CIMA

Latin America and the Caribbean

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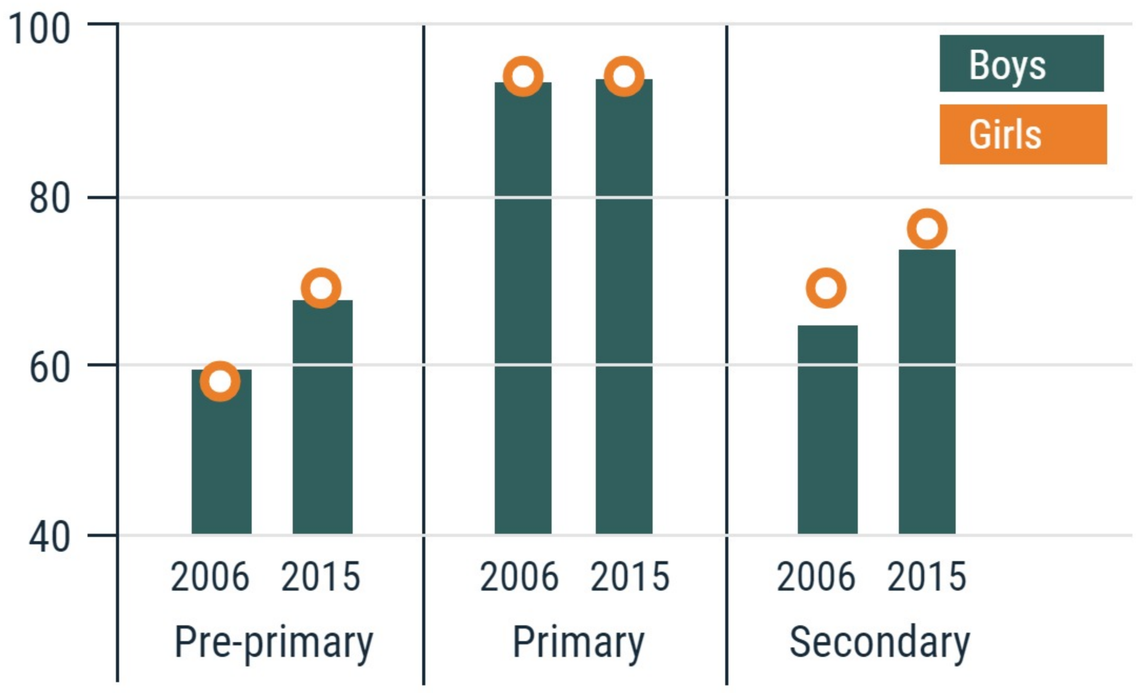
ARE GIRLS PERFORMING BETTER THAN BOYS IN EDUCATION?

Girls attend and finish school at the same rate or higher than boys. Nevertheless, boys continue to outperform girls on standardized learning assessments and continue to benefit most from labor market dynamics.

More girls than boys attend school

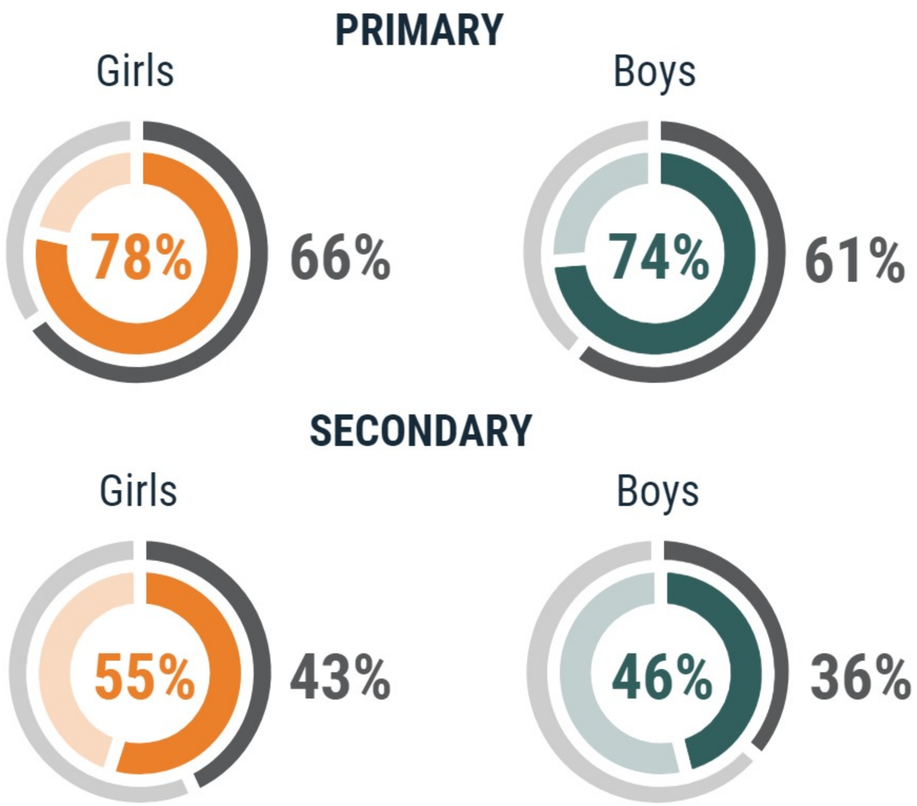
- Attendance rates at each education level are higher among girls than among boys, even in pre-primary and primary education, where the gender gap is smaller than one percentage point.
- The difference between boys and girls is more evident in secondary school, despite the fact it has been shrinking. The secondary school attendance rate is three percentage points higher for girls (76%) than for boys (73%) in 2015.
- In 2015, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru were the only countries in the region where more boys than girls attended secondary school.
- Also in 2015, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Uruguay had the largest gender gaps in secondary school attendance rates that favored girls (10, 7, and 6 percentage points, respectively).

ATTENDANCE RATE BY GENDER AND EDUCATION LEVEL, 2006 AND 2015



Source: CIMA (Information Center for Improvement in Learning), Education Division, Inter-American Development Bank, 2017.
Note: The values for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) correspond to simple means that include all countries with available data.

COMPLETION BY GENDER AND EDUCATION LEVEL, 2006 AND 2015



Source: CIMA, IADB, 2017.
Note: The gray circles represent data from 2006.

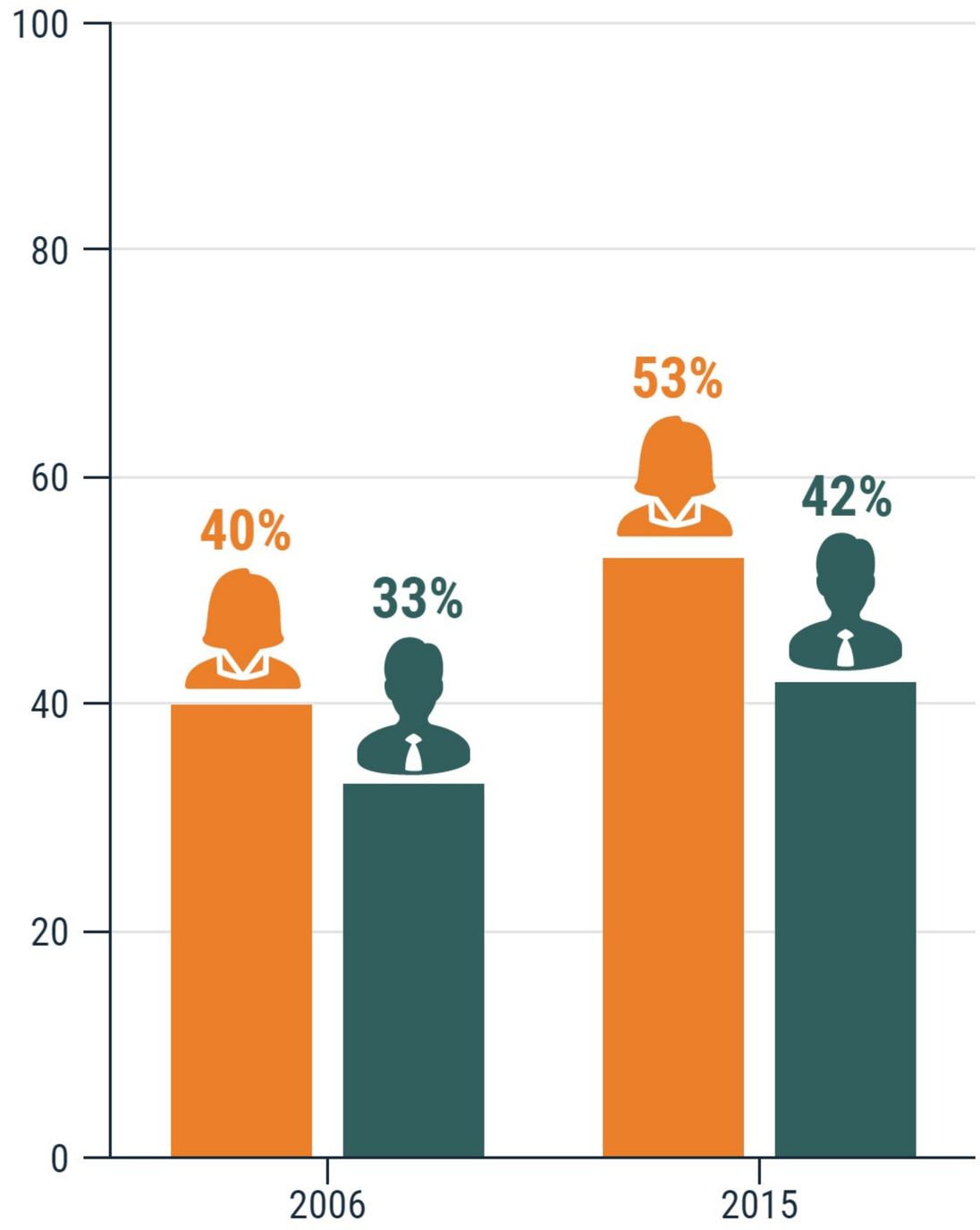
Girls have a higher probability of finishing school than boys

- In 2015, about 78% of girls finished primary school; the completion rate for boys was 5 percentage points lower. The girls' secondary school completion rate of 55% was 9 percentage points higher than the boys' secondary school completion rate.
- Brazil, Argentina, and Honduras saw the largest increases between 2006 and 2015 in the percentages of girls who finished primary school (27, 24, and 25 percentage points, respectively).
- More girls graduate from secondary school each year. In 2015, the percentage of girls who completed secondary school was 11 percentage points higher than in 2006.
- Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, and Peru saw the largest increases between 2006 and 2015 in the percentages of girls who finished secondary school (31, 19, and 18 percentage points, respectively).

More women than men attend higher education

- Between 2006 and 2015, women's attendance rate at the tertiary level increased by 23 percentage points, while men's attendance rate grew by 18 percentage points.
- In 2015, 53% of women pursued some type of higher education while only 42% of men did the same, representing a gender gap of 11 percentage points; this increased the gender gap, which was only 7 percentage points in 2007.
- Chile (81%), Argentina (76%), and Uruguay (71%) have the largest percentages of women who attend tertiary education. The largest gender gaps in this indicator favor women; the largest exists in the Dominican Republic (32 percentage points), followed closely by Argentina and Uruguay (23 percentage points in both countries).
- Guatemala (17%) had the smallest percentage of women attending tertiary education.
- Bolivia and Mexico are the only countries where gender gaps favoring men still persist (5 percentage points and 1 percentage point, respectively).

ATTENDANCE RATE BY GENDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2006 AND 2015



Source: CIMA, IADB, 2017.

GENDER GAP IN THE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WITH MORE THAN 13 YEARS OF SCHOOLING

Source: CIMA, IADB, 2017.
Note: The only people represented in this graph are those who were older than 25 years of age in 2015.

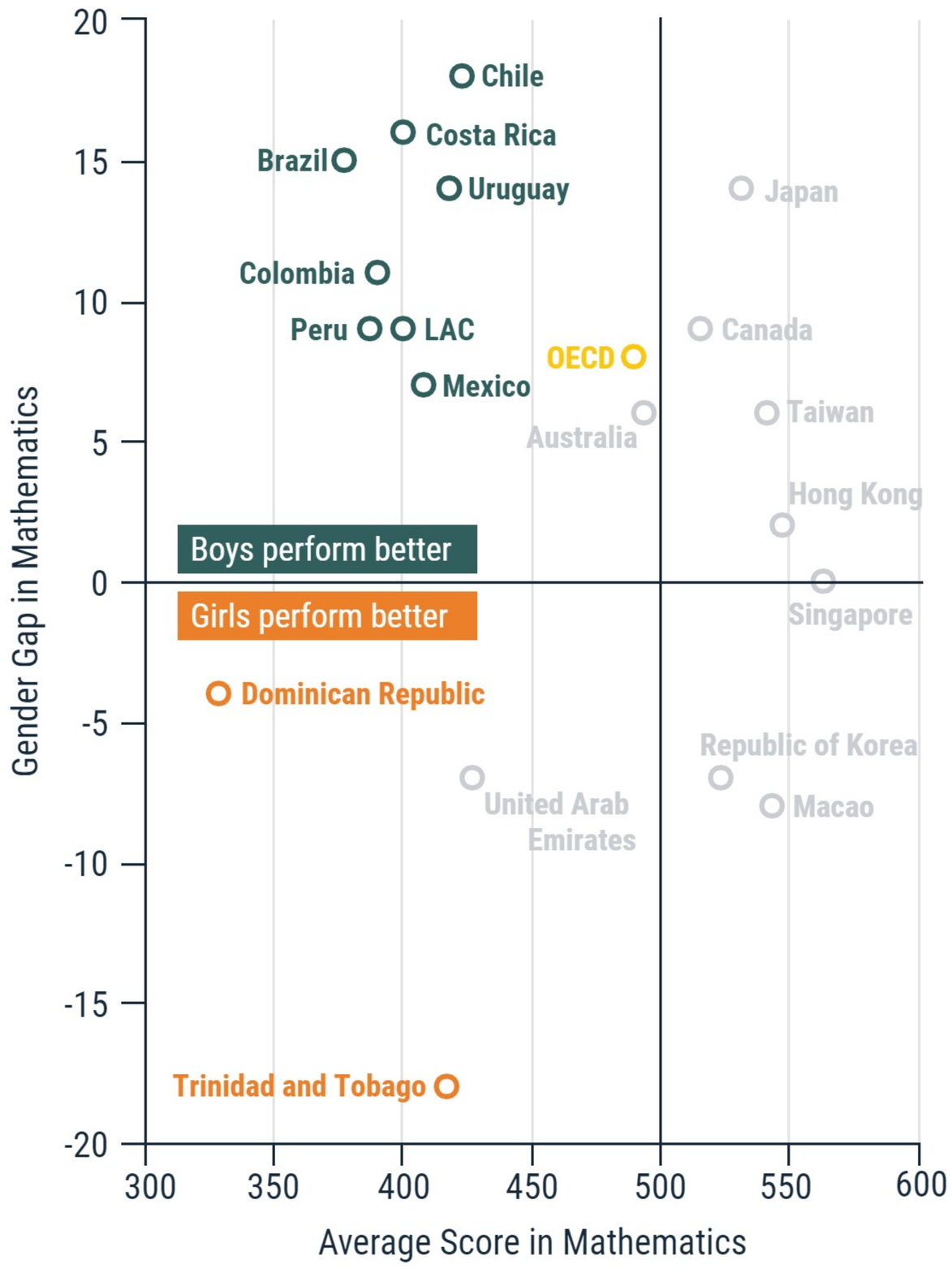
Women today have received more years of schooling than men

- In 2015, about 24% of women older than 25 years of age had more than 13 years of schooling, a proportion 2 percentage points higher among women than among men.
- Venezuela, Panama, and Argentina have the largest gender gaps in educational attainment, all of which favor women by 10, 6, and 5 percentage points, respectively.
- In Bolivia, Chile, and Peru the percentage of men with more than 13 years of schooling is higher than the percentage of women with the same amount of schooling by 4, 3, and 2 percentage points, respectively.
- Since 2005, the percentage of women with more than 13 years of schooling has increased by 6 percentage points; the percentage of men with the same quantity of schooling has increased by only 4 percentage points.
- Between 2006 and 2015, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Panama have seen the largest increases in their percentages of women with more than 13 years of schooling (13, 12, and 7 percentage points, respectively).

Boys perform better than girls in mathematics, especially in sixth grade

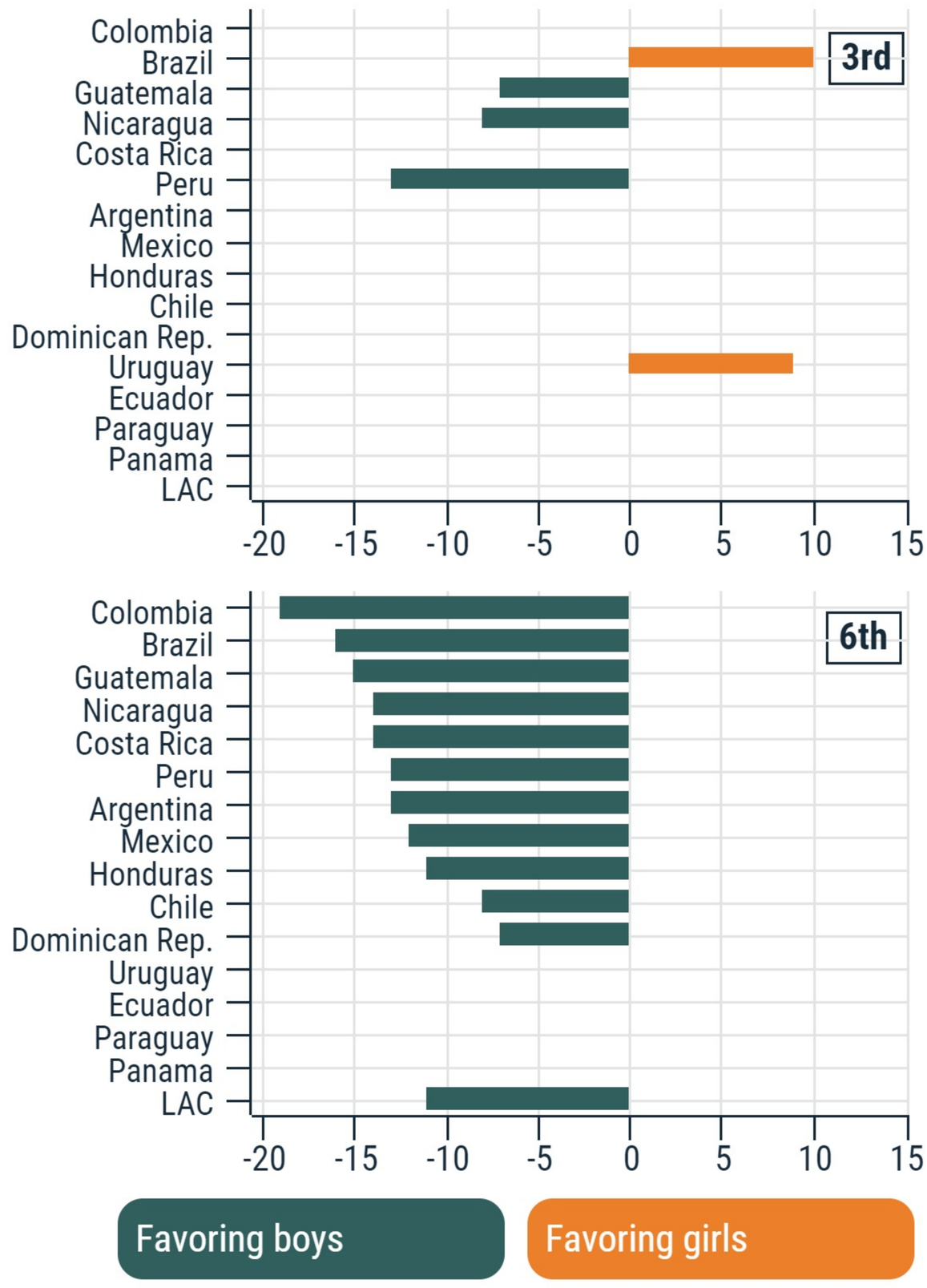
- In third grade in Peru, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, the average mathematics score for boys was higher than the average score for girls by 13, 8, and 7 percentage points, respectively.
- In sixth grade, boys' average score in mathematics were higher than girls' average score in every country that participated in the assessment.
- Colombia and Brazil possessed the largest gender gaps in mathematics performance, with boys scoring 19 and 15 points higher than girls, respectively.
- The learning assessment used in the Caribbean (CSEC) paints a similar picture. More boys (19%) than girls (16%) qualify as top performers in mathematics in CSEC.

GENDER GAP IN MATHEMATICS BY COUNTRY, PISA 2015



Source: PISA 2015.
Notes: 1. The gray points represent other participating countries with available data from PISA 2015; 2. Only statistically significant differences are shown.; 3. "LAC" stands for "Latin America and the Caribbean."

GENDER GAP IN MATHEMATICS IN THIRD AND SIXTH GRADES, TERCE 2013



Source: TERCE 2013.
Note: Only countries with statistically significant differences are shown.

The gap among 15-year-olds is larger in the region than in other countries

- As the PISA results illustrate, not only is the academic performance of 15-year-old youth low in the region, but also, in the majority of countries in the region, girls perform worse academically than boys.
- On average in the region, boys score 9 points higher than girls in mathematics, a gap larger than in the OECD, where it is only 8 points.
- In Chile, the country with the largest gender gap in mathematics performance, the boys' average score is 18 points higher than the girls' average score. The next two largest gaps exist in Costa Rica (16) and Brasil (15).
- The Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago are the only countries with inverted gaps, where girls' average scores are 4 points and 18 points higher than boys' average scores, respectively.

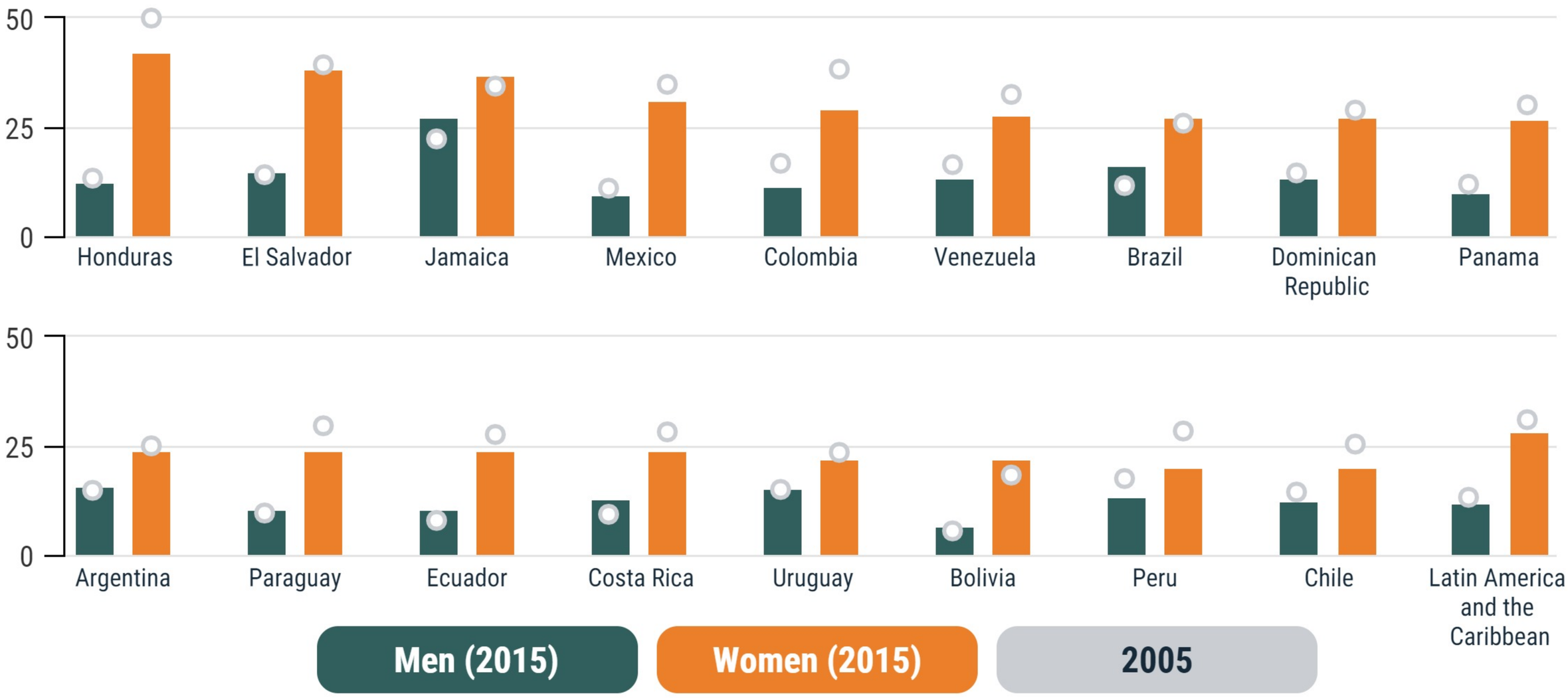
More women don't study or participate in the labor market

- In 2015, 28% of women between the ages of 15 and 24 didn't study or work, while the same was true for only 12% of men, corresponding to a difference of 16 percentage points.
- Peru, Chile, and Bolivia are the countries with the lowest percentages of women who don't study or work (20%, 20%, and 22%, respectively).
- Honduras, El Salvador, and Jamaica have the largest proportions of women who don't study or work (42%, 38%, and 36%, respectively).
- Honduras and El Salvador have the largest gender gaps between the percentage of women who qualify as NEETs and the percentage of men who do the same (the percentages are 29 and 23 percentage points higher for women than for men, respectively).

The proportion of NEETs has declined more among women than among men

- The percentage of NEETs (the share of youth who are both unemployed and not pursuing any type of education or training) declined from 31% in 2005 to 28% in 2015 for women, while for men there was a reduction of less than 1 percentage point during the same time period.
- Colombia, Honduras, and Peru saw the largest drops in the percentages of women who don't study or work (9, 8, and 8 percentage points, respectively).
- Despite the fact that the percentage of female NEETs has declined over the last decade, women still encounter greater challenges in the labor market than men: they have a lower labor market participation rate, a greater chance of working in the informal sector, and earn less per hour on average.[2,3]

PERCENTAGE OF NEETS BY GENDER, 2005 AND 2015



Source: CIMA, IADB, 2017.
Note: NEETs are young people between the ages of 15 and 24 who are not in school and are economically inactive.

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References: 1. CIMA (2017). 2. Information System of Labor Markets and Social Security. 3. Ñopo, H (2012). "New Century, Old Disparities: Gender and Ethnic Earnings Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean." Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.

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