ZYCUS

Latin American Procurement: Eight Markets, One Opportunity

What regional and global research reveals about where enterprise procurement stands on AI readiness across Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Argentina, and the broader region.

14%

of global AI tool visits originate from Latin America

1.12%

of global AI investment reaches the region a 6x gap

15%

average logistics cost-to-serve ratio vs global best-practice target

ZYCUS POINT OF VIEW - LATIN AMERICA - 2026

A note on Latin America from Zycus

THE CALLOUT

Latin America accounts for 14% of global AI tool visits — but only 1.12% of global AI investment. The region is consuming AI faster than it is building the infrastructure to govern it. For procurement, that gap is both the challenge and the opportunity.

Procurement technology markets move in waves.

A disruption forces the function into visibility, investment follows — and then, usually 18 to 24 months later, the gap between what was adopted and what was actually built becomes apparent. Latin America is at that second moment now, at scale, across multiple economies simultaneously.

This is where Zycus focuses in the region — and Latin America is a market we take seriously for specific reasons. The enterprise base in Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Argentina is more sophisticated than it is often credited for. Large manufacturing, retail, financial services, and energy conglomerates in these markets manage significant spend with procurement functions that are structurally lean and under-automated relative to global peers. That gap makes the efficiency argument for agentic AI sharper, and the governance argument more urgent.

We also recognize, deliberately and specifically, that Latin America is not one market.

- Mexico's procurement priorities are shaped by nearshoring and USMCA supply chain complexity.
- Colombia's are shaped by rapid digital adoption and a growing BPO and logistics intelligence sector.
- Chile's are shaped by a sophisticated regulatory environment and resource extraction supply chains.
- Peru and Argentina operate in contexts of economic volatility that make real-time procurement intelligence — not just cost reduction — a survival capability.
- Guatemala and Central America are earlier on the maturity curve, but their enterprise sectors are moving faster than the regional benchmarks suggest.

This point of view focuses on the eight Spanish-speaking markets where Zycus sees the sharpest near-term demand. Brazil, the region's largest and most AI-mature economy, operates as a distinct Portuguese-language market with its own regulatory and procurement dynamics, and warrants a dedicated point of view rather than inclusion in a Spanish Latin American procurement synthesis.

The research in this report — drawn from ECLAC/CENIA's Latin American AI Index 2025, Deloitte's Global CPO Survey, ProcureCon's 2026 CPO Report, and global benchmarks from Hackett and McKinsey — does not fully capture this nuance. We have tried to. The country context page in this report is our attempt to give procurement leaders in each market a starting point that reflects their reality, not a Latin American average that reflects no one's.

The five capability gaps and six actions that follow are grounded in that reading. The research validates them. What happens next is yours to decide.

Latin America is not one region. It is eight distinct procurement realities.

The most common error in Latin American market strategies is treating the region as a single audience. The research aggregates are real — ECLAC's AI Index covers 19 countries, and the headline finding (14% of global AI visits, 1.12% of global AI investment) is accurate at the regional level. But the gap between Brazil's sophisticated AI ecosystem (the regional frontier, and the subject of a separate Zycus point of view), Mexico's nearshoring-driven supply chain transformation, and Guatemala's emerging digital infrastructure is not a gap in degree. It is a gap in kind. Each market has distinct procurement drivers, enterprise structures, regulatory contexts, and AI readiness profiles that require a differentiated approach.

The cards below synthesize what the available data tells us about eight Spanish-speaking markets that are primary focus areas for Zycus in Latin America. ILIA maturity tiers (Pioneer / Adopter / Explorer) are sourced directly from ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025.

MEXICO	COLOMBIA	CHILE	PERU
GDP: \$1.86T (2025) **AI Maturity:** Adopter **(ILIA Adopter)**	**GDP:** \$363B (2025) **AI Maturity:** Adopter **(ILIA Adopter)**	**GDP:** \$340B (2025) **AI Maturity:** Pioneer **(ILIA Pioneer)**	**GDP:** \$268B (2025) **AI Maturity:** Adopter **(ILIA Adopter)**
Procurement context: Nearshoring boom creating complex multi-tier supply chains. SAP adoption tripled 2024. Manufacturing-heavy, USMCA-driven.	**Procurement context:** BPO hub evolving into supply chain intelligence centre. Strong fintech. Growing mid-market enterprise procurement.	**Procurement context:** Most advanced regulatory and governance environment in region. Resource extraction (mining, agri) drives complex procurement.	**Procurement context:** Mining and agribusiness dominate. Economic volatility makes real-time procurement intelligence a business continuity tool.
AI signal: AI in logistics, manufacturing scheduling, and supplier risk. \$3.68B AI market. ERP modernisation accelerating.	**AI signal:** AI in logistics and predictive supply chain. Colombia/Mexico/Peru lead in AI citizen applications. Digital-first posture.	**AI signal:** Leads ILIA 2025 alongside Brazil/Uruguay. Strong data infrastructure. AI governance frameworks most mature in region.	**AI signal:** Progressing in AI literacy and national strategy. Significant infrastructure gaps outside Lima metropolitan area.

ARGENTINA	ECUADOR	GUATEMALA	URUGUAY
GDP: $621B (2025) **AI Maturity: Adopter** **(ILIA Adopter)**	**GDP:** $118B (2025) **AI Maturity: Adopter** **(ILIA Adopter)**	**GDP:** $103B (2025) **AI Maturity: Explorer** **(ILIA Explorer)**	**GDP:** $78B (2025) **AI Maturity: Pioneer** **(ILIA Pioneer)**
Procurement context: Sophisticated enterprise base. Economic volatility creates acute need for procurement agility and cost intelligence.	**Procurement context:** Rapidly advancing in connectivity and AI strategy per ILIA 2025. Government-driven digital transformation.	**Procurement context:** Central America's largest economy. Manufacturing, agribusiness, and retail growing. Less mature enterprise tech base.	**Procurement context:** ILIA 2025 Pioneer alongside Chile and Brazil. Small market but highest AI governance maturity per capita in region.
AI signal: Strong tech talent. AI adoption accelerating despite macro instability. Buenos Aires tech ecosystem growing rapidly.	**AI signal:** Classified as 'rapidly advancing' adopter by ECLAC. Connectivity improvements enabling enterprise digitization.	**AI signal:** Rapid progress in connectivity per ILIA 2025. Open-source AI adoption growing. SME digitization expanding.	**AI signal:** Leads in governance frameworks and digital infrastructure relative to GDP. Tech hub for regional HQs.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROCUREMENT TECHNOLOGY DECISIONS

A 'one Latin America' product strategy will underserve every market in the region. Mexico needs supply chain complexity management. Chile needs governance-grade AI infrastructure. Peru and Argentina need procurement intelligence as a stability tool. Guatemala and Ecuador need foundation building. The most effective Latin American procurement technology approach starts country-specific and builds regional coherence from there.

Source: ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025 (maturity tiers) · IMF World Economic Outlook 2025 (GDP) · IMARC/Mordor Intelligence (market data) · Mexico Business News 2026

Usage is surging. The infrastructure to govern it is not keeping pace.

Latin America is moving fast on AI. Faster, in some dimensions, than the global benchmarks would predict. ECLAC and CENIA's Latin American AI Index 2025 — the most comprehensive regional benchmark available, covering 19 countries across 100 sub-indicators — confirms that the region accounts for 14% of global AI tool visits despite representing only 11% of global internet users. Generative AI download rankings place the region third worldwide.

And yet the data reveals a structural pattern that directly shapes what procurement leaders can and cannot do with this technology. Adoption is broad and fast. The foundations underneath that adoption — investment, governance, talent, and infrastructure — are thin and unevenly distributed.

14%

of global AI tool visits from Latin America — despite 11% of internet users

ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025

1.12%

of global AI investment — vs 6.6% of global GDP. A 6x gap.

ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025

15%

average logistics cost-to-serve ratio in Latin America vs global best-practice target

Mexico Business News / GCSCM 2026

The ILIA 2025 talent findings are the most consequential for enterprise procurement specifically. Of 19 countries assessed, 13 do not generate early AI skills domestically, and 11 lack doctoral programmes in AI. The gap with the global average has widened since 2022, with accelerating loss of specialists. For procurement functions that depend on AI-literate category managers and data-ready operations teams, this is not a future problem. It is a present constraint.

> "Latin America is adopting AI dynamically — but faces critical gaps in talent, investment, and infrastructure. To transform AI into an engine of development, AI strategies must be integrated with sectoral productive development policies."
>
> *José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary, ECLAC · ILIA 2025 Launch*

At the enterprise level, the AI in Latin America Payments and E-Commerce report 2025 — covering Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru — confirms that while AI adoption now exceeds global averages in several functional areas, infrastructure limitations and workforce constraints continue to shape implementation trajectories. More than 40% of firms cite skill shortages and unclear ROI as primary barriers.

This is consistent with the global procurement benchmark: ProcureCon's 2026 CPO Report finds only 11% of North American procurement organisations fully AI-ready, with the same barriers — data quality, governance, and skills — appearing at the top of every survey.

THE LATIN AMERICAN PROCUREMENT MOMENT

The combination of nearshoring-driven supply chain complexity (Mexico), sophisticated logistics intelligence needs (Colombia), resource extraction supplier risk (Chile, Peru), and the macro pressure to do more with lean procurement teams (across the region) creates a genuine and near-term demand for agentic AI in procurement. The constraint is not appetite. It is the governance, data quality, and skills infrastructure to deploy it safely and at scale.

Sources: ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025 · AI in Latin America Payments & E-Commerce 2025 · ProcureCon CPO Report 2026 · Mexico Business News / GCSCM 2026

Global peers are scaling what Latin American enterprises are still piloting.

Global procurement research reveals a function actively deploying AI from pilot into production. Latin American data reveals a region where AI utilisation is broad but enterprise-grade deployment — governed, integrated, and outcome-oriented — remains the exception. The contrast is not one of ambition. It is one of the enabling infrastructure.

THE REGIONAL PRESSURE POINT UNIQUE TO LATIN AMERICAN

Latin America's average logistics cost-to-serve ratio is 15% — significantly above global best-practice benchmarks. The industry is now betting on agentic supply chains to close this gap. For procurement leaders in Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and Peru, this is not an abstract efficiency metric. It is a direct competitiveness gap that agentic procurement intelligence is specifically designed to address.

THEME	LATIN AMERICA FINDING	GLOBAL PROCUREMENT BENCHMARK
AI adoption vs readiness	14% of global AI visits but only 1.12% of global investment. High consumption, thin infrastructure. Explorer/Adopter majority in ILIA. ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025	43% of global organisations actively deploying AI-enabled technology — nearly double 2025 levels. HACKETT GROUP 2026
Talent gap	13 of 19 countries generate no early AI skills. 11 lack doctoral AI programmes. Talent gap vs global average has widened since 2022. ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025	Skill scarcity is the primary execution bottleneck globally. Procurement workloads up 8–10%, headcount growth 1%. HACKETT GROUP 2025 & 2026
Governance readiness	More national AI strategies exist, but without financing or implementation mechanisms. Enforcement remains fragmented. ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025 · AI IN LATAM PAYMENTS REPORT 2025	Only 21% of global enterprises have mature governance models for autonomous AI agents. DELOITTE STATE OF AI 2026

CONTRASTING LATIN AMERICAN DATA AGAINST GLOBAL PROCUREMENT BENCHMARKS

THEME	LATIN AMERICA FINDING	GLOBAL PROCUREMENT BENCHMARK
AI barriers	40%+ of firms cite skill shortages and unclear ROI as primary barriers. Infrastructure gaps outside major hubs. AI in LATAM Payments Report 2025	Data quality/integration (54%), data privacy (67%), unclear ROI (46%) as top barriers in procurement. PROCURECON CPO REPORT 2026
Logistics & supply chain	15% average cost-to-serve ratio vs global best practice. Nearshoring driving complex multi-tier supplier networks in Mexico. GCSCM 2026 · IMARC 2025	25–40% efficiency gains possible at scale with agentic AI in supply chain and procurement. DELOITTE STATE OF AI 2026 · MCKINSEY 2025
AI ROI gap	Most Latin American enterprises have not yet established measurable ROI frameworks for AI in procurement. Investment below GDP weight. ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025	Digital Masters achieve 3.2x ROI on GenAI vs 1.5x for followers — gap driven by governance and talent, not technology. DELOITTE GLOBAL CPO SURVEY 2025

THE DEFINING PATTERN

Latin American enterprises are consuming AI at rates that exceed their global share of the digital economy. The organizations that will convert that consumption into competitive advantage are those building the governance, data, and skills infrastructure that makes AI investable and scalable — not just deployable.

Sources: ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025 · Deloitte Global CPO Survey 2025 · Hackett Group 2026 · ProcureCon 2026 · McKinsey 2025 · GCSCM 2026

Five decisions that determine whether agentic AI scales or stalls.

Across Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, and the broader region, the same five structural gaps appear consistently as the barriers between procurement AI adoption and procurement AI impact. They are sequential. Closing them in order is what separates organisations that will scale in 2026 from those that will still be scoping pilots in 2028.

1 Process Intelligence — The intake visibility imperative

ECLAC ILIA 2025 identifies data openness and standardisation as limited across the region, hindering transparency and science. For procurement, this begins at intake: if demand signals are unmanaged or invisible, every downstream AI application — spend analytics, sourcing automation, supplier risk scoring — is working with incomplete inputs. 87% of operations leaders globally say poor data quality hampers AI value (PwC 2026). In Latin America, where informal procurement channels remain common in mid-market enterprises, this gap is wider than the global average.

2 Agentic Architecture Readiness — Infrastructure before investment

Mexico's ERP market reached $807M in 2025 with cloud adoption tripling among large enterprises. But ERP modernisation and agentic AI readiness are not the same thing. Most Latin American procurement teams — even those on modern ERP platforms — have not assessed whether their master data quality, API architecture, or integration depth can support autonomous agents. 43% of global organisations are now actively deploying agentic AI (Hackett 2026). The assessment must come before the investment.

3 Decision Boundary Governance — Where agents are permitted to act

Latin America's AI governance challenge is well documented: ECLAC ILIA 2025 finds national strategies exist across the region but without financing or implementation mechanisms. At the enterprise level, this translates to procurement AI operating without clear boundaries — where agents can act, where they escalate, and where humans decide. ProcureCon 2026 finds that governance model is a stronger predictor of AI adoption success than organisational size or industry. In Latin American enterprises, establishing that governance layer is the highest-leverage single action available to a CPO.

4

Outcome Measurement — Speaking the language the CFO tracks

Deloitte's Digital Masters — those achieving 3.2x ROI on procurement AI — connect performance to enterprise-wide metrics: working capital, supply continuity, risk-adjusted margin. In Latin America, where CFOs are managing multi-currency exposure, macro volatility, and regulatory complexity simultaneously, procurement that can demonstrate its contribution to those metrics earns a fundamentally different level of mandate than procurement reporting savings-against-target. This translation gap is the most common reason procurement AI investment stalls at the boardroom level.

5

Change Readiness — Literacy and leadership before launch

ECLAC ILIA 2025 is explicit: 13 of 19 Latin American countries generate no early AI skills domestically, and talent loss is accelerating. For procurement, this means that deploying agentic AI without investment in team capability is not a shortcut — it is a risk. ProcureCon 2026 finds that 51% of organisations cite resistance rooted in concerns about AI replacing human judgment as a top adoption barrier. In Latin America, where procurement functions are often lean and seniority-driven, that resistance is particularly acute. Leadership communication and AI literacy programmes are not soft investments. They are the primary determinant of whether pilots reach production.

The sequence matters.

Organisations that skip to Gap 2 (Agentic Architecture) without closing Gap 1 (Process Intelligence) invest in AI on top of invisible spend. Those who close Gaps 1 and 2 without addressing Gap 3 build capable systems that cannot act autonomously. The five gaps are sequential, not parallel — and the order in which they are addressed determines the return.

Sources: ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025 · PwC Digital Trends in Operations 2026 · Hackett Group 2026 · Deloitte Global CPO Survey 2025 · ProcureCon CPO Report 2026

The organisations that move now will define the benchmark everyone else chases.

The research is consistent across regional and global sources: the gap between 'AI as utilisation' and 'AI as operational infrastructure' is closing fast, and it closes faster for organisations that invest in governance and enabling capabilities alongside technology — not after it. These are the six moves the evidence supports most strongly for Latin American enterprise procurement.

Immediate priorities now to Q3 2026

1

Audit your procurement AI footprint before adding to it.

Map every AI tool, pilot, and workflow active in your procurement function. Understand what data each uses, who governs it, and what decisions it influences. In Latin America, where informal channels and shadow procurement are common, this audit frequently reveals more AI activity — and more ungoverned spend — than leadership expects.

PwC 2026: 'You can't govern what you can't see.' · ProcureCon 2026: governance gap is #1 structural barrier

2

Build intake visibility before any agentic deployment.

Quantify unmanaged spend. Map every channel through which procurement requests enter your organisation. In Latin American enterprise context — where informal purchasing channels remain significant and ERP coverage is often partial — this step alone typically surfaces 20–35% of spend that the current AI tooling cannot see or influence.

PwC Digital Trends 2026: 87% say poor data quality hampers AI value · ECLAC 2025: data openness limited across region

3

Run an agentic readiness assessment before your next technology investment.

ERP modernisation is not the same as agentic readiness. Assess master data quality, API maturity, and integration depth against the specific requirements of the agentic use cases you are considering. Mexico's SAP adoption surge and Colombia's digital-first posture create a false impression of readiness that the underlying data architecture does not always support.

Hackett Group 2026: 43% of global leaders assessing this now · Mexico ERP market: SAP cloud adoption tripled 2024

Strategic priorities Q3 2026 onward

4 Establish AI governance as a named, funded, executive-owned priority in procurement.

ECLAC ILIA 2025 identifies this as the defining gap at the national level in Latin America — strategies exist but without implementation mechanisms or budgets. The same pattern plays out at the enterprise level. ProcureCon 2026 finds that where senior leadership mandates AI adoption with cross-functional accountability, AI non-adoption drops from 52.5% to 10%. The governance decision is the highest-leverage single action.

ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025: limited governance as top regional gap · ProcureCon CPO-CIO Report 2026

5 Translate procurement performance into CFO and board language.

In Latin America's multi-currency, high-volatility environment, the CFO is tracking working capital, FX exposure, supply continuity, and margin risk — not procurement cycle time. Deloitte's Digital Masters achieve 3.2x ROI on AI by connecting procurement performance to exactly those metrics. In Latin America, procurement that can demonstrate its contribution to financial resilience — not just cost savings — will earn the board mandate it needs to scale.

Deloitte Digital Masters: 3.2x ROI vs 1.5x for followers

6 Invest in AI literacy for your procurement team before the next sourcing cycle.

ECLAC ILIA 2025 confirms talent is the most critical and most undersupplied resource in the Latin American AI ecosystem. For procurement specifically, the goal is not to produce AI researchers — it is to produce category managers and sourcing leads who can collaborate with agents, interpret their outputs, and override them when required. That capability, built inside the function, is what prevents the pilot purgatory that 89% of procurement organisations currently live in.

ECLAC/CENIA ILIA 2025: 13 of 19 countries generate no early AI skills · ProcureCon 2026: only 11% fully AI-ready

ALL FINDINGS CITED WITH FULL SOURCE CREDIT

01 **ECLAC / CENIA Chile · Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index (ILIA 2025)**
19 countries, 100+ sub-indicators · October 2025 · cepal.org

02 **Deloitte · Global Chief Procurement Officer Survey 2025**
(250+ CPOs, 40 countries) · deloitte.com

03 **ProcureAbility / ProcureCon · 2026 CPO Report & CPO-CIO Report**
(senior procurement leaders, North America) · procureability.com

04 **The Hackett Group · 2026 Procurement Key Issues Study**
(175 Canadian executives, 3,200+ global) · thehackettgroup.com

05 **McKinsey & Company · Transforming Procurement for an AI-Driven World**
(October 2025) · mckinsey.com

06 **PwC · 2026 Digital Trends in Operations Survey**
(767 operations leaders, Jan–Feb 2026) · pwc.com

07 **ResearchAndMarkets / IDC · AI in Latin America Payments & E-Commerce 2025**
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08 **IMARC Group · Mexico Supply Chain Management Market 2025**
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09 **Mexico Business News / GCSCM 2026 · Nearshoring 2026:**
Agentic AI and the New Supply Chain Blueprint · mexicobusiness.news

10 **OECD · Latin American Economic Outlook 2025**
oecd.org

11 **IMF World Economic Outlook 2025 (GDP data)**
imf.org

Zycus delivers procurement outcomes — not just transactions. Its leadership in Source-to-Pay is independently recognized by Gartner, Forrester, IDC, and customers worldwide.

By moving beyond Source-to-Pay to Intake-to-Outcomes, Zycus is defining the next generation of procurement. Its unified platform uniquely combines native Intake, agentic AI, and an end-to-end S2P core in a single architecture.

The Merlin Agentic AI Platform brings this vision to life — guiding every request through Merlin Intake, unlocking hidden savings through Autonomous Negotiation, and continuously executing toward outcomes, not workflows.