



The Open Think  
Tank Directory

# Regional Brief Americas

On Think Tanks

February 2022

Think Tank State of the Sector

2020–2021

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# The Open Think Tank Directory

The Open Think Tank Directory (OTTD) was created to overcome the shortage of publicly available information about think tanks and other policy research centres and expertise bodies worldwide. On Think Tanks builds and maintains it with the aim of offering a public and open database that benefits the entire evidence-informed-policy community. Through it, centres can identify potential collaborators and connect with peers, funders and others; for the body of scholars who study think tanks, the directory provides a sample frame for their investigations; interested people can browse the profiles of think tanks and also get an overview of the sector; and funders can identify organisations that focus on their agendas. The database is downloadable through this link, which helps increase the sector's transparency.

Defining which organisations are to be included is a difficult task, as think tanks themselves are difficult to define. In the Open Think Tank Directory, we have defined think tanks as a diverse group of knowledge and engagement organisations that have as their (main) objective to undertake research, generate knowledge and use evidence-informed arguments to inform and/or influence policy and its outcomes. To do this, they perform a range of functions, including undertaking research, aiming to influence the public agenda, monitoring how specific policies are carried out, suggesting or advocating for policy changes, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

The directory has been compiled and is updated using a mixed approach: web searches in Google; suggestions for inclusion by country and regional experts; think tanks' websites; and direct submission by or contact with think tanks. We have established a review criterion for transparency of the quality of the data and include the sources of the information in the profile of each organisation.

**The Open Think Tank Directory does not make any evaluations of the organisations it features.**

## Funding

The development and maintenance of the Open Think Tank Directory has been, and remains, possible thanks to many funders. It has been built based on contributions and grants from: The Open Society Foundations, the Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Latin America from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., UNICEF's Office of Research-Innocenti, Robert Bosch, USAID, and most importantly our grant from the Hewlett Foundation that makes the management, improvement, update and analysis of the Open Think Tank Directory possible.

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<sup>1</sup> See [FAQs](#) for more on inclusion criteria.

# Introduction

The regional briefs are companion reports to the Think Tank State of the Sector 2020–2021 report. They aim to provide a more nuanced look at the think tank sector in each continent and the subregions within it. This report is based on an analysis of 2020 and 2021 data from 962 active think tanks,<sup>2</sup> and it aims to describe (but not explain) the think tank sector in the Americas, and within it USA & Canada and Latin America & the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup>

## This regional brief provides an overview of:

- How many organisations from the Americas feature in the OTTD?
- When were think tanks in the Americas founded?
- Which topics do American think tanks mostly focus on?
- What is the most common business model for think tanks in the Americas?
- What is the turnover of American think tanks?
- How much do American think tanks publish?
- What is the staff size in American think tanks?
- Who founds American think tanks?
- How many men and women lead American think tanks?
- Which social media channels do American think tanks use?
- List of think tanks in the region.

We hope this overview helps further understanding of the think tank sector in the Americas and that it inspires others to explore the data further.

## Data quality

As in the main report, and given the nature of the methodology and the data available, the findings are representative at the sample level. The report is not a complete sector analysis, but an analysis of the sample of think tanks that the Open Think Tank Directory holds.

The data featured in the OTTD depends on the information that organisations offer on their websites, and in some cases information they themselves have offered. The information that think tanks provide on their websites varies greatly;<sup>4</sup> some offer little more than a short description, while others display great detail. Because of this, sourcing and completing data for each organisation is difficult and the data completeness by variables between regions are wide ranging.

<sup>2</sup> It does not include organisations that featured in the directory but that are defunct or deemed boundary. The cut-off date for inclusion in the report was August 2021. Organisations registered after this date have not been included in the analysis.

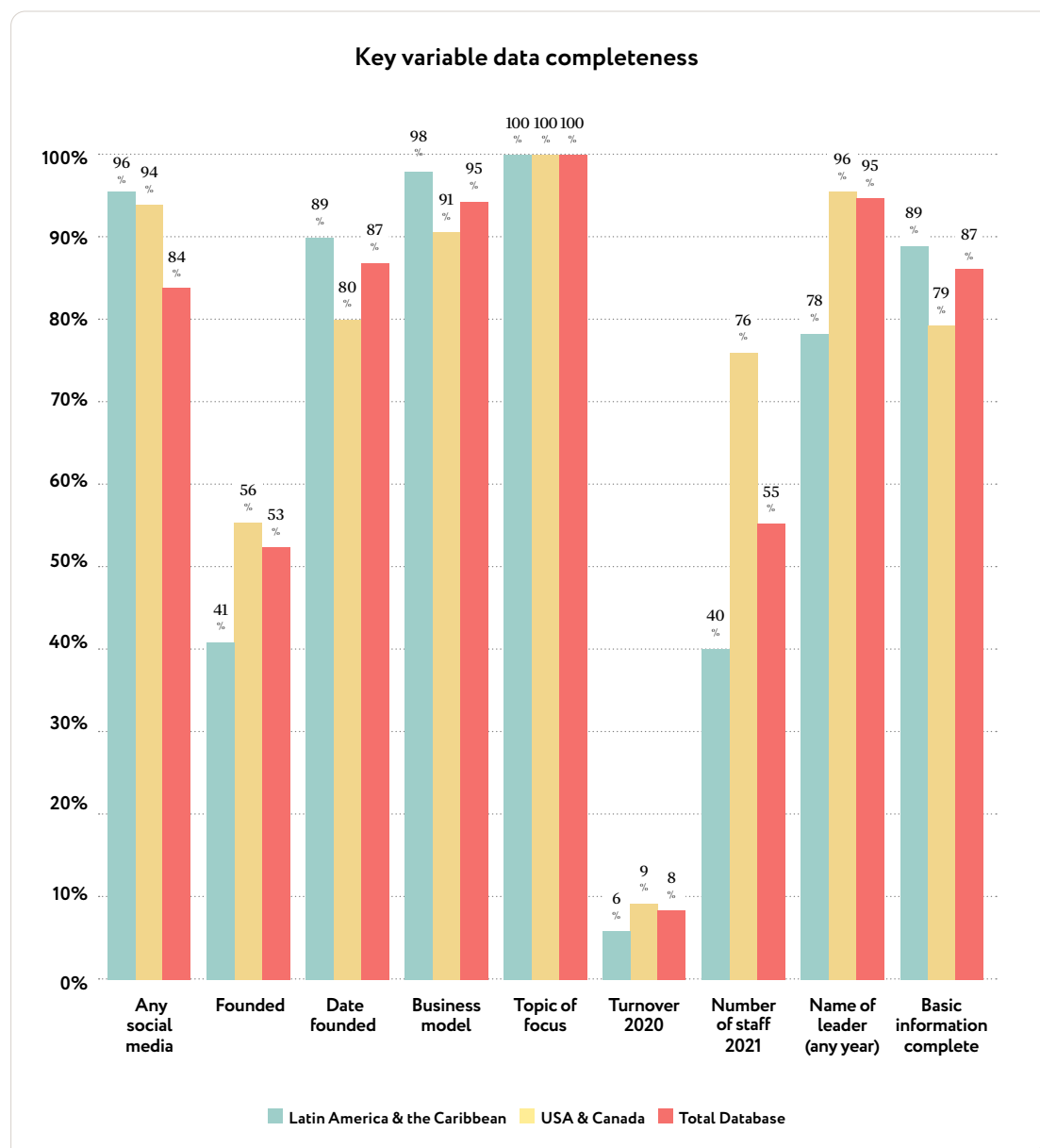
<sup>3</sup> Click [here for the database](#) used for the analysis and report.

<sup>4</sup> For more on differences on the information offered by think tanks on their websites see our article [‘What we learned from looking at more than 3000 websites’](#).

Chart 1 shows the overall data completeness. Turnover information is the variable with the least data available, across the world, but we found it even more difficult to source turnover data in Latin America & the Caribbean. As very few think tanks share this information on their website, most turnover data from this subregion was submitted directly by the think tanks in response to our consultation. USA & Canada do share more information online, but not all of it is easily accessible and fieldwork issues precluded us from sourcing it.

Another differences from world patterns is the disclosure of founder names, the number of staff and the names of leaders, with USA & Canada being more open about publicly displaying this data compared to think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean.

Chart 1.

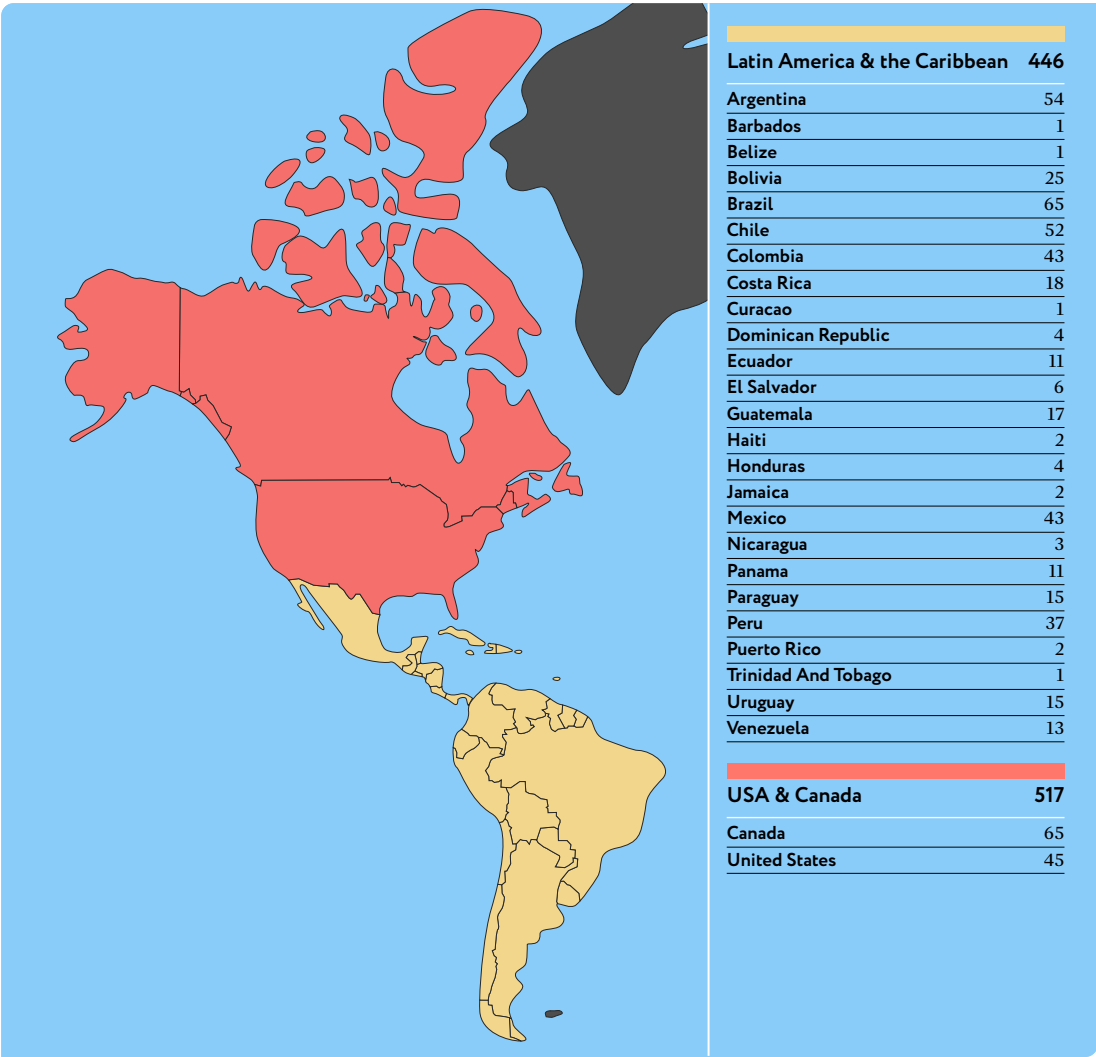


n. Latin America & the Caribbean 445; USA & Canada 517; world 3,107

# How many organisations feature in the OTTD?

The Open Think Tank Directory features 962 think tanks from the Americas, which constitutes 31% of the think tanks in the database. These 962 think tanks are further subdivided into Latin America & the Caribbean (14% of the database) and USA & Canada (17% of the database) (see Image 1). But most of the think tanks in the Americas are in the United States, which, with 452 organisations, is the country with the most think tanks in the whole database. Among the 25 countries in Latin America & the Caribbean included in the database, most are in Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

Image 1: Number of think tanks per country



note: If a country is not listed, it means that there are no think tanks registered in the Open Think Tank Directory under that country.

# When were think tanks in the Americas founded?

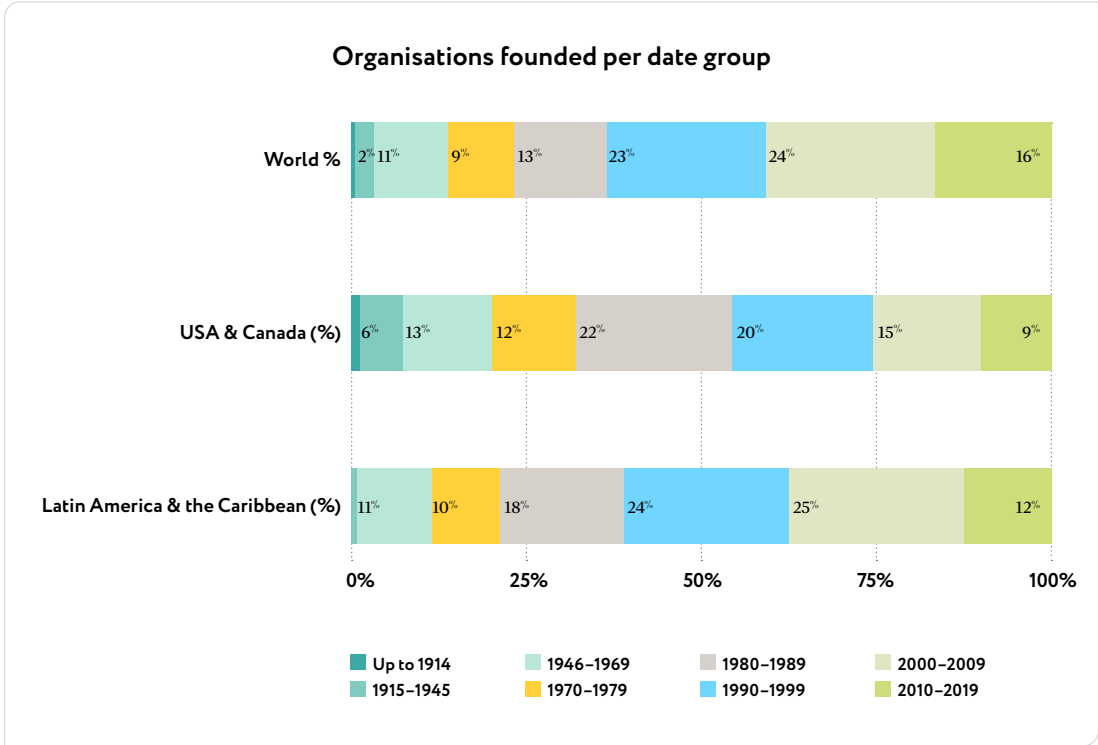
Image 2: Average think tank age by region



The average age of think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean (29 years) is close to the world average (30), while USA & Canada have the oldest think tank age average (37) in the world (Image 2).

A closer look at when think tanks were founded (Chart 2) shows that Latin America & the Caribbean follows more closely the world trend, as most of its think tanks were established in the 1990s (24%) and 2000s (25%), while in USA & Canada most think tanks were established in 1980–1989 (22%) and 1990–1999 (20%); an additional 20% of its think tanks were founded before 1970, but this is primarily driven by the United States.

Chart 2.



n: Latin America & the Caribbean 398; USA & Canada 409; world 2,692  
 note: Organisations founded from 2020 onwards are not shown as their number is very low (19 in total).

## Which topics do think tanks mostly focus on?

The key topics that are most favoured worldwide (social policy, governance/transparency and trade/economics/finance) are also the top four most researched topics across the Americas (Charts 3 and 4). Think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean favour the topics of environment/natural resources/energy (52%), social policy (46%), governance/transparency (40%) and law/justice/human rights (40%). Think tanks in USA & Canada are primarily interested in trade/economics/finance (42%), followed by environment/natural resources/energy (41%) and social policy (37%).

But there are more interesting differences when comparing with the rest-of-world averages (Chart 5). In Latin America & the Caribbean think tanks are less interested in trade/economics/finance, international affairs/development and defence/peace/security and much more interested in environment/natural resources/energy. On the contrary, organisations in the OTTD from USA & Canada are less interested in social policy and more interested in health issues.

Chart 3.

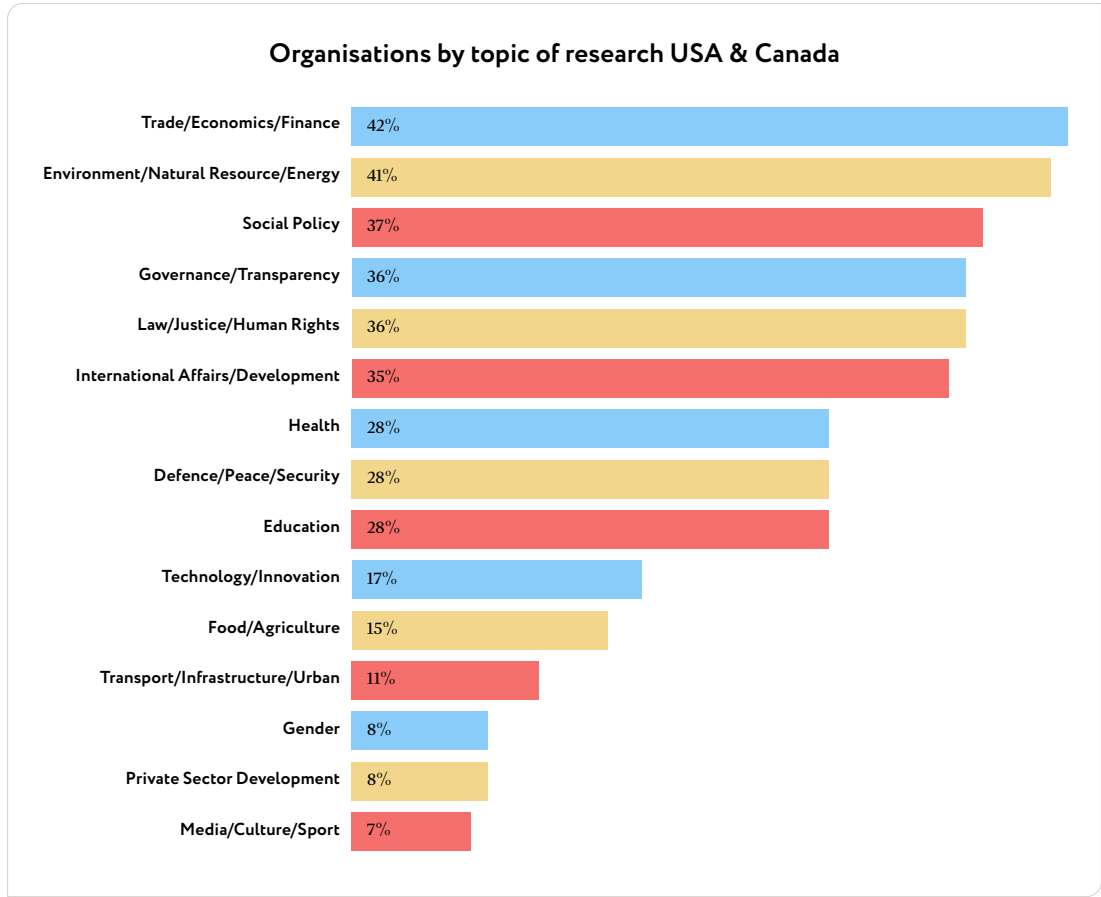


n: 445

note: Worldwide think tanks primarily focus on social policy (49%), trade/economics/finance (44%) and governance/transparency (44%).



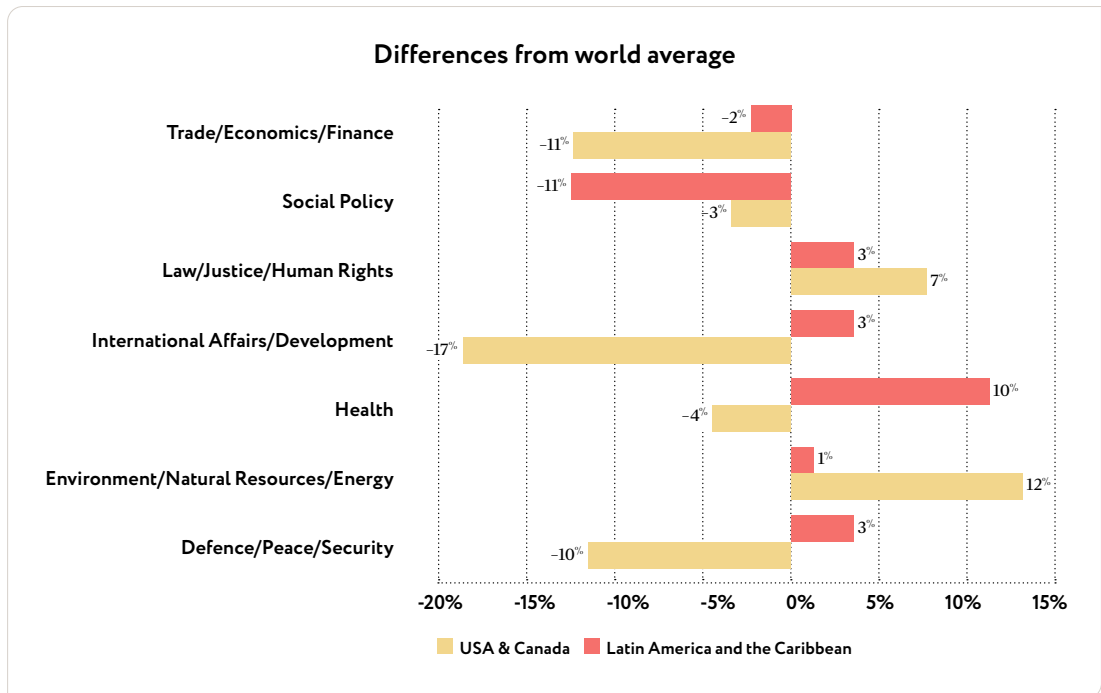
Chart 4.



n: 517

note: Worldwide think tanks primarily focus on social policy (49%), trade/economics/finance (44%) and governance/transparency (44%).

Chart 5.

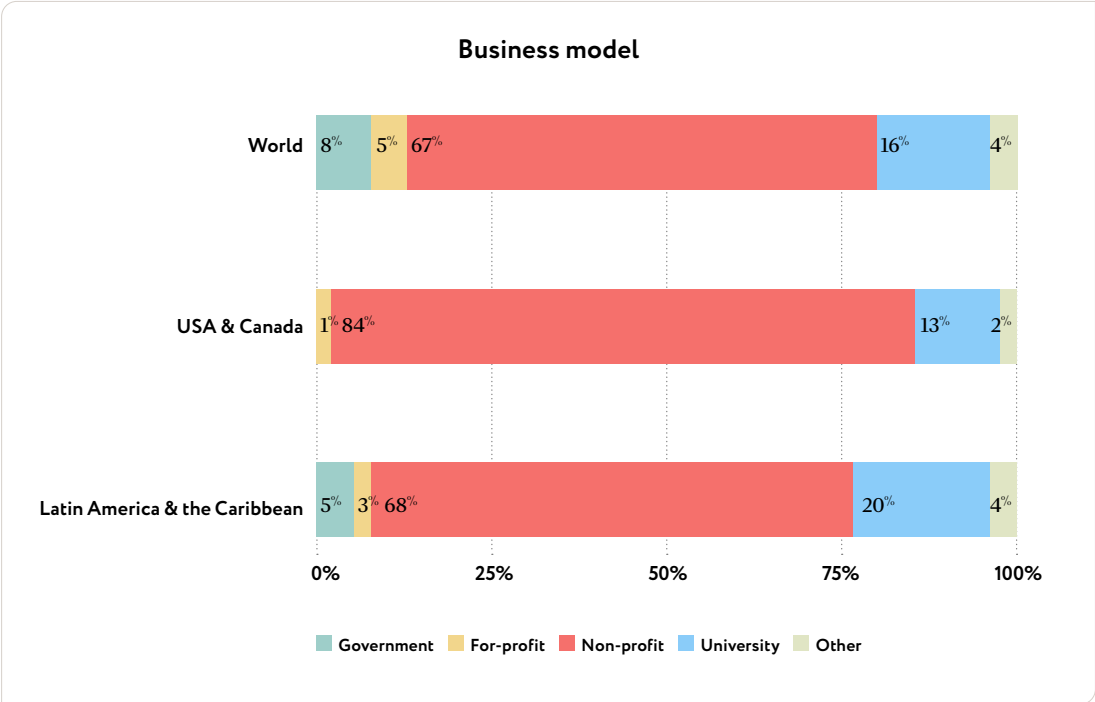


n: Latin America & the Caribbean 445; USA & Canada 517; world 3,107

# What is the most common business model?

Most of the think tanks in USA & Canada (84%) and Latin America & the Caribbean (68%) have a non-profit business model (consistent with the world trend, 67%), followed by university-affiliated think tanks. Latin America & the Caribbean has a higher percentage (in comparison to USA & Canada) of think tanks with university (20%) and government (5%) business models.

Chart 6.

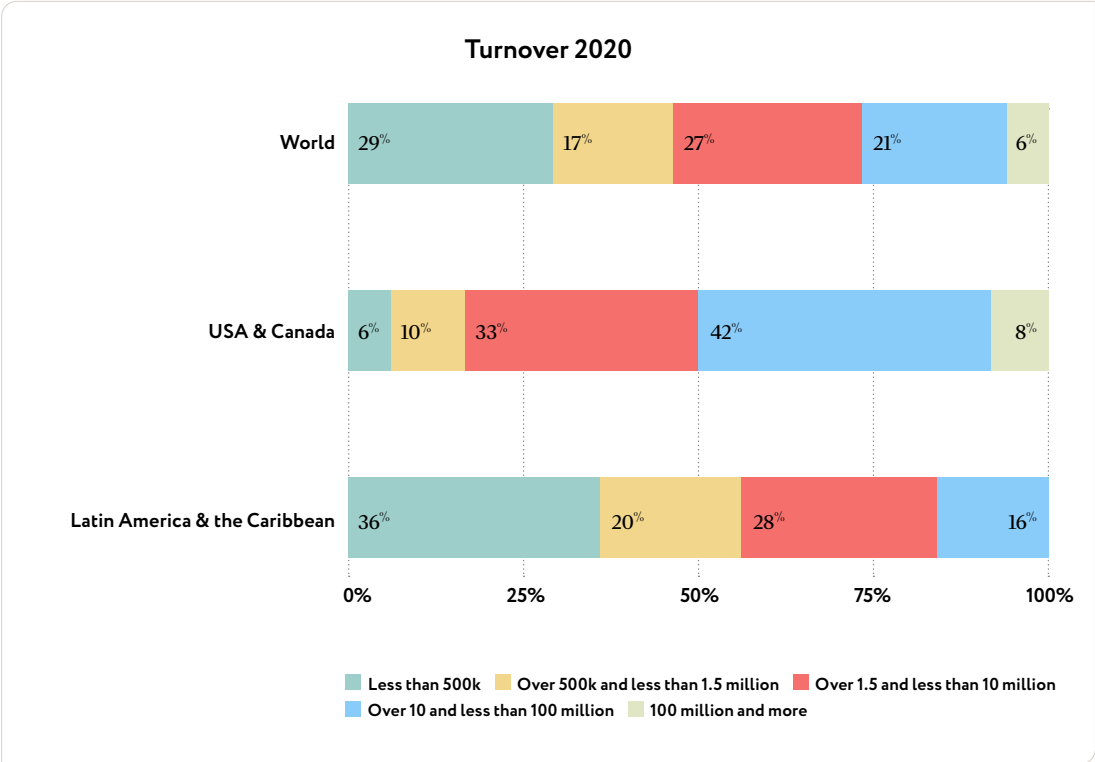


n: Latin America & the Caribbean 438; USA & Canada 469; world 2,819

# What is the turnover of think tanks?

Almost 30% of think tanks worldwide (in the database) have a turnover of less than USD 500,000. This trend is observed among think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean (36% turn over less than USD 500,000) but not in USA & Canada, where only 6% fall in this category. In general, think tanks from USA & Canada in the database have higher turnovers than the world average and much higher than their Latin America & Caribbean counterparts – 42% make over USD 10 million and less than USD 100 million and 33% over USD 1.5 million and less than USD 10 million. None of the think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean have a turnover higher than USD 100 million. But these results need to be read as overall trends and patterns to explore, because the number of organisations included is very low.

Chart 7.

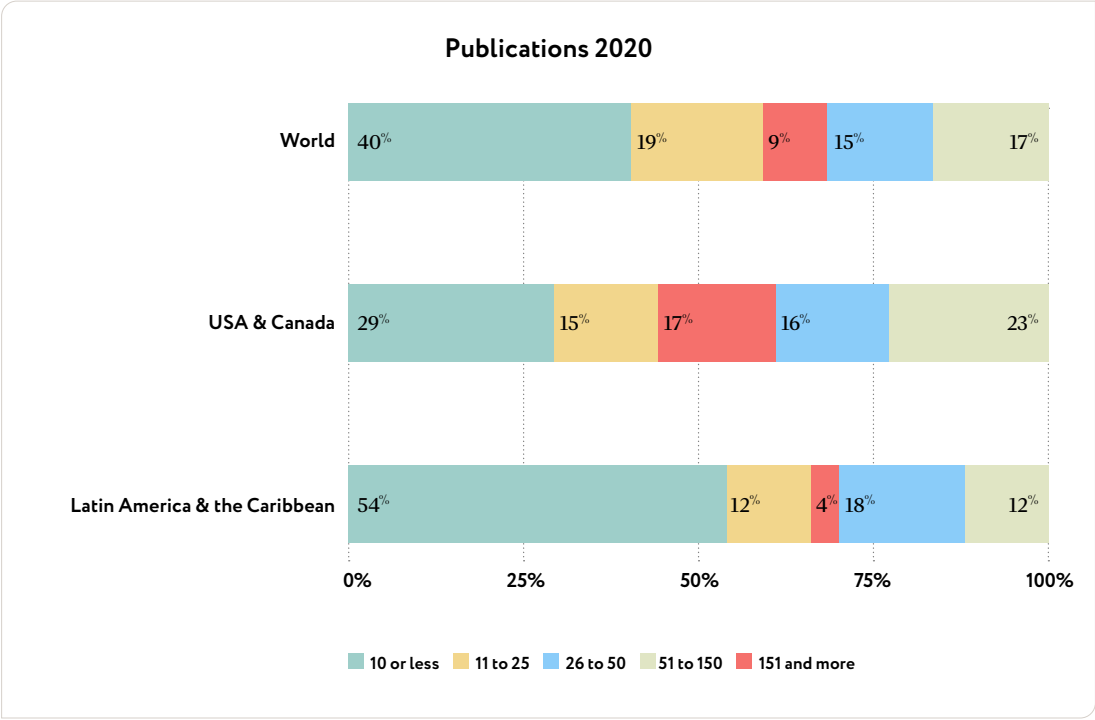


n: Latin America & the Caribbean 24; USA & Canada 48; world 263

# How much do think tanks publish?

Forty per cent of think tanks in the database released 10 or fewer publications in 2020; however, organisations in the Americas diverge from this trend in opposite ways. While a third of think tanks in USA & Canada (29%) released 10 or fewer publications in 2020, more than half of think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean (54%) fell into this category. Moreover, a higher percentage of think tanks in USA & Canada produced more than 50 publications (23%) compared to only 12% in Latin America & the Caribbean. But, as in the case of turnover, these results need to be read as overall trends and patterns to explore because the number of organisations included is very low.

Chart 8.



n: Latin America & Caribbean 50; USA & Canada 36; world 1,011

# What is the staff size?

The median staff size of both subregions is close to the world median staff size (Table 1). The median shows that USA & Canada has bigger think tanks compared to Latin America & the Caribbean, and to the world in general.

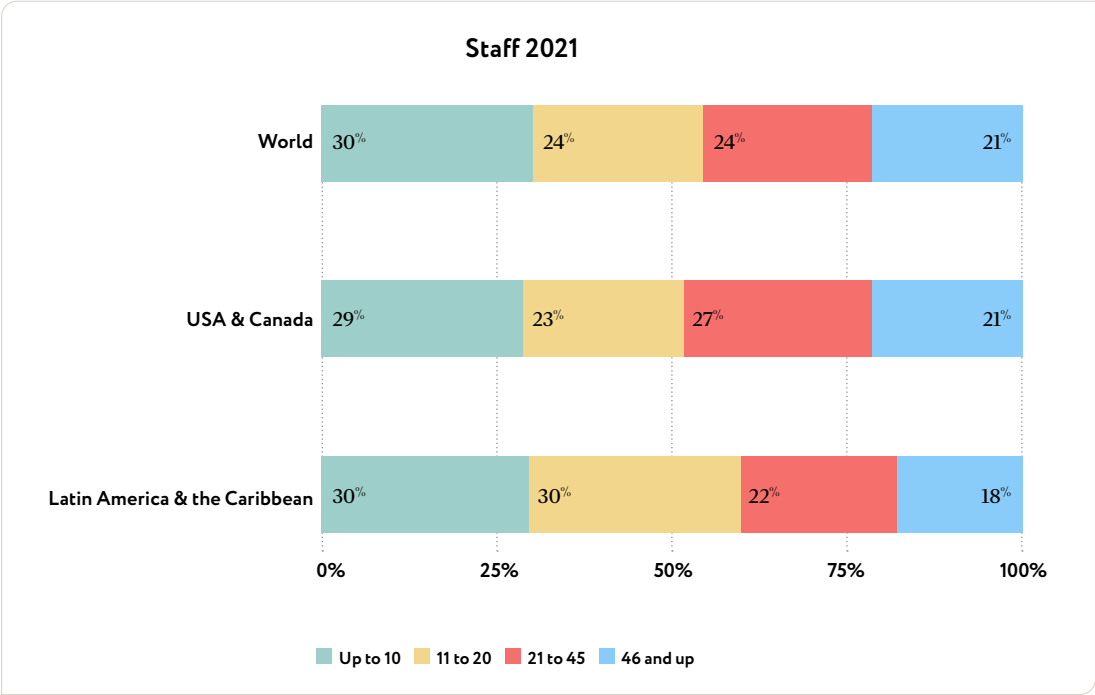
Table 1.

Median staff size	
Latin America & Caribbean	18
USA & Canada	20
World	18

*n*: Latin America & the Caribbean 175; USA & Canada 393; world 1,716

Consistent with the above, more think tanks in USA & Canada have teams with 46 or more members (21%) compared with Latin America & the Caribbean (18%). And although the differences are not large they are consistent across the categories established; think tanks in USA & Canada (and the world average in general as well) have larger teams than those in Latin America & the Caribbean, where more think tanks have smaller teams – up to 10 (30%) and 11 to 20 (30%).

Chart 9.



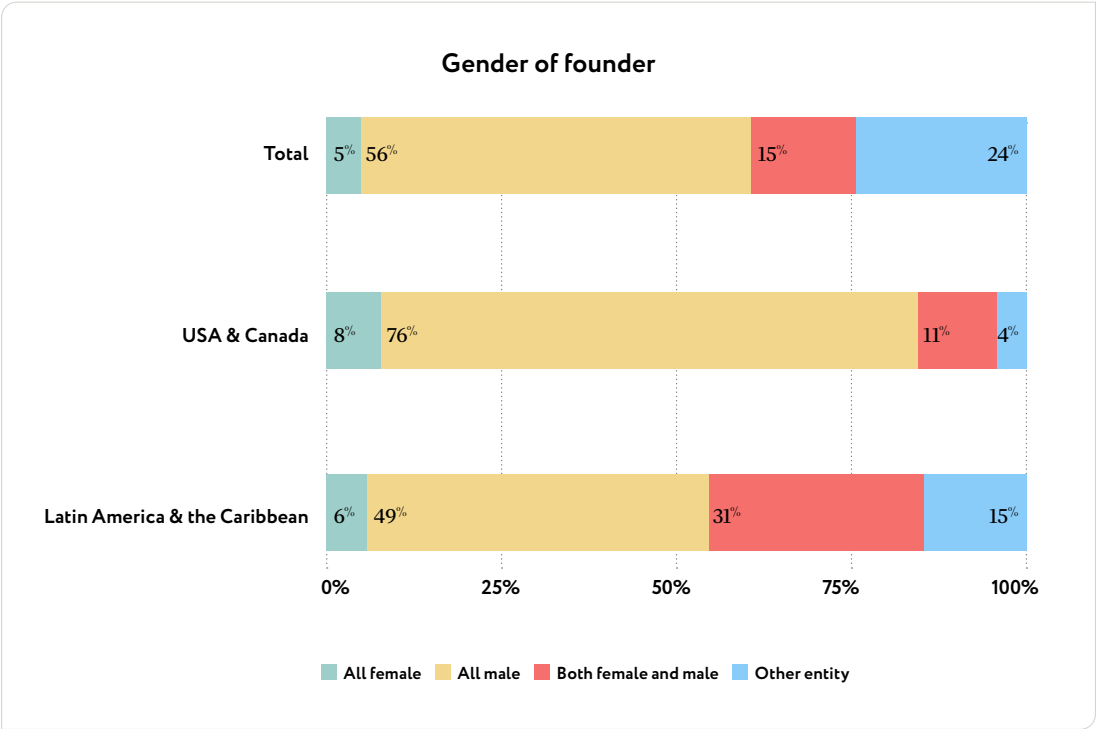
*n*: Latin America & Caribbean 175; USA & Canada 393; world 1,716

# Who founds think tanks?

The OTTD registers the name and gender of think tank founders, and it shows that most think tanks in the world were founded by only men (55%), followed by other entities (24%), a mix of male and female co-founders (15%) and only female founders (5%). However, this trend somewhat varies in the Americas. Most think tanks in the Americas as a whole were founded by males, but the percentage is higher in the USA & Canada (76%) and lower in Latin America & the Caribbean (49%). Latin America & the Caribbean also has a higher (than world average) percentage of think tanks founded by both men and women co-founders (31%) while the USA & Canada has a significantly smaller percentage of think tanks founded by other entities (4%).

The higher percentage of think tanks in USA & Canada founded by only men responds in part to the foundation date of the organisations: the USA & Canada sector is older, and women had less participation (politically, academically and in the overall workforce) when these older organisations were founded.

Chart 10.



n: Latin America & Caribbean 184; USA & Canada 288; world 1,633

Around 15% of think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean were founded by other entities. An analysis of the types of organisation that found think tanks in this region (Chart 11) shows that university founders are most common, with government-affiliated entities (29%) only coming in second, and interestingly there are a few founded by religious organisations, particularly the religious order Society of Jesus (founders of five think tanks).

Chart 11.

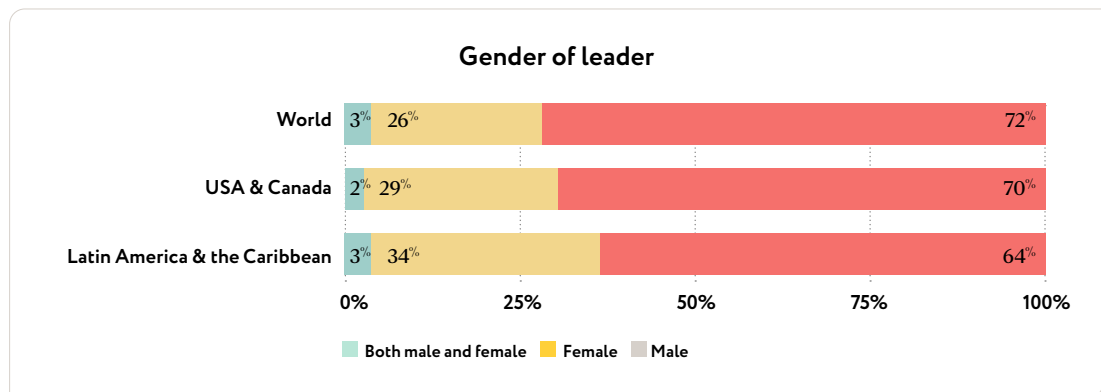


*n: Latin America & Caribbean 28; world 445*  
*note: USA & Canada not reported as the number is too low.*

# How many men and women lead think tanks?

The think tank sector has consistently been dominated by men worldwide (72% are led by men), and this is consistent with the findings in the Americas as shown in Chart 12. While Latin America & the Caribbean has more female-led think tanks (34%) than the USA & Canada (29%), both are higher than the world average (26%).

Chart 12.



*n*: Latin America & Caribbean 349; USA & Canada 493; world 2,624

When compared to the gender of the founder (Table 2), female-founded think tanks have a higher-than-average percentage of female leaders. As expected, male-founded think tanks continue to have male leaders across the Americas and in the world. However, think tanks with a mix of male and female co-founders tend to have more female leadership in both the Americas and the world. Lastly, among think tanks that were founded by other entities, females tend to hold leadership positions in USA & Canada, but the opposite is true for think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean.

Table 2.

Gender of founder by gender of leader									
Gender of founder	Latest leader gender								
	Latin America & Caribbean			USA & Canada			World		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
All female	13%	1%	5%	19%	3%	7%	14%	2%	5%
All male	38%	55%	49%	58%	85%	78%	40%	63%	57%
Both male and female founders	43%	27%	33%	13%	10%	11%	24%	12%	15%
Other entities	6%	17%	13%	9%	3%	4%	22%	23%	23%

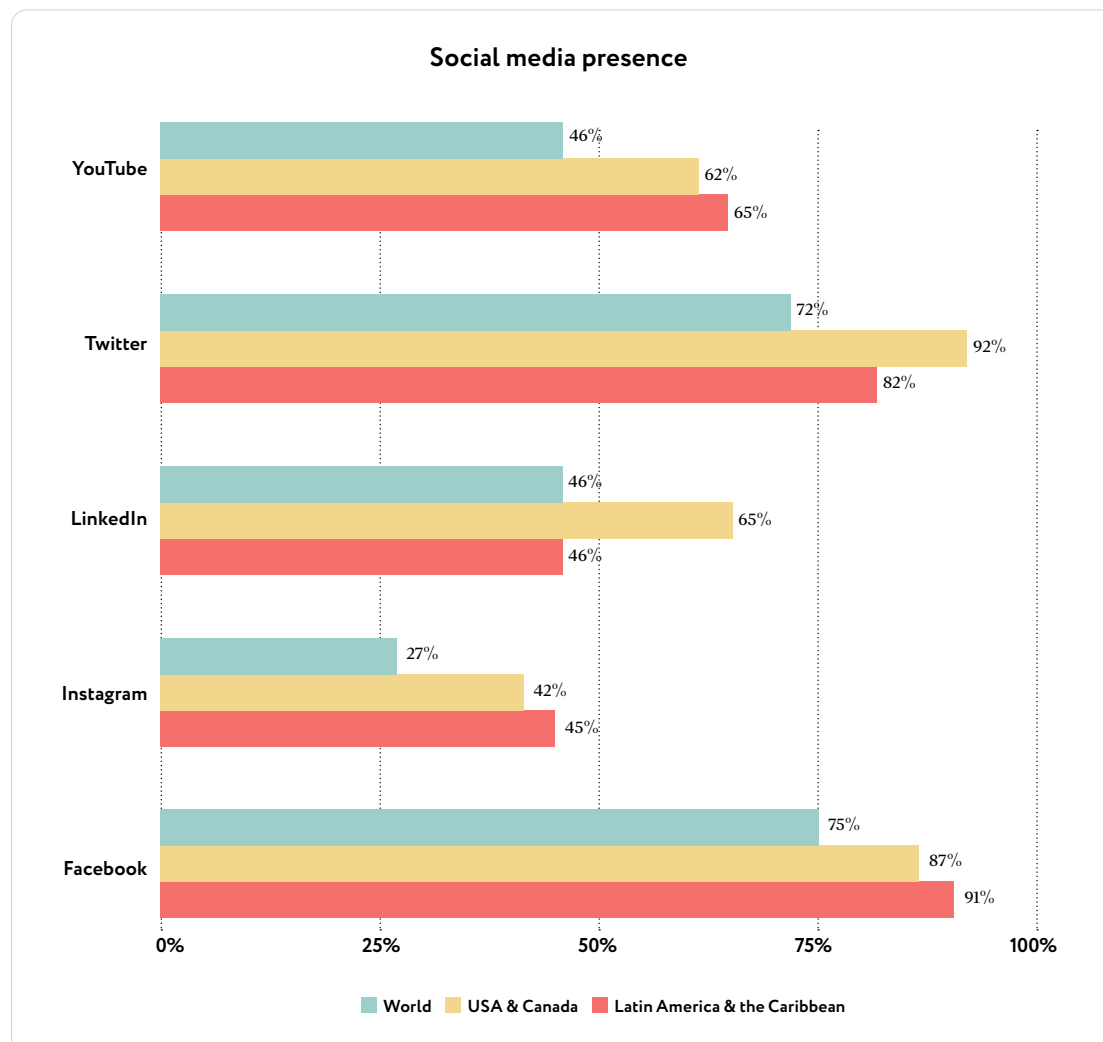
*n*: Latin America & Caribbean 160; USA & Canada 280; world 1,463



## Which social media channels do think tanks use?

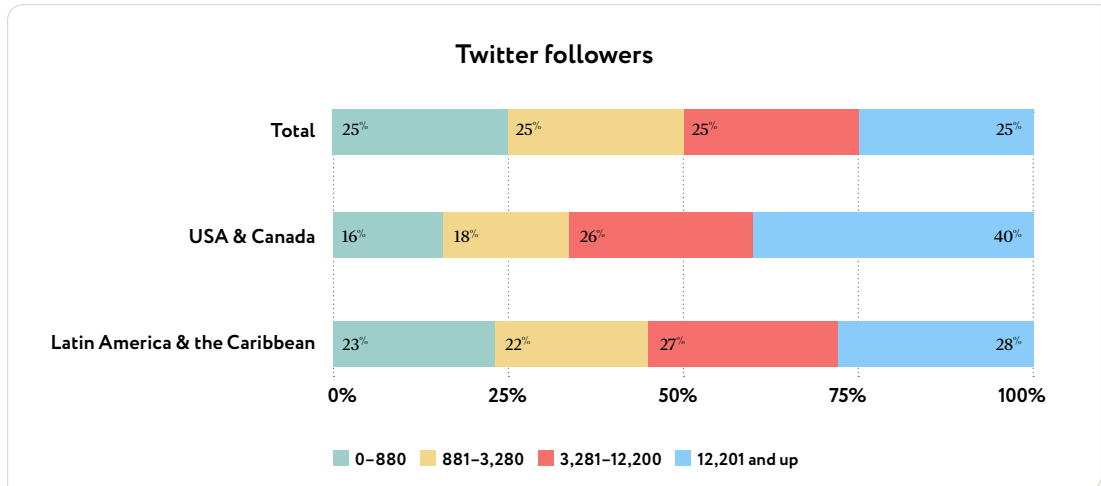
Most think tanks in USA & Canada use Twitter (92%), followed by Facebook (87%) and LinkedIn (65%), while most think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean use Facebook (91%), followed by Twitter (82%) and YouTube (65%). Instagram usage is lowest in both these subregions and in the world.

Chart 13.



With USA & Canada being the larger user of Twitter out of the two subregions, its think tanks have the highest numbers of followers (12,201 and up) (40%) and a median follower size of 8,038 compared to a median follower size of 4,044 in Latin America & the Caribbean. Both subregions though have a higher than world average median follower size (world median is 3,272).

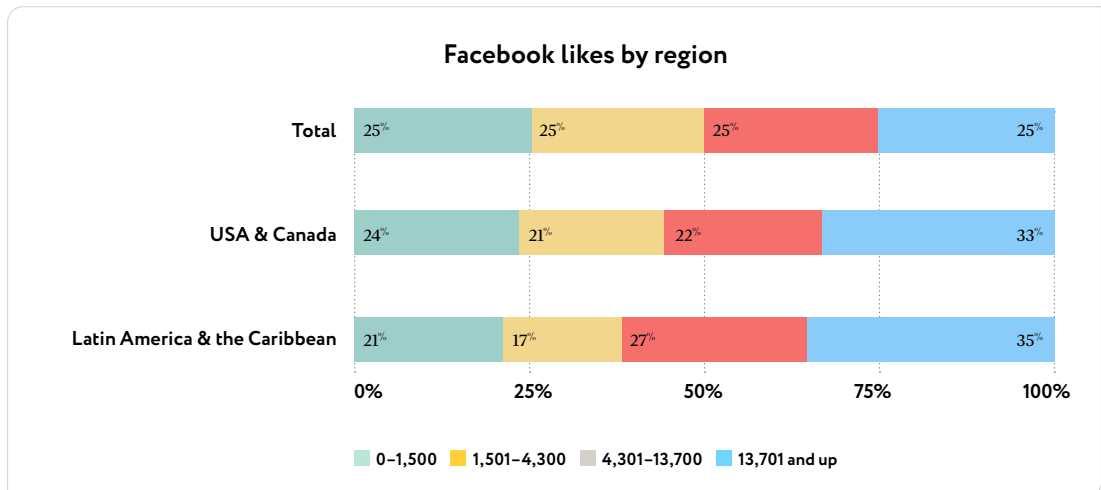
Chart 14.



n: Latin America & Caribbean 353; USA & Canada 465; world 2,156

Think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean have a stronger presence on Facebook than think tanks in USA & Canada, evidenced by their higher count of likes. Thirty-five per cent of think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean have more than 13,701 likes, followed closely by USA & Canada with 33% of its think tanks falling into this category. Meanwhile, the median number of likes for think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean is 7,787 compared to 5,560 in USA & Canada. Both regions have a higher than world average median number of likes (world median is 4,236).

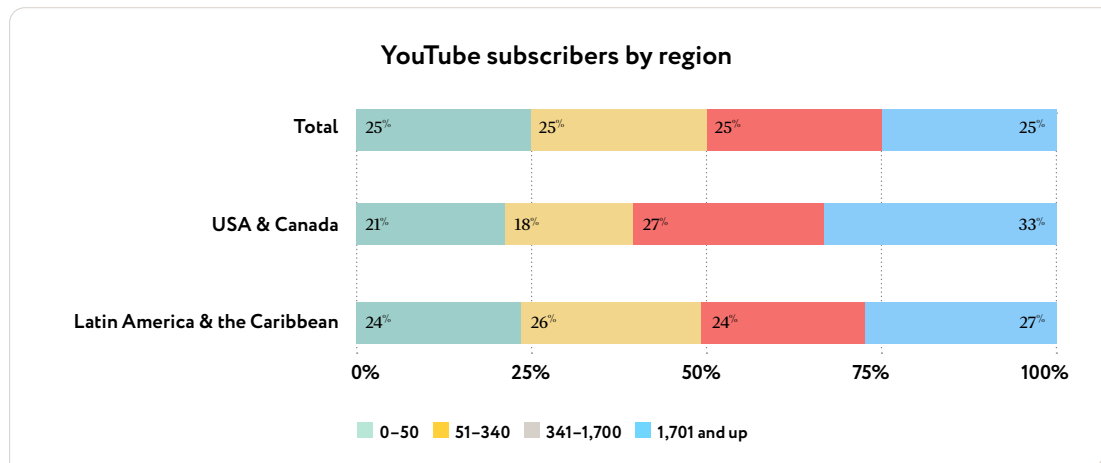
Chart 15.



n: Latin America & Caribbean 339; USA & Canada 449; world 2,304

More think tanks in Latin America & the Caribbean (relative to USA & Canada) have a YouTube account. However, think tanks in USA & Canada that do have an account tend to have more subscribers (1,701 and up, 33% of think tanks with an account), post more videos (median = 166) and receive more views (median = 144,127). On the other hand, 27% of think tanks with YouTube accounts in Latin America & the Caribbean have more than 1,700 subscribers, post fewer videos (median = 105), and receive fewer views (median = 49,179).

Chart 16.



*n*: Latin America & Caribbean 288; USA & Canada 318; world 1,437

# List of think tanks – Americas

Click on each country to take you to the list of all organisations from the Americas included in the Open Think Tank Directory.

## Latin America & The Caribbean

- Argentina
- Barbados
- Belize
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Curacao
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Puerto Rico
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

## USA & Canada

- Canada
- United States of America



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