students' language backgrounds.** The languages spoken at home likely reflect a mix of Indigenous languages, Afro-descendant languages, and migrant languages.
- **The increase may also reflect broader social changes.** Efforts in some countries to expand access to secondary education for Indigenous students may make schools more linguistically diverse. At the same time, regional migration flows – including from Venezuela and Haiti—may also contribute to a growing share of students whose first language differs from the language of instruction.

TEACHER-REPORTED SHARE OF STUDENTS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE DIFFERS FROM THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION (%)



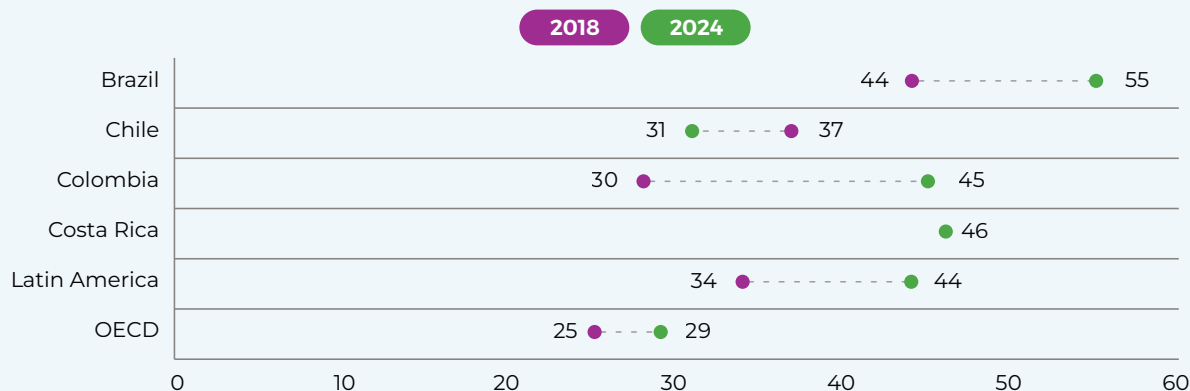
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.
Notes: Share of teachers reporting that more than 10 percent of students in their class have a first language different from the language of instruction. Costa Rica did not participate in TALIS 2018.



Preparation for multilingual and multicultural teaching is rising in Latin America

- **Reported preparation increased by 10 percentage points between 2018 and 2024**, suggesting that teacher education programs may be placing greater emphasis on preparing teachers for multilingual and multicultural classrooms.
- **Country levels vary.** In 2024, Chile reports preparation levels similar to the OECD (31% and 29%), and is the only country in the sample where reported preparation declined between 2018 and 2024, while Brazil and Costa Rica (both 55%) and Colombia (45%) report substantially higher shares of teachers who say their pre-service training prepared them to teach in multicultural and multilingual classrooms.
- **These results reflect teachers' self-reported perceptions of their preparation and should be interpreted cautiously.** Comprehensive training in managing multilingual and multicultural classrooms may increase teachers' awareness of the challenges of bilingual instruction and of the limits of their own preparation (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

TEACHER PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.

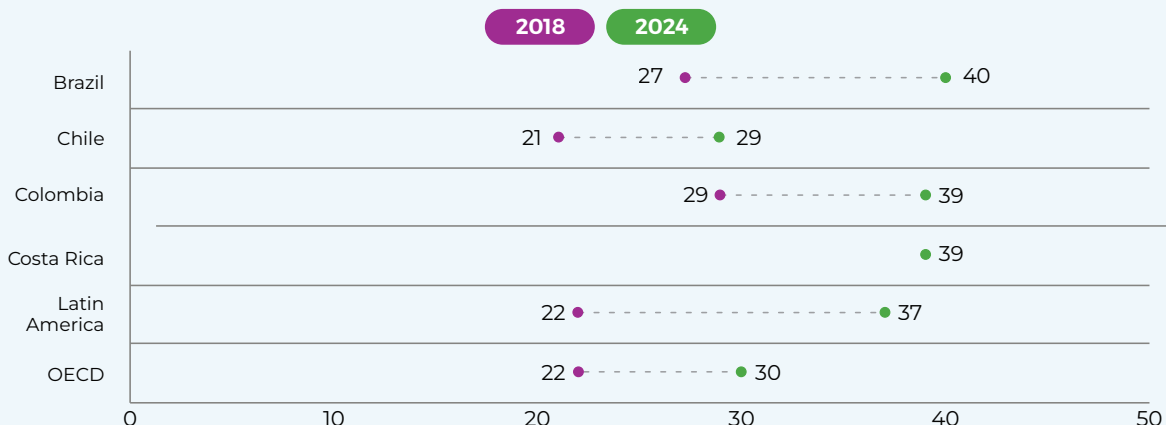
Notes: Share of teachers reporting that their pre-service formal education and training make them feel "quite a bit" or "a lot" prepared for teaching in a multicultural setting. Costa Rica did not participate in TALIS 2018.



Training on multicultural and multilingual teaching has expanded since 2018

- **Participation in this training increased substantially between 2018 and 2024, rising from 22% to 37% in Latin America**, likely reflecting growing policy awareness of the need to support teachers working in multilingual and multicultural classrooms.
- **Country levels vary but show broadly similar patterns.** In 2024, Brazil (40%), Colombia (39%), and Costa Rica (39%) report higher participation in this type of professional development, while Chile reports lower levels (29%).

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHING IN MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.

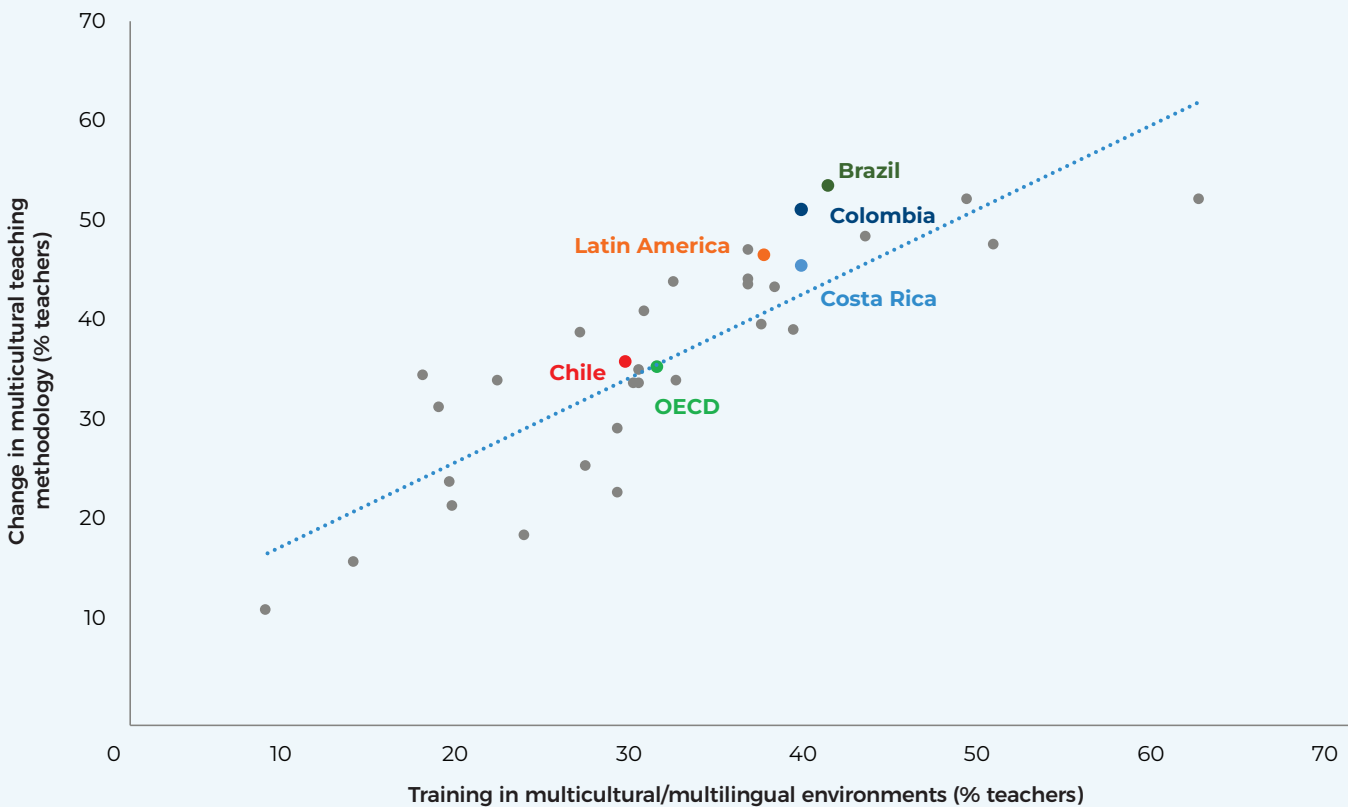
Notes: Share of teachers reporting that teaching students in multicultural/multilingual environments was included in their inservice teacher professional learning activities in the last 12 months. Costa Rica participated in TALIS 2024 for the first time.



Teachers receiving diversity-related training are more likely to adapt their teaching practices

- Teachers in Latin American countries report relatively high levels of pedagogical change after receiving feedback on teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings, particularly in Brazil and Colombia, where about half of teachers report improvements in their teaching methods.
- Brazil, Colombia, and Costa Rica appear above the OECD average on both dimensions—training participation and reported improvements in diversity teaching methodology—while Chile is aligned with the OECD on both dimensions.
- These consistent patterns suggest that professional development in multicultural and multilingual teaching support changes in classroom practices, helping teachers adapt instruction to linguistically diverse learners.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN IN-SERVICE TRAINING IN TEACHING IN MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS AND POSITIVE CHANGE IN MULTICULTURAL TEACHING METHODOLOGY (%)



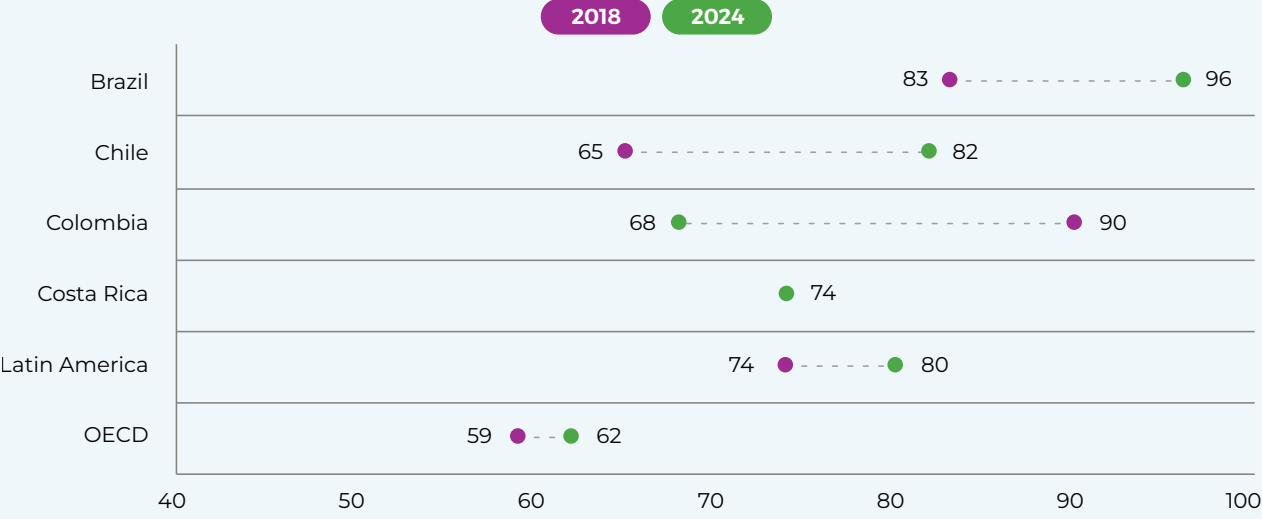
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.
Notes: Share of teachers affirming that "teaching students in multicultural/ multilingual environments" was included in their inservice teacher training (x-axis) and that the "feedback received lead to positive change in methods for teaching students in multicultural /multilingual environments" (y-axis), both in the last 12 months.



Most teachers feel confident adapting instruction to culturally diverse students

- Teachers' confidence in multilingual and multicultural teaching practices increased among Latin American teachers between 2018 and 2024, rising by 6 percentage points (from 74% to 80%), with notable increases in Brazil (+13 pp) and Chile (+17 pp).
- Reported confidence levels are strikingly high in Brazil (96%), far above the OECD average (62%), suggesting that teachers' self-reported perceptions of their capacity may differ from their actual preparation to teach in culturally diverse classrooms.
- In contrast, reported confidence declined sharply in Colombia (-22 pp). This may reflect greater awareness of the complexity of multilingual teaching as teachers receive more training and feedback on teaching in diverse classrooms, with deeper training potentially making teachers more conscious of the limits of their preparation.

TEACHER CONFIDENCE IN MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION (%)



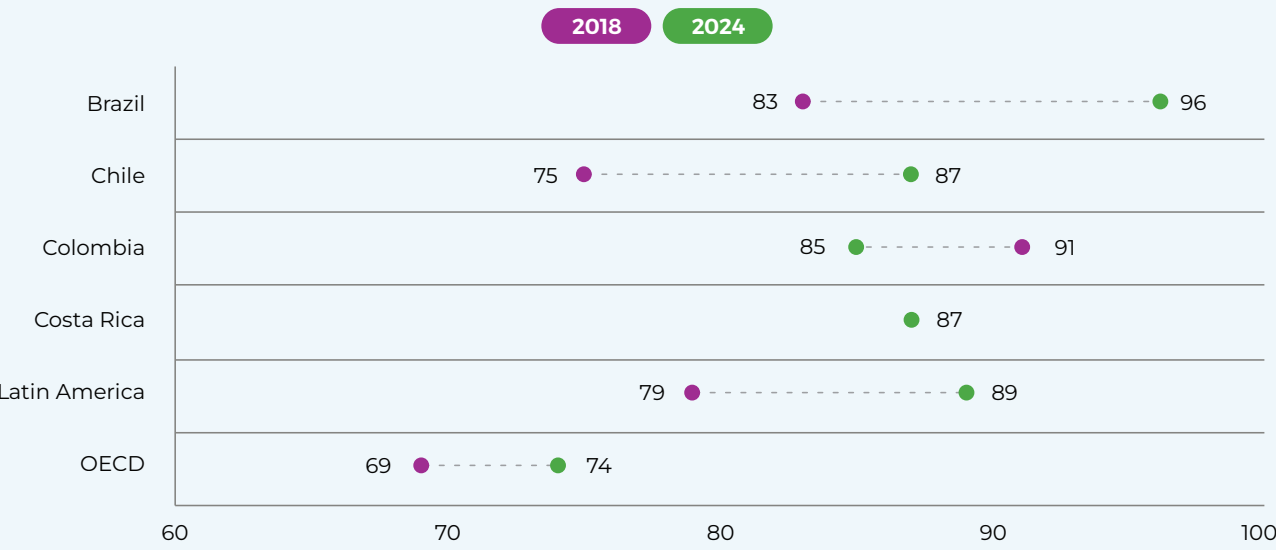
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.
Notes: Share of teacher reporting that the extent to which they can adapt teaching to cultural diversity is "quite a bit" or "a lot." Costa Rica did not participate in TALIS 2018.



Promoting interaction across cultural groups is now a widespread classroom practice

- This practice became more common between 2018 and 2024, increasing in Latin America from 79% to 89%, with notable gains in Brazil (+13 pp) and Chile (+12 pp), while reported levels declined slightly in Colombia (-6 pp).
- These results reflect teachers' self-reported classroom practices and should therefore be interpreted cautiously. The large gap with the OECD and the very high levels reported in some countries, such as Brazil (96%), may reflect differences in how teachers interpret survey questions or social desirability bias in reporting inclusive practices. At the same time, the high reported levels may indicate strong awareness among teachers that promoting interaction across cultural backgrounds is an important classroom practice.

PROMOTION OF INTERACTION AMONG STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS (%)



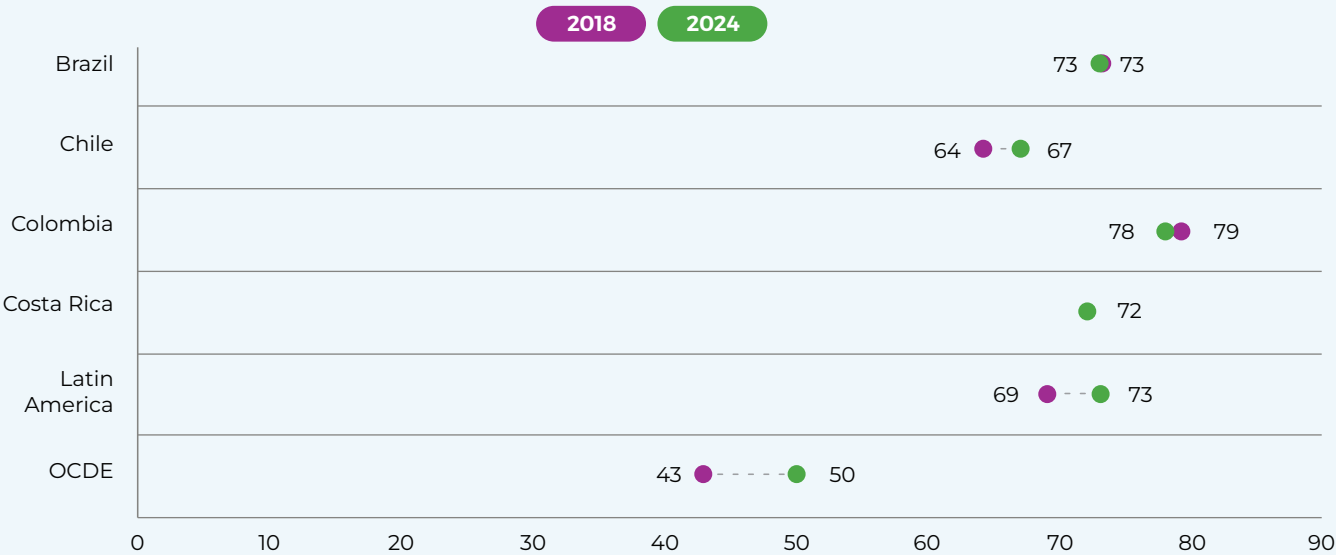
Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.
Notes: Share of teacher reporting that the extent to which they ensure students with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds work together is "quite a bit" or "a lot." Costa Rica did not participate in TALIS 2018.



Most teachers report needing further training to teach in multilingual environments

- **Despite sharp increases in teacher training**, the share of teachers reporting a need for further training in multicultural and multilingual education increased between 2018 and 2024, rising from 69% to 73% in Latin America.
- **Demand for additional training is high across countries**, including Brazil (73%), Chile (67%), Colombia (79%), and Costa Rica (72%).
- **The high demand for professional development contrasts with teachers' very high reported confidence in adapting teaching to cultural diversity and fostering student interaction.** Even as teachers are more confident than their OECD peers, they also report much greater need for further training, suggesting that many recognize the limits of their preparation and skills.

NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHING IN MULTICULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION (%)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the OECD, TALIS 2018 and 2024 Database.
Notes: Teachers reporting a "moderate level" or "high level" when asked the extent to which they currently need professional learning activities in teaching students in multicultural/multilingual environments. Costa Rica did not participate in TALIS 2018.

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