CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT IN LATAM

SHERLOCK COMMUNICATIONS

Photo: iStock

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WHO CARES?

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has never been trendier, as companies try to improve their status by getting involved in social projects and diverse causes. Whether the motivation for CSR is altruism, or optics, is debatable. The question is: do Latin American consumers care either way? Does investment in social and environmental projects actually change how people react to certain brands?

To get a better idea of how people in the region feel about corporate social responsibility, we decided to ask them. **Sherlock Communications** contacted more than **3,100** people across six Latin American countries (**Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico**). We asked them if they thought companies owe it to society to make the world a better place. Did they think businesses are doing enough, or should more be invested? What issues are most important to Latin Americans in 2021?

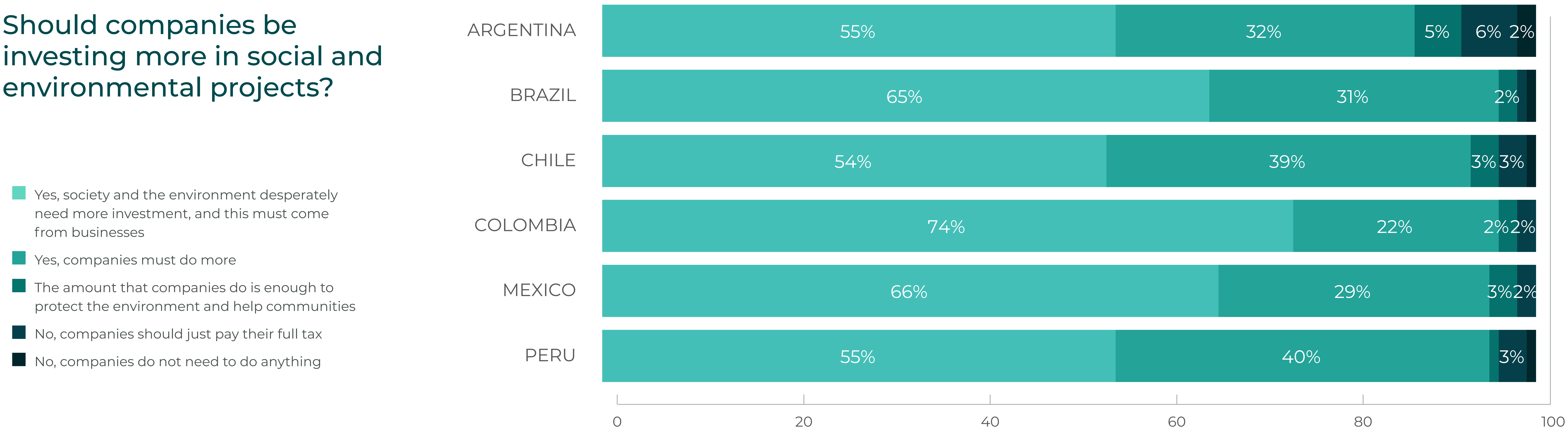
The results were interesting. We found that CSR has a direct impact on how people in Latin America view certain brands and companies. Nearly everyone we spoke to said that they thought that companies should get involved in contemporary societal issues. Most support the idea of using diverse voices for communications campaigns. A majority of residents from the region said they want companies to manufacture and sell sustainable products, while education was the number one social issue that people wanted to see companies focus on in their CSR efforts.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN LATIN AMERICA

An overwhelming majority of Latin Americans (94%) think companies should be investing more in social and environmental initiatives.

On the other hand, 6% of Argentinians didn't think so, saying they didn't believe companies needed to do more, provided they are paying their taxes. This view was shared by 3% of Chileans and 3% of Peruvians. For another 2% of Argentinians, there is no need at all for companies to worry about philanthropic projects. 1% of the respondents we spoke to in Brazil, Chile and Peru shared this opinion, while no-one agreed in Colombia and Mexico.

Should companies be investing more in social and environmental projects?

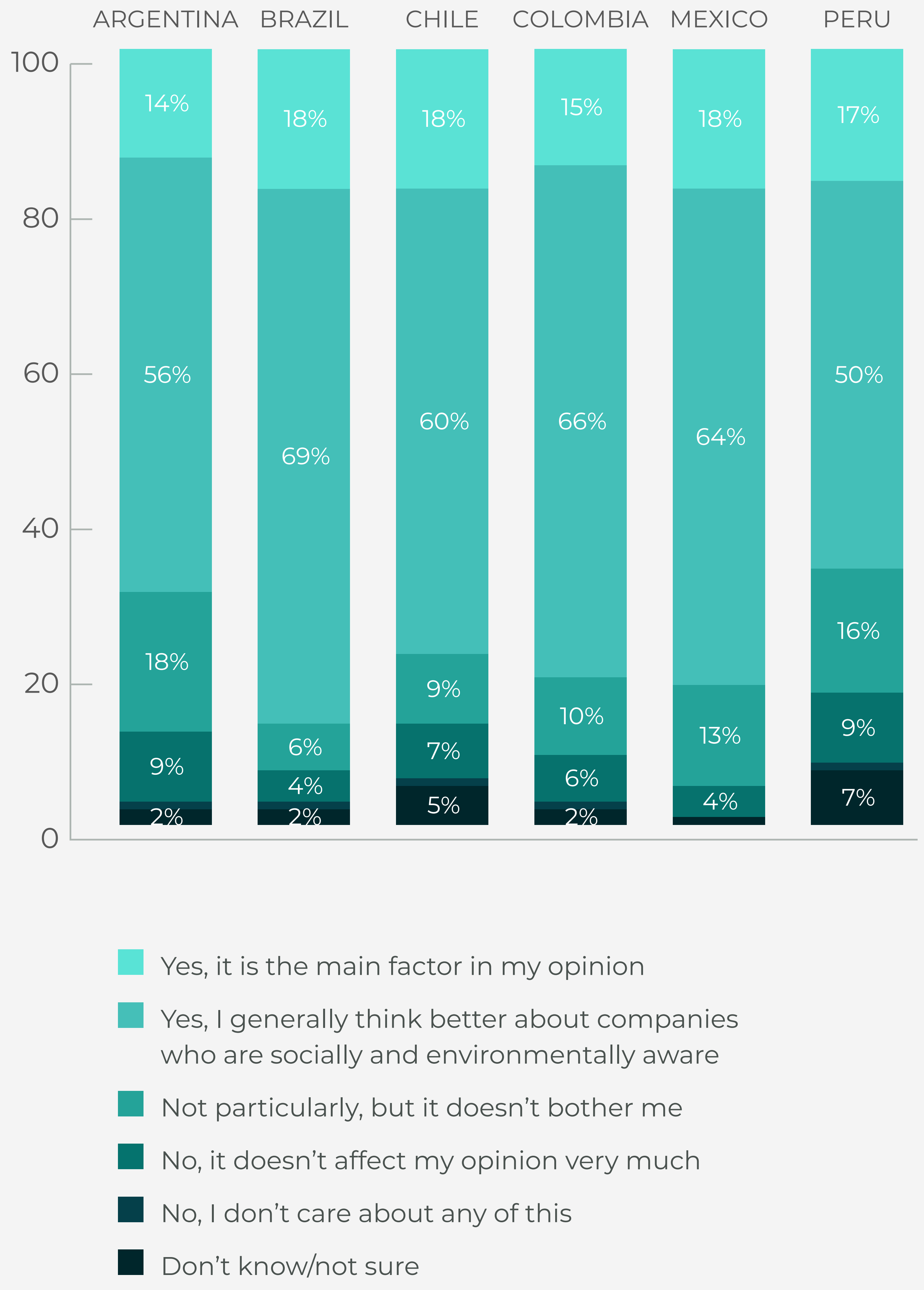


DOES CSR AFFECT BRAND PERCEPTION?

When we asked respondents whether a company's social and environmental actions affected their opinion of a brand, it was interesting to note that at least three out of four Latin Americans said yes. In fact, 17% said CSR was the main factor in shaping their view of companies.

Research shows that corporate social responsibility is of significant importance to the vast majority of people all over Latin America. 87% of Brazilians said their opinion of companies was impacted by CSR activity, while 82% of Mexicans and 81% of Colombian people said the same. CSR was a deciding factor in forming the opinions of 70% of Argentinians, 78% of Chileans, and 67% of Peruvians. An average of 12% across the region said CSR doesn't particularly influence their opinion of a brand either way. Less than 1% said they didn't care.

Does the company's social and environmental actions affect your opinion of them?



DOES CSR MATTER TO LATIN AMERICANS?

When we asked people about the importance of firms taking action to improve society and the wider community, the response was pretty unanimous. Less than 1% of the 3,120 respondents from across Latin America felt that it was not important - a total of 26 people! Interestingly, 3% of Argentinians felt that CSR is not important, while 1% of Chileans and Mexicans said the same. Meanwhile, no-one that we spoke to in Brazil, Colombia or Peru agreed.

Across the board, 86% of respondents said that it was either 'extremely important' or 'very important' that companies do something to improve the society in which they trade. In Colombia, 94% considered CSR 'extremely' or 'very important', as did 89% of Brazilians; 87% in Mexico; 83% in Peru; 85% of Chilean people; and 78% in Argentina. Brazilians emerged as the strongest advocates in the region for the importance of CSR, with 60% saying they consider it 'extremely important' for corporations to do their bit for the wider community.

How important is it that companies take action to improve society and the wider community they operate in?

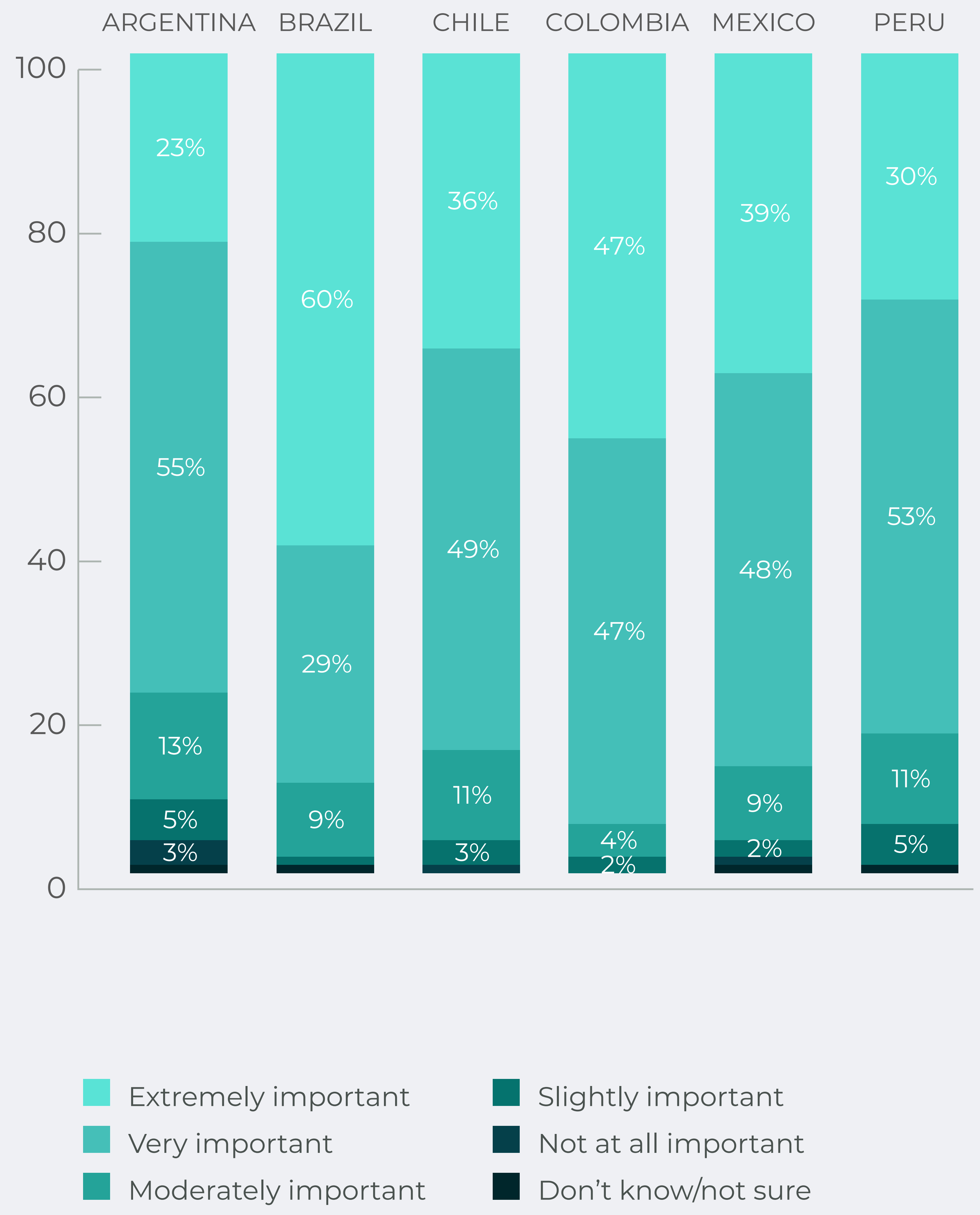


Image: MicroStockHub /iStock

WHAT TYPE OF CSR DO LATIN AMERICANS WANT?

We asked Latin Americans what type of engagement was needed for a company to have a positive impact in local communities, and asked participants to select the top three actions which they thought matter the most.

The most important CSR action for seven out of ten people in Latin America is sustainability - manufacturing and selling products in a way that does not harm the environment. This was most important for 71% of Colombians and Mexicans, 70% of Brazilians, 68% of Chileans, 65% of Peruvians and 63% of Argentinian respondents.

The second most important action in the region concerns employment conditions and pay, with 51% telling us that they thought it important that companies ‘pay people fairly and ensure they have a good life’. This was the second most important characteristic for people in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico, and the third highest priority for Brazilians, who placed slightly more importance on the sponsoring of community projects.

Photo: MicroStockHub /iStock

Three out of ten Latin Americans said that companies should be hiring personnel from diverse groups. This was particularly important for Brazilians: 39% of whom advocated for more diversity in corporate hiring practices

Such community engagement was the third most important CSR action for Latin Americans, cited by 38% of the people we spoke to. Brazilians placed more value on community project engagement than some of their neighbours, with 44% of respondents selecting the option, compared to 33% of Argentians and 34% of Peruvians.

One third of the people we spoke to across the region said companies should be committed to long term projects. This was a CSR priority for 38% of Argentinians, 37% of Brazilians and Mexicans, and 29% of people from Colombia.

Three out of ten Latin Americans said that companies should be hiring personnel from diverse groups. This was particularly important for Brazilians: 39% of whom advocated for more diversity in corporate hiring practices, along with 35% of respondents in Chile. One third of Argentinians (33%) felt the same. One in four people in Colombia said they value diversity in the workplace, as did 28% of Mexicans and 27% of Peruvians.

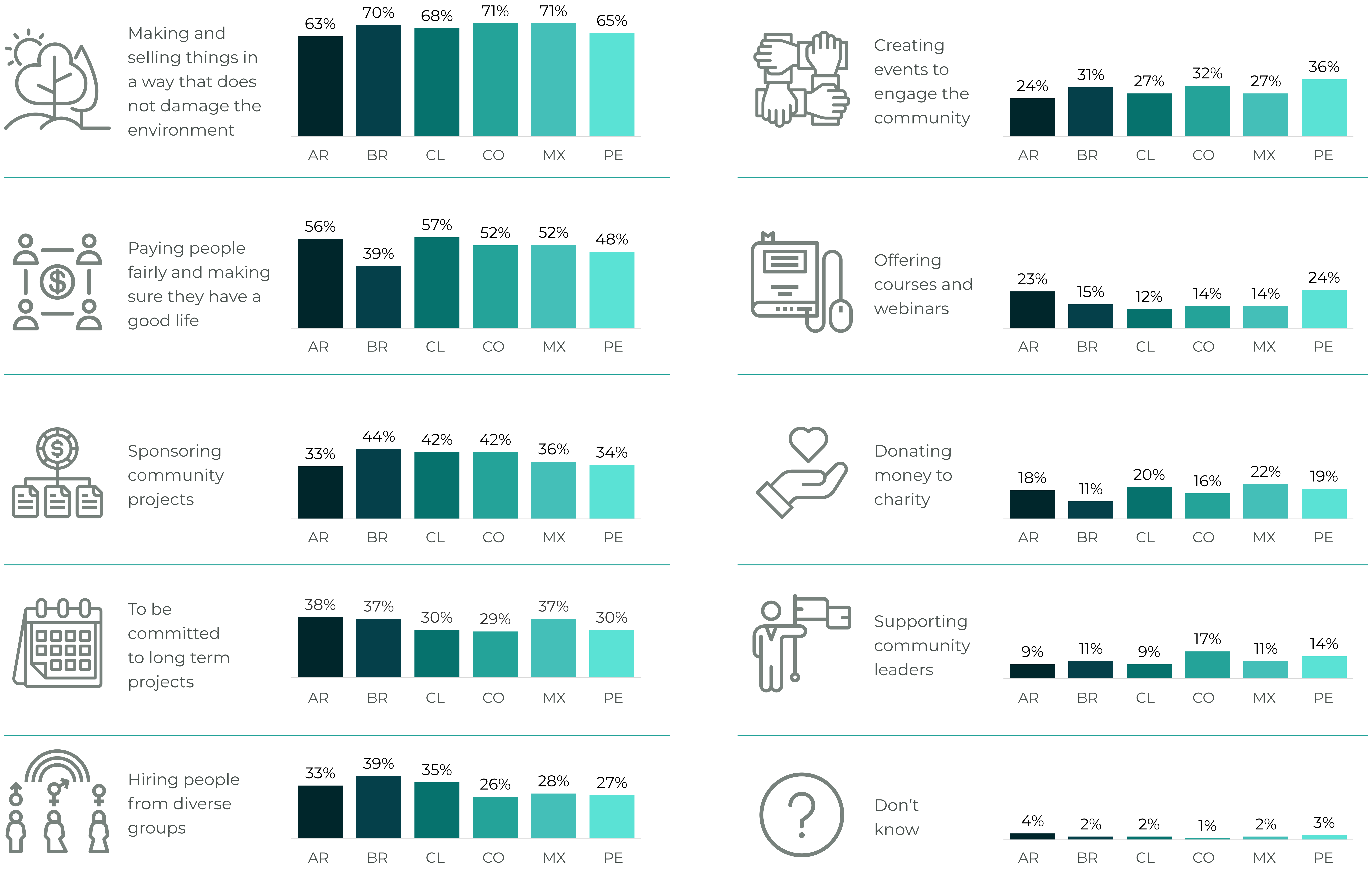
In Peru, 36% of people said companies should create events to engage the community, and this was echoed by 32% and 31% in Colombia and Brazil respectively, while 27% agreed in Chile and Mexico. The importance of community engagement through local events was cited by one quarter of Argentinian participants in the survey.

Photo: kampus production /Pexels

Interestingly, donating money to charity was low on the priority list across all countries, with an average of 18% saying this was a good CSR action. Our research revealed that 22% of Chileans think companies should donate to charity as part of their CSR strategy, an opinion shared by only 11% of Brazilians. Corporate offers of courses and webinars was a priority for 17% regionally, an idea held in comparatively high esteem by Peruvians (24%) and Argentinians (23%), compared to just 12% of Chileans.

Supporting community leaders was only seen to be of importance in corporate CSR for 12% of all respondents in the six countries we surveyed. In Colombia, 17% thought this was important, but only 9% in Argentina and Brazil agreed.

Which of these are important for a company to have a positive impact? Select three most relevant.



ARGENTINA
BRAZIL
CHILE
COLOMBIA
MEXICO
PERU

Icons: Koson Rattanaphan/ Diky Setiawan/ Komkrit Noenpoempisut/ nareerat jaikaew/ Nithinan Tatah/ Mahmure Alp/ Becris/ Berkah Icon/Noun Project

TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES

Do Latin Americans believe companies when they talk about CSR?

We asked people in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico to select their three most trustworthy sources for details on CSR activities. Half of the people across the region said they trusted social media as a means of finding out about corporate community involvement. Trust levels in social media were lowest in Brazil, with just 41% citing it as a trustworthy source, compared to 56% in both Chile and Mexico.

An average of 49% of Latin Americans told us that they trusted CSR-related information published on news websites. Brazilians gave a lot more credit to new sites as a valid source of information (61%), while only 40% of Colombians agreed. In both Chile and Peru, 45% cited news websites as trustworthy sources for CSR information. Television broadcasts were considered reliable sources by 49% of respondents across the region, particularly in Brazil (55%) and Peru (54%). A regional average of 28% said the same for radio. Chileans (32%) were more likely to trust what they heard on the radio regarding CSR actions than their neighbours in Brazil or Mexico (23% each).

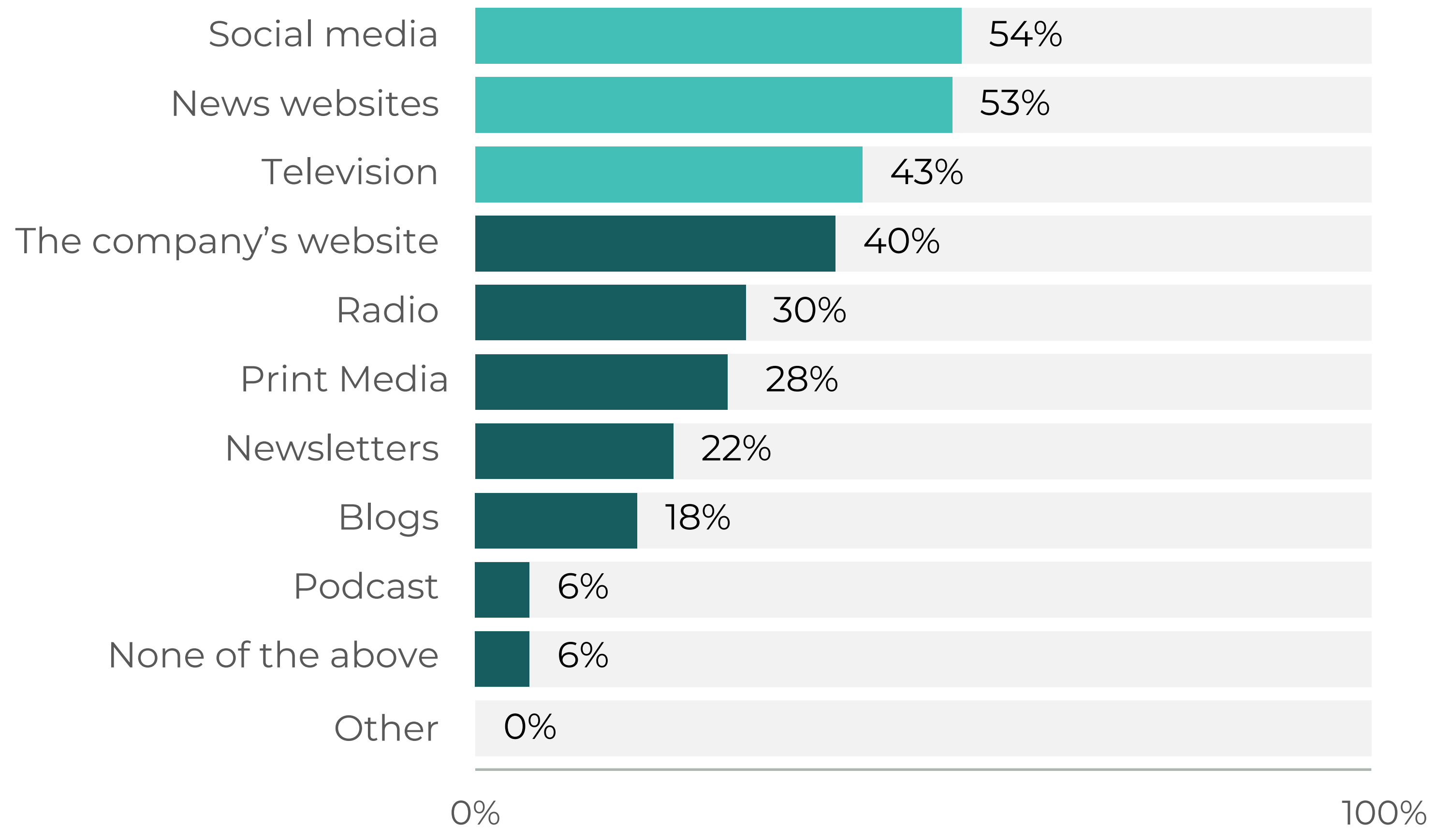
Blogs, podcasts and newsletters were among the least-trusted sources of CSR information in the region. Only 6% of Peruvians cited newsletters as the most credible source, a sharp contrast from Argentina, where 22% cited them as a viable source. Only 9% of Brazilians said they thought blogs were the best place to get accurate information, compared to 19% in Colombia. Podcasts were the least trusted source across the region - while 16% of Mexicans said they thought this was a good place to find accurate information, only 6% in Peru and Argentina agreed.

Photo: michael burrows/Pexels

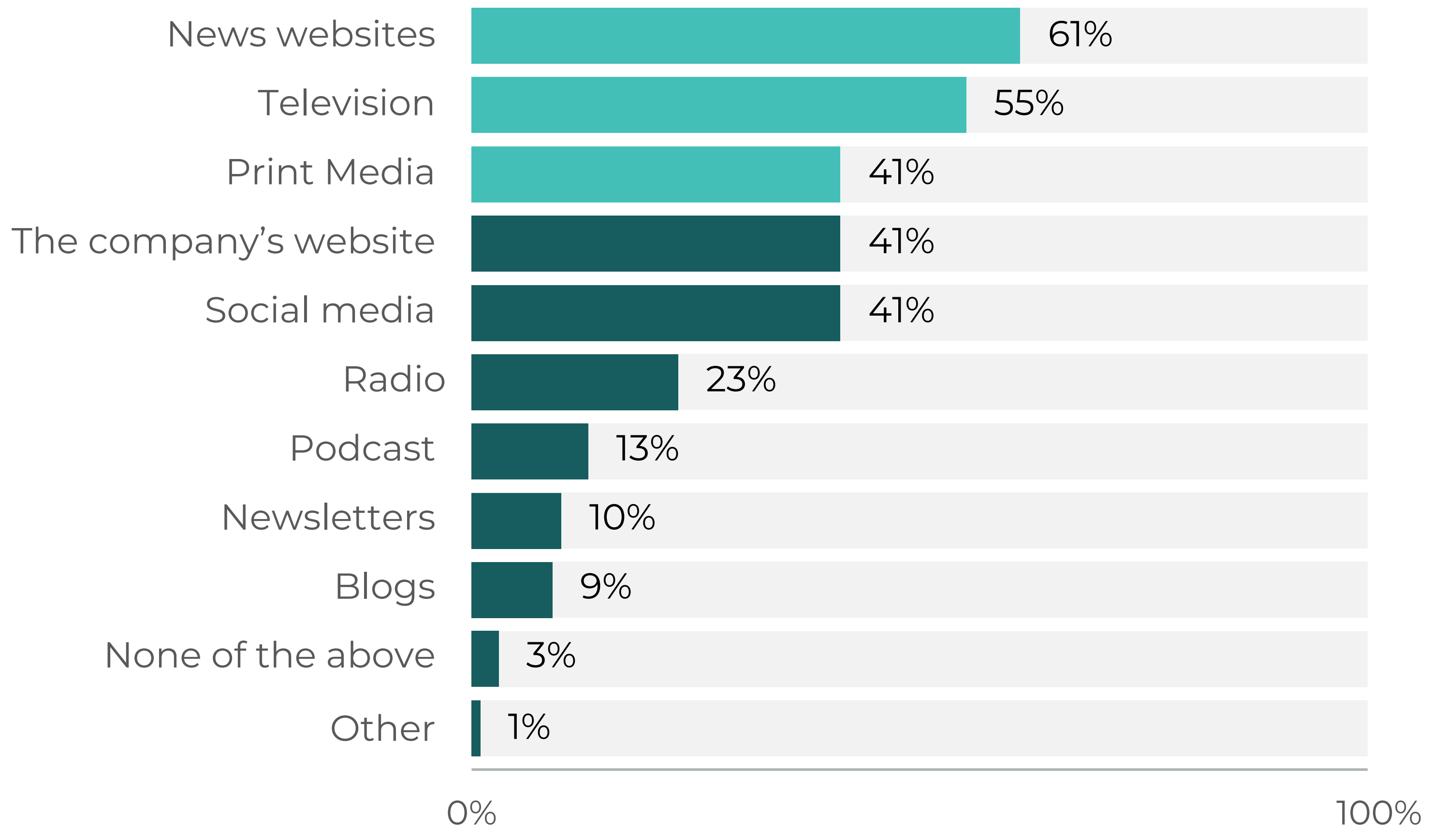
Half of the people across the region said they trusted social media as a means of finding out about corporate community involvement

Which of the following do you trust the most when you are reading/listening about the community actions of companies: (Select three)

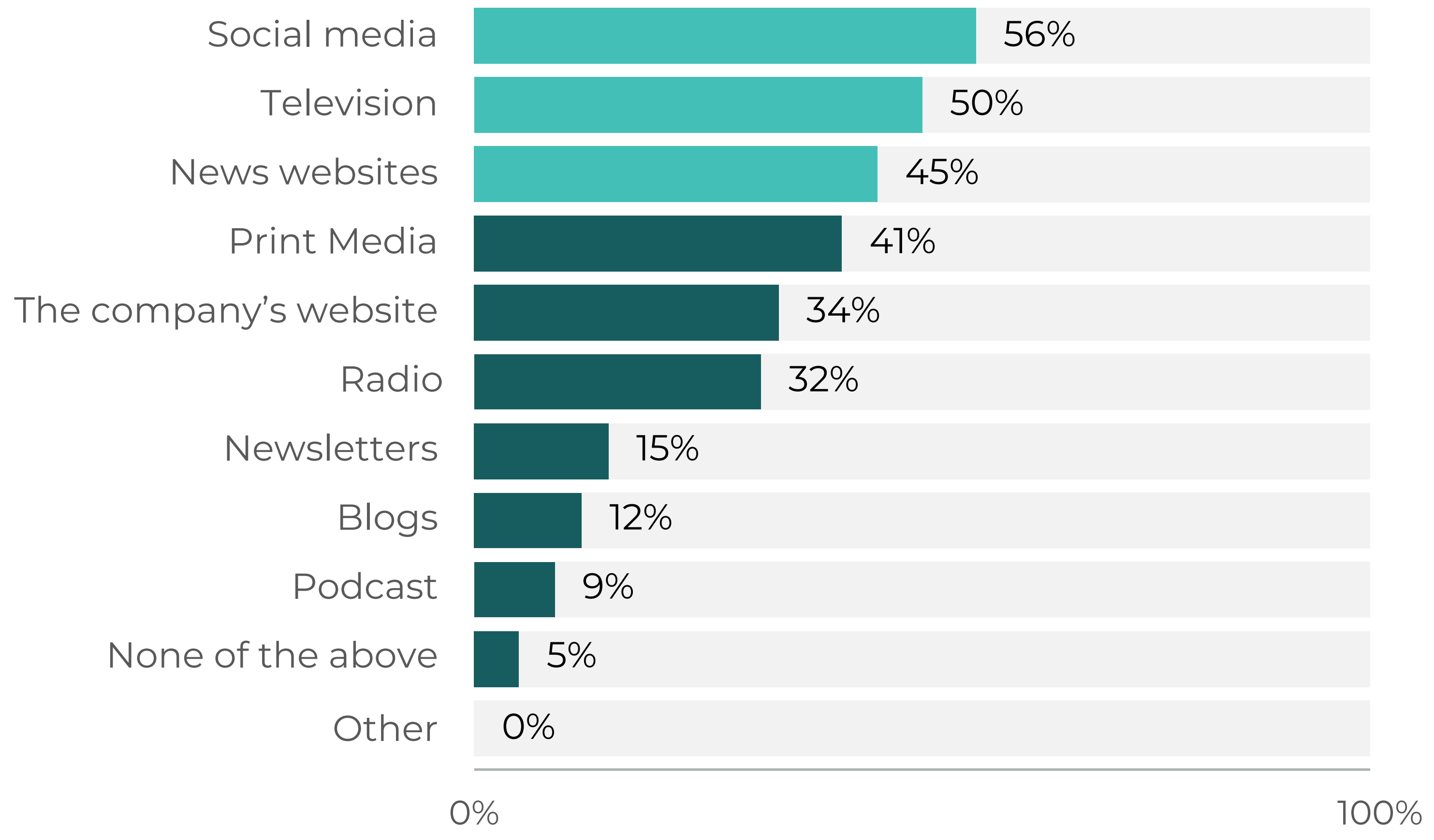
ARGENTINA



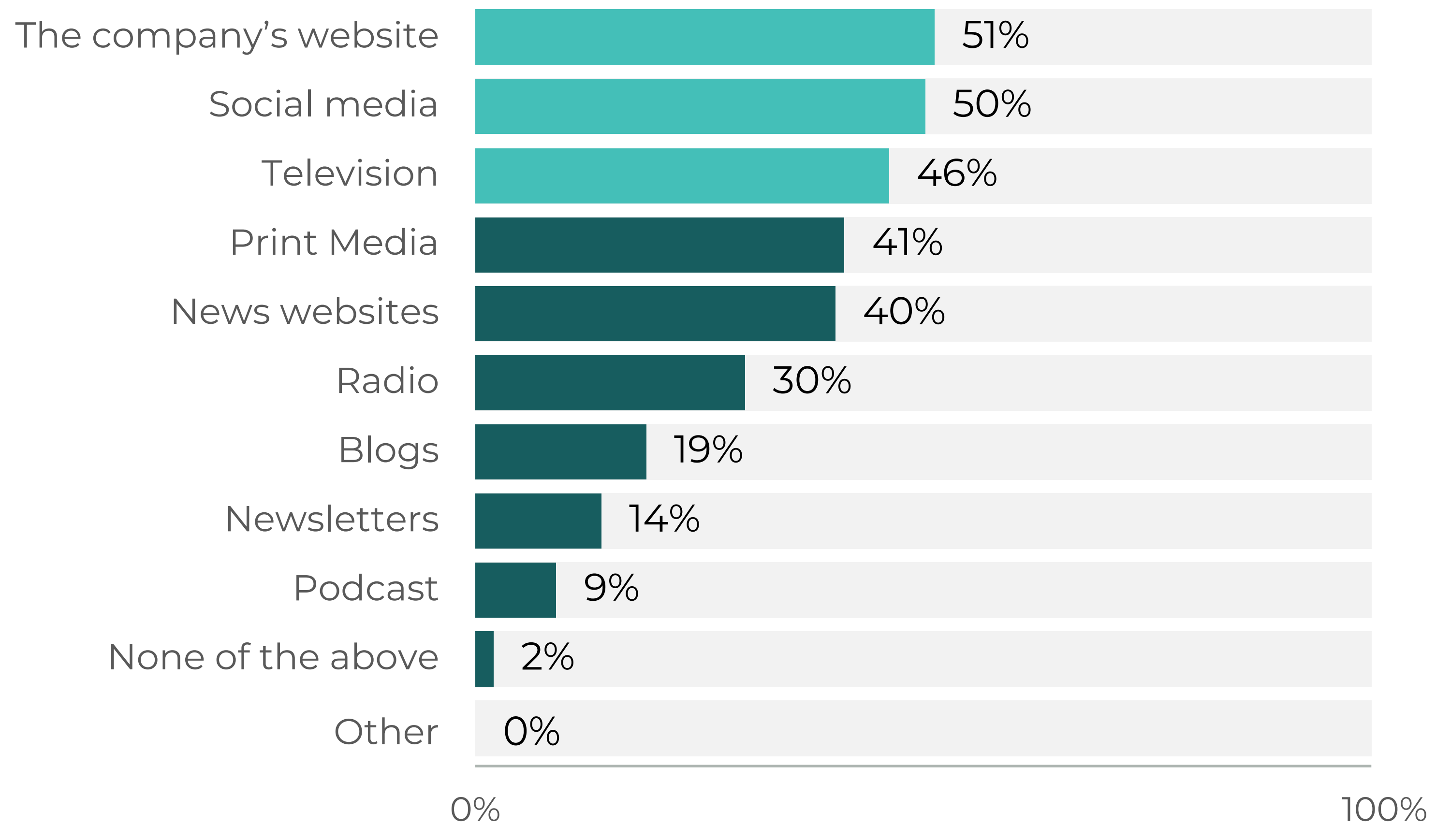
BRAZIL



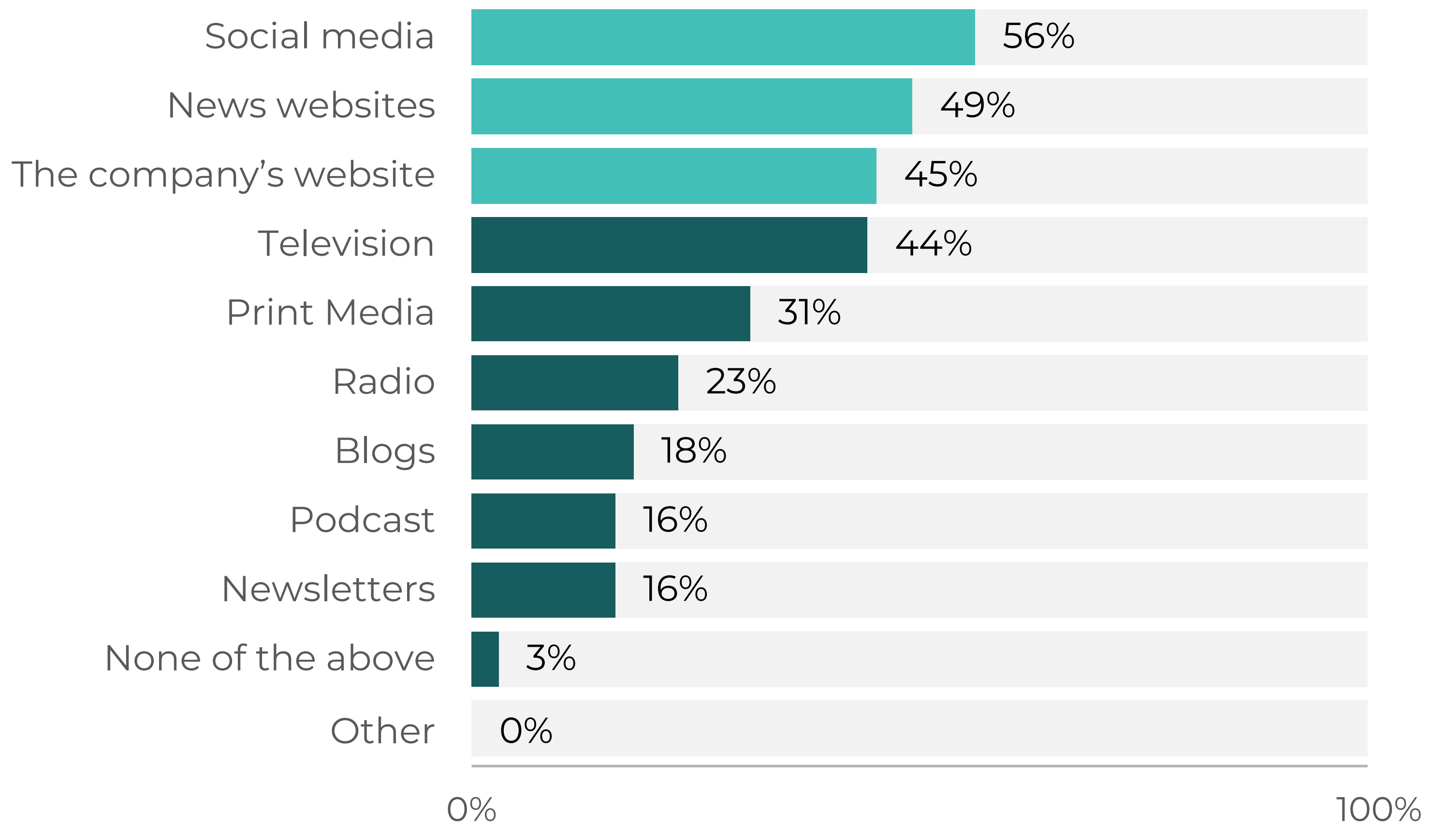
CHILE



COLOMBIA



MEXICO



PERU

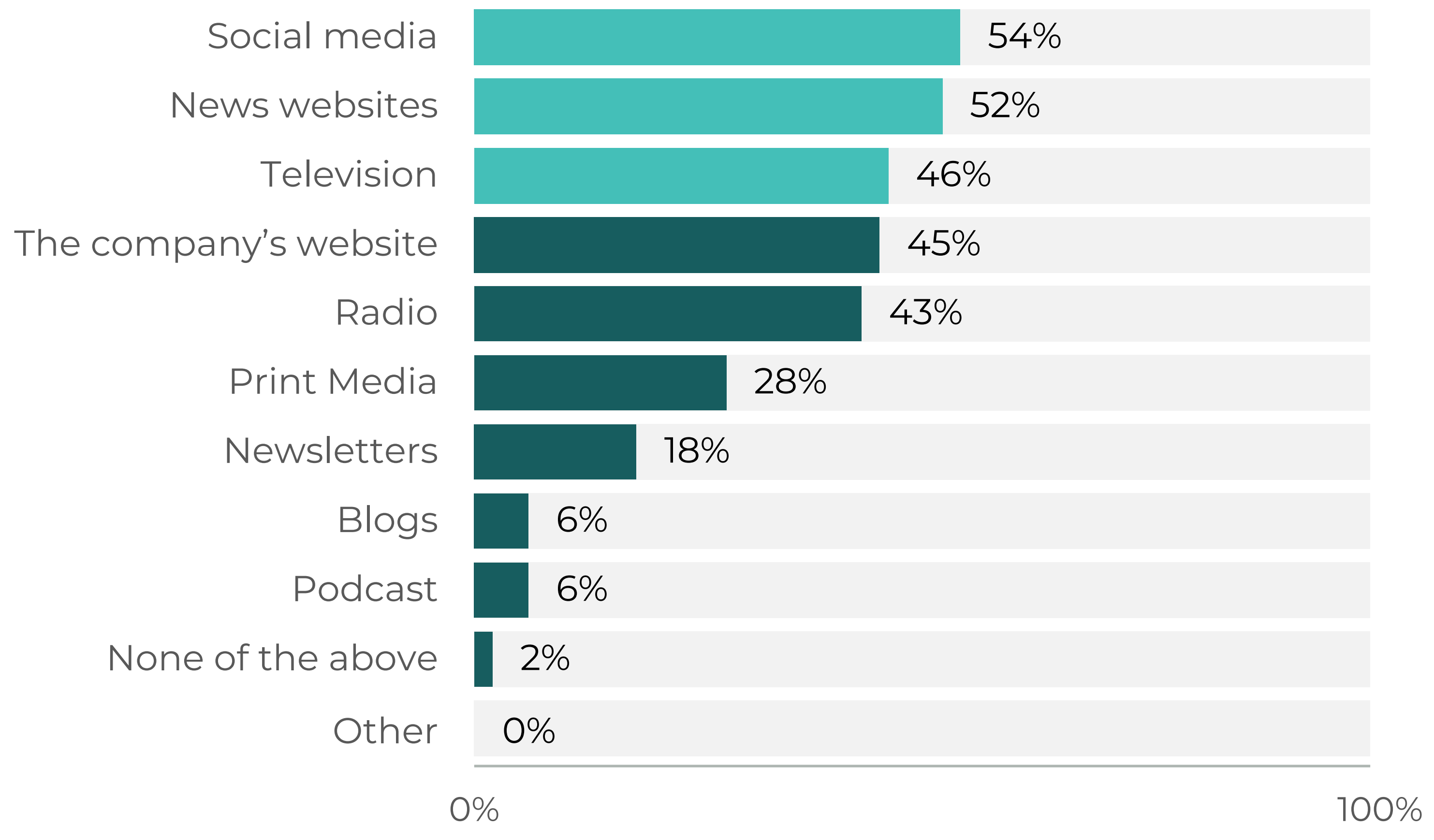


Photo: LanaStock/iStock

WHO’S TELLING THE TRUTH?

To further gauge trust levels, we asked people from across the region which people in society they were most likely to trust to tell the truth about which CSR activities companies are up to.

Celebrities and politicians fared the worst. Only 3% of people across Latin America trust what comes out of politicians’ mouths - just 99 people from a sample of more than 3000 people said they would take a politician’s word on what a company was doing for its community. While 5% of people in Peru and Mexico cited elected officials as trustworthy, only 1% did so in Colombia.

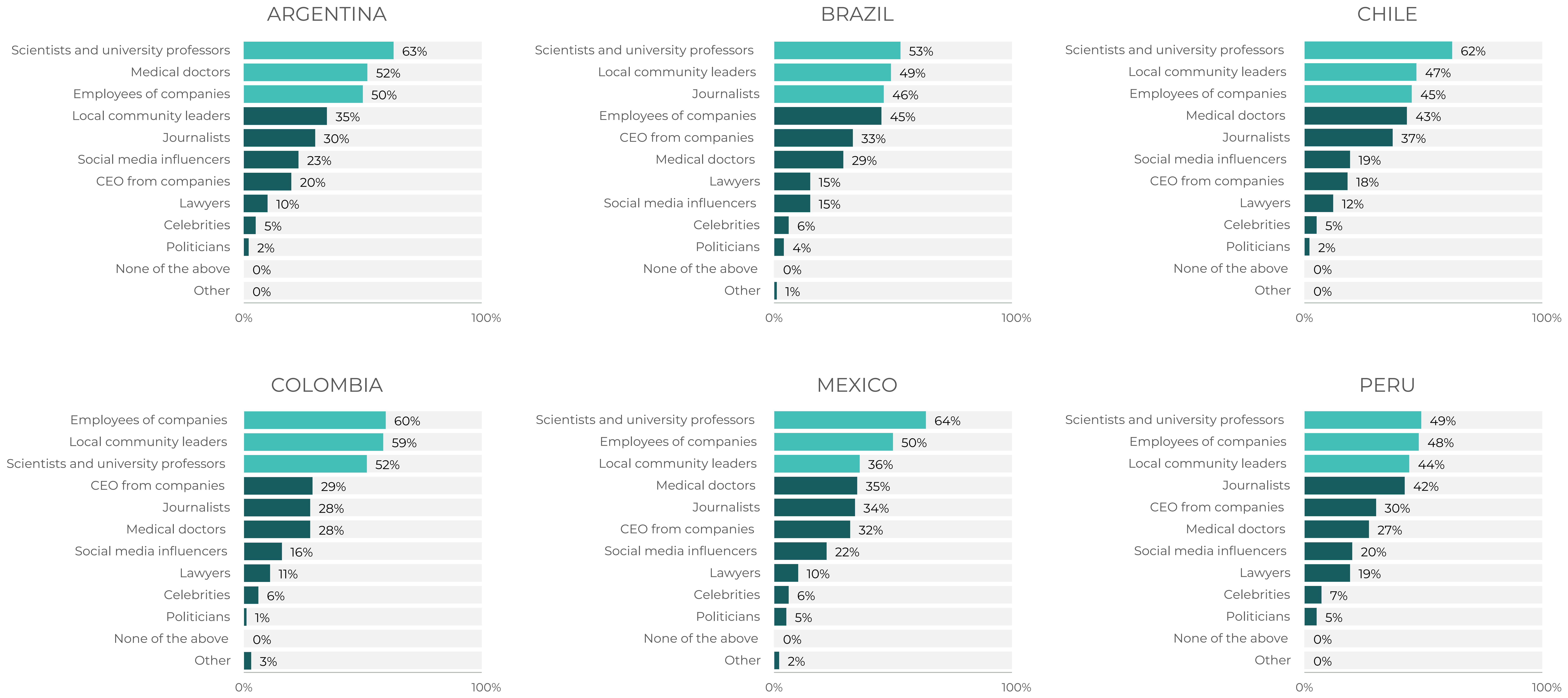
Interestingly, while only 5% consider celebrities to be a reliable source when it comes to the provision of corporate information, 19% of people across Latin America said they trusted social media influencers. Notably, 23% of Argentinians said they trusted influencers, as did 22% of Mexicans. Only 15% of Brazilians and 16% of Colombians agreed.

Reassuringly in the middle of a pandemic, scientists and university professors were cited as the most trustworthy source of corporate social responsibility information, by 57% of the overall survey population. Mexicans were the most likely to trust scientists and professors (64%), along with 63% of Argentinians, and 62% of Chileans. Only one in two Peruvians had similar levels of trust (49%), compared to 53% of Brazilians and 52% of Colombians.

Half of the Latin American population said they trust the word of people working in the company in question, with Colombians more likely to do so (60%) more than their neighbours in Brazil and Chile (45% each). Of note: most people would trust regular employees over the company’s CEO. While an average of 50% of respondents said they would trust employees, only 36% cited CEOs as trustworthy. Chief executives inspired the most confidence in Brazil (33%), and the least in Chile (18%) and Argentina (20%).

Local community leaders are trusted as sources of information regarding CSR by 45% of Latin Americans, and 36% listed journalists as purveyors of the truth in this sphere. Trust levels in journalists were highest in Brazil (46%), and lowest in Argentina (30%) and Colombia (28%). Only 13% across the region said they thought lawyers could be trusted to tell the whole truth about companies’ CSR activities, with more Peruvians trusting attorneys (19%) than any other nation we spoke to. Only 10% of Argentinians and Mexicans thought they were the best source, compared to 11% of Colombians, 12% of Chileans and 15% from Brazil.

Which of the following people do you trust the most to tell the truth about the actions of companies: (Select three)



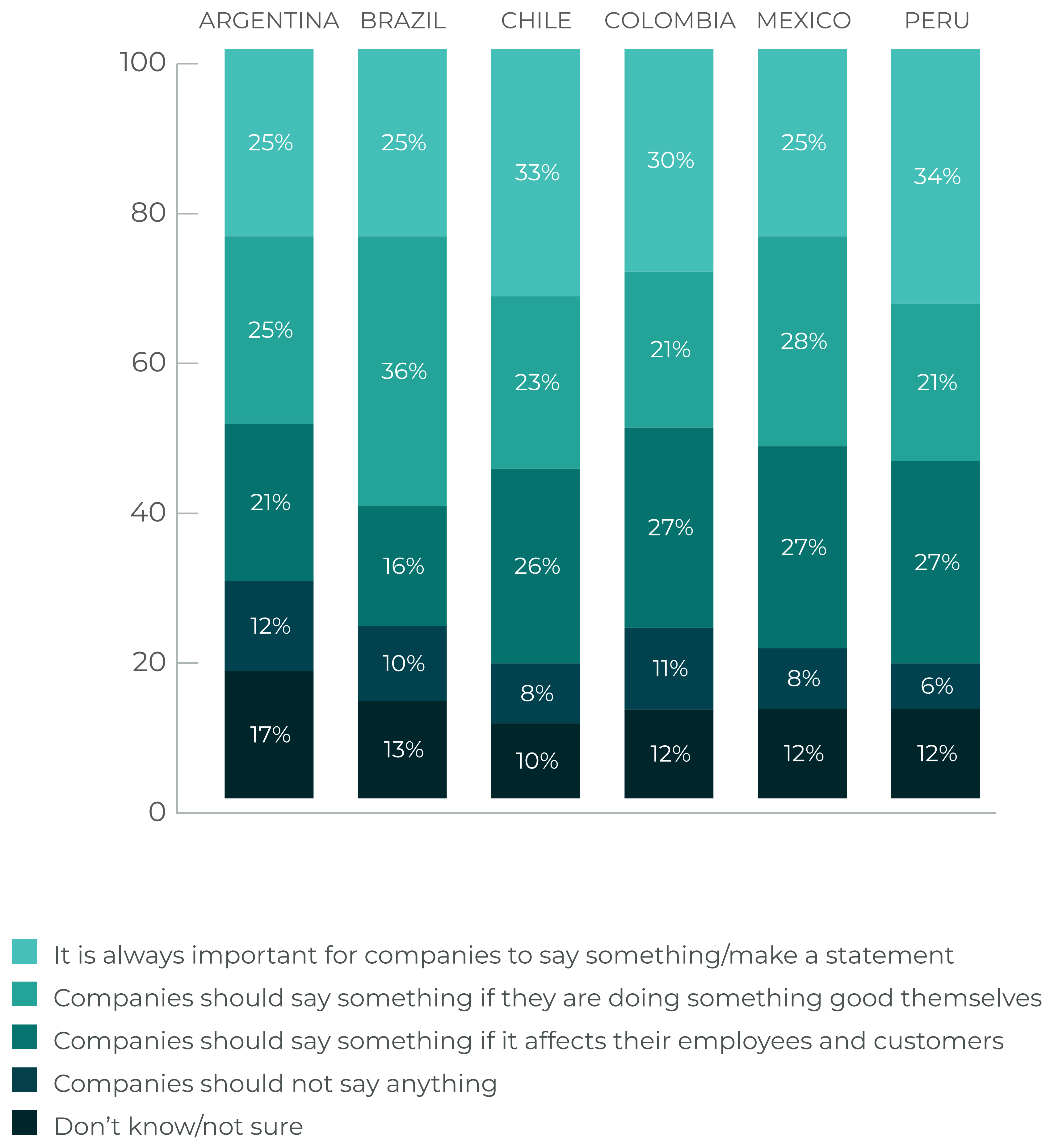
WEIGHING IN ON ISSUES

What to think about companies that comment on social and environmental issues or raise the LGBTQIA+ flag for pride month?

Eight out of ten people in the region felt that companies should get involved in contemporary issues, although of these, around a third said companies should only weigh in if they are actually doing something about the issue, and another similar sized subset said companies should really only get involved if the issue is something that impacts their employees or customers.

While comment on contemporary issues was important to many in Latin America, 9% were of the opinion that companies should not get involved. This sentiment was strongest in Argentina, where 12% said companies should not comment on social and environmental issues. Just 6% of Peruvians felt the same. 13% of the people who spoke to us said that they were not sure or did not have an opinion on the matter.

What do you think of companies commenting on social and environmental issues (like rainbow colors for LGBTQI+ pride month, black square for Black Lives Matter)?



DOES DIVERSITY MATTER?

The response to this question was overwhelming. Across Latin America, more than 93% felt that it was important for companies to highlight a diverse range of people in their communications.

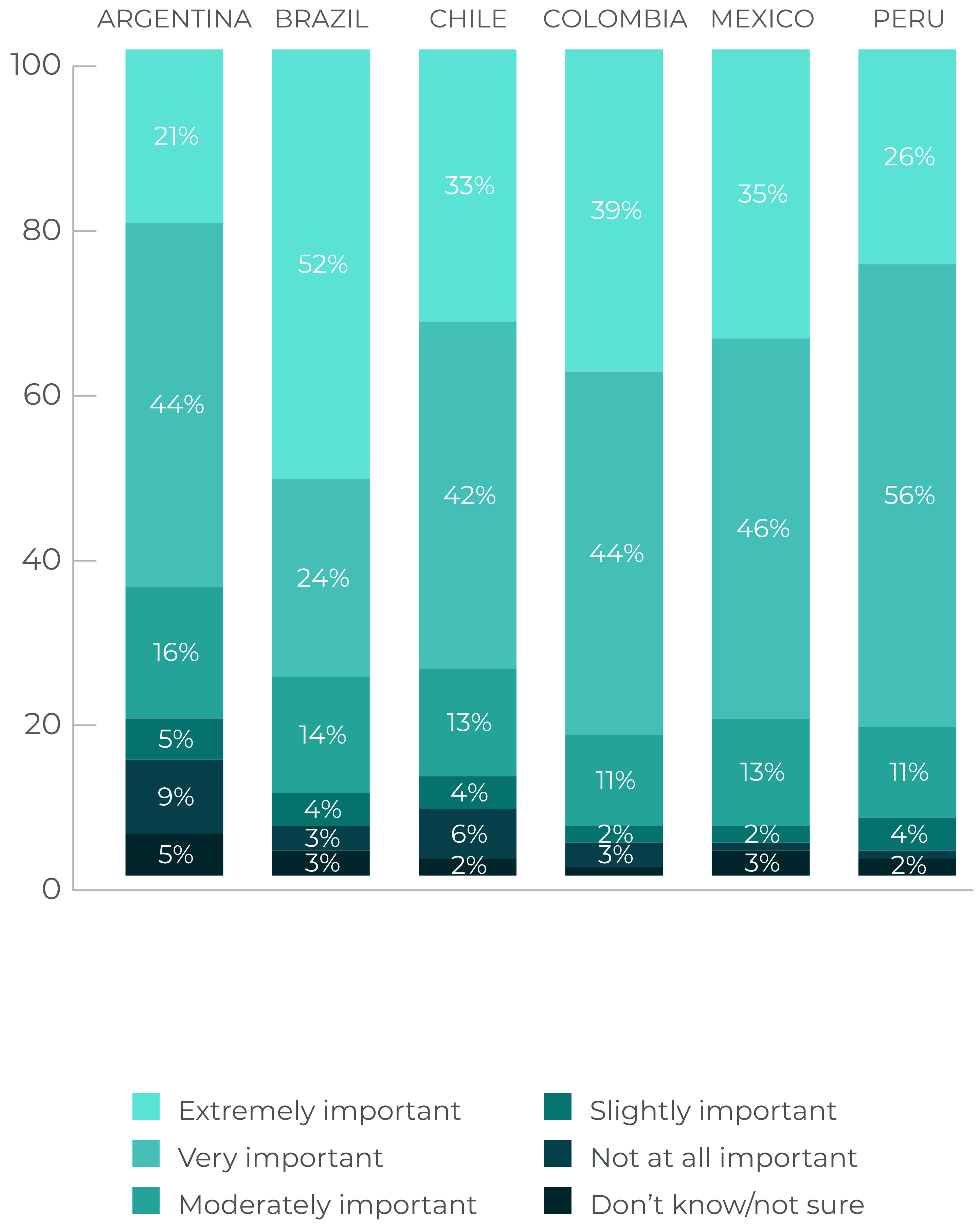
Only 4% disagreed, while 3% were not sure. While most people were in agreement as to the importance of diversity in corporate CSR messaging, the level of importance ascribed varied somewhat. One in three people across the vast region said that it was 'extremely important' to communicate using a diverse range of voices. This was most important to the Brazilians we spoke to, with 76% saying such diversity was either 'extremely' or 'very important'.

In contrast, only 22% of Argentinians considered communicating with diverse voices to be 'extremely important', while 44% said it was 'very important'.

Photo: jeffbergen/iStock

Argentines were also most likely to say that diverse voices were not at all necessary, with 9% stating this opinion. Not so in Colombia and Peru, where only 1% in each market considered it unnecessary to use diverse voices in communications strategies.

How important is it for companies to use a diverse range of people in their communications?



WHAT ARE THE BURNING ISSUES FOR LATIN AMERICANS?

We asked all of the participants in our study to tell us which 5 issues they thought companies should focus their CSR efforts on.

Education emerged as the main issue, deemed to be most important for two out of three people across Latin America. 72% of Colombians cited education as an area in which they would like to see CSR action being taken; as did 69% of Argentinians and Peruvians, two-thirds of Chileans, and 59% of those in Mexico.

‘Fighting air and water pollution’ was the second most cited issue among participants across the six Latin American nations, and was the number one issue cited in Mexico - by seven out of ten respondents - as well as in Chile - where 66% said they wanted corporate CSR to focus on cleaning up the atmosphere. Both countries cited ‘education’ as the next most pressing issue , while ‘global warming and its consequences’ was the third most burning issue for people in these two nations.

Respondents from across the region also shared concerns about global warming and a desire to see companies try to address the issue. 54% said they wanted companies to take affirmative action through CSR strategies in this area.

Photo: Igor Alecsander/iStock

The six countries we analysed for this survey account for 30% of all Covid-19 deaths to date, so it was perhaps surprising that healthcare was only the fourth most important issue cited by survey respondents, mentioned by 53% of the survey sample. Equally surprising, healthcare was only the eighth most important issue for Brazilians (after ‘education’, ‘combating hunger’, ‘fighting air and water pollution’, ‘global warming and its consequences’, ‘fighting racial inequality’, ‘deforestation or environmental damage’, and ‘access to clean water and sanitation for the population’, in that order).

Helping vulnerable women was cited more in Peru than in any other country, with 45% stating that corporations should get involved with this struggle.

Access to clean water and sanitation was considered the fifth most important issue, and cited by 47% of Latin Americans, while more than 44% wanted companies to engage in the fight against hunger. This issue was particularly acute among 65% of more than 800 Brazilians we spoke to, along with 46% of Colombians, 43% of Argentinians, 40% of our Peruvian respondents, 38% in Mexico, and 35% in Chile.

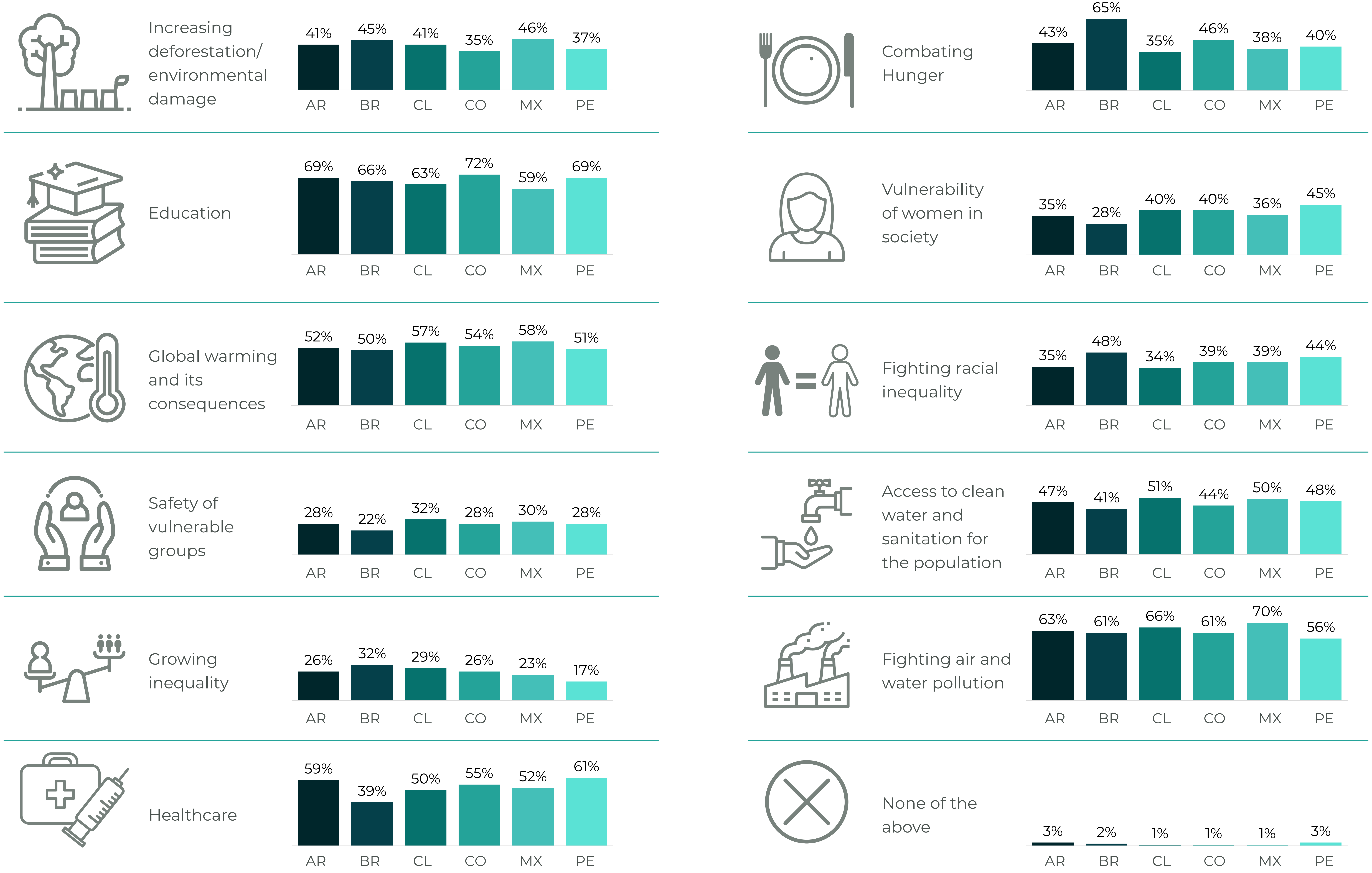
41% of Latin Americans think that companies should focus their CSR strategies to combat the ongoing destruction of forests and the environment, with Brazilians (45%) and Mexicans (46%) expressing slightly more concern than Peruvians (37%) and Colombians (35%).

Four out of ten people told us that they wanted to see companies fighting against racial inequality, with 48% of Brazilians citing this as a pressing issue, along with 44% of Peruvians, 39% of Mexicans and Colombians, 35% of Argentinians, and 34% in Chile.

Helping vulnerable women was cited more in Peru than in any other country, with 45% stating that corporations should get involved with this struggle. 40% in both Chile and Colombia agreed, as did 36% in Mexico, 35% in Argentina, and just 28% in Brazil. The regional average for this issue was just over 37%. 'Safety of vulnerable groups' was a concern for three out of ten respondents, and 'growing inequality' was a CSR concern for one in four. 57 people from the full sample of 3120 people told us that they did not believe companies should invest their efforts in any of the issues listed in the survey.

Photo: hadynyah/iStock

What issues do you think that companies should put their social and charitable efforts into the future? (Choose up to 5)



ARGENTINA
BRAZIL
CHILE
COLOMBIA
MEXICO
PERU

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LESS OPTICS, MORE ETHICS - DEVELOPING A CSR STRATEGY

Customer satisfaction is about more than just the exchange of products and services. Nowadays, consumers expect more from the companies they spend their money on. If most people in Latin America expect CSR, and for companies to invest in social and environmental issues, then it's crucial for these companies to understand what is important to people in the region.

The message from Latin Americans is clear regarding the production process and environmental worries, including concern about deforestation, air and water quality, sanitation, and the consequences of global warming. People in Latin America want companies to do better, and offer products that are more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

In fact, a study published by Euromonitor International in February 2021 suggests that people in Latin America are more concerned about climate change than people from other regions. The survey showed that three out of four people in Latin America were 'worried about climate change', compared to 66% in the Asia Pacific region, 64% in Europe and just 57% in North America.

Photo: Science in HD/Unsplash

THE BOTTOM LINE

A more humane and equitable approach to doing business makes financial sense too. While initial investment may be needed to introduce CSR strategies, improved brand awareness and satisfaction will lead to greater customer satisfaction, which in turn can even help with search engine optimization. Positive reviews, particularly on third party sites, are highlighted by algorithms and can help companies to surf to the top of SERPs (search engine results pages).

Caution is advised, however. Latin American customers don't want companies to merely donate to charity and call it a day, thinking the job is done. They value long term commitment to the issues which they see as important. A piecemeal approach may not have the desired impact. It is important for companies not only to carefully consider what issues matter to people in each target market, but also select projects that align in some way with what they offer commercially.

Corporate environmental and social governance (ESG) is a major draw for investors too, according to the UBS investment bank, who recently wrote to clients: "We expect increased investor focus on ESG considerations after Covid-19, with particular demand for greater corporate transparency and stakeholder accountability. (...) The crisis underscores the relevance of ESG considerations to company performance and investment returns, and we expect that this will continue to influence corporate and investor actions going forward." Companies are already taking action, and the investment bank confirmed that seven out of ten of their corporate clients are "implementing or revising a sustainability strategy."

IT'S NOT ABOUT PET PROJECTS

One of the most important things to remember with corporate CSR is that it's not about sponsoring pet projects. Maybe the CEO loves rugby, but is that a good enough reason to support a local club and call it CSR? Does rugby have anything to do with what the company does? Will the support have any impact on how the company is perceived? If there is no clear link between the main bread and butter of a company and their CSR plan, then what is the point? Selflessly supporting projects is laudable, but should not be wholly independent from brand development plans.

An effective CSR campaign in Latin America should have a clear link to some aspect of a company's main activities, and reach as many people as possible, both in terms of impact and exposure.

Latin American customers don't want companies to merely donate to charity and call it a day, thinking the job is done. They value long term commitment to the issues which they see as important

Photo: SDI Productions/iStock

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Once a company has selected a social or environmental project that suits their profile, and begins to engage and see positive results, it is important to make sure that people know about it.

Engagement on social media, news websites and on TV should be prioritized, as these are the sources which Latin Americans told us they favour when looking for trustworthy information.

Communication is key, and it is vital to have the right voice. Reacting to what people in each market have told us, we know how to reach them on the platforms they trust. Get some experts to talk about the real impact of CSR engagement, and make sure to get journalists on board. And forget about politicians - no-one trusts them!

A Sherlock Communications Latin America media consumption report published in 2021 highlighted similar trends - politicians were the least trusted source of information in Latin America, while scientists were held in the highest regard.

EMPLOYEE BUY-IN

Corporate social responsibility impacts staff morale, and Latin Americans told us that they trust the word of employees over that of CEOs. A LinkedIn study published in 2018 found that 71% of professionals would actually work for lower wages if it meant being employed by a firm that shares their values, and a mission they believe in. Nearly half of employees said they were proud to work at companies that have a positive impact on society, while 39% said they would leave their job over an ethical conflict. While the LinkedIn study was based on US data, our research suggests that Latin Americans are equally concerned about workplace ethics - after all, they told us that what they valued most in CSR was ‘paying people fairly and making sure they have a good life’, and ‘making and selling things in a way that does not damage the environment’.

Photo: drobotdean/Freepik

A LinkedIn study published in 2018 found that 71% of professionals would actually work for lower wages if it meant being employed by a firm that shares their values, and a mission they believe in.

DIVERSE VOICES

The Sherlock Communications CSR survey results illustrate that diversity is important for Latin Americans, with respondents telling us that they want to see more diverse voices in corporate messaging and communications. Furthermore, one in five people said they trust what influencers tell them, while half of the people we spoke to said they trust what company employees have to say when it comes to CSR.

> “diverse companies are more innovative, collaborative and profitable than their non-diverse peers”

Rather than engaging diverse voices in specific campaigns for the sake of good optics, companies should seek to employ people from diverse backgrounds in the region. A study published in 2020 by McKinsey showed that “diverse companies are more innovative, collaborative and profitable than their non-diverse peers”. It found that a commitment to diversity had a strong correlation with positive business outcomes, and that “employees in companies perceived as diversity-committed are 111% more likely to report that they can be themselves at work, which likely empowers them to participate and contribute.” Employees in diverse companies are 152% more likely to propose new ideas and try new ways of doing things.

In fact, the report showed that Latin American companies with gender-diverse executive teams are 14% more likely to outperform their industry counterparts, and companies whose employees perceive them as gender diverse are 93% more likely to surpass the financial performance of market peers.

Falabella, a Chilean department store giant with more than 500 stores across Latin America, has a well developed sustainability strategy which, as well as using recycled cotton and polyester, includes a commitment to ‘diversity and inclusion’. Their site outlines respect for the person as one of their fundamental values. “We value and protect the diversity of race, color, sex, marital status, association, religion, sexual orientation or social origin. (...) we promote a collaborative and inclusive work environment, based on the dignity of people, trust and mutual respect.”

Photos: Prostock-Studio/iStock, marketing Falabella

FIGHTING RACIAL INEQUALITY

Racial inequality was an issue which one of two Brazilian respondents said they want companies to combat through their CSR actions. In a country where more than half of the population identifies as black or brown (‘*pardo*’ in Portuguese), the issue of racism and racial inequality is heavily featured in the media.

In a recently published Sherlock Communications ebook examining media representation of excluded groups in Latin America, Daiene Mendes, director of an online news portal *Favela em Pauta,* said racial inequality was a major issue. “Historically in Brazil, we see the exclusion of black and poor people from society, even down to the basic right of access to education.” Some companies are working to address this.

According to research published in 2018 by Institute Locomotiva on behalf of Brazilian entity Feira Preta, the *‘pardo’* population spends BRL $1.7 trillion (around USD $331.3 billion) on an annual basis. The study revealed that the *pardo* population will pay up to 20% more on products that value afro culture. Also, 72% of those surveyed said the people that appear in advertising are not like them, and 83% said they wanted companies to listen to them.

Magazine Luiza, a major online trader, launched a trainee programme last year exclusively for black staff - leading to both widespread support and criticism, and a great deal of brand exposure. While 53% of the company’s 3,000+ workforce identify as black or pardo, they only make up 16% of managerial roles. Company president Frederico Trajano said: “We want to solve a problem that we know we have. We are being honest about the need to change a reality which we helped to create. We are responsible for who we select and who we promote.”

Photos: monkeybusinessimages/iStock, marketing Magazine Luiza

REFORESTING LATIN AMERICA

41% of Latin Americans told us that they wanted companies to get involved in the fight against deforestation. Chile's '*Fundación Reforestemos*' works to restore areas devastated by fires, and areas of high ecological value in the country. The environmental project is supported by a wide range of companies, including Coca Cola, Uber, Samsonite, Latam, Reebok, Natura, and DHL, as well as government bodies, universities and banks.

Faber-Castell, the international pencil company, started planting forests in Minas Gerais, Brazil, more than 35 years ago, on the initiative of CEO Count Anton-Wolfgang von Faber-Castell. More than 10,000 hectares of certified forest supply the company's factory in São Carlos, producing over two billion pencils per year. The forests absorb more carbon than the company emits worldwide.

ENGAGING WITH LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Sherlock Communications works with a range of social initiatives across Latin America, and our award-winning team provides pro-bono work to many social and environmental projects which are very close to our heart. We always recommend that our international clients engage in some level of corporate social responsibility, not just as a means of raising brand awareness in Latin American markets, and subsequently raising their profile and profit margins, but also as a way of giving something back to society.

Latin America is one of the most unequal regions in the world, and international companies should be willing to make a real, conscious effort to engage and offer genuine solutions to some of the issues that matter to the people living here.

BanQi, a fintech company that offers virtual payment systems, partnered with NGO *Novos Líderes Empreendedores* (New Entrepreneurial Leaders) in Rocinha, one of the largest *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to offer entrepreneurship classes to people in the community aged between 25 and 40. They later ran a competition, 'Shark Tank Rocinha' that attracted 25 local business owners based in the *favela* community. The NGO was a perfect fit for our client, and the initiative benefited lots of people while helping to create a positive popular image for the company as it developed its brand in Latin America.

Photo: marketing Faber Castell

CSR IN A POST-PANDEMIC LATIN AMERICA

Corporate social responsibility will become more important than ever as Latin America slowly emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. Education was the main issue for people we spoke to across the region. They want companies to engage in education as part of their CSR actions. Latin Americans have good reason to be worried about education, as the pandemic reversed much of the progress made in this area in recent decades. Hundreds of thousands of children went without classes for months on end, for a variety of reasons, and many will struggle to catch up. Latin American students lost more school time, on average, than children in other regions. UNICEF labeled a “generational catastrophe” the fact that more than 3 million may never return to school. In Colombia university drop-out rates of up to 50% were projected during the pandemic.

Latin America is one of the most wonderful regions in the world, and efficient CSR is win-win. Customers have told us what they want, and what issues are most important to them. They have made it clear that they will think more highly of brands as a result of corporate social and environmental actions. It is time to pay attention, and make sure that corporate CSR is focused on ethics, not optics.

Photo: Freepik

Education was the main issue for people we spoke to across the region

Sherlock Communications (www.sherlockcomms.com) is a public relations and digital marketing agency that has won several awards in Latin America. Headquartered in São Paulo, the company also has offices in Lima, Bogota, Santiago, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, San José, Panama City and Guatemala City. **With a multidisciplinary and fully bilingual team**, our mission is to help companies bridge the commercial and cultural gap between Latin American and foreign markets.

The agency won and was highly recommended for more than 55 global awards in the past two years, including **Best Agency in LATAM and Best Campaign in LATAM for the PRWeek Global Awards. Sherlock Communications** was also named by The Holmes Report's Creative Index 2019 as the second most creative agency in the world and the **most creative in Latin America.**

For more information please send an email to contact@sherlockcomms.com

Managing Partner Patrick O'Neill | **Project Manager** Amanda Boucault | **Project Assistants** Danielle Cameira and Fabiana Moreno Rosa | **Research Manager** Justin Axel-Berg
Content Curation and Writer Sarah O'Sullivan | **Creative Design** Producer Rosy MacQueen | **Creative Design Assistant** Érica Duarte