

Evaluating the Maturity Level of Health Technology Assessment in Latin America: A Comparative Qualitative Analysis

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¹F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd, HTA Network LATAM. A: Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay, Perú, Ecuador; B: Colombia; C: LATAM; D: Brazil; E: Chile; F: Mexico; G: Central America, Caribbean and Venezuela; H: Argentina

Background

- Universal health coverage is a global goal, requiring efficient resource use, evidence-based decision-making, transparency and participation for sustainability.
- Health Technology Assessment (HTA) is a structured process used in over 40 countries to inform healthcare decisions, enhancing equity, efficiency and quality.
- The rapid introduction of new health technologies, especially in low-and-middle-income countries (LMIC), necessitates timely HTA to maximize health outcomes and manage limited resources effectively.
- In Latin America, HTA adoption varies widely, with diverse structures and methodologies linking HTA to healthcare decisions; progress is notable, yet regional gaps remain significant.
- This study aims to assess HTA in selected Latin American countries to identify structural, procedural, and capacity-related gaps, fostering a tailored approach that maximizes resources and strengthens healthcare systems in the region through evidence-based practices.

Objective

This study aimed to review the application of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) in 16 Latin American and Caribbean countries by constructing a Balanced Scorecard (BSC). This facilitated **cross-comparison of HTA institutionalization**.

Methods

- **Study Type & Population:** Qualitative study using indexed and gray literature from 16 Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and others.
- **Data Collection:** A team from Roche/Genentech will gather data on HTA-related legislation, processes, and agency structure from databases (e.g., PubMed, LILACS) and gray literature sources (e.g., institutional and government websites).
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Articles must discuss HTA agencies, policies, processes, or strategies relevant to the selected countries, published in Spanish, Portuguese, or English post-2017. Stakeholders include RedETSA, INAHTA, and HTAi members or health ministry representatives.
- **Assessment:** A balanced scorecard with 18 criteria (e.g., HTA-policy link, budget allocation, and international collaboration) will score each country, with a maximum of 72 points, to assess HTA maturity.
- **Scoring System:** Countries are rated 0–4 per criterion, indicating progress from "Totally immature" (0) to "Totally mature" (4), allowing cross-country comparisons and identifying areas for improvement.

Results

The scoring system (balanced-scorecard) will be used to evaluate countries based on the following criteria:

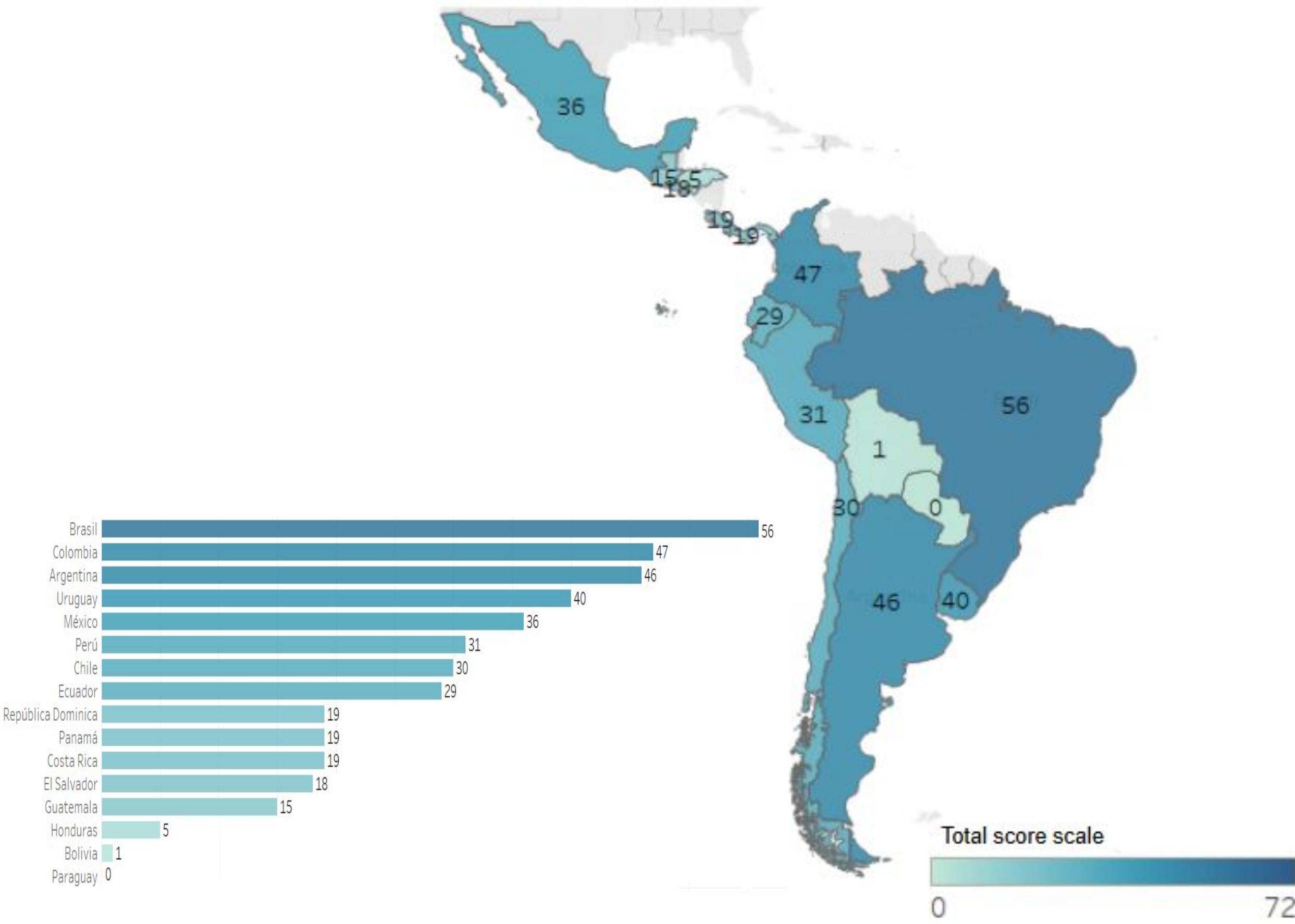
1. Formal mechanism to link HTA unit and policy makers
2. Full-time group of researchers
3. Use of HTA in policy
4. HTA process guidelines
5. HTA method guidelines
6. Appointment of focal point agency for HTA
7. Collaboration of domestic experts in HTA research
8. Domestic HTA training
9. Allocation of annual budget for HTA by government
10. Policy statement on willingness to use HTA in decision making
11. National HTA database of reports
12. HTA legislation
13. Membership in international networks
14. Postgraduate training on HTA subjects
15. Data registry for clinical and economics data for use in HTA
16. International journal publications by researchers
17. National HTA conference
18. HTA as part of undergraduate curricula for health fields

Source: Adapted by authors from ¹Castro et al and Chootipongchaiwat et al.

Score	Levels	Definition
0	Totally immature	The totally immature level indicates that the evaluated aspect does not exist or is in a very early stage. At this level, there are no established structures or processes for the evaluated aspect
1	Immature	The immature level indicates that the evaluated aspect exists but is deficient in terms of design, implementation, or financing. At this level, the evaluated aspect may be inefficient, ineffective, or not adapted to needs
2	In development	The in-development level indicates that the evaluated aspect exists and is functioning but is still under development. At this level, the evaluated aspect may be undergoing changes or improvements
3	Mature	The mature level indicates that the evaluated aspect is effective and efficient. At this level, the evaluated aspect is designed to meet needs and is supported by the necessary resources
4	Totally mature	The totally mature level indicates that the evaluated aspect has reached its maximum potential. At this level, the evaluated aspect is efficient, effective, and continuously improving

- **Score Ranking and Government Support:** Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina achieved the highest total scores, while Paraguay scored zero. Despite some countries having full-time HTA researchers, government budget allocation for HTA remains generally low.
- **Database Accessibility and Network Participation:** National HTA report databases are limited in accessibility, except in Argentina, Brazil, and Peru. Fewer than half of the countries are involved in international HTA networks, indicating a need for stronger global connections.

Map of Latin America showing the score value for each country



- **Data Registration and Conference Generation:** Most countries, excluding Brazil and Colombia, show immature levels in registering clinical and economic data for HTA. The generation of national HTA conferences is also minimal across the region, highlighting an area for potential growth.

Discussion & Conclusion

- HTA implementation levels vary widely across Latin American countries, with many facing barriers such as limited budget allocation and low accessibility to HTA reports.
- Key challenges include inadequate systems for registering clinical and economic data, which hinders the effective use of HTA in decision-making processes.
- Increased international collaboration and the creation of accessible national HTA databases could help strengthen HTA capabilities across the region.
- To improve healthcare decisions, policymakers should prioritize investment in HTA resources and support systems that enable comprehensive and accessible HTA data.

References

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