



Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Overview



Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is the second most urbanised region in the world after Asia, with 81% of the population living in urban areas in 2019. This high urbanisation rate has led to rising demand for transport and, in many cases, to an increase in private vehicle trips, resulting in congestion, bad air quality and growing CO₂ emissions.



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Diverse, at times opposing, transport trends in LAC

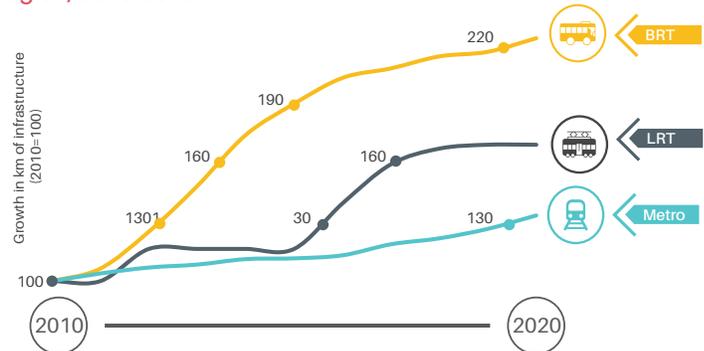
LAC is experiencing the **highest growth in car ownership in the world** - up 58% between 2005 and 2015, or more than twice the global average of 27%.

The **majority of passenger travel in the region occurs via public transport** (averaging 68% of all trips). LAC has the world's highest per capita bus use and also leads in the implementation of bus rapid transit, with systems present in 54 cities as of 2019.

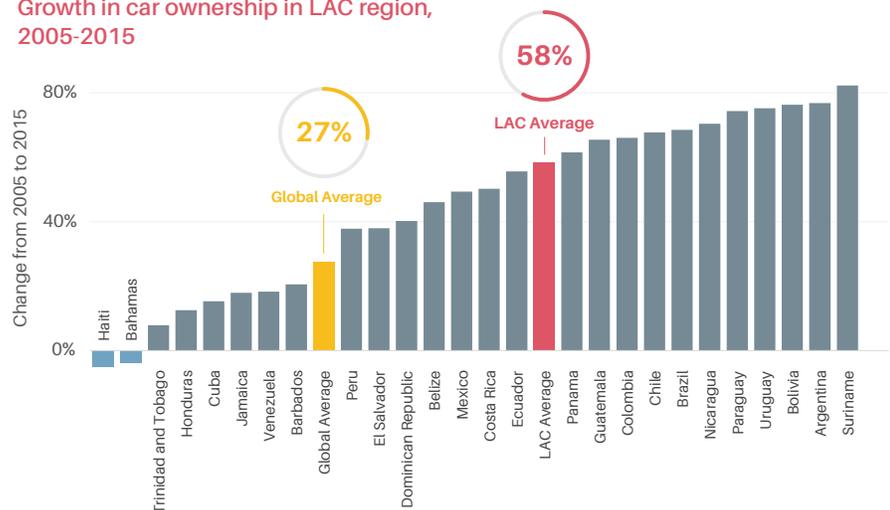
Around **70% of freight transport in LAC is by truck**, and regional freight demand (on land and sea) is expected to more than double between 2015 and 2050.

LAC spent around **44% of its total infrastructure investments on transport between 2008 and 2015** (this is similar to figures from Africa, which spent around 42% on transport). During 2015-2019, on average, around 1.2% of public spending in the region went to transport infrastructure, with higher shares in countries such as **Belize** (5.4%), **Bolivia** (5.3%) and **Nicaragua** (3.9%).

Growth in bus rapid transit, metro systems and light rail transit in LAC region, 2010-2020



Growth in car ownership in LAC region, 2005-2015

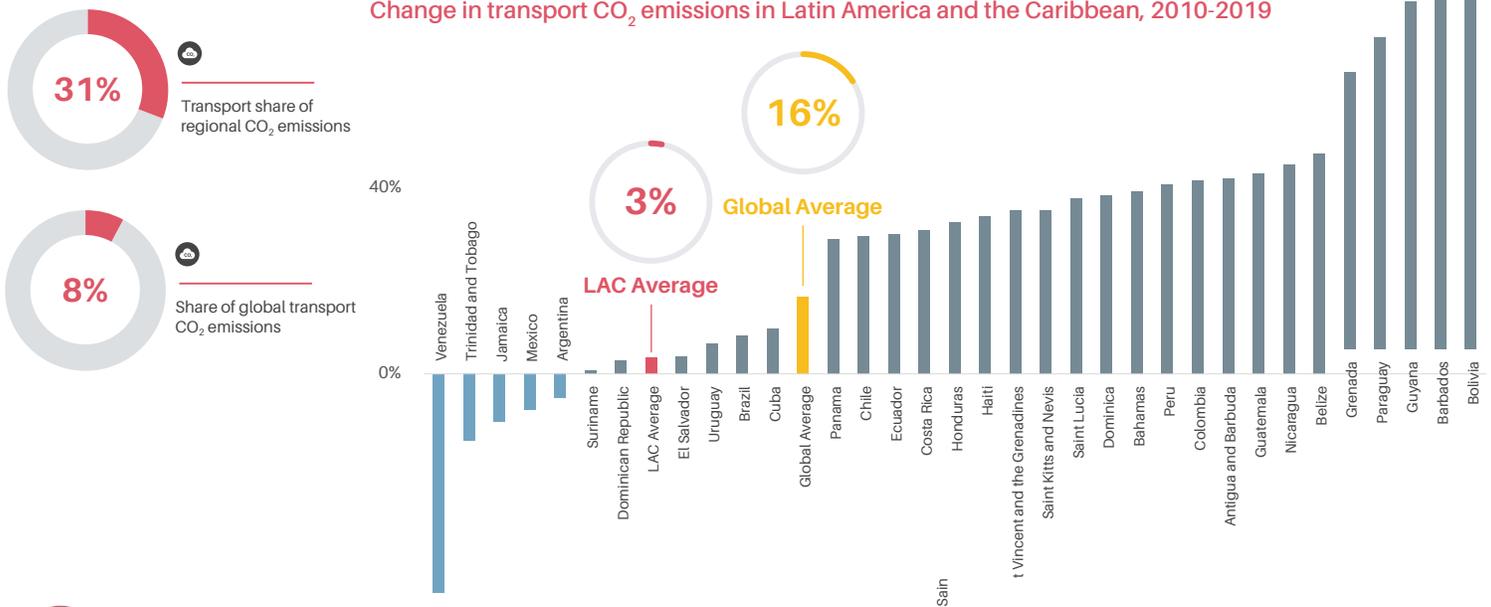




LAC has experienced a modest growth in transport emissions

Regional transport CO₂ emissions increased 3% from 2010 to 2019 and accounted for 8% of total global emissions in 2019. Per capita transport CO₂ emissions in the region (0.85 tonnes) track closely to the global average (0.88 tonnes).

Transport emissions relative to economic output are higher in LAC than in any other region except Africa, at 0.98 tonnes of CO₂ per USD 10,000 in 2019. The region has lower vehicle emission standards than Asia and Europe, but emerging programmes in **Argentina, Brazil, Chile** and **Costa Rica** are contributing to more stringent standards.



LAC quickly adapted transport to the COVID-19 pandemic

Cities across LAC responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by adding **temporary bicycle lanes** to promote socially distant transport options, including in **Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Cuenca (Ecuador), Lima** and **Mexico City**, among others.

Paratransit (sometimes called “informal transport”) has been an essential supplier of transport services in LAC, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been providing access to mobility for millions of people, filling in gaps left by formal transport systems by quickly adapting and responding to changes in demand and generating significant employment opportunities.



Want to find out more about trends in specific countries in LAC?

Check out these **country fact sheets** with data on transport demand, emission trends and measures taken at the national level towards achieving sustainable, decarbonised transport systems:



Argentina



Bolivia



Brazil



Chile



Colombia



Ecuador



Mexico



Peru



Read the SLOCAT country fact sheets on [fossil fuel and renewable energy use](#) (available for [Antigua & Barbuda](#) and [Chile](#)).



Electrification and sustainable urban mobility planning are popular transport actions in LAC



Strategic plans, enabling policies and incentives are emerging across the region to help **accelerate the uptake and manufacturing of electric vehicles**. Growing regional demand for electric vehicles, driven in large part by the replacement of internal combustion engine bus fleets, presents opportunities to increase regional manufacturing of electric vehicles. Currently, several electric vehicle manufacturing facilities exist in Brazil and additional facilities are planned to produce electric trucks.

As of March 2021, nearly 3,000 electric buses were operating across the LAC region, most introduced in the past several years.

Chile and **Colombia** are rolling out electric buses at scale, with **Bogotá's** TransMilenio operating 1,485 electric buses as of early 2021.

Colombia passed a new law establishing incentives for electric vehicles, including discounts on insurance premiums, exemptions on vehicle traffic restriction measures and preferential parking.

Costa Rica launched a National Electric Transport Plan with new laws and incentives to promote electric vehicles.

Ecuador, through its Energy Efficiency Law, set a target to electrify all buses by 2025 and eliminated import taxes on electric cars and buses, as well as on charging stations and vehicle batteries. This has spurred the development of municipal regulations to support electric vehicle deployment.



The LAC region boasts **the world's highest shares of renewable energy**, including in electricity grids, creating significant opportunities to decarbonise transport through electrification. Nearly every country in the region also has blending mandates for biofuels, although they are not universally enforced.



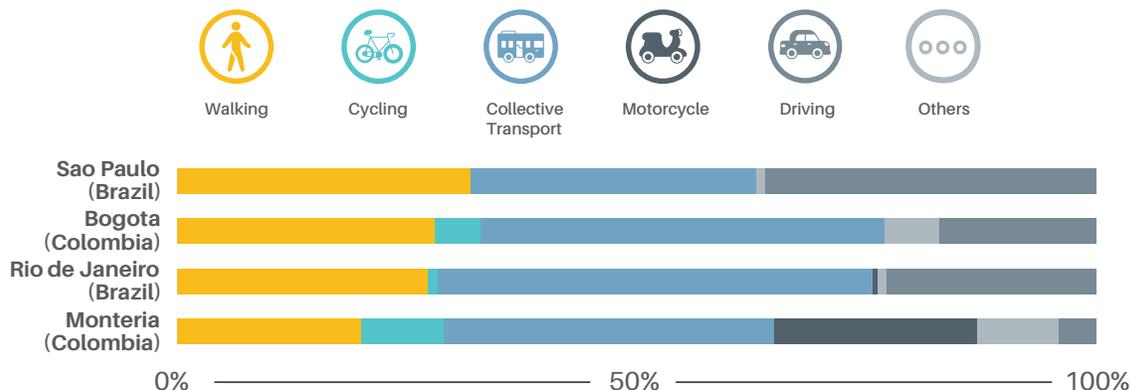
The LAC region has **the world's second highest number of implemented sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs)** after Europe. **National urban mobility plans (NUMPs)**, although not yet widespread, are **growing in prominence**.



Cities in LAC continued to invest in **cycling infrastructure, supported by strategies and incentives to increase active mobility**. However, **investments in pedestrian infrastructure have been insufficient**, considering that **walking constitutes as much as 54% of all trips in the region**.

MobiliseYourCity and the **EUROCLIMA+ Programme** supported the development of **SUMPs in eight LAC cities (Ambato, Antofagasta, Arequipa, Baixada Santista, Guadalajara, La Habana, Santo Domingo and Trujillo)** as well as **NUMPs in five countries (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay)**, between 2015 and 2020.

Share of trips by transport mode in selected cities, various years



This regional fact sheet is part of the SLOCAT Transport and Climate Change Global Status Report - 2nd edition. The information shown is based on desk research, focusing on trends between 2019 and 2020. Data has been collected to the best knowledge and availability. The content does not represent the opinion of the SLOCAT Partnership.

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