

LAPOP's AmericasBarometer takes the

Pulse of Democracy

Support for
Electoral Democracy

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Democratic
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Our Mission

LAPOP is a center for excellence in international survey research. Located at Vanderbilt University, our mission is to:

- Produce high-quality public opinion data
- Develop and implement cutting-edge methods
- Build capacity in survey research and analysis
- Generate and disseminate policy-relevant research

The LAPOP research center is led by scholars with expertise in survey methodology and innovative approaches to the study of public opinion, a dedication to pedagogy, and a commitment to providing high-quality input into evidence-based decisions about programs and policy.

Our first public opinion study was conducted in the 1970s, in Costa Rica, by survey research pioneer and founder of LAPOP, Dr. Mitchell A. Seligson. Over the years, our geographic scope, team, and network of affiliates has expanded. Though our roots remain in the Americas, we are a global institute with research experience in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.

LAPOP's most significant project is the AmericasBarometer, a regular survey of citizens' experiences, evaluations, and preferences in the Western Hemisphere. The AmericasBarometer was launched in 2004 with 11 countries, and quickly grew to cover 34 countries in the Americas. Since 2004, the survey has been carried out every two years. Key to a successful comparative project is standardization in design and methods; we accomplish this via peer-reviewed sample designs, standardized protocols, the pioneering use of electronic devices for data collection in face-to-face interviews, layers of quality control, and partnerships with reputable fieldwork organizations and researchers across the region. In 2018, the AmericasBarometer received the prestigious Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba Dataset Award from the Comparative Politics section of the American Political Science Association.

Data and reports generated by LAPOP are used by individuals and organizations across the Americas to diagnose challenges and advance solutions in the broad

area of democratic governance. By making datasets public, lending our technical support to the user community, and effectively distributing key findings via reports, social media, presentations, and workshops, LAPOP data have become integral to conversations and programming on the rule of law, economic well-being, social inclusion, political tolerance, democracy, and many other issues.

LAPOP has a long history of effective partnerships with the international development community. Since its inception, the AmericasBarometer has been supported by a cooperative agreement with USAID. Across rounds of the survey project, we have partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), World Bank, and others to advance research on a variety of topics related to democratic governance. Our collaborations with the policymaking community have involved work on impact evaluations, numerous reports, and the input of our data into widely-used indices, including the Americas Quarterly Social Inclusion Index and the World Bank Governance Indicators.

As an academic research institute, capacity building is a core part of our mission. Through research assistantships, fellowship programs, mentoring, and classes, undergraduate and graduate students gain hands-on experience in all aspects of survey research design, implementation, analysis, and report writing. Many of our former students are themselves training the next generation of survey research consumers, analysts, and producers across the Americas. Through our own efforts and via collaborations with a network of affiliates, we work to build awareness of data access, best practices in research methods, and topline results from our surveys.

Interested in supporting our research or collaborating with us?

Please contact LAPOP at 1-615-322-4033 or lapop@vanderbilt.edu.

Introduction to the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer

ELIZABETH J. ZECHMEISTER AND NOAM LUPU

The pulse of democracy in the region remains weak. Citizen support for democracy is critical to sustaining free and fair systems and bolstering against democratic backsliding. Yet support for democracy declined in the last round of the AmericasBarometer (2016/17) and remains low in this round, fielded between late 2018 and early 2019. Public satisfaction with how democracy is performing has also declined, while support for executive coups (i.e., the executive shuttering congress) has continued to grow. Political legitimacy – the extent to which the public views their country's basic core institutions and processes as worthy of respect and confidence – remains below the midpoint in the average country in the Americas.

In the midst of this milieu of doubt regarding the value of democracy and the capacity of political institutions, social media are on the rise. Globally and in the Latin America and Caribbean region, analysts are asking whether social media on the whole help or hinder democratic processes and democracy itself. Findings from the AmericasBarometer's new social media module allow us to see how widespread social media are, and who uses them (the younger, the more urban, and the more educated). They also allow us to see distinctions among the political attitudes held by those who use social media frequently. In brief, frequent social media users tend to adhere more to core democratic values but also tend to be more disaffected in their satisfaction with

democracy and their confidence in core political institutions.

The AmericasBarometer by LAPOP is a unique tool for assessing the public's experiences with democratic governance. The survey permits valid comparisons across individuals, subnational and supranational regions, countries, and time, via a common core questionnaire and standardized

methods. Comparative research on democratic governance is critically important to understanding today's realities, anticipating key political challenges, and identifying actionable policy solutions.

The 2018/19 AmericasBarometer represents the 8th round of this project. The questionnaire contains a common core that allows us to assess the extent to which citizens support democratic values, perceive a sufficient supply of basic liberties, experience the rule of law, engage in political life, support their system of government, use social media, and more.

Fieldwork for the latest round of the AmericasBarometer began in late 2018 and continued into the summer of 2019. At this time, 20 countries are included in the round. For the first time since their initial inclusion in the AmericasBarometer, we selected

not to conduct surveys in Venezuela and Haiti due to instability and related concerns about interviewer safety. We will revisit this decision as circumstances change. For now, the full dataset for this round includes over 31,050 interviews, conducted across urban and rural settings and implemented with the assistance of partners and fieldwork organizations across the Americas.

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Questionnaire content reflects input from a wide range of project sponsors and stakeholders. The surveys were pretested in each country via cognitive interviews and programmed into Survey to Go software for fieldwork. The samples are nationally representative and also programmed into the e-instrument. All fieldwork teams used e-devices for fieldwork and were trained in the project's protocols and in quality control. To monitor quality, we applied LAPOP's FALCON (Fieldwork Algorithm for LAPOP Control over survey Operations and Norms). All interviews were audited at least once to ensure the following: that interviewers were in the sampled location, enumerators were those who attended training, questions were read correctly, interview protocols were followed, and

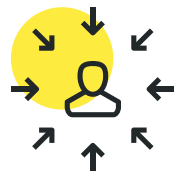
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contact attempts were recorded efficiently and accurately. All datasets were audited and processed by our team. The data and project reports are publicly and freely available at the project website (www.lapopsurveys.org).

Each round of the AmericasBarometer involves a multi-year process and the effort of thousands of individuals across the Americas. In each country, we partner with a local fieldwork organization and we further benefit from input from researchers, country experts, sponsors, and subject experts located in institutions across the Americas. This network is critical to the quality of the AmericasBarometer and its availability as a public good. On behalf of this entire team, we express our hope that the reports and data generated by this project reach and are useful to the broadest possible number of individuals interested in and working to improve democracy and development across the Americas.

Dr. Elizabeth J. Zechmeister is Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and Director of LAPOP. Dr. Noam Lupu is Associate Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and Associate Director of LAPOP.



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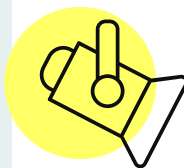
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A Letter from USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) takes pride in its support of the AmericasBarometer. While its primary goal is to represent the voice of the people on important issues, the AmericasBarometer also helps guide USAID programming and inform policymakers throughout the Latin America and Caribbean region. In numerous ways, the AmericasBarometer informs discussions over the quality and strength of democracy in the region.

USAID relies on the AmericasBarometer to inform strategy development, guide program design, and in evaluating the context in which we work in the region. The AmericasBarometer alerts policymakers and international assistance agencies to key challenges and informs citizens about democratic values and experiences in their country, as compared to other countries. As a 'barometer', the project gives important insights on long term trends that can identify democratic backsliding and highlight upswings in norms and attitudes for further study.

At every stage of AmericasBarometer, the team realizes another objective of the project: building capacity. In the course of the project, experienced and expert individuals in the field of survey research work alongside and transfer knowledge and skills to students, local researchers, and others. These opportunities come through discussions over the development of the core questionnaire, cross-national collaborations on sample design, training sessions for fieldwork teams and office personnel involved in the surveys, and workshops and presentations on the analysis and reporting of the public opinion data.

The AmericasBarometer is coordinated by a team at Vanderbilt University, which hosts the LAPOP research center and core team. At the same time, the AmericasBarometer is a collaborative international project. In the first stage of each round, LAPOP consults with researchers across the Americas, USAID, and other project supporters to develop a core questionnaire. For each individual country survey, subject experts, local teams, and USAID officers provide suggestions for country-specific modules that are added to the core. In each country, LAPOP works with local teams to pre-test the questionnaire in order to refine the survey instrument while making sure that it is written in language(s) familiar to the average person in that country. Once the questionnaire is completed, it is programmed into software and each local survey team is trained according to the same exacting standards. Samples are designed and reviewed by LAPOP and local partners. As data collection proceeds, LAPOP and the local teams stay in close contact to monitor quality, security, and progress. Once the data are collected, LAPOP audits and processes the files while engaging in conversations with a consortium of individuals and institutions, including



USAID, over plans for the dissemination of those data, findings, and reports. A large network of individuals across the region contributes to the reports that are developed after each round of the AmericasBarometer.

The collaborative nature of the AmericasBarometer improves the project and makes it possible. While USAID has been the largest supporter of the surveys that form the core of the AmericasBarometer, Vanderbilt University provides important ongoing support. In addition, each round of the project is supported by numerous other individuals and institutions. Thanks to this broad and generous network of supporters, the AmericasBarometer covers the Americas and provides a public good for all those interested in understanding and improving democratic governance in the region.

USAID is grateful to the LAPOP team, who assiduously and scrupulously works to generate each round of the AmericasBarometer, currently under the leadership of Dr. Elizabeth Zechmeister (Director) and Dr. Noam Lupu (Associate Director). We also extend our deep appreciation to their outstanding former and current students located at Vanderbilt and throughout the hemisphere, to the local fieldwork teams, to all those who took the time to respond to the survey, and to the many expert individuals and institutions across the region that contribute to and engage with the project.



Stephanie Molina
*Democracy and Human Rights Team
Office of Regional Sustainable Development
Bureau for Latin America & the Caribbean
U.S. Agency for International Development*

Acknowledgements

Conducting national surveys across the Americas requires extensive planning, coordination, and effort. We thank all the members of the public who took the time to assist with pretests and to respond to the final questionnaire. We are grateful for their generosity and willingness to share their beliefs and experiences. Just as important to recognize are our partner survey organizations and fieldwork teams, whose unflagging efforts have been crucial to the success of this project.

The AmericasBarometer is made possible by core support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Vanderbilt University. Over the course of the 2018/19 round of the AmericasBarometer, we benefited from leadership and guidance offered by Stephanie Molina, Chris Strom, and Madeline Williams. At Vanderbilt, the Dean of the College of Arts and Science, Dr. John Geer, and the Chair of the Political Science Department, Dr. Alan Wiseman, have championed and supported the project in important ways. We gratefully acknowledge the interest and support of the staff, students, and faculty in the Department of Political Science, the Center for Latin American Studies, the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration, and the leadership at Vanderbilt. Support for selected efforts associated with the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer came from collaborations with organizations and institutions that include Ciudadanía (Bolivia), Environics (Canada), Florida International University, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the University of Southern California, and at Vanderbilt University: the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions and the Trans-Institutional Programs (TIPs) initiative.

We thank the “LAPOP Central” team who collectively has put in tens of thousands of hours of work into this project, adroitly employing new skills and conscientiously keeping an eye on the smallest of details. For this

round, these exceptional individuals included, in alphabetical order, Rubí Arana, Dr. Fernanda Boidi, Dr. Oscar Castorena, Dr. Jonathan Hiskey, Sebastián Larrea, Dr. Daniel Montalvo, Georgina Pizzolitto, Dr. Camilo Plata, Alexa Rains, Maita Schade, and Dr. Carole Wilson. We remain grateful as always to Tonya Mills, who manages all financial aspects of this project. We also owe thanks to Heather Selke for her help on various administrative aspects of the project. We are grateful, as well, to Eduardo Marengo, working from his home in Nicaragua, who assisted in a number of ways with our Central America fieldwork.

We take seriously the opportunity to develop new research capacities and train top-notch new scholars in the field of public opinion research. In turn, we benefit immensely from the intellect and efforts contributed by our students. Supporting the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer was a terrific group of young scholars. This includes the following undergraduate research assistants and Fellows: Grace Adcox, Allison Booher, Anais Boyer-Chammard, Alexa Bussmann, Haley Feuerman, Sarah Graves, Hannah Hagan, Bianca Herlory, Victoria Herring, Darby Howard, Maria Loaiza, Miriam Mars, Brielle Morton, Sael Soni, Joy Stewart, and Elsa Young. It also includes several individuals who successfully completed their dissertations recently: Dr. Oscar Castorena, Dr. Gui Russo, and Dr. Sheahan Virgin. Others among our graduate students continue to work energetically on courses and dissertations while engaging in discussions and work related to the project: Kaitlen Cassell, Claire Evans, Rachael Firestone, Meg Frost, SangEun Kim, Sebastian Meyer, Daniela Osorio Michel, Emily Noh, Mariana Ramírez Bustamante, Facundo Salles Kobilanski, Laura Sellers, Bryce Williams-Tuggle and Adam Wolsky.

Critical to the project’s success was the cooperation of the many individuals and institutions in the

countries we studied, as well as experts in these countries. The list of experts to whom we owe thanks is extensive. Among the many who shared subject and country expertise for this round, we would like to acknowledge Leticia Alcaráz, Dr. George Avelino, Dr. Dinorah Azpuru, Dr. Julio Carrión, Dr. Ricardo Córdova, Dr. José Miguel Cruz, Dr. Rosario Espinal, Dr. Miguel García, Dr. François Gelineau, Dr. Jonathan Hiskey, Balford Lewis, Dr. Germán Lodola, Dr. Juan Pablo Luna, Dr. Jana Morgan, Dr. Keith Neuman, Dr. Pablo Parás, Dr. Rosario Queirolo, Dr. Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Raga, Dr. Gui Russo, and Patricia Zarate. To craft the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer questionnaire, we applied an open consultation model, in which we invited proposals and input from the political science community and other researchers. We appreciate all the excellent ideas that were submitted and worked to include as many as possible. We are grateful to all who participated in this process. We also express our gratitude to Dr. Mitchell Seligson for founding the AmericasBarometer project and for all the many ways his expert advice benefited this latest round of the survey.

To all of these individuals, and those whose names we may have inadvertently omitted, we offer our sincere gratitude. We could not achieve the scope, quality, and impact of the AmericasBarometer project without your support.



Liz Zechmeister
Noam Lupu

*Nashville, Tennessee
August 2019*

By the numbers:

The 2018/19 AmericasBarometer

660
Questions



31,050
Interviews

20
Countries



Interviewer
training days

709
Interviewers

LAPOP

40
Students
involved each year

205
News references
to project data per year

120k+
Website
views per year

The AmericasBarometer



20k+

Annual downloads

8

Rounds

34

Countries

70%



Percentage of 2018 *Insights* reports with student authors

311,336

Interviews



560

Datasets



362

Insights reports

Four continents



40

Non-AmericasBarometer surveys since 2010



5,550+

Twitter followers



Support for Electoral Democracy

Oscar Castorena and Sarah L. Graves¹

Electoral democracy is the predominant framework for politics in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The principal threats to this system of government have changed over time. Immediately following the Third Wave of democratization of the 1970s and 1980s, observers worried about a new military seizure of power or a return to dictatorial rule. In contrast, contemporary concerns for democracy in the region focus on various forms of democratic backsliding, such as overreach by powerful executives.² Within this context, some worry about the development and persistence of electoral authoritarian regimes that feature regular elections marred by manipulation of votes or harassment of the opposition.³ Related, scholars have suggested that a democratic “recession” or wave of autocratization is underway⁴, including within the LAC region.⁵

The LAC region has seen backsliding caused by, and permitting, disregard for the rule of law, among other factors. In the region, instances of backsliding are often accompanied by revelations of corruption and/or “an escalation of authoritarian tendencies, populism, and violence”.^{6,7} Recent presidents in a number of countries, such as Peru, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, have sought to weaken the other branches of government and the capacity of international organizations to keep them in check.⁸

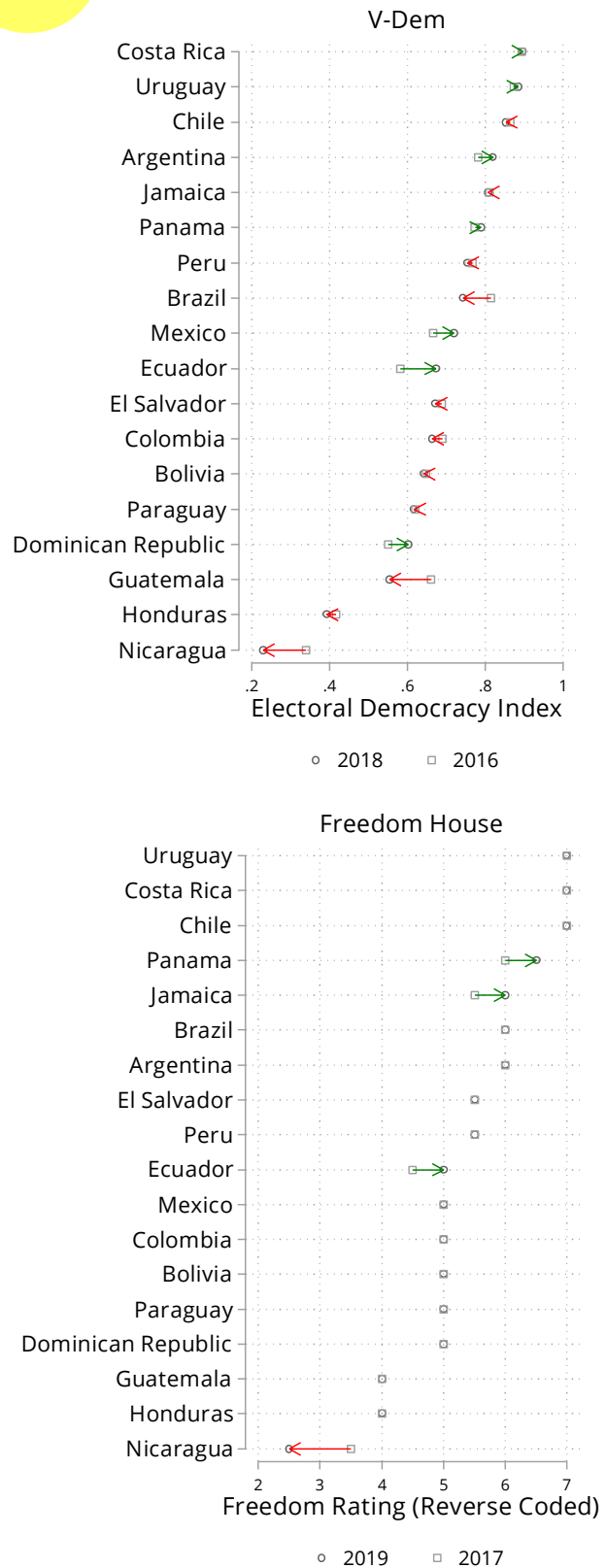
Further complicating democratic consolidation is the fact that countries in the region are grappling with problems such as economic hardship and crime. For example, transnational organized crime groups in Mexico and several Central American countries have exacerbated corruption, insecurity, and violence.⁹ These problems of insecurity as well as economic downturns, cast as failures of democratic regimes, can create the fertile conditions for the rise of authoritarian alternatives.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the state of democracy in the Latin America and Caribbean region as interpreted through indices (ratings) from the V-Dem project¹⁰ and Freedom House, which rely on expert evaluations.¹¹ Along with each country's latest score, the figure also plots the score from two years prior.¹² This provides a sense of the shift in electoral democracy for each country from the previous (2016/17) to the current (2018/19) round of the AmericasBarometer. There is notable variation across countries in the advance and retreat of democracy in this relatively short two-year period. While the ratings are created using different methodologies, they point to similar conclusions.¹³ According to both measures, the highest quality democracies in the region are Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Chile. At the other end, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala rank at the bottom.

Ecuador had the largest improvement in V-Dem's electoral democracy index of the 18 countries included here and was also one of the three countries to see an improvement in Freedom House's freedom rating. In early 2017, a referendum saw Ecuadorians vote to bring back presidential term limits, placing constraints on executive power. At the other end, Nicaragua experienced the largest declines in democracy, according to both the Freedom House and V-Dem measures.¹⁴ Nicaragua's democratic backsliding is evident – among other ways – in its holding of hundreds of political prisoners, arrested by paramilitary forces controlled by the Ortega government, for protesting against the regime. This type of taking and holding of citizens as political prisoners undermines basic human rights that are supposed to be afforded to citizens in a democratic system.¹⁵

A central question for scholars and policymakers concerns the factors behind democratic consolidation and, likewise, behind democratic backsliding. Theoretical work in political science holds that the endurance and quality of democratic governments rests in part on the political attitudes of their citizens. Without popular support, democratic regimes in crisis are more prone to experience breakdowns or democratic backsliding.¹⁶ Recent empirical work has found evidence for a causal relationship between citizens' opinions and the endurance of democracy in a country.¹⁷ That is, the mass public's support for democracy has a positive effect on the resilience and nature of democracy. We use this insight, that citizens' attitudes and beliefs about democracy are consequential for democracy's endurance and growth, as the starting point for this report's assessment of public support for democracy in general and public evaluations of democracy in practice in the LAC region.

Figure 1.1. State of Democracy in the LAC-18 Region





Main Findings

The main findings on support for electoral democracy are as follows:

Support for democracy in 2018/19 remains low when compared to the pre-2016 time period.

Men, older, wealthier, and more educated individuals express more support for democracy, on average, across the LAC region.

Support for executive coups (that is, the shutdown of the legislature) increased by 3.5 percentage points in 2018/19.

Support for executive coups is highest among the least educated, poorest, youngest, and male individuals.

Satisfaction with democracy continued to decrease slightly in 2018/19.

The oldest, poorest, and least educated rural individuals are those most satisfied with democracy.

Over half the LAC public believes their country is democratic.

Across countries, the percent agreeing that their country is a democracy ranges from 52.3% to 67.3%.

Basic Tenets of Electoral Democracy

While there exist multiple conceptualizations and definitions of democracy,¹⁸ this report focuses on *electoral democracy*. In his classic work, Schumpeter (1942, 260) provides a definition of electoral democracy as a system “for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” While other definitions provide more comprehensive conceptualizations with additional dimensions,¹⁹ this minimalist definition addresses the most basic tenet of democracy: rule by competitively elected leaders. This definition also directly relates to the principal threats that have challenged democratic government in the contemporary LAC region. The first is the risk that unelected actors, such as the military, seize political power from elected officials. The second is the risk that executives go beyond their mandate and seek to rule unilaterally, undermining congresses elected by the people to legislate. The following sections assess the state of public support for electoral democracy in the LAC region. First, we examine citizens’ support for democracy in the abstract. We then examine the extent to which the public supports or rejects military and executive coups.

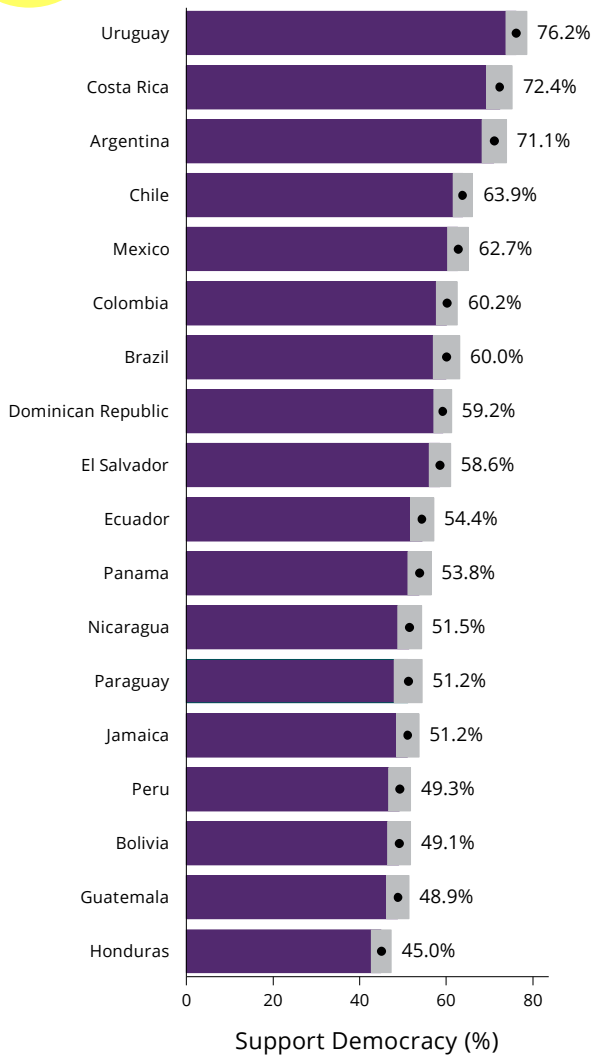
Support for Democracy in the Abstract

To what extent do individuals in the Latin America and the Caribbean region believe that democracy is the best political system, and how does their support for democracy in 2018/19 compare to past years? Since its inception, the AmericasBarometer project has asked respondents across the Americas the following question to assess support for democracy:²⁰

ING4. Changing the subject again, democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Respondents provide an answer ranging from 1-7, with 1 signifying “strongly disagree” and 7 denoting “strongly agree.” We consider responses on the agree side of the scale, that is values of 5-7, to indicate support for democracy. Figure 1.2 displays the percent of individuals in each country that expresses support for democracy in 2018/19. Support for democracy ranges from a low of 45% in Honduras to a high of 76.2% in Uruguay. The percentage of the public that supports democracy is highest in some of the region’s most stable democracies (Uruguay, Costa Rica). Support for democracy is lowest in two Northern Triangle countries: Guatemala and Honduras.

Figure 1.2. Cross-National Support for Democracy



As noted earlier, public support for democracy is an important input to the endurance and quality of democratic government. With that in mind, we consider the relationship between levels of support for democracy and country democracy ratings. Figure 1.3 displays the relationship between the percentage of citizens in each country who strongly support democracy and that country's score in V-Dem's electoral democracy index. Generally, there is a positive relationship between the two measures (Pearson's correlation = .64). That is, although the analysis here is descriptive and not a test of a causal relationship, the pattern is consistent with previous research that identifies public support as a critical ingredient for the vitality of democracy.²¹

Figure 1.3. Support for Democracy and the Level of Democracy

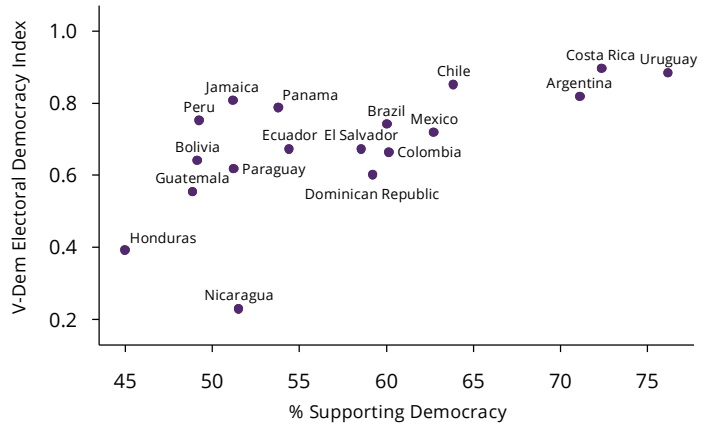
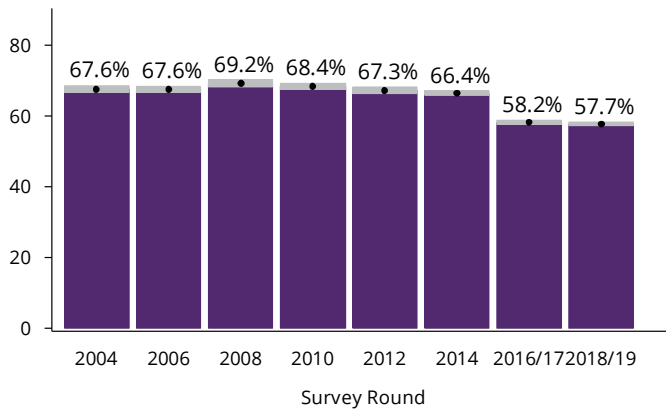


Figure 1.4 documents the level of support for democracy in the Latin America and Caribbean region, as it has changed across time. This and all other cross-time and sub-group analyses in this report use data from 18 countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region - what we term the "LAC-18" region for this report.²² Cross-time analyses in this report (and analyses by subgroup) are conducted for the region as a whole. For the interested reader, for the key variables analyzed in this report, an online appendix table presents the cross-time change between the current (2018/19) and prior (2016/17) round of the AmericasBarometer, for each country.²³

While on average a majority of citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean region support democracy in the abstract, that support declined significantly in 2016/17 and mean levels of support have remained at this low point. According to Figure 1.4, on average across the LAC region, 57.7% of citizens support democracy in the current time period, 2018/19. This value is similar to the level of support for democracy registered in the 2016/17 round, at which point support for democracy had registered a significant and concerning drop from its average of around 66 to 69% in prior rounds. The value for 2018/19, 57.7%, represents a slight decline (0.5 percentage points) from the 2016/17 survey round, though the difference is not statistically significant.

57.7%

Figure 1.4. Support for Democracy over Time in the LAC-18 Region

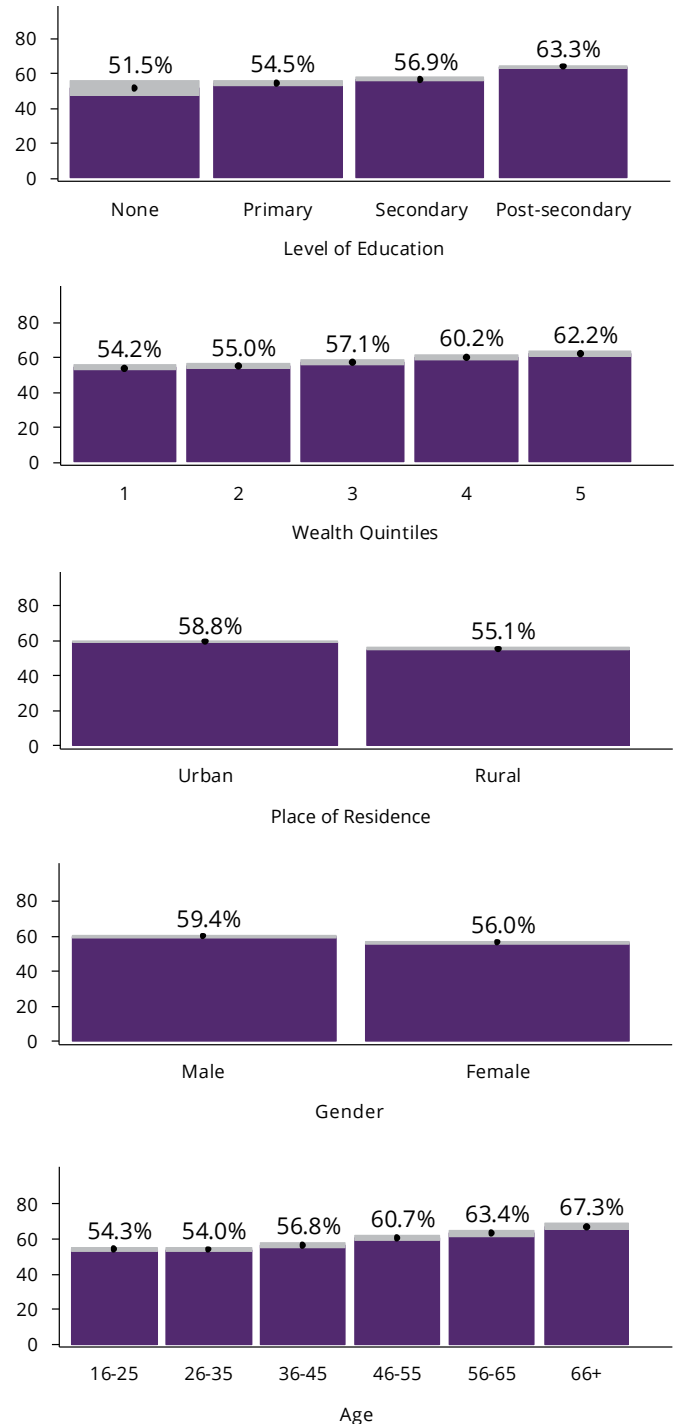


Who is most likely to support democracy? Considering the region as a whole, Figure 1.5 shows statistically significant relationships between five demographic and socio-economic subgroups (education, wealth, urban/rural residence, gender, and age) and support for democracy. In all such figures of demographic and socio-economic correlates in this report, we only show relationships that are statistically significant with 95% confidence. If a socio-demographic variable is excluded from the figure, this means we did not find significant differences in a particular dependent variable across the values of that socio-demographic variable.

Figure 1.5 shows that, generally, the most educated and wealthiest citizens - arguably those who most benefit from the status quo system - report support for democracy at higher rates than do their less educated and poorer counterparts. Women are slightly less likely to express support for democracy than are men, and those living in urban areas are more likely to support democracy than those in rural residences. Older individuals are also more likely to report support for democracy than younger citizens do. Age is a particularly significant predictor of support for democracy, exhibiting the largest differences across values of the variable compared to the other correlates. While 54.0% of those 26-35 years old support democracy, 67.3% of those 66 years old or older support democracy.²⁴

In the average LAC country, 57.7% of adults express support for democracy.

Figure 1.5. Demographic and Socio-Economic Correlates of Support for Democracy in the LAC-18 Region



Rules of the Game: Tolerance of Military Coups

In addition to support for democracy in the abstract, acceptance of the basic rules of electoral democracy as “the only game in town” is key to stability and persistence of democratic governance.²⁵ This means, in short, that citizens in democratic societies should not tolerate military coups that replace the incumbent democratically elected government with military leadership. The 2018/19 AmericasBarometer includes two items that tap willingness to tolerate a military takeover of the government. A randomly drawn half of respondents received the first of the following questions, while the other half was randomly assigned to receive the second:

Now, changing the subject. Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the military of this country to take power by a coup d'état (military coup). In your opinion would a military coup be justified under the following circumstances? [Read the options after each question]:

	A military take-over of the state would be justified	A military take-over of the state would not be justified
JC10. When there is a lot of crime.	1	2
JC13. When there is a lot of corruption.	1	2

Figure 1.6 shows the percentage of respondents that responded that they would find a military coup justifiable under each of these circumstances. We consider those who express this view to be “tolerant” of military coups under particular circumstances. Tolerance for military coups under conditions of high crime ranges from a low of 23.8% in Uruguay to a high of 65% in Jamaica. Tolerance for coups under high corruption ranges from 23% in Uruguay to a high of 58.3% in Jamaica.

More generally, levels of tolerance for military coups are lowest in Uruguay, Colombia, Panama, Argentina, Chile, and El Salvador. Tolerance for coups is the highest in Jamaica, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala.

Figure 1.6. Tolerance of Military Coups under High Crime and High Corruption

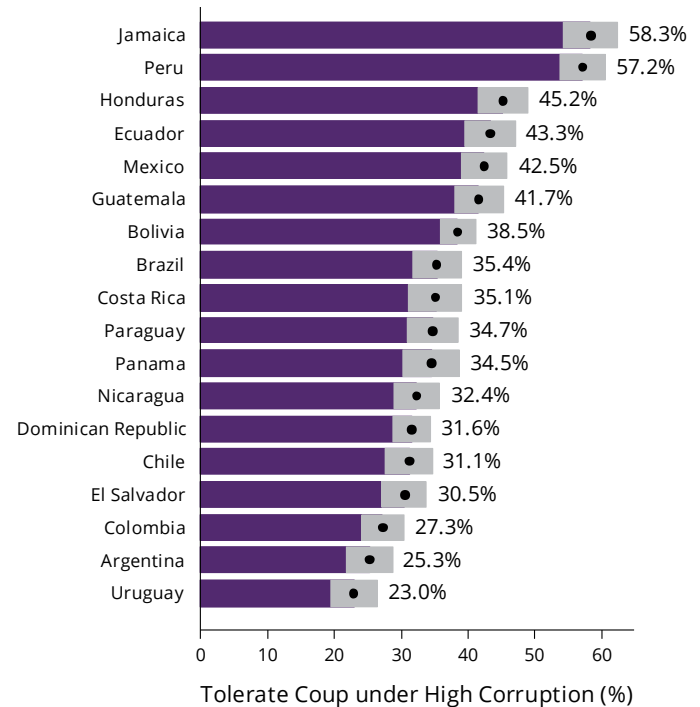
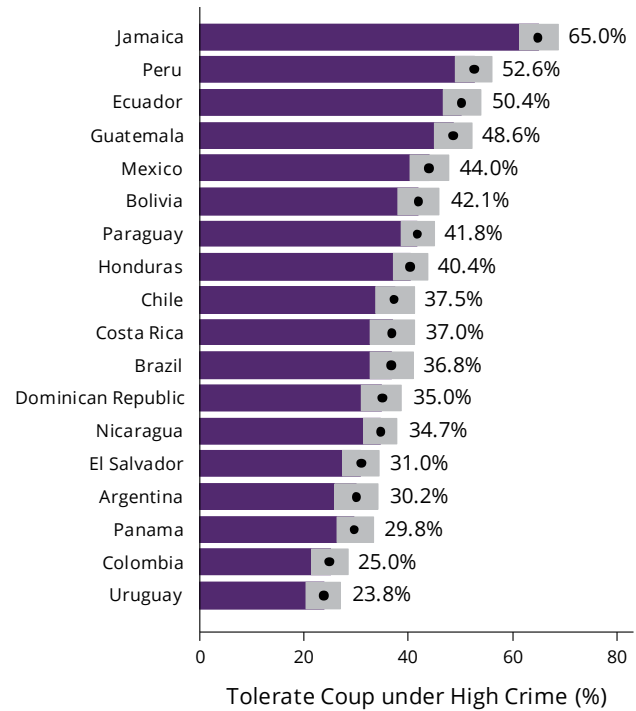


Figure 1.7 shows cross-time change in tolerance for military coups for the average LAC-18 country. Levels of tolerance for military coups under high crime have increased from about 34% to 39% since 2014. Meanwhile, levels of support for military coups under high corruption have marginally decreased from about 40% to 37% since 2014. In both cases, tolerance is lower in recent years compared to a decade or more prior (2004-2008). While recent changes in opinion on the two scenarios are at odds (slight decrease in tolerance for a military coup under high corruption and slight, though not statistically significant, increase in tolerance for a military coup under high crime), it is nonetheless the case that tolerance for military coups decreased in 2010 and has remained lower than it was in the 2004-2008 period.

Figure 1.7. Tolerance for Military Coups Across Time in the LAC-18 Region

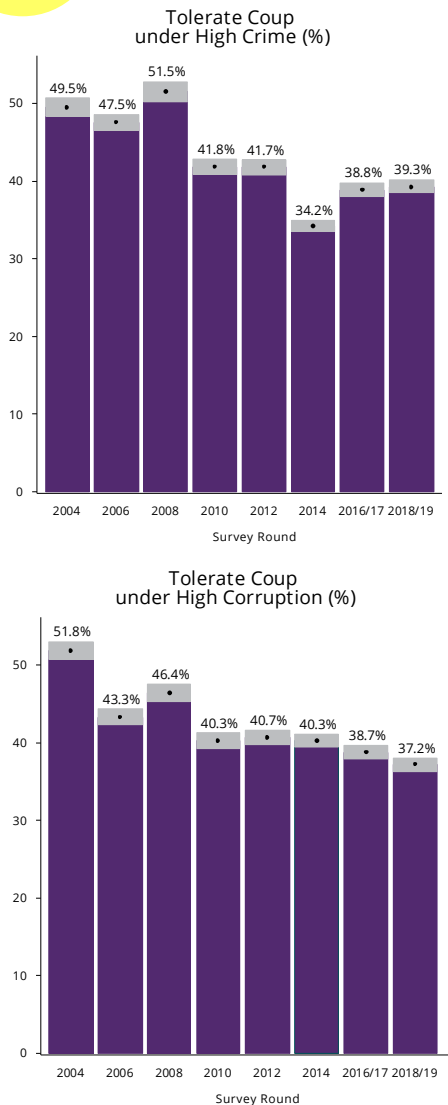
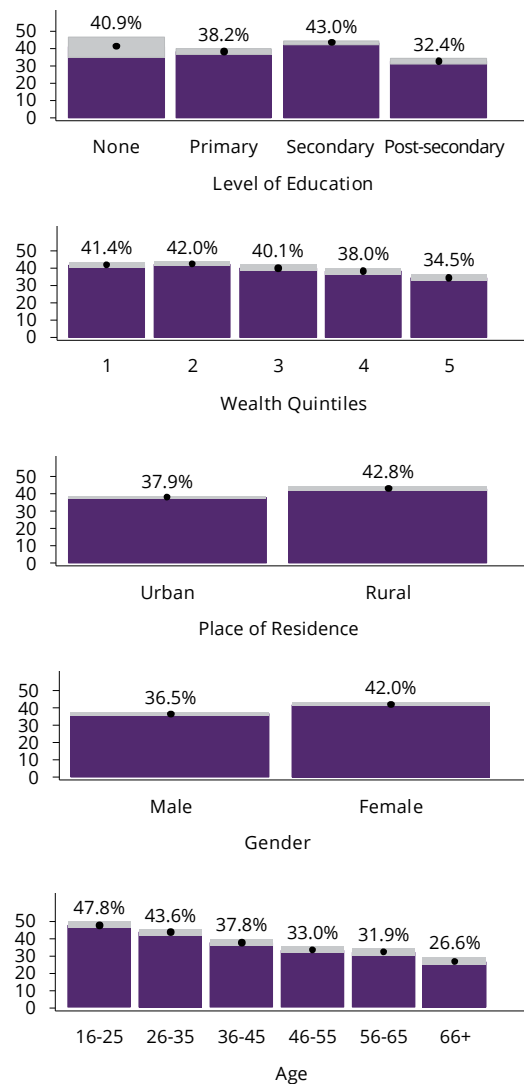
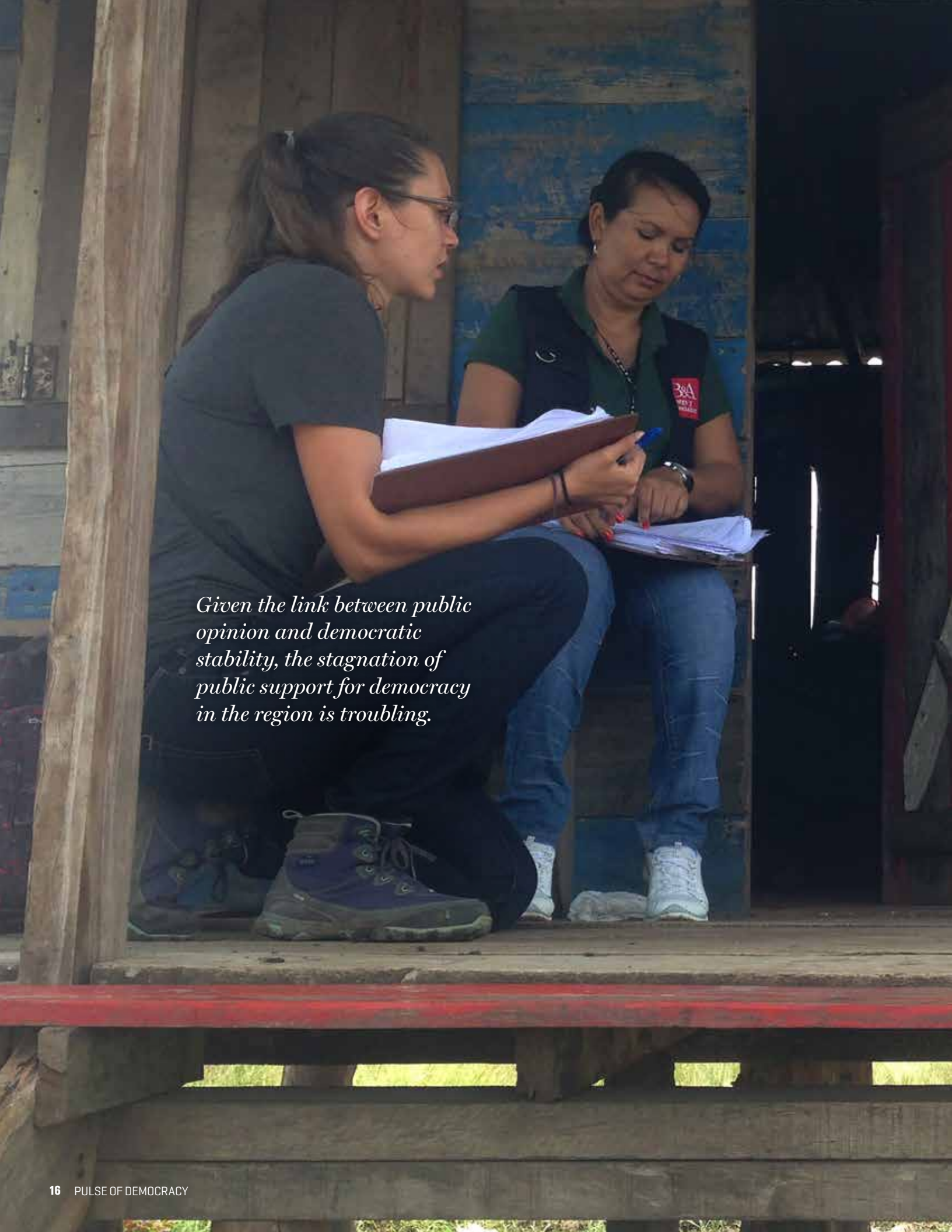


Figure 1.8 shows tolerance for military coups by demographic and socio-economic subgroups. For the sake of parsimony, we present results only for tolerance of coups in contexts of high crime. The relationships between socio-demographic categories and tolerance of coups under high corruption are substantively similar to those reported here. Among average respondents from the LAC-18 region, women are slightly more likely than men to voice their tolerance for a hypothetical coup, as are those in the lowest wealth quintile (compared to those in the two wealthiest quintiles). Those with post-secondary education and older individuals are less likely to express tolerance for military coups than are their younger and less educated counterparts.

Figure 1.8. Demographic and Socio-Economic Predictors of Tolerance of Military Coups in the LAC-18 Region





Given the link between public opinion and democratic stability, the stagnation of public support for democracy in the region is troubling.



Tolerance of Executive Coups

The AmericasBarometer in 2018/19 asked all respondents the following question to gauge tolerance of executive coups - that is, the shutdown of legislative bodies by the executive branch:

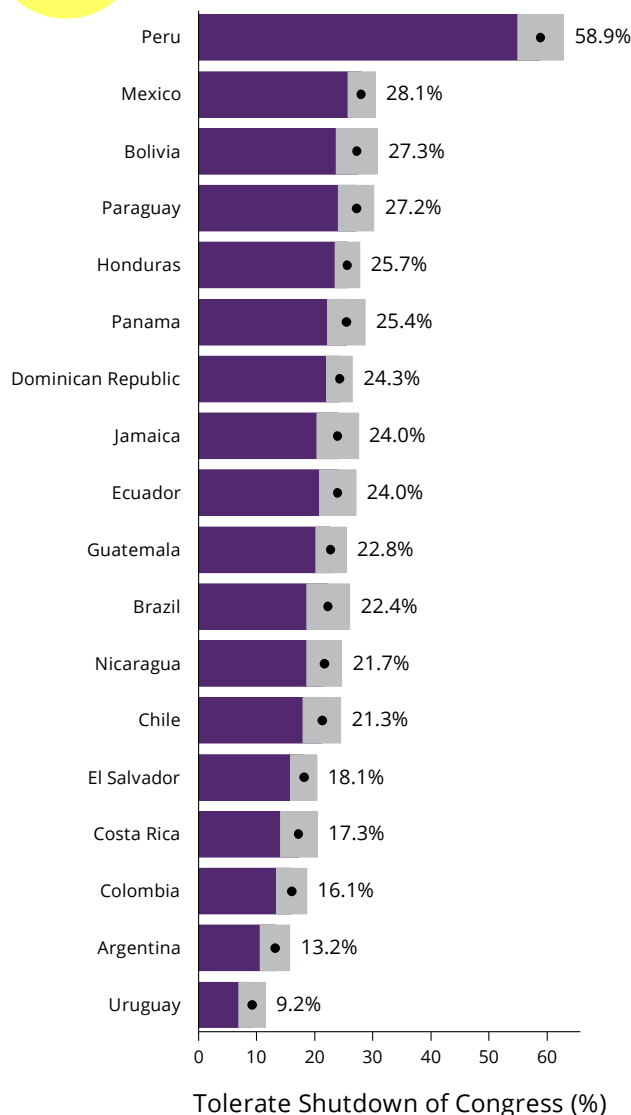
JC15A. Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Congress/Parliament and govern without Congress/Parliament?

Yes, it is justified No, it is not justified

1 2

Figure 1.9 shows the distribution of tolerance for executive coups in very difficult times across countries in the LAC region in 2018/19. Tolerance for executive coups across the region is generally lower than tolerance for coups by the military under conditions of high crime or corruption. Tolerance for executive coups is the lowest in Uruguay (9.2%) and support for executive coups is by far the highest in Peru (58.9%). Not only is the Peruvian case an outlier in terms of average tolerance for executive coups, it also registered the largest increase in the measure from the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer. The 21.1 percentage point increase from the previous round is almost twice the next largest increase (+10.9 in Mexico). This dramatic shift in the public's tolerance for unilateral assertions of power by the executive reflects recent political developments in the country. President Martín Vizcarra took over in March 2018 after his predecessor Pedro Pablo Kuczynski resigned rather than face impeachment amid corruption scandals. Since taking office, Vizcarra has clashed with the legislature, which has stalled in passing his anti-graft reforms. In light of this inter-branch gridlock, Vizcarra has referred to provisions in the constitution that could allow him to dissolve the legislature and call early legislative elections.²⁶ For this reason, the question of whether one would tolerate the president shutting down congress takes on a very tangible meaning in the Peruvian context of 2018/19. Vizcarra's threat of calling new elections is closely linked with his anti-corruption efforts. Moreover, leaders in the opposition, such as Keiko Fujimori of the *Fuerza Popular* party, have been implicated in corruption scandals similar to those that led to the Kuczynski resignation. These factors (the salience of the president's constitutional powers and the context of public discontent with corruption scandals) are the likely causes of the surge of tolerance among the Peruvian public for the notion of the president shutting down congress.

Figure 1.9. Tolerance for Executive Coups



While tolerance for executive coups is lower than tolerance for military coups under high crime or high corruption, Figure 1.10 shows that levels of tolerance for an executive shutdown of the legislature increased substantially in the 2018/19 round of the AmericasBarometer in the LAC-18 region - from 20.4% to 23.9%. This round is also the highest point observed in the AmericasBarometer survey, a worrying trend.²⁷

Figure 1.10. Tolerance for Executive Coups Across Time in the LAC-18 Region

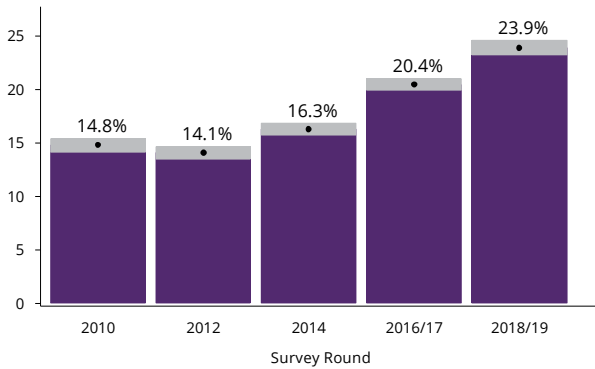
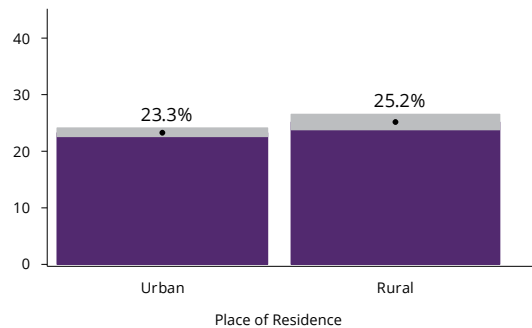
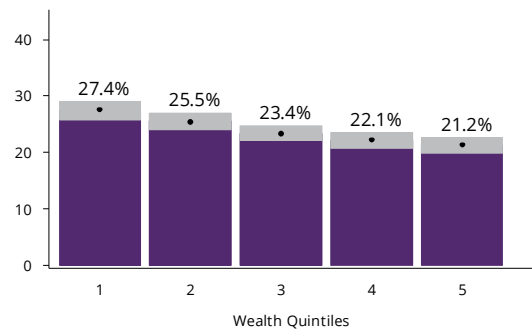
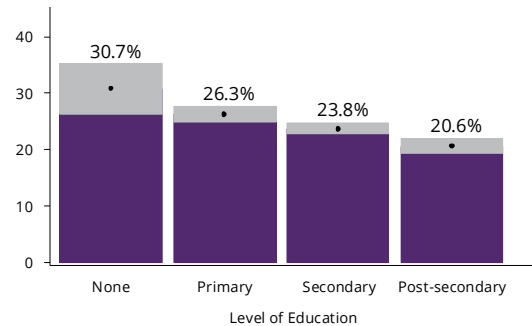


Figure 1.11 shows that, on average in the region, the demographic and socio-economic predictors of tolerance for executive coups are similar to those found in the analysis of tolerance for military coups: the highly educated (20.6%), wealthy (21.2%), and those living in urban areas (23.3%) are significantly less likely to tolerate executive coups than those with no or primary education (30.7%), less wealth (27.4%), and who live in rural areas (25.2%). There are no significant differences in tolerance for executive coup among the age cohorts nor differences between men and women.



Figure 1.11. Demographic and Socio-Economic Predictors of Tolerance for Executive Coups in the LAC-18 Region



On balance, these metrics of middling support for democracy and non-trivial levels of tolerance for coups that sideline democratically elected officials provide reasons to be concerned about the state of public support for electoral democracy in the LAC region. Support for democracy in the abstract declined significantly in 2016/17 and has remained at that lower level in 2018/19. While levels of tolerance for military coups are generally low and have not shifted in major ways in recent years, tolerance for executive coups increased by three percentage points in 2018/19. Although these results are noteworthy, they are also hypothetical, abstract, and general. That is, these analyses do not reveal how respondents feel about the way that democracy is functioning in their particular national context. The remainder of this report turns to this question.

Evaluation of Democracy in Practice

Electoral democracy rests on a stronger foundation to the degree that citizens are satisfied with how their democracy is performing in practice. It is also important to consider whether citizens believe their system is a democracy, or whether they feel the system has slid too far away from that ideal to warrant the label. That is, satisfaction with democracy and the democratic status of the political system are important metrics for understanding citizen support for democracy as it functions in the real world and, as well, serve as a foundation of citizens' commitment to democracy (a fundamental component in democratic consolidation).

Satisfaction with democracy “is an indicator of support for the performance of the democratic regime”.²⁸ Stated in other words, it is a measure of “people’s evaluations of the political regime”.²⁹ Satisfaction falls under the concept of “specific” support, based on its “relationship to members’ satisfaction about the perceived outputs and performance of the political authorities of the system they belong to”.³⁰ Specific support is “possible only under conditions in which the culture permits the members to entertain the notion that the authorities can be held responsible for what happens in the society...” and “... when these [perceived benefits or satisfactions] decline or cease, support will do likewise”.³¹ In short, levels of satisfaction are mediated by interactions with political authorities and authoritative institutions.

Asking about satisfaction with democracy presupposes that individuals believe the system is democratic. Surveys can also simply ask the public whether they believe their country is a democracy. In theory, those who say that they do not perceive the system to be democratic are similar to those who are not satisfied with how it is functioning. To the degree this is true, a democracy is stronger to the extent that individuals perceive their political system to be a democracy.

Electoral democracy is more legitimate, in the eyes of the public, to the extent that there is a high degree of satisfaction with democracy and to the extent that citizens perceive their system to be a democracy. The following sections examine satisfaction with democracy and assessments of the democratic status of political systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the goal of better understanding specific support for electoral democracy in the region.

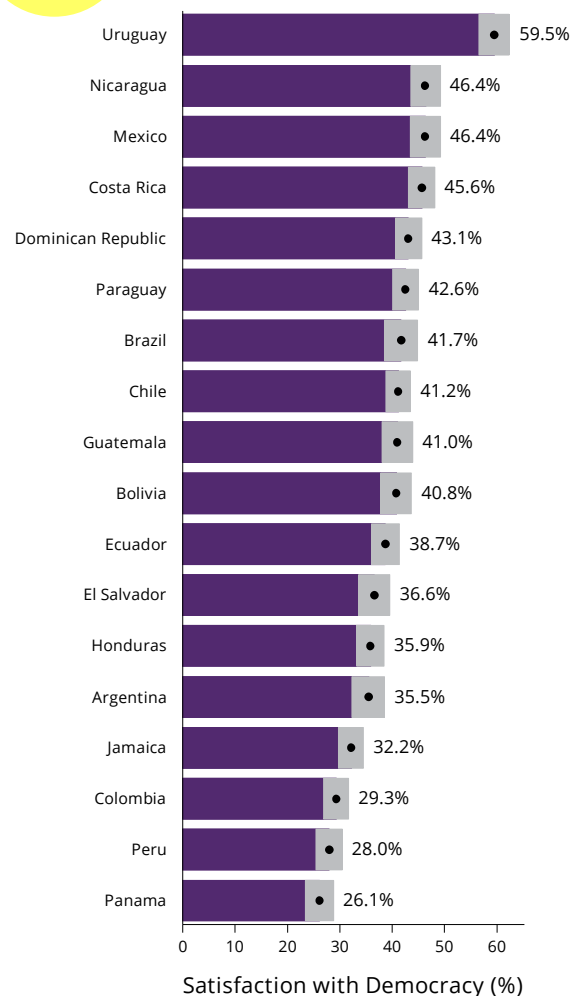
Satisfaction with Democracy

Since its inception, the AmericasBarometer has asked respondents across the Americas the following question about satisfaction with democracy:

PN4. In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?

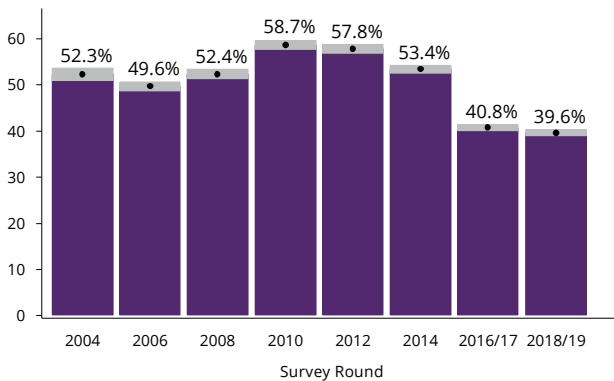
Respondents provide an answer ranging from 1-4, with 1 signifying “very satisfied” and 4 signifying “very dissatisfied.” In the analyses that follow, we grouped the data, so that responses of “very dissatisfied” and “dissatisfied” are coded together as dissatisfaction, and responses of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” are coded together as satisfaction. Figure 1.12 displays the percentage of respondents in each country that reports satisfaction with democracy (that is, the percentage who report that they are satisfied or very satisfied). The percentage of citizens who are satisfied with democracy ranges widely, from 26.1% in Panama to 59.5% in Uruguay.

Figure 1.12. Cross-National Satisfaction with Democracy



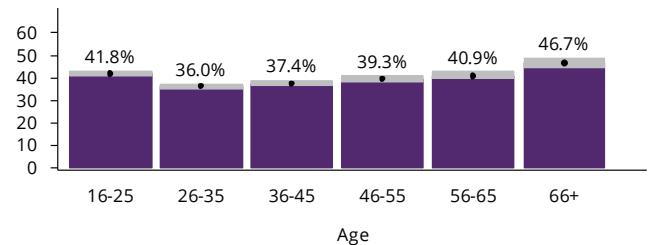
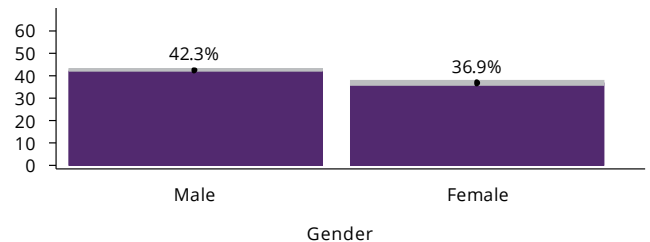
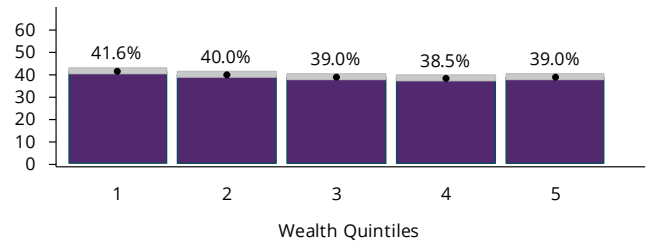
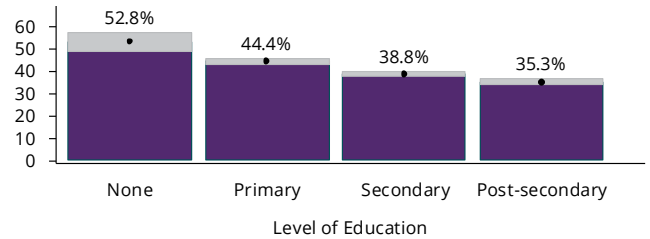
In the LAC-18 countries, an average of 39.6% of citizens are satisfied with democracy, according to the 2018/19 round of the AmericasBarometer (see Figure 1.13). This value is only slightly lower than that reported in the 2016/17 round, yet it is substantially lower than the satisfaction with democracy reported in the period between 2004-2014. In fact, this round is now the lowest point recorded in the AmericasBarometer.

Figure 1.13. Satisfaction with Democracy over Time in the LAC-18 Region



In terms of who is most likely to be satisfied with democracy, the results in Figure 1.14 show that – on average in the LAC-18 region – those with more education and (to a marginal degree) wealth are more critical of democracy in their country than those with no or primary education and those in lower wealth quintiles. Similarly, those living in rural areas are more likely to be satisfied with democracy than urban residents. Satisfaction with democracy declines slightly in the years after those in which individuals first reach voting age and increases among the oldest age cohort (over 65). Women are less likely than men to report being satisfied with democracy in their country (36.9% versus 42.3%).

Figure 1.14. Demographic and Socio-Economic Indicators of Satisfaction with Democracy in the LAC-18 Region



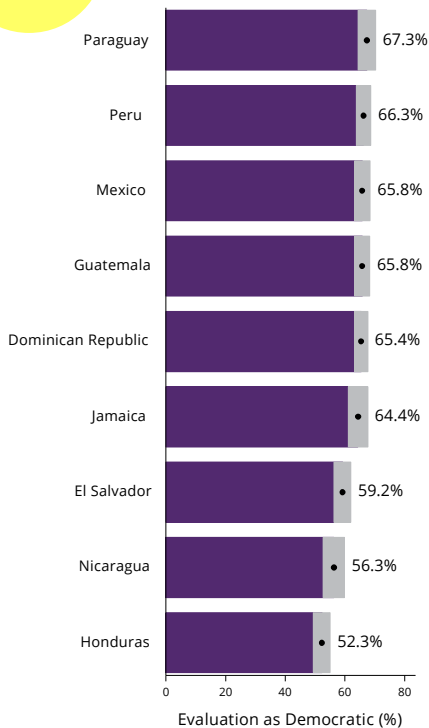
Democratic Status of Political System

While satisfaction with democracy is a key element in the continuation of electoral democracy, citizens' evaluations of their country as being democratic or not provide additional insight into how they view their country's system. If they do not believe it to be a democracy, then why would they be satisfied with how democracy is working in the country? In nine countries included in the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer, the survey asked respondents the following question as a follow-up to the question of whether or not they were satisfied with democracy:

	Yes	No
DEM30. In your opinion, is [country] a democracy?	1	2

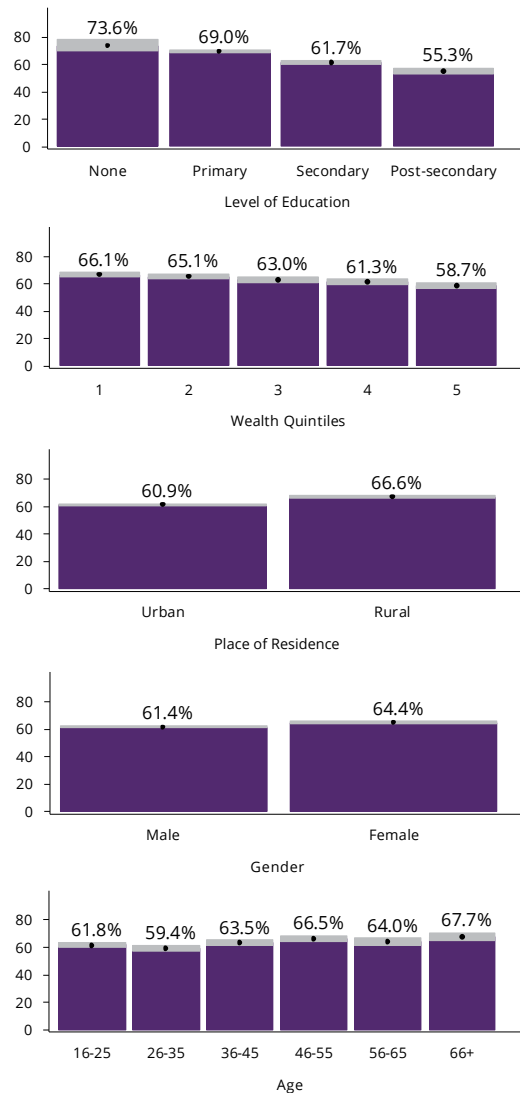
Figure 1.15 shows that evaluations of countries as democratic ranges from only 52.3% of Hondurans reporting that, yes, their country is democratic, to 67.3% of Paraguayans providing an affirmative response. The majority of the nine cases cluster around percentages in the mid-60s agreeing their country is a democracy. As we had conjectured earlier, those who report that their country is not a democracy also have a high tendency to say that that they are dissatisfied with how democracy works in the country.³²

Figure 1.15. Cross-National Evaluations of Country as Democratic



Who is more likely to report that their country is democratic? Figure 1.16 shows that the demographic and socio-economic features associated with thinking one's country as democratic in the LAC-18 countries are similar to those associated with satisfaction with democracy. Poorer and older individuals are more likely to believe their country is a democracy, and those with no or only a primary education are more likely to state their country is democratic than those with secondary or post-secondary education. Rural individuals are more likely to believe their country is a democracy. While the difference between men and women is not as great as differences between other factors, 64.4% of women report their country is democratic as opposed to 61.4% of men.

Figure 1.16. Demographic and Socio-Economic Correlates of Evaluation of Country as Democratic

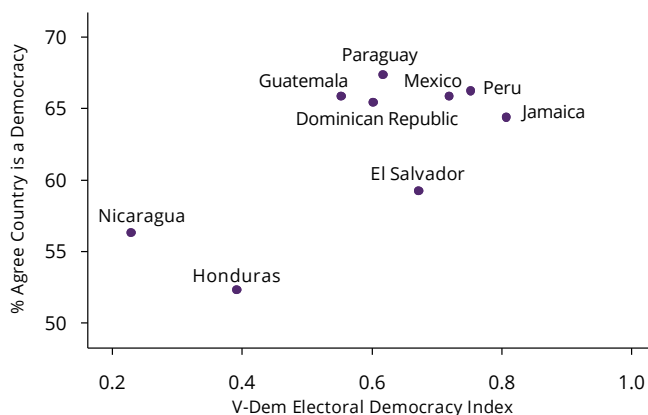


23.9%

In the average LAC country, 23.9% of adults report tolerance of executive coups.

Does the public assess their system, as democratic or not, in a manner similar to expert ratings? As mentioned above, V-Dem indices and scores are generated in part from assessments by country experts (e.g. scholars or professionals). Figure 1.17 displays the relationship between the percentage of respondents in the AmericasBarometer survey who believe their country is a democracy and that country's score in V-Dem's electoral democracy index. These two measures are somewhat correlated (Pearson's correlation coefficient=0.70). To a large degree, this moderate correlation is driven by the cluster of countries (Honduras and Nicaragua) that distinguish themselves from the rest of region as having particularly low evaluations on both measures. One possibility is that the mass public and experts diverge in their evaluations at intermediate levels of democracy, but broadly agree in what differentiates a well-functioning democracy from a struggling democracy.

Figure 1.17. Mass Public and Expert Evaluations of Democracy



Conclusion

What is the state of support for electoral democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2019? The analyses in this report provide some reasons to be concerned about the depth of citizens' commitment to democracy as a system in the abstract and along more specific dimensions of support. On average, across the region, support for democracy in the abstract has remained relatively stable over the last two rounds of the AmericasBarometer. However, this near-term stability is part of a larger negative break from higher levels of support for democracy in the previous decade. Belief that executive coups are justified in difficult times has increased substantially over the last four rounds of the AmericasBarometer.

When it comes to evaluations of democracy in practice, satisfaction with democracy as it works in one's country declined slightly between the prior round and this round of the AmericasBarometer. Again, a big dip on this measure was registered in the last round and, again, there was no rebound from the large declines detected in that prior round of the AmericasBarometer. When asked a new question on whether or not their country is a democracy, majorities in each of the nine countries studied respond in the affirmative. It is reasonable for citizens in countries that are experiencing institutional backsliding, as measured by expert ratings, to declare that their country is not a democracy. Yet, the fact that large numbers of individuals perceive their system to be undeserving of the label "democracy" underscores the need for improvement. Overall, the data analyzed here suggests that the region has settled into a malaise with respect to public views of democracy: following a significant decline on a number of these measures in the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer, the public continues to express these diminished (and in some cases even marginally lower) levels of support for and satisfaction with democracy in the Americas.

The overall downward casting trend in support for the basic tenets of democracy and diminished levels of system support may leave the public increasingly open to undemocratic leaders who offer action in times of crisis. Given the link between public opinion and democratic stability,³³ the stagnation of public support for democracy in the region is troubling.

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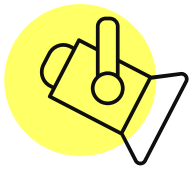
Sarah L. Graves is a student at Hanover College in Indiana and a Leadership Alliance intern at LAPOP for the summer of 2019.

Notes

- 1 Some text in this report is taken, with permission, from a previous report published by LAPOP (Cohen 2017). We thank Dr. Mollie Cohen for her efforts on that earlier project and her permission to build on that work.
- 2 Bermeo 2016.
- 3 Levitsky and Way 2010.
- 4 Diamond and Plattner 2015, Lührmann and Lindberg 2019.
- 5 Almagro 2019; Goldfrank 2017; but see Van Dyck 2017.
- 6 Almagro 2019, p.6.
- 7 Peru's president resigned in March just ahead of a vote on impeachment on corruption charges. In Nicaragua, widespread protests against the government of President Daniel Ortega were suppressed violently, with over 300 people killed. In Guatemala, efforts by President Jimmy Morales to undermine and expel the U.N.-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) prompted widespread protests and expressions of international concern
- 8 Sullivan et al. 2019, p.5.
- 9 Sullivan et al., 2019, p.1.
- 10 Coppedge et al. 2019.
- 11 For more information on the methodologies of the V-Dem and Freedom House scores, see <https://www.v-dem.net/en/reference/version-9-apr-2019/> and <https://freedomhouse.org/report/methodology-freedom-world-2018>.
- 12 Freedom House provides ratings for each country in its annual Freedom in the World report. These ratings are based on the previous calendar year such that the 2019 ratings reflect events in 2018 and so on. Therefore, the V-Dem and Freedom House scores summarized in Figure 1.1 cover the same period.
- 13 The ratings provided by Freedom House originally are coded such that a value of one represents the most free and a value of seven represents the least free. We reverse the coding here so as to facilitate comparison with other democracy measures.
- 14 Another country experiencing notable declines in democracy, but not included in the 18 countries studied in this report, was Venezuela. It registered shifts in the Freedom House score equal to Nicaragua's shift and among the largest declines in the V-Dem index compared to the 18 countries. If it were included in the analysis, it would be the least free country according to the Freedom House rating and the second least democratic according to the V-Dem index. The decision not to include Venezuela in the 2018/19 round of data collection of the AmericasBarometer survey was influenced by the levels of insecurity associated with the country's political and economic instability, which complicated fieldwork in the 2016/17 round. In light of these difficulties and the dangers they pose to interviewers carrying out the survey, Venezuela was not included in the 2018/19 round. Readers should be cognizant of the implications for understanding and measuring region-wide opinion relating to democracy when fieldwork is not possible in the most challenging contexts. In the analyses that follow, and especially in any time-series analyses, data from Venezuela captured in prior rounds of the AmericasBarometer is not included.
- 15 Almagro 2019.
- 16 Lipset 1959, Easton 1965.
- 17 Claassen 2019.
- 18 Diamond 1999.
- 19 See Dahl 1971.
- 20 This question is often referred to as a "Churchillian" question of democratic support, as it is derived from Winston Churchill's oft-quoted speech from the House of Commons, in which he noted that, "...democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time (Churchill 1947)."
- 21 Claassen 2019.
- 22 Cross-time values are calculated including only those countries the AmericasBarometer has surveyed consistently since 2006: Argentina, Jamaica, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. All analyses of cross-time trends have been replicated for the subset of countries included in the 2004 AmericasBarometer study (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic). Cross-time trends were similar across these groups of countries for all analyses shown here.
- 23 The online appendix table is available at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studies-country.php>
- 24 Except for urban/rural residence, these relationships hold when controlling for other demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Regression results available upon request from the lead author.
- 25 Linz and Stepan (1996) use the phrase "the only game in town" to refer to the consolidation of democracy. With respect to the role of public opinion, they state, "Attitudinally, a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion, even in the midst of major economic problems and deep dissatisfaction with incumbents, holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life, and when support for antisystem alternatives is quite small or more-or-less isolated from prodemocratic forces (16)."
- 26 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/18/martin-vizcarra-peru-anti-corruption-measure-reform>
- 27 This trend of increasing tolerance for executive coups in the region since 2010 holds when excluding Peru from the analysis. In other words, the increasing levels of tolerance for executive coups in Peru are not alone in driving the regional cross-time trend.
- 28 Linde and Eckman 2003, p.399.
- 29 Klingemann 1999.
- 30 Easton 1975, p. 437.
- 31 Easton 1975, p.438-9.
- 32 Among those who disagree with the statement that their country is a democracy, 79.4% report being dissatisfied with the way democracy functions in their country. Among those who do agree that their country is a democracy, opinion is split about the quality of that democracy: 50.2% report being dissatisfied and 49.8% report being satisfied with democracy as it functions in their country.
- 33 Claassen 2009.

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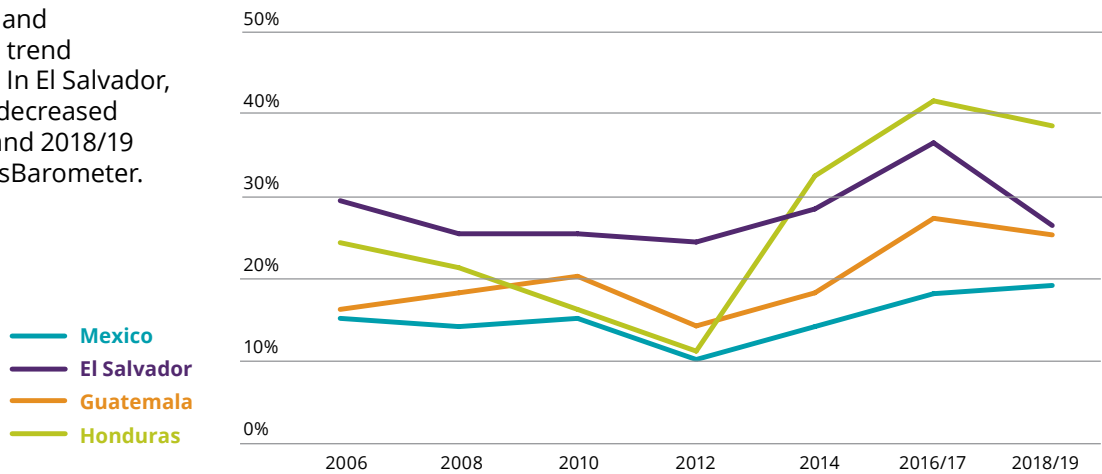


Spotlight on Intentions to Emigrate

For over a decade, the AmericasBarometer has asked about intentions to live or work in another country. Between 2012 and 2016/17, emigration intentions increased in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

In Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, the upward trend tapered off in 2018/19. In El Salvador, emigration intentions decreased between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 rounds of the AmericasBarometer.

Do you have any intention of going to live or work in another country in the next three years?



Intensity of Emigration Intention

In 2018/19, the AmericasBarometer asked a question to gauge intensity of intention to emigrate. The question wording is:

Q14f. [If respond "yes" to Q14:] How likely is it that you will live and work in another country in the next three years?

Respondents were only asked this question if they indicated an emigration intention. That is, the question (Q14f) is not asked of the entire sample.

Among those with an intention to emigrate in Mexico, 36% report a strong intention; for Guatemala, this number is 39%; for El Salvador, 36%; and, for Honduras, 51%.

For every 100 adults, how many express a strong desire to emigrate?*



*"Strong desire to emigrate" is calculated as the proportion who express an intention to emigrate and, likewise, report that it is "very likely" that they will leave the country to work or stay in the next three years.

Emigration intentions provide a lens into public mood regarding the choice to emigrate. Of course, not all who express an intention actually emigrate.

Safety, Resources, and Governance Influence Emigration

Who is more likely to emigrate?

Individuals who:	Mexico	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras
Receive remittances	-	■	■	■
Have ties to the U.S.	■	■	■	■
Are crime victims	■	■	■	-
Fear assault	-	-	■	■
Are asked for bribes	■	■	-	■
Are food insecure	■	■	■	■
Experience income loss	-	■	■	■
Are unemployed / seeking work	■	■	■	■
Are men	■	■	■	■
Are young	■	■	■	■

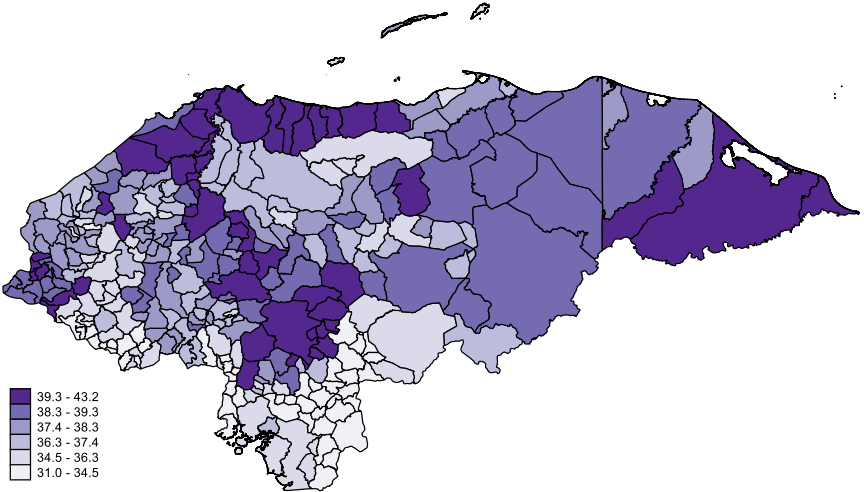
Note: Black boxes indicate a factor is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$; white boxes indicate significance at $p \leq 0.10$. For Honduras, insecurity is a stronger predictor ($p < 0.05$) if crime victimization is removed, and crime victimization is significant if bribe victimization and insecurity are removed, indicating that these factors tend to cluster in the same individuals.

Where are individuals more “at risk” of emigration?

This choropleth map estimates the percentage of adults in each municipality in Honduras who have an intention to emigrate. Not

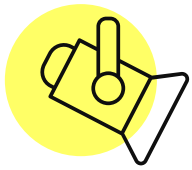
all who express an intention to emigrate will leave, but intentions are well-correlated with immigration flows. Therefore, the results are a

reasonable estimate of Honduran municipalities that contain more, or fewer, individuals “at risk” of emigration.



Note: By design, LAPOP’s AmericasBarometer surveys are representative at the national level and at the level of major sub-national regions. That design permits estimates of how regions in the west of a country differ from those in the east, for example. To drill one level deeper, we apply a statistical modeling approach called “Multilevel Regression and Poststratification” (MRP). This technique permits us to synthesize information from a recent census with the AmericasBarometer survey data to generate estimates at the level of a municipality. Interested in knowing more? Reach out to LAPOP and ask!

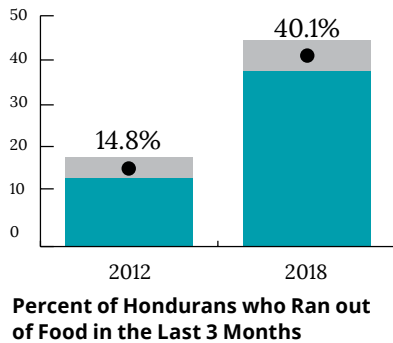




Spotlight on Food Insecurity in Honduras

By Adam Wolsky¹

Food insecurity affects 2 in 5 households in Honduras, according to the 2018 AmericasBarometer Honduras survey.² This statistic represents an increase of 171% since the project last surveyed the topic in 2012. In 2018, 40.1% of Hondurans said their household had run out of food in the last three months, whereas in 2012 only 14.8% reported the same level of food insecurity.



Who is more likely to be food insecure? Analyses of the 2018 Honduras AmericasBarometer data indicate that economically disadvantaged and older individuals are more likely to say their household has run out of food in the last three months, compared to those who are wealthier and younger. Those who have children under 13 at home also are more likely to experience food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a critical topic because it affects individuals' quality of life and opportunities. By a large margin, food-insecure individuals are more likely to report that their personal economic situation worsened over the last twelve months, that their household income is not enough to get by, and similarly, that their income has

declined over the last two years. Food insecurity also affects individuals' intentions to emigrate: 45.6% of Hondurans who have experienced food insecurity express intentions to emigrate, compared to 33.5% who have not run out of food in the last three months.

A warming climate will continue to yield deleterious outcomes for Honduras' crops. News outlets report that recent drought conditions have devastated agriculture in Honduras.³ The expansion of Central America's dry corridor has decreased economic opportunity, increased food insecurity, and increased emigration flows. Given that one-quarter of the Honduran population works in agriculture, these shifts are likely to exact further tolls on citizens'

household finances, food security, and the extent to which Hondurans remain rooted in their local communities.⁴

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² The AmericasBarometer asked two questions about food insecurity in the 2018/19 round. The wording for this particular question is as follows: FS2. In the past three months, because of a lack of money or other resources, did your household ever run out of food? (0) No (1) Yes.


³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/central-america-drying-farmers-face-choice-pray-rain-or-leave-n1027346>

⁴ [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/11/06/how-climate-change-is-affecting-rural-honduras-and-pushing-people-north/?noredirect=on](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/11/06/how-climate-change-is-affecting-rural-honduras-and-pushing-people-north/?hpid=hp_hp-climate-change-honduras-opinion&hpid=hp_hp-climate-change-honduras-opinion)



Democratic Legitimacy

Oscar Castorena and Brielle Morton¹



One ingredient in democracy's success is its ability to generate public support for core institutions and processes. The former – support for core institutions – is often referred to as "political legitimacy" or "system support." The latter – support for democratic processes – refers to citizens' commitment to the use of those institutions in ways consistent with a liberal democracy. For example, confidence in elections is one expression of political legitimacy, while the belief in extending the franchise to all adults regardless of their beliefs is one expression of support for core democratic processes.

Political legitimacy or “system support” has long been a focus of public opinion research in both new and developed democracies because a decline in mass support could result in political instability.² Political systems with low levels of legitimacy will be ill equipped to weather periods of crisis. Moreover, legitimacy matters at the level of political institutions as it can prevent interbranch crises,³ a key threat to the stability of democracy in the region. Along with concerns about the stability of democratic regimes, previous research has found that system

support is important for the ability of political leaders to carry out their work successfully.⁴ Political environments with high trust in the regime provide leaders with more leeway to govern effectively as they can count on a “reservoir” of support.⁵ Conversely, in low trust environments, poor performance and political scandals can mean that governments quickly lose the broad support of the people to rule.

The LAC region's recent experiences with crises of economic hardship, insecurity, and corruption highlight the

significance of political legitimacy for regime stability and policy outcomes. The case of Brazil provides a useful example. A period of economic contraction and the Lava Jato corruption scandal mired the government of Dilma Rousseff, resulting in her impeachment in 2016. The sacking of the president, however, was not enough to restore public trust in the Brazilian government. Rousseff's successor, Michel Temer, had previously served as her vice president; as Acting President, Temer sustained approval ratings in the single digits and the public grew distrustful of the Congress, as the corruption scandal engulfed nearly every sector of the country's political class.⁶ Persistent low levels of political legitimacy fueled the rise of an anti-establishment populist leader, Jair Bolsonaro, whose election ironically may have restored public confidence in democratic processes at the same time that his leadership style presents a challenge to the country's democracy.

Along with basic regime survival and stability, political legitimacy is necessary for a regime to govern effectively and for society to flourish. This is especially relevant for two challenges facing the region: migration and insecurity. Previous research has connected the quality of democracy and citizens' confidence in their government institutions to intentions to emigrate.⁷ In contexts where the government has, through economic mismanagement, corruption, or repression, failed to secure diffuse political support, citizens may decide to emigrate (exit) rather than attempt to exercise their voice as a strategy to change the government.⁸ Political legitimacy is also relevant for the ability of governments to address problems of insecurity. Previous research has identified trust in law enforcement institutions as an important factor in citizens' support for vigilante justice.⁹ Although such extra-judicial actions may reduce crime in the short term, vigilantism ultimately undermines the state's monopoly on violence as well as its ability to maintain a strong criminal justice system.

While political support is necessary for the survival and effectiveness of a regime, political tolerance is an essential component of democratic political culture. Because democracy entails pluralism, it also entails disagreement

and dissent. The extent to which governments respect the rights of the opposition and regime critics to participate is commonly held as a measure of the quality of a democracy.¹⁰ Nicaragua and Honduras are illustrative of the relevance of political tolerance to democracy. Both countries are rated low, and have experienced declines, in the V-Dem electoral democracy index as of 2018.¹¹ These two countries have experienced recent episodes of government repression of political dissidents. In Honduras, a protest movement recently formed in response to irregularities in the 2017 presidential elections that saw the incumbent, Juan Orlando Hernández, reelected. The government has met these protests with repressive actions. As of January 2018, 31 people had been killed in post-election violence according to the National Commission of Human Rights in Honduras, with state actors implicated in a number of these deaths.¹² In Nicaragua, what began as anti-austerity protests in the spring of 2018 were also met with repression by government and paramilitary forces. State actions have included the taking of political prisoners. As of 2018, over 300 people had been killed in the political unrest.¹³ These recent events highlight the importance of political tolerance on the part of governments and their publics. Citizen commitment to the rights of political dissidents can temper the ability of governments to engage in acts of repression with impunity. In the case of Nicaragua, the protest movement expanded to calls for Daniel Ortega's resignation and a general anti-regime movement, garnering international attention. While Ortega remains in office, the mobilization sends a strong signal of disapproval and causes the regime to act under greater scrutiny by domestic and international actors. In short, public opinion on political tolerance matters.

This report provides a cross-time analysis of support for the political system and political tolerance among the citizens of Latin America and the Caribbean from 2004 to 2019. We describe cross-national differences as well as the social and demographic bases of these indicators. We also describe trends in these measures, and offer some perspective on the degree to which they appear to be (or not to be) influenced by recent political events.



48.8

The average LAC resident expresses middling levels of system support: 48.8 units on a 0-100 scale.



Main Findings

This report looks at two dimensions of political legitimacy – diffuse and specific. First, we assess diffuse support for regime institutions by analyzing system support over time, cross-nationally, and demographically. Second, we measure specific support by analyzing levels of trust of particular political institutions over time. Some key findings include:

Support for the political system decreased in 2018/19 in the average LAC country. The components with the largest decreases were protection of basic rights, pride in the political system, and the fairness of the courts.

Living in a rural setting is the strongest demographic predictor of support for the political system. Support is lower among those with higher education, more wealth, men, and younger age groups.

The institution with the lowest level of trust, on average, is political parties. Trust in the executive had the highest level of trust on average before 2010, and experienced the largest decrease in trust, on average for the region, by 2018/19.

The report also investigates commitment to the democratic political processes. Specifically, we analyze political tolerance over time, cross-nationally, and across socio-economic and demographic categories. Key findings include:

Political tolerance has remained fairly stable in the LAC region since 2004. On average, there is more support for ensuring the right to peacefully protest for those who criticize the government than there is approval for retaining the right of government dissidents to run for office.

Young people have the highest tolerance, on average. Citizens with higher education, the wealthy, and men have higher tolerance as well.

The final section provides an analysis of the relationship between system support and other dimensions of democratic legitimacy.

System support is positively correlated with five other attitudes relevant to the well-functioning of a democratic system: political tolerance, external efficacy, trust in the executive, trust in local government, and trust in the public. Trust in the executive and trust in local government stand out as the strongest correlates of system support.

System Support

Citizen support for the concept of democracy is vital to the endurance of democratic regimes. Yet, while this aspect of political support is important, it is just one of the ways in which regimes are legitimate in the minds of their citizens. In what follows, and setting aside support for democracy in the abstract, we provide an analysis of the multifaceted concept of political legitimacy as it operates in the LAC region.

LAPOP defines political legitimacy in terms of support for the political system. Political legitimacy, or “system support,” has two central dimensions: diffuse and specific support.¹⁴ While specific support concerns evaluations of incumbent authorities, diffuse system support refers to a generalized attachment to the more abstract objects that the political system and its institutions represent. Along with the Eastonian diffuse-specific framework of political support, Norris further articulates the multi-dimensional structure of political legitimacy.¹⁵ Those dimensions, listed from most diffuse to most specific are: the existence of a political community, support for core regime principles, support for regime institutions, evaluation of regime performance, support for local government, and support for political actors or authorities.

LAPOP’s measure of system support (operationalized through AmericasBarometer survey data) captures the diffuse support for regime institutions that is central to democratic survival.¹⁶ We operationalize the concept of system support through an additive index.¹⁷ This index uses broad questions about political institutions in diffuse terms, rather than personal feelings towards any specific institution or actor. The questions are as follows:

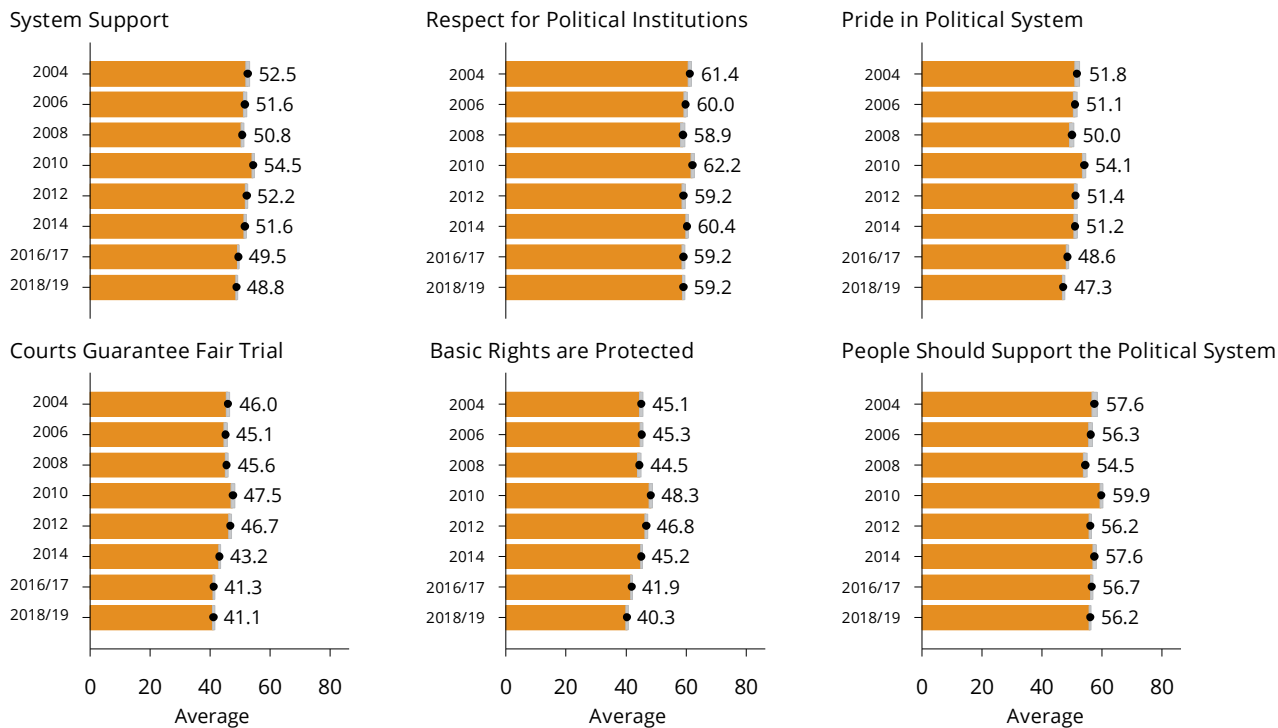


I am going to ask you a series of questions. I am going to ask you that you use the numbers provided in the ladder to answer. Remember, you can use any number.

- B1. To what extent do you think the courts in (country) guarantee a fair trial? (Read: If you think the courts do not ensure justice at all, choose number 1; if you think the courts ensure justice a lot, choose number 7 or choose a point in between the two.)
 - B2. To what extent do you respect the political institutions of (country)?
 - B3. To what extent do you think that citizens’ basic rights are well protected by the political system of (country)?
 - B4. To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of (country)?
 - B6. To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of (country)?
- For each question, we rescale the original 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“a lot”) scale to run from 0 to 100, such that 0 is the least support for the political system and 100 is the most support for the political system. This follows LAPOP’s standard coding and can be interpreted as measuring support in units, or degrees, on a continuous scale running from 0 to 100.

Figure 2.1 shows mean responses for the system support index across time alongside mean scores for each of its five constituent components.¹⁸ Overall, support for the political system has stayed at middling levels, with a 5.7 unit decrease in mean ratings since the 2010 peak. This decrease is primarily driven by changes in opinions on the courts (B1), basic rights (B3), and pride in the political system (B4). The other two components stayed fairly constant, while citizens’ beliefs that the courts guarantee fair trials, that their governments protect their basic rights, and feelings of pride about living under their political system have steadily decreased. From 2010 to 2018/19, mean ratings of fairness in the judicial system dropped by 6.4 units. Ratings of rights protection dropped by 8.0 units. Finally, LAC-average ratings of pride in the political system have fallen by 6.8 units.

Figure 2.1 System Support and Its Components in the LAC-18 Region, 2004-2018/19

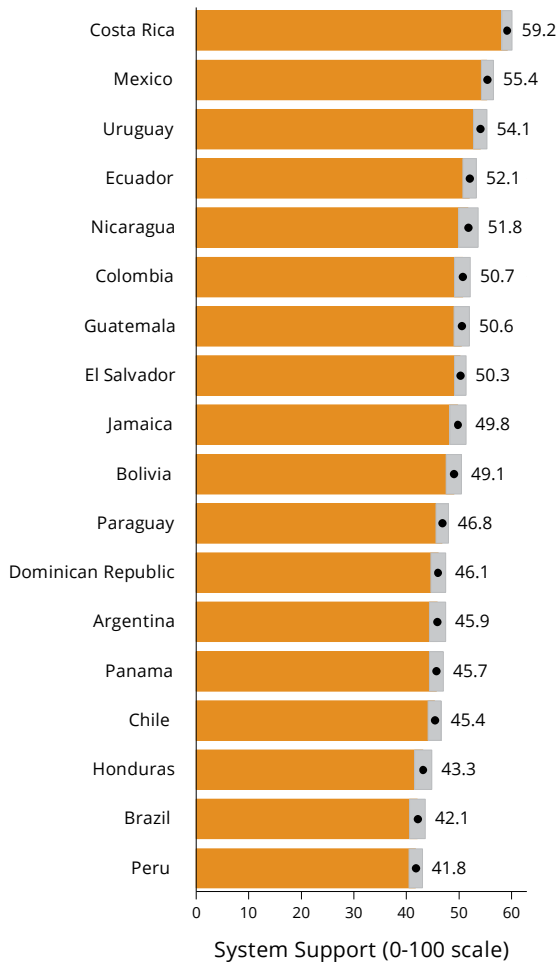


Not surprisingly, given cross-national heterogeneity in political systems, there are differences in support for the political system by country. Figure 2.2 shows levels of system support for the eighteen LAC countries surveyed in the 2018/19 round. Costa Rica has the highest average level of support at 59.2 degrees and Peru has the lowest average at 41.8 degrees.

6.8

The average LAC resident's pride in the political system dropped 6.8 units between 2010 and 2018/19.

Figure 2.2 System Support in the Americas, 2018/19

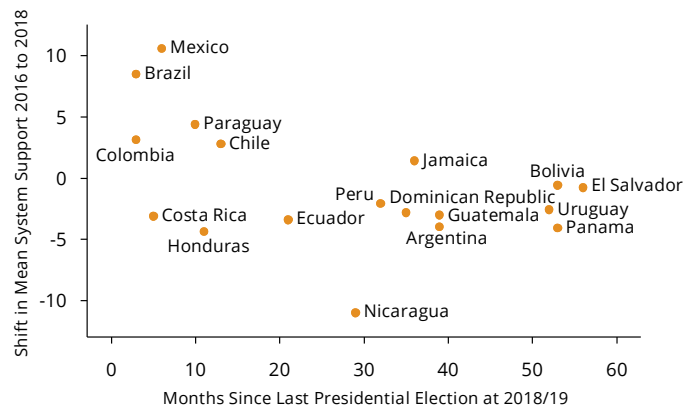


System support is meant to tap the inherent value citizens place in democratic institutions. As such, it ought to change slowly over time. However, systemic shocks may speed up the process in either positive or negative ways. For the interested reader, we provide the country-level trends from the previous round of the AmericasBarometer for each of this report’s key variables in the appendix tables available online.¹⁹ For the sake of parsimony, we will only comment on some findings from this analysis here. In a few cases, there are considerable shifts between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 rounds of the AmericasBarometer. Interestingly, these shifts appear to have some relation to the timing of elections. The countries experiencing the largest positive shifts in the system support index from 2016/17 to 2018/19 are Mexico (+10.6 degrees), Brazil (+8.5 degrees), Paraguay (+4.4 degrees), and Colombia (+3.1 degrees). These four countries also held presidential elections in the spring to fall of 2018 prior to the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer

fieldwork. At the other end, the countries with the largest negative shifts in system support are Nicaragua (-11.0 degrees), Honduras (-4.4 degrees), Panama (-4.1 degrees), and Argentina (-4.0 degrees). At the time of fieldwork, these countries had last held presidential elections in 2016, 2017, 2014, and 2015 respectively. Together, these sets of results suggest that elections play an important role in replenishing citizens’ “reservoir” of support for their political system.

To analyze the relationship between the recentness of elections and the dynamics of system support, Figure 2.3 plots the shift in average system support between the last two rounds of the AmericasBarometer (y-axis) and the months since the last presidential election at the time of survey fieldwork for the 2018/19 round (x-axis). The figure shows, on average, large positive shifts among the countries that have experienced elections within the last 20 months. In general, there appears to be a significant correlation between time since the last presidential election and changes in system support (Pearson’s correlation = -.47). Honduras stands out as one exception - a case with a relatively recent election, but declines in system support. Costa Rica likewise exhibits a similar pattern, but unlike Honduras, is already at a relatively high level of system support to begin with, as demonstrated in Figure 2.2. Finally, Nicaragua’s decrease in system support is significantly greater than one would expect if only election timing mattered. These cases remind us that, while the holding of elections is important to system support, how elections are conducted and political leadership matter as well.

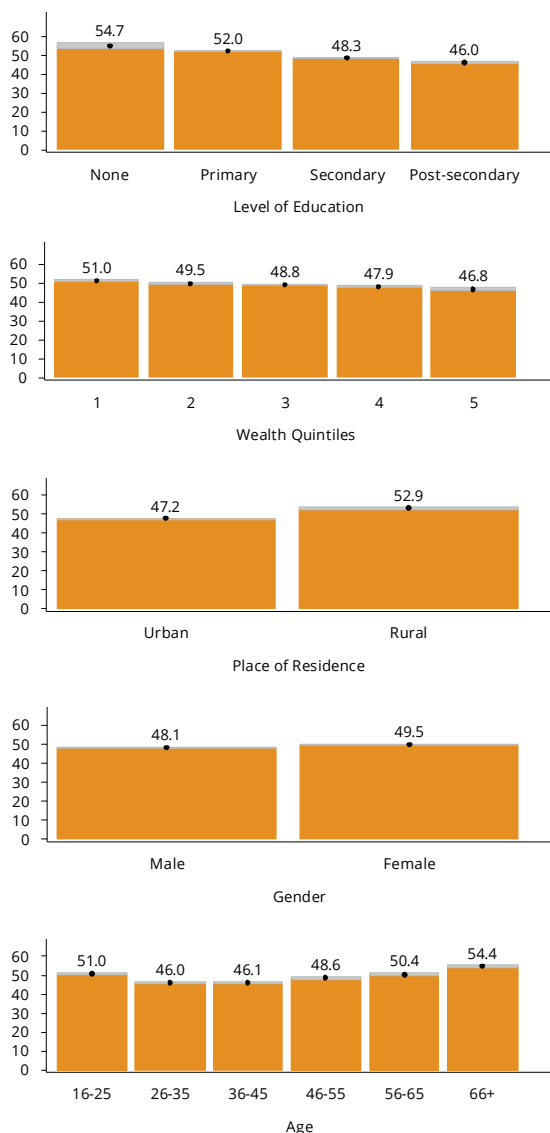
Figure 2.3 Changes in System Support and Recent Elections



Along with contextual factors, individual characteristics are also statistically significant predictors of levels of support for the political system, as shown in Figure 2.4.²⁰ There is a negative relationship between support for the

political system and wealth, education, and urban (vs. rural) place of residence. On average in the LAC region, as individuals increase in wealth and education they express lower system support. Individuals from rural settings have an average system support equal to 52.9 units out of 100, compared to a mean of 47.2 for individuals from urban settings. Women have a higher mean level of support compared to their male counterparts; yet this difference of just 1.4 units, while statistically significant, is quite marginal. Older individuals express a higher mean level of system support compared to younger age groups: those 66 and older register at 54.4 units versus 46.0 units for the 26-35 age group.

Figure 2.4 Demographic and Socio-Economic Correlates of System Support



Specific Institutions and Actors

The system support index is a diffuse, or broad, indicator of political legitimacy. For a more comprehensive evaluation, we can also analyze specific indicators of support by looking at other political institutions and actors that fit into Easton's framework.²¹ One can approach such an assessment by looking at citizen satisfaction with how democracy functions in their country. Here we take a different tack from that performance-based focus on specific support and instead consider evaluations of identifiable actors.

As in prior AmericasBarometer studies, the following questions were included in the 2018/19 study asking about confidence in a set of specific institutions:²²

- B13. To what extent do you trust the National Congress?
- B21. To what extent do you trust the political parties?
- B21A. To what extent do you trust the President/Prime Minister?
- B47A. To what extent do you trust elections in this country?

28.2

In the average LAC country, trust in political parties rates at 28.2 units on a 0-100 scale.



For citizens to have confidence in political institutions, they must perceive them to operate in ways that are free of bias and irregularities.

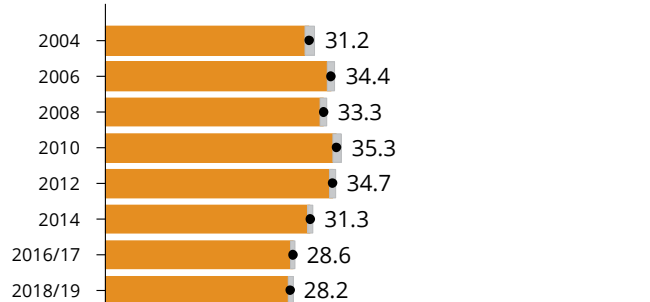


Figure 2.5 shows region-average levels of trust for each institution from 2004 to 2019. Trust in political parties has continuously had the lowest average, dropping to 28.2 in 2018/19 on the 0 to 100 scale. The regional average for trust in the national legislature dipped below the 40s to 39.4 in the 2018/19 round. Trust in elections has continued to decrease; keeping in mind the gap in data from 2006 to 2010 (when the question was not included in the core questionnaire), it declined to an average low of 45.5 out of 100 in 2018/19. The largest decrease in trust over time has been toward the executive; from 2010 to 2018/19, average trust declined from 55.2 to 42.8 on a 0 to 100 scale, a difference of 12.4 units. The mean change is striking, though there is variation among countries and individual presidents in office at the time of each survey.

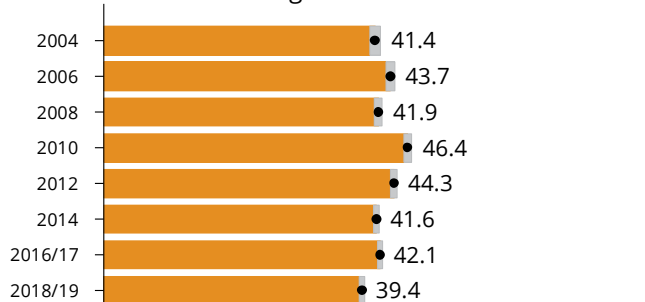
To what extent are citizens' evaluations of these specific institutions related to expert evaluations of institutional performance? We can provide one answer to this question by looking at confidence in elections. Figure 2.6 plots the country mean level of trust in elections from the AmericasBarometer 2018/19 round and the country's mean score on the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Index for the 2012-2018 period. The Electoral Integrity Project creates this index using expert surveys of electoral processes.²³ There is a positive correlation between the two measures (Pearson's correlation = .61), indicating that experts and the mass public correspond in their evaluations of how elections are conducted in their country. Honduras stands out as a case where the public and expert evaluations exhibit particularly low levels of trust in the integrity of elections.

Figure 2.5 Trust in Institutions in the LAC-18 Region, 2004-2018/19

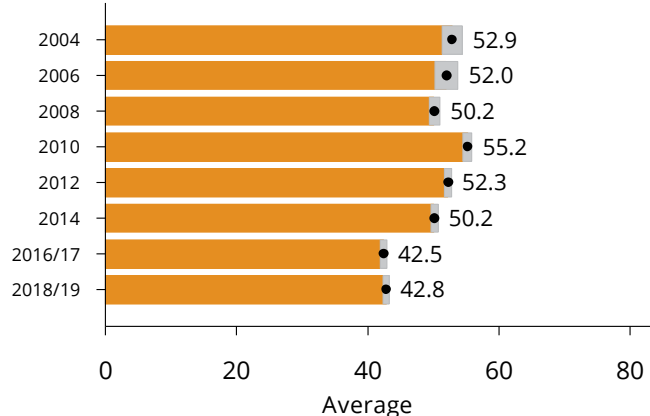
Trust in Political Parties



Trust in the National Legislature



Trust in Executive



Trust in Elections

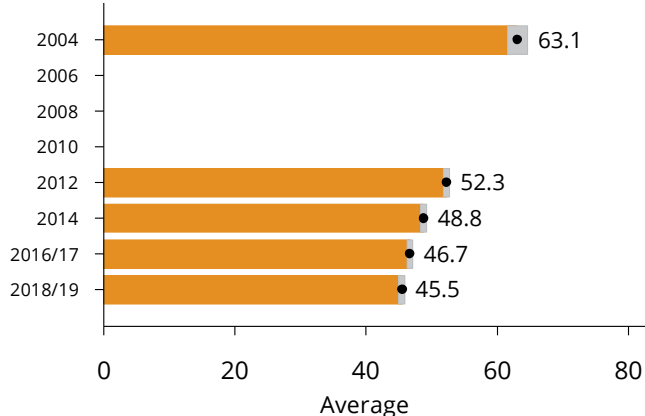
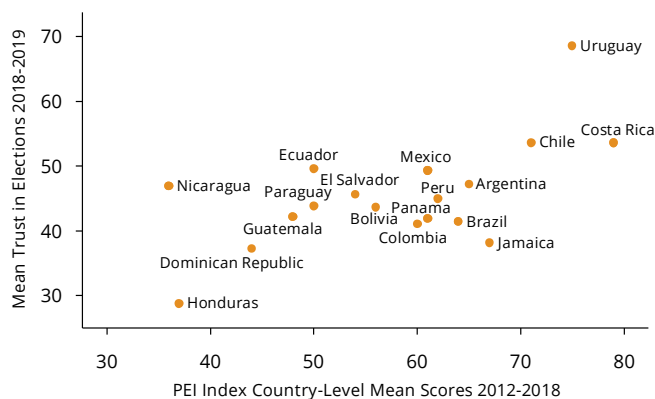


Figure 2.6 Mass Public and Expert Evaluations of Elections



Since these indicators capture the specific support dimension of political legitimacy (tapping into citizen trust of specific political actors and institutions), one ought to expect variation across time within a given political system. For example, trust in the president should ebb and flow along with the executive's performance in office. While we do not discuss cross-time trends for each country for the sake of parsimony, we can speak to noteworthy shifts in a few cases.²⁴ In the first place, trust in the executive displayed substantial variation across countries in direction and magnitude of changes from 2016/17 to 2018/19. These ranged from a large positive shift in Mexico (+40.3 degrees) to a decline of 19.5 degrees in Nicaragua. The top four countries with the largest increases in trust in the executive each experienced recent presidential elections: Mexico, Brazil (+32.9 degrees), Paraguay (+17.2 degrees), and Colombia (+17.0 degrees). These countries also experienced statistically significant increases in the other three trust indicators (with the exception of trust in elections in Paraguay and trust in the national legislature in Colombia and Paraguay). At the other end, two countries experienced statistically significant declines across all four indicators: Nicaragua and Honduras. The largest decline in trust in elections (-11.6 degrees) was registered in Honduras; as mentioned above, Honduras was the site of a protest movement in response to perceptions of malfeasance in the 2017 elections.

Political Tolerance

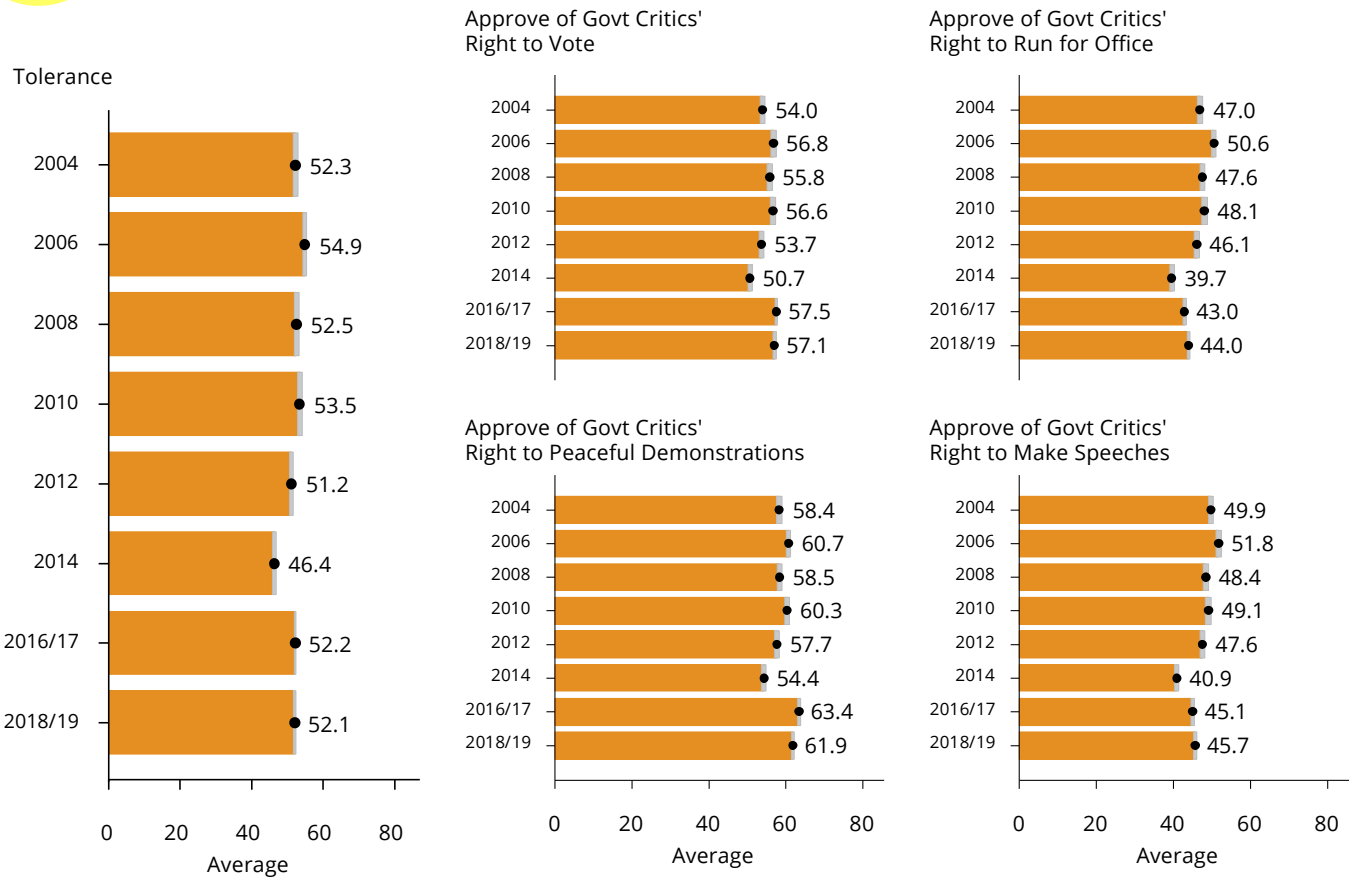
This section shifts focus to a different dimension of democratic legitimacy outlined by Norris: support for regime principles.²⁵ Regime principles in this context refer to democratic ideals such as political competition, alternate sources of information, and universal suffrage.²⁶ Following the work of Booth and Seligson, we use citizen commitment to political tolerance as a measure of support for regime principles.²⁷ In line with previous LAPOP research, political tolerance is defined as “respect by citizens for the political rights of others, especially those with whom they may disagree.”²⁸

The AmericasBarometer measures political tolerance by asking about citizens' approval of the right of people with dissenting political opinions to participate in politics. Specifically, the questions ask about rights to vote, peacefully demonstrate, run for office, and make televised speeches. The following questions are used to generate a political tolerance index:²⁹

- D1. There are people who only say bad things about the [country's] form of government, not just the incumbent government but the system of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people's right to vote? Please read me the number from the scale [1-10 scale]
- D2. How strongly do you approve or disapprove that such people be allowed to conduct peaceful demonstrations in order to express their views? Please read me the number.
- D3. Still thinking of those who only say bad things about the [country's] form of government, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to run for public office?
- D4. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people appearing on television to make speeches?

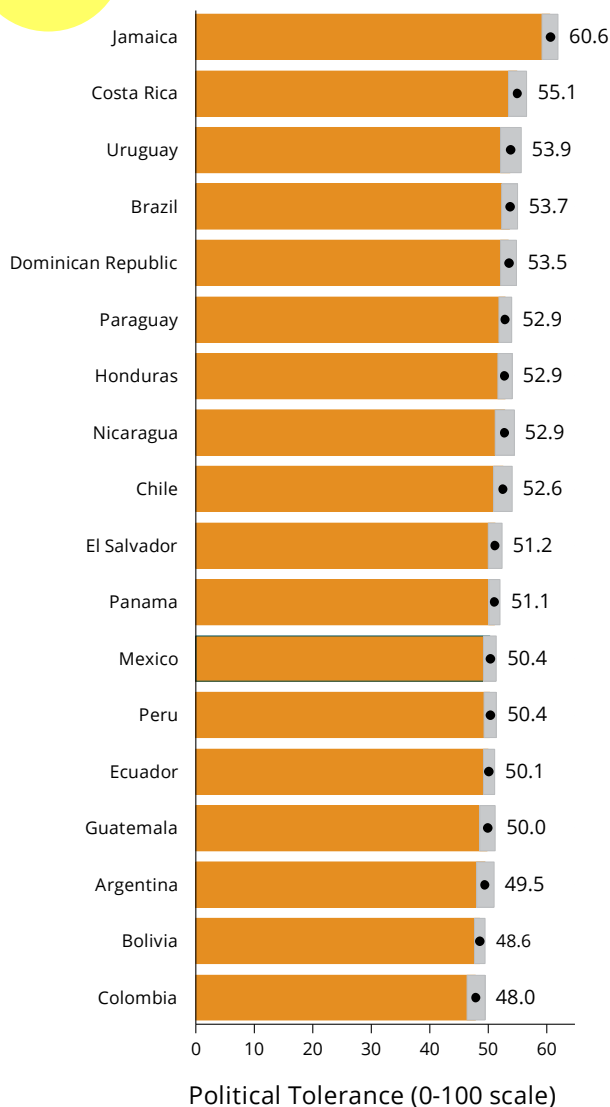
On average across the region, political tolerance has remained fairly constant since 2004. Though there was a slight decrease in 2014, the average level of tolerance has since returned to approximately 52 degrees on the 0 to 100, scale as shown in Figure 2.7. Citizens have the highest approval for retaining the right to peacefully protest for those who criticize the government, with a mean of 61.9 out of 100 in 2018/19. The lowest values are registered for approval of critic's right to run for office, at 44.0 out of 100 in 2018/19.

Figure 2.7 Political Tolerance and Its Components in the LAC-18 Region, 2004-2018/19



How does political tolerance vary by country? Figure 2.8 shows the cross-national distribution of mean levels of political tolerance on the 0-100 scale. Jamaica has the highest average level of tolerance at 60.6, while Colombia has the lowest average at 48.0 units. Most countries in the region have levels of political tolerance around the mid-point on the 0-100 scale.

Figure 2.8 Political Tolerance in the Americas, 2018/19



An analysis of trends from the 2016/17 to 2018/19 round at the country level, not shown in the report's main text but available in the online appendix³⁰, reveals considerable stability in the political tolerance index. Shifts in the political tolerance index ranged only from -4.1 to +3.5 degrees (on the 0-100 scale). In fact, there are only four countries with statistically significant increases in their index averages: El Salvador (+3.5 degrees), Peru (+2.7 degrees), Colombia (+2.5 degrees), and Honduras (+2.2 degrees). There are also only five cases that experienced statistically significant declines since the 2016/17 wave: Mexico (-4.1 degrees), Brazil (-3.6 degrees), the Dominican Republic (-3.0 degrees), Uruguay (-2.8 degrees), and Panama (-1.7 degrees). It is worth noting that the two cases with the greatest declines in their political tolerance index average (Mexico and Brazil) also exhibited the greatest increases in measures of system support and trust in political institutions discussed above.

Figure 2.9 shows variation in political tolerance by socio-economic and demographic groups, for the region as a whole.³¹ Level of education is the strongest predictor of political tolerance: those with higher education express more political tolerance. The results show an average level of tolerance of 56.7 units for the highest education level compared to an average level of 46.5 for the lowest education level. Political tolerance decreases as people age. The youngest age cohort has an average level of tolerance of 55.7 units compared to 46.8 units for the oldest cohort. Women have slightly lower tolerance (average = 50.7 units) compared to their male counterparts (average = 53.5). The highest wealth quintile is more politically tolerant (55.1) than the lowest quintile (49.3). There is a marginal difference between urban and rural residents of .7 units.³²

52.1

In the average LAC country, levels of political tolerance rate at 52.1 units on a 0-100 scale.

Figure 2.9 Demographic and Socio-Economic Correlates of Political Tolerance



Dimensions of Democratic Legitimacy

This section analyzes the relationship between system support and five other dimensions of political regime legitimacy.³³ As discussed in the previous sections, the system support index is a measure of diffuse support for regime institutions. The political tolerance index is a measure of diffuse support for regime principles. To capture evaluations of regime performance, we look at another diffuse indicator, external efficacy - how much someone believes their government representatives care about their concerns as an individual. In addition, we consider three indicators of support for specific institutions:

trust in the executive (to represent a support for specific actors dimension) trust in local government (to represent a support for local government dimension), trust in the public community (i.e., interpersonal trust, to represent a political community dimension). The specific measures are as follows:

System Support Index: B1, B2, B3, B4, B6 - (see section on System Support)

Political Tolerance Index: D1, D2, D3, D4 - (see section on Political Tolerance)

EFF1. Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

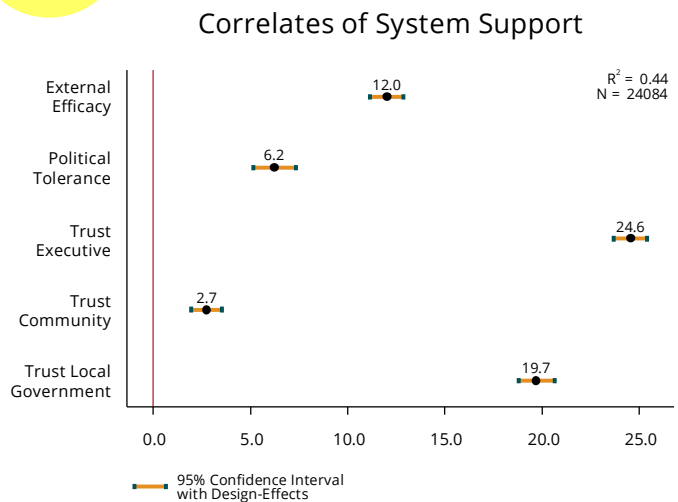
B21A. To what extent do you trust the President/Prime Minister?

B32. To what extent do you trust the local or municipal government?

IT1. And speaking of the people from around here, would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy?³⁴

We ran a regression analysis to determine the relationship between system support and these other five dimensions of democratic legitimacy. We control for the same socio-economic and demographic indicators analyzed earlier, and country-fixed effects. All five support indicators have a positive, significant relationship with system support, according to a 95% confidence interval, as shown in Figure 2.10. This indicates that as external efficacy, political tolerance, trust of the executive, community, and local government increase, so does the average level of support for the political system. The highest correlations with system support are between trust in the president (coefficient = 24.6³⁵), in the local government (19.7), and external efficacy (12.0). Two of the specific indicators, trust in local government and executive, have particularly strong correlations with system support.

Figure 2.10 Regression Analysis Predicting System Support Index with Other Measures of Political Support, 2018/19



The empirical evidence presented here affirms that there exist important connections between a general measure of political support (political legitimacy) and other diffuse and specific indicators of democratic legitimacy. These results affirm the validity of the system support index, as a means by which one can evaluate the level of political legitimacy within a mass public. The results also suggest that trust in specific institutions may spill over into more diffuse trust and, of course, vice versa. That is, the fate of political legitimacy is connected not only to general assessments of political institutions and processes, but also to the evaluations that individuals develop of specific political actors and agencies.

Conclusion

Democracy is stronger to the degree that citizens express support for its institutions and support for democratic processes. When citizens broadly view the system as legitimate and tolerate even its most ardent detractors, democratic governments are empowered to function in ways that are both effective and inclusive. However, when this cultural foundation is fragile, democracy's fate is less certain. Given the importance of these beliefs and attitudes by the mass public, we tracked the legitimacy of democratic regimes and levels of political tolerance in the Americas, compared them across countries, and provided an analysis of the socioeconomic and demographic factors that influence these attitudes. We also considered the relevance of context, including elections, to changes in public opinion over time.

One conclusion from the cross-time analyses is that system support and political tolerance do not necessarily trend together, nor even do all components of these indices. Recall that overall system support fell in the previous decade largely due to flagging faith that courts guarantee a fair trial, that the system protects citizens' basic rights, and pride in the political system. Yet respect for the country's political institutions and normative commitments to liberal democracy, as operationalized by political tolerance, were more stable.

Another noteworthy finding from this report is that political legitimacy and, to a lesser extent, political tolerance exhibit short-term volatility in the Americas. Analyses of specific cases here suggest this volatility reflects real-time political processes, namely elections and turnovers in executive power as well as violent government crackdowns of protest movements. It is worth noting that the two cases that experienced the largest positive shifts in system support from 2016/17 (Mexico and Brazil), were also the two cases with the largest declines in average political tolerance. This indicates that these two important components of democratic legitimacy can trend in opposite directions, at least in the short term. Recent work on democratic

political culture in the region has highlighted the willingness of citizens to delegate greater authority to popular executives (whose popularity can bolster system support) and support greater control on political dissent.³⁶ This dynamic poses a challenge for the development of a political culture conducive to stable democratic government, as both support for the political system and political tolerance are necessary for the legitimacy of democratic regimes.

The findings here provide useful insights for political actors and observers of the region. Presidents and local governments are some of the institutions that are most visible in citizens' day-to-day lives. Levels of trust in these institutions are the strongest predictors of overall system support. From one perspective, it is unfortunate for the overall health of democracy that support for the political system is so strongly related to perceptions of specific actors and institutions rather than more stable and diffuse dimensions such as commitment to regime principles. In a more positive light, incumbent governments at the local and national level have the opportunity to make positive impacts on citizens' commitment to the democratic regime, i.e. building the "reservoir" of support. This places a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of the actors who inhabit these institutions. It is thus incumbent upon political leaders to show themselves to be capable, honest, and responsive.

Another factor that can serve to build the "reservoir" are regular elections. Our analyses provide evidence that elections are instruments for reinvigorating the legitimacy of political institutions. System support is often elevated in countries that have recently held elections. Thus, for example, we would expect that system support in Panama is higher following the country's May 2019 election than it was at the time of fieldwork, prior to that national election. We might also think the pattern bodes well for system support in Argentina, which holds elections in late 2019. However, elections in and of themselves are not sufficient. The case of Honduras highlights that citizens need to have confidence in the integrity of the electoral process if there are to be gains in system support. In short, for citizens to have confidence in their institutions, they must perceive them to operate in ways that are free of bias and irregularities. Effective democratic institutions build strong democratic citizenries, which in turn help democracy to flourish.

Oscar Castorena holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University and a postdoctoral research fellow at LAPOP.

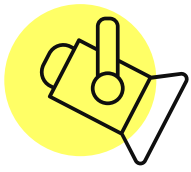
Brielle Morton is student at University of Maryland and a Leadership Alliance intern at LAPOP for the summer of 2019.

Notes

- 1 Some text in this report is taken, with permission, from a previous report published by LAPOP (Carlin 2017). We thank Dr. Ryan Carlin for his efforts on that earlier project and his permission to build on that work.
- 2 Dalton 2004.
- 3 Helmke 2010.
- 4 Hetherington 1998.
- 5 Easton 1975, Lipset 1963.
- 6 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/latamcaribbean/2017/07/28/the-temer-government-in-brazil-lacks-the-legitimacy-required-to-reform-its-way-back-to-recovery/>
- 7 Hiskey et al. 2014, Meyer and Taft-Morales 2019.
- 8 Hirschman 1970.
- 9 Zizumbo-Colunga 2017.
- 10 Dahl 1971.
- 11 For information about the V-Dem Varieties of Democracy data consulted for this report and the methodology of that project, see <https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data-version-9/>.
- 12 See also Haugaard 2018.
- 13 Human Rights Watch 2019.
- 14 Easton 1975.
- 15 Norris 1999, p. 10.
- 16 Booth and Seligson 2009.
- 17 The system support index is the mean of five questions from the questionnaire: B1, B2, B3, B4, and B6. A Cronbach's alpha score is used to determine the reliability of combining the questions into a singular index. The system support alpha score is 0.80, which is high and evidence of scale reliability for the index.
- 18 Cross-time values are calculated including only those countries the AmericasBarometer has surveyed consistently since 2006: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay. All analyses of cross-time trends have been replicated for the subset of countries included in the 2004 AmericasBarometer study (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic). Cross-time trends are similar across these groups of countries for all analyses shown here.
- 19 See these results in the online appendix at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studies-country.php>
- 20 For all demographic figures in this report, we evaluate statistical significance using the 95% confidence intervals from the bivariate analysis between the socio-demographic category and the variable of interest.
- 21 Easton 1975.
- 22 Again, we recoded responses from their original 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("a lot") scale, so that the measures in this report run from 0 to 100.
- 23 Norris and Grömping 2019.
- 24 Interested readers can consult the online appendix tables available at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studies-country.php>.
- 25 Norris 1999.
- 26 Dahl 2008, Schmitter and Karl 1991, Diamond 1999.
- 27 Booth and Seligson 2009.
- 28 Seligson 2000, p. 5.
- 29 The political tolerance index is created using the mean score of the D series: D1, D2, D3, and D4. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.82, a high score that indicates scale reliability for the political tolerance index. For the analyses in this report, we rescaled responses from their original 1 to 10 scale to run from 0 to 100, as per LAPOP's standard.
- 30 The online appendix is available at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studies-country.php>
- 31 As in the earlier analyses, we evaluate statistical significance using the 95% confidence intervals from the bivariate analysis between the socio-demographic category and the variable of interest.
- 32 In a multiple regression of political tolerance on all five socio-demographic variables, this marginal difference between urban and rural residents is not statistically significant.
- 33 Norris 1999.
- 34 Trust in the community has been reverse coded from its original scale in the survey so that higher values in that variable indicate higher levels of trust and lower levels indicate lower trust.
- 35 Given the way the variables are coded, the regression coefficients can be interpreted as the predicted change in the dependent variable, on the 0-100 scale, given a min-to-max change in the independent variable.
- 36 Carlin and Singer 2011.

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Spotlight on Sustainable Development Goals

By Noam Lupu ¹

In September 2015, the leaders of 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While these goals are wide-ranging, they focus primarily on ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and addressing climate change. They provide “a global blueprint for dignity, peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and in the future.”² For instance, Goal 16 focuses on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Its targets include developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms, and promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

How do we know whether countries are making progress toward these goals? Official statistics on some of these measures may be unavailable or unreliable. There is ample evidence, for instance, that official statistics about crime victimization – which

come primarily from police records of reported crimes – dramatically underestimate actual crime rates. This underestimation occurs because many crimes go unreported to the police, especially in contexts where citizens mistrust the police or where officers are widely expected to request bribes.

AmericasBarometer data offer a valuable resource for measuring progress toward some of the targets set by the SDGs. Not only are the data rigorous and high-quality, but they are also designed systematically to be comparable across countries and over time. With hundreds of questions covering over a decade of surveys, the AmericasBarometer includes measures that are relevant to 10 of the 17 SDGs, with roughly 32 questions that are relevant to specific targets.

Consider target 16.5 within Goal 16: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. For over a decade, the AmericasBarometer has been asking citizens across the Americas about their experiences

being asked to pay bribes. Which countries have made progress toward reducing bribery? Figure 1 answers this question using data from the AmericasBarometer. A core set of items in the survey asks citizens whether in the prior 12 months an official has asked them to pay a bribe.³ For each country, the figure compares the proportion of respondents who reported having been asked to pay a bribe at least once in the 2008 round to the same proportion in the 2018/19 round.

The countries toward the top of the figure are those that in the last decade have made the most progress toward reducing bribery. Jamaica, Argentina, and Costa Rica have substantially reduced the proportion of citizens who report having been asked to pay a bribe. At the other end of the spectrum, bribery seems to have increased dramatically in the last decade in Paraguay and Honduras.

Figure 1.
Change in Bribe Victimization in the Americas, 2008-2018/19

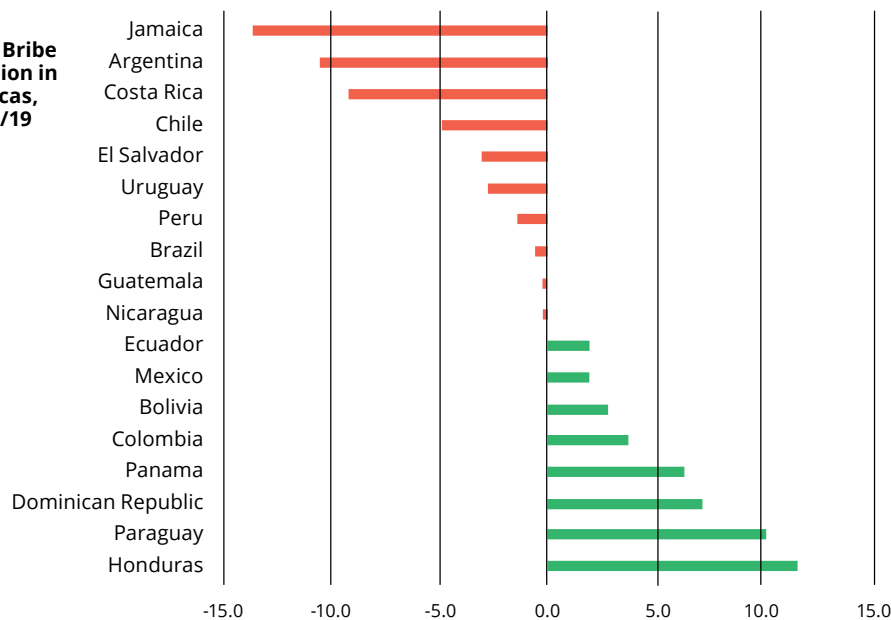
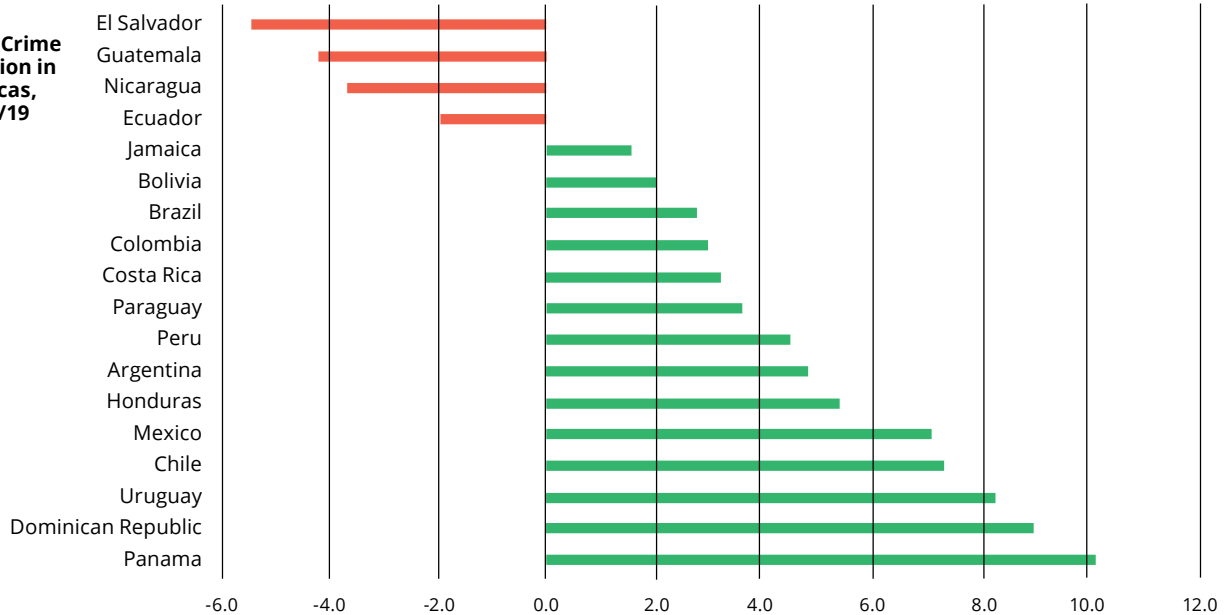


Figure 2.
Change in Crime
Victimization in
the Americas,
2010-2018/19



Another target within Goal 16 focuses on crime and security. Target 16.1 asks countries to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.” Since 2010, the AmericasBarometer has been asking citizens across the Americas whether in the prior 12 months they had been the victim of at least one crime.⁴

Since official crime statistics tend to underreport true rates of victimization, this measure is likely more accurate than data based on police records.

Moreover, the comparability of the data over time allows us to systematically track each country’s progress.

Figure 2 shows which countries have made progress in reducing crime victimization and which have not. Only three countries in the region have reduced the proportion of adults who report being victimized: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. As many observers have noted, crime rates have risen across much of the region in recent years. According to the AmericasBarometer, the rate of crime victimization has increased especially highly in Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay, although there are substantial increases across much of the region. As international organizations and individual governments around the world assess progress toward

the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important that we have accurate and reliable measures of specific targets and indicators. The AmericasBarometer offers high-quality data that speak to a large number of Goals and individual targets. These data can and should be used to help us assess which countries are making progress and which are falling behind.

1 Noam Lupu is Associate Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and Associate Director of LAPOP.

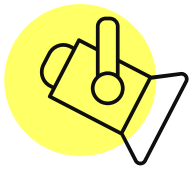
2 See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/why-the-sdgs-matter/>.

3 These items ask about whether different officials asked the respondent to pay a bribe: “Now we want to talk about your personal experience with things that happen in everyday life... EXC2. Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last twelve months? EXC6. In the last

twelve months, did any government employee ask you for a bribe? EXC20. In the last twelve months, did any soldier or military officer ask you for a bribe? EXC11. In the last twelve months, to process any kind of document in your municipal government, like a permit for example, did you have to pay any money above that required by law? EXC13. In your work, have you been asked to pay a bribe in the last twelve months? EXC14. Did you have to pay a bribe to the courts in the last twelve months? EXC15. In order to be seen in a hospital or a clinic in the last twelve months, did you have to pay a bribe? EXC16. Have you had to pay a

bribe at school in the last twelve months?” Respondents are coded as having been asked to pay a bribe if they responded affirmatively to any of these questions.

4 Specifically, the question (VICIEXT) asked, “have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threats or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?”



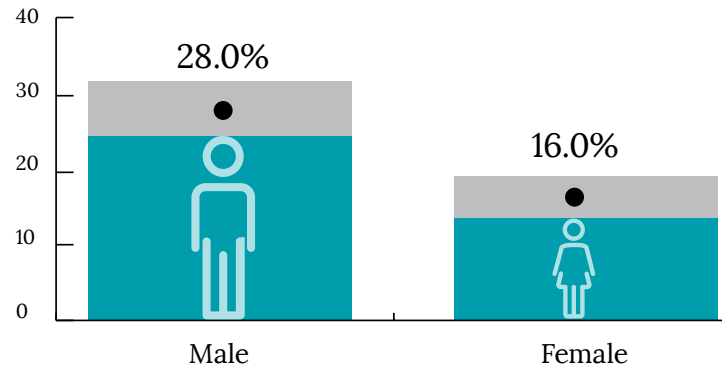
Spotlight on Gender and Political Representation in Bolivia

By Daniela Osorio Michel¹

Bolivia has one of the most effective gender quotas in the region, but barriers to women's entry into politics remain. Bolivia's quota stipulates parity and alternation: women must constitute 50% of party lists at the national level, and parties must alternate between women and men on their candidate lists. This type of quota is effective in that it guarantees that half of the elected representatives are women. However, parity does not necessarily mean that Bolivian women have equal resources, opportunities, or encouragement to run for office compared to their male counterparts. Indeed, there is a significant gender gap regarding the extent to which women are encouraged to participate as candidates.² According to the 2019 AmericasBarometer Bolivia survey, 28% of men and 16% of women have been encouraged to run for office.³ This difference may partially explain a gap in the extent to which individuals consider actually running for office: AmericasBarometer data reveal that 14.7% of Bolivian men have considered running for office, compared to 10% of Bolivian women.

The 2019 AmericasBarometer survey also asked whether respondents feel that they are qualified to be a public official. Once again, responses reflect a gender gap. In Bolivia, 39.6% of men think they are either very or somewhat qualified, while only 29.1% of women report the same opinion of their abilities. Furthermore, 35.9% of Bolivian women feel they are not qualified at all, compared to 28% of Bolivian men.

Interestingly, Bolivians demonstrate satisfaction with female leadership in terms of present issues, despite



Percent Encouraged to Run for Political Office in Bolivia, by Gender

gender gaps in factors that motivate men and women to run for political office. This finding is especially applicable to Bolivian women. For example, according to more than one third of Bolivians, the economy is the most important problem afflicting the country. When asked who can better handle the economy, 34.9% of Bolivian women report that female representatives are more capable than men are. As a noteworthy point of contrast, only 8.6% of Bolivian men think a male leader would be more successful in managing the economy compared to a female leader.

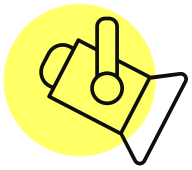
Yet, when considering political leadership in general, we see that the Bolivian public is more inclined toward male leadership. According to the 2019 AmericasBarometer, 22.9% of all Bolivian adults (and 30.9% of Bolivian men) consider men to be better political leaders than women. This general inclination to favor male leadership may be a key factor behind the encouragement gap shown in the figure above.

Despite Bolivia's great progress regarding female representation at the national level, there is still room for improvement at the individual level. Those seeking to increase the number of women who run for political office in Bolivia and elsewhere should consider boosting awareness of the differential levels of encouragement offered to women versus men. Programs that encourage women to run while providing practical training to increase confidence may help break down lingering barriers to women's full inclusion in the political space.

¹ Daniela Osorio Michel is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and a LAPOP-affiliated researcher.

² The figure is based on this question: PRA8N. ¿Alguna vez lo(a) animaron personalmente a presentarse como candidato(a) a una elección para un cargo público?

³ Additionally, more educated respondents, those that are older, and respondents who live in rural versus urban communities were more likely to be encouraged to run for political office.



Spotlight on Environmental Policy Preferences in Brazil

By Claire Q. Evans¹



As the largest and most populous country in Latin America, Brazil's environmental policies carry particular regional and global significance. LAPOP's 2014 AmericasBarometer estimated that 62% of Brazilians prioritize the environment over economic growth. But who do Brazilians trust to carry out environmental policy?² The 2018/19 AmericasBarometer asked respondents whether they prefer that hypothetical funding for environmental protections be given to local governments or non-state actors such as NGOs or community organizations. In Brazil, public opinion on the matter is split. A slight majority prefers that non-state actors be put in charge of executing environmental protections (54.5%), while a slim minority favors transferring funds to local governments (45.5%).



54.5% Give resources to local government
45.5% Give resources to non-state actor

Who favors non-state actors to local governments when it comes to environmental policy implementation? In Brazil, women are more likely to prefer non-state actors, while older cohorts are more likely to favor local

governments. Analyses of the data also show that education, wealth, urban versus rural dwelling, and regional location are not related to preferences over environmental policy implementation in Brazil. Importantly, preferences for non-state implementation appear to be shaped by evaluations of government. As individuals' trust in local governments decreases, the likelihood of preferring non-state actors increases. Furthermore, when asked who they would vote for if national elections were held at the time of the survey, those who express their intention to vote for the opposition candidate/ party or casting a null vote are more likely to favor that resources for environmental protection go to non-state actors.

Understanding Brazilians' opinions on the implementation of environmental policy is vital for understanding how to move forward with environmental protections. The 2019 Brazil AmericasBarometer study reveals an opinion divide over whether government or non-government actors should take the lead in managing public resources for environmental protection. If leaders of local governments wish to increase demand for their involvement in environmental protection efforts, they will need to increase confidence in public institutions and administrations.

¹ Claire Q. Evans is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and a LAPOP-affiliated researcher.

² See Evans, Claire Q. (2015). "Rethinking Environmental Attitudes in Latin America and the Caribbean." *Insights Series*. No. 118, LAPOP, Nashville, TN.



Social Media and Political Attitudes

*By Noam Lupu, Elizabeth J. Zechmeister,
and Mariana V. Ramírez Bustamante*

In the last decade, social media use has expanded around the world, including in the Americas.¹ And increasingly, people access the news through social media. On the one hand, social media can play a positive role in expanding access to timely information. On the other hand, social media can help spread misinformation, intimidation, and hostile rhetoric. Given these dueling currents, it is challenging to determine whether social media improves or undermines the quality of democracy overall. One way to study this is to compare the attitudes and evaluations expressed by social media users and non-users. If social media users are less supportive of democracy and its institutions, this could mean that information spread via social media erodes democratic attitudes. Conversely, if social media users largely support democratic politics, their use of the platform may spread goodwill toward the system and counterbalance the negative experiences and evaluations that circulate in the general public.

Research on this topic has so far yielded mixed results, as well as reasons to be concerned about the attitudes held by social media users. Some scholars find a positive relationship between social media use and political cynicism (e.g., lower trust in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy), while others find weaker or no evidence of this connection.² Still, most of the research on these topics has focused on the more developed democracies of North America and Western Europe.

Within the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, little is known about who uses social media and what political attitudes they hold. Looking at eight countries in the region, one study

finds that social media users tend to be more educated, more urban, wealthier, and more interested in politics.³ Other studies suggest that social media users in the region are less satisfied with democracy, more politically tolerant and democratic, and more likely to protest.⁴ But these studies analyze data from nearly a decade ago, use blunt yes/no social media access measures, and focus on a subsample of countries in the region.

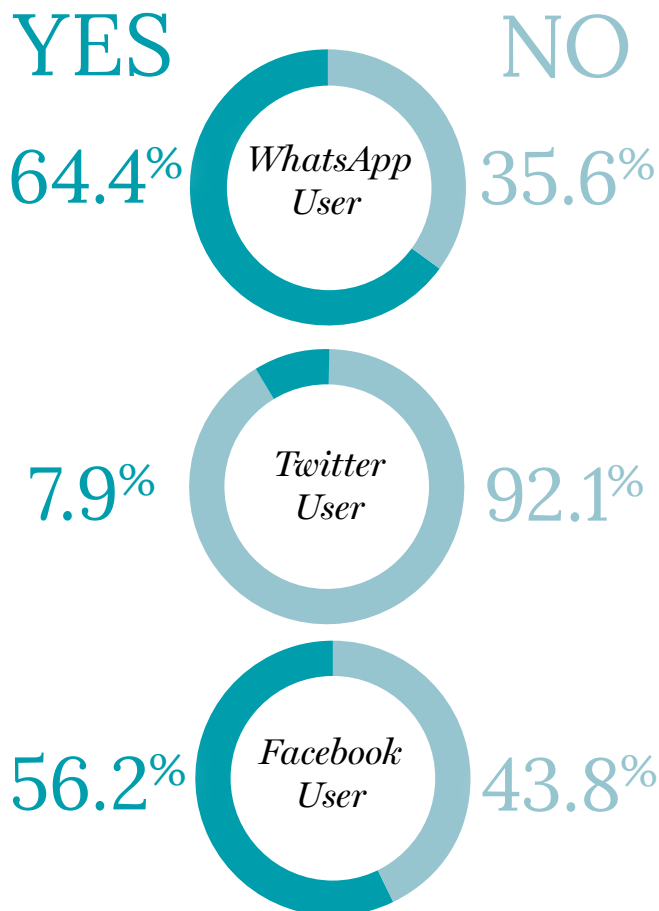
By analyzing an original module of questions in the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer, this report provides foundational evidence about these phenomena across 18 countries in the LAC region.⁵

Globally, the most popular social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp.⁶ We developed the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer social media module to focus on these three platforms. In analyzing this module, we first present descriptive data on usage across the region. We then profile social media users in the LAC region, providing a description of their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, their propensity to use social media frequently, and their engagement with political information on these platforms. Finally, we analyze the connections between social media use and political attitudes, including political tolerance, support for democracy, trust in political institutions, and satisfaction with democracy.

How Widely Used Are Social Media?

In the LAC region, WhatsApp is the most commonly used social media platform, followed by Facebook and then Twitter. Figure 3.1 shows region-wide average usage rates for each platform.⁷ On average across the LAC region, 64.4% of adults report using WhatsApp. At a close second, 56.2% of adults indicate that they use Facebook. Trailing significantly in usage is Twitter: fewer than 1 in 10 adults (7.9%) in the LAC region use Twitter.

Figure 3.1. Social Media Use in the LAC Region, 2018/19



Main

The main findings on social media and political attitudes are as follows:

WhatsApp is the most commonly used social media platform in the LAC region, followed by Facebook. In the average country, 64% of adults use WhatsApp and nearly 56% use Facebook.

Internet access and social media engagement vary across countries. Table 3.1 reports the proportion of adults in each country who have cellphones in their homes, home internet access, and use each social media platform.⁸ Where available, we also report statistics on smartphone penetration.⁹ The majority of adults have a cellphone (averaging around 90% across the LAC region). In contrast, home internet access is more limited and varies significantly across countries. At 73.7%, Brazil has the largest proportion with access to internet at home, while this rate is comparatively low in Nicaragua and Guatemala, at less than 25%.

There are substantial differences in WhatsApp user rates across countries in the LAC region. Costa Rica has the largest proportion of WhatsApp adult users at 81.6%. Uruguay and Argentina also have high rates, with 80% and 78.9%, respectively. In contrast, WhatsApp is far less widely used in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras, at less than 48% of adults. WhatsApp use is higher when home access to the internet is higher: the correlation between the proportion of adults in a country who use WhatsApp and the proportion with internet access at home is a strong 0.93.¹⁰ Further, WhatsApp usage is higher where more people have cellphones: the country-level correlation between the proportion of adults who use WhatsApp and the proportion who have cellphones in the home is 0.86. This same pattern carries over to smartphone rates: the correlation between smartphone ownership, for the six countries for which we have data (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru) and WhatsApp user rates is 0.83.

Findings

Twitter is used infrequently in the LAC region: the highest percentage of adult Twitter users is in Argentina, at 13%.

The typical social media user in the Latin American region is young, urban, and educated.

Among social media users, WhatsApp is used with the greatest frequency: 82% of WhatsApp users use the platform daily (compared to 57% for Facebook and 37% for Twitter).

About 1 in 3 WhatsApp users report viewing political information on the platform a few times a week or daily; while these rates are higher for Facebook and Twitter users, the results document the relevance of WhatsApp as a medium for exchanging political information in the region.

Table 3.1. Internet Access and Social Media Usage by Country, 2018/19

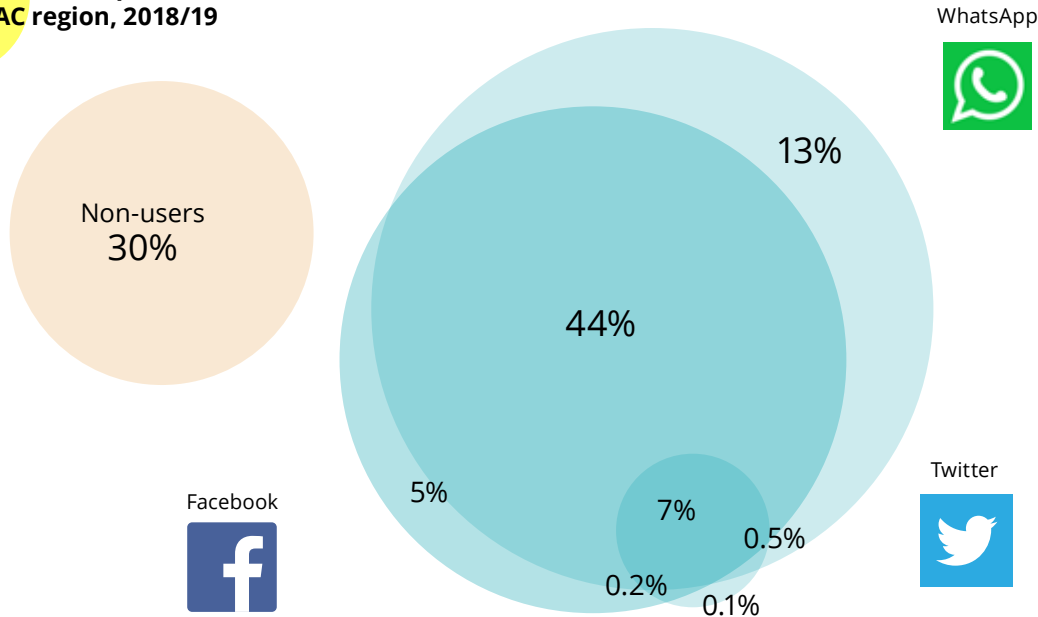
Countries	Smart-phone ownership	Cellphone in home	Home internet service	WhatsApp users	Facebook users	Twitter users
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Argentina	65.0	92.5	70.9	78.9	67.3	12.9
Bolivia	-	93.7	42.1	63.5	57.9	5.6
Brazil	54.0	95.4	73.7	76.2	59.8	8.5
Chile	72.0	97.0	70.3	75.5	62.9	9.2
Colombia	56.0	92.8	48.2	62.7	59.6	10.5
Costa Rica	-	96.3	67.9	81.6	66.6	8.0
Dom. Rep.	-	88.9	42.7	68.2	61.9	9.5
Ecuador	-	90.5	51.4	60.2	66.9	11.2
El Sal.	-	86.9	35.5	56.0	56.2	6.7
Guatemala	-	81.6	23.9	47.6	43.2	6.5
Honduras	-	86.4	25.1	46.9	44.6	4.8
Jamaica	-	94.2	55.0	68.1	45.9	4.5
Mexico	42.0	82.2	45.7	55.1	47.9	7.6
Nicaragua	-	84.5	22.2	47.7	48.1	5.8
Panama	-	84.0	35.2	56.7	34.6	5.8
Paraguay	-	95.8	44.1	69.3	60.5	8.0
Peru	41.0	86.5	37.5	58.6	61.4	7.6
Uruguay	-	95.6	70.0	80.0	66.5	9.8

Note: Smartphone ownership data come from Pew Research Center (2018); all other data are from the AmericasBarometer 2018/19.

Social media platforms tend to coincide. That is, Facebook usage is high where WhatsApp use is high. At the country-level, the correlation between the proportion of adults who use WhatsApp and those who use Facebook is 0.71. With respect to Facebook usage, we again find that Argentina, Ecuador, and Costa Rica have comparatively high user rates. And again we see comparatively low usage rates in Guatemala and Honduras. Panama and Jamaica stand out as unusual cases in which WhatsApp usage substantially outstrips Facebook penetration: 56.7% of Panamanians and 68.1% of Jamaicans use WhatsApp, whereas only 34.6% and 45.9%, respectively, use Facebook. Table 1 also shows that, although Twitter usage is not especially widespread in the LAC region, usage rates vary across countries, from 4.5% in Jamaica to 12.9% in Argentina.

At the individual-level, many social media users¹¹ are engaged in more than one type of social media.¹² Indeed, Figure 3.2 shows the majority of Facebook and WhatsApp users are multi-platform users. 51% of adults in the LAC region are both Facebook and WhatsApp users and, of those a small proportion (7% of adults) also are Twitter users. In contrast, only 4.7 and 12.8%, respectively, are single-platform users, of Facebook and WhatsApp respectively. At the same time, Figure 3.2 usefully highlights that a sizable proportion of citizens in the average LAC country, 30%, do not use any of these social media platforms.¹³

Figure 3.2. Overlap in Use of Social Media Platforms in the LAC region, 2018/19



Who Uses Social Media?

The average social media user is a younger adult (35 or below), lives in an urban setting, has a comparatively higher economic status, and has more years of education than the average citizen in the LAC region. There is no detectable gender divide in WhatsApp and Facebook social media use, on average across the Latin American and Caribbean region. These conclusions are based on Table 3.2, which draws on the AmericasBarometer dataset to show the percentage of adults in the LAC region who live in urban areas (71.1%) and are male (49.8%), as well as their average age (40), mean wealth (3rd quintile), and mean years of education (9.9). Alongside these basic statistics,

the table presents the proportion of WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter users (vs. non-users) who live in urban areas and are male, as well as their mean age, wealth, and education.

Though most people in the region live in urban areas, the percentage of WhatsApp (76.7%), Facebook (76.9%), and Twitter (84.5%) users who live in urban areas is greater than the percentage of non-users of these respective platforms who live in urban areas, and these differences are statistically significant. The average social media user also belongs to higher economic strata. With wealth levels above the regional average of 3.0 quintiles, Twitter users tend to be the most affluent; their average wealth is 3.9 on the 1-5 measure. Further, compared to non-users, social

Table 3.2. Characteristics of Social Media Users in the LAC Region, 2018/19

characteristics	General population	WhatsApp		Facebook		Twitter	
		Users	Non-users	Users	Non-users	Users	Non-users
Urban (%)	71.1	76.7	62.0	76.9	64.4	84.5	70.3
Male (%)	49.9	49.4	50.4	49.7	49.9	61.8	48.7
Mean Age	39.8	35.4	48.2	33.8	47.9	32.2	40.6
Mean Wealth	3.0	3.3	2.4	3.3	2.6	3.9	2.9
Mean Yrs. Educ.	9.9	11.3	7.5	11.4	8.1	12.9	9.7

Notes: Bolded figures indicate statistically significant differences between users and non-users. Wealth is measured by quintiles, 1-5.

media users have a higher average number of years of education: about 11 years of education for WhatsApp and Facebook users and 12.9 for Twitter users. There does not seem to be any substantial difference between the percentages of male users and non-users of WhatsApp and Facebook. This is not the case for Twitter, which has a much higher percentage of male users than male non-users. Social media users are, on average, younger than non-users among the general adult population.

How Frequently Do They Use Social Media?

The availability of social media has changed how people communicate, interact, and consume different kinds of information, including political information.¹³ According to scholars, social media are “soft news” sources, where political content is an ancillary interest. That is, most social media users “are not necessarily seeking information about public affairs” when they make use of these platforms.¹⁴ However, given that political content does circulate through these channels, many social media users will tend to see some amount of news about politics and related information.

Not all social media account holders use it at the same rate, in general or to access political information. While one person might have a Facebook account that she uses to connect with friends on an occasional basis, another might access Facebook frequently and often acquire news via these engagements. To gauge how often social media account holders use these platforms, and how often they see political information on WhatsApp, Facebook, or Twitter, we included the following questions within the AmericasBarometer social media module:

SMEDIA2. How often do you see content on Facebook?

SMEDIA3. How often do you see political information on Facebook?

SMEDIA5. How often do you see content on Twitter?

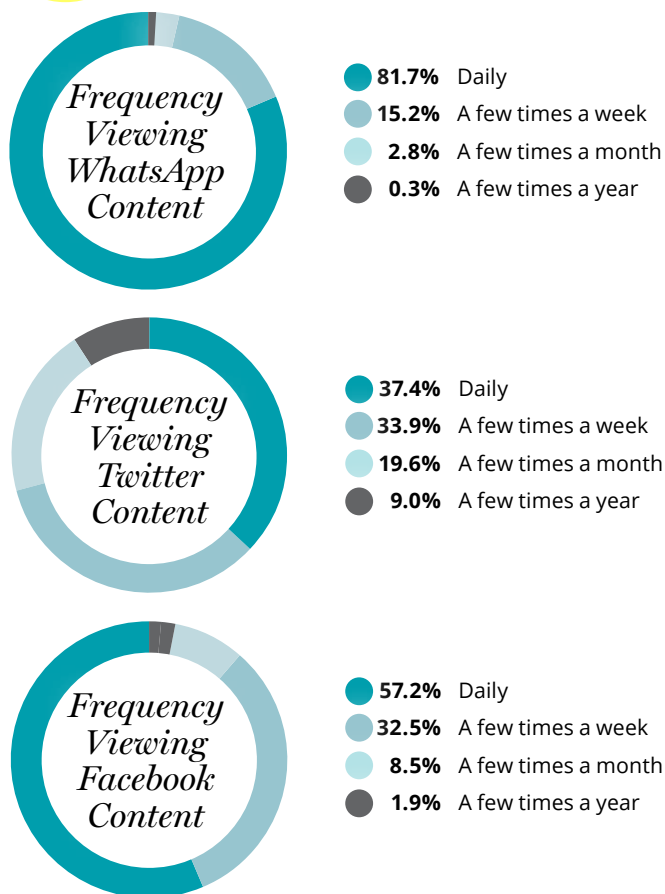
SMEDIA6. How often do you see political information on Twitter?

SMEDIA8. How often do you use WhatsApp?

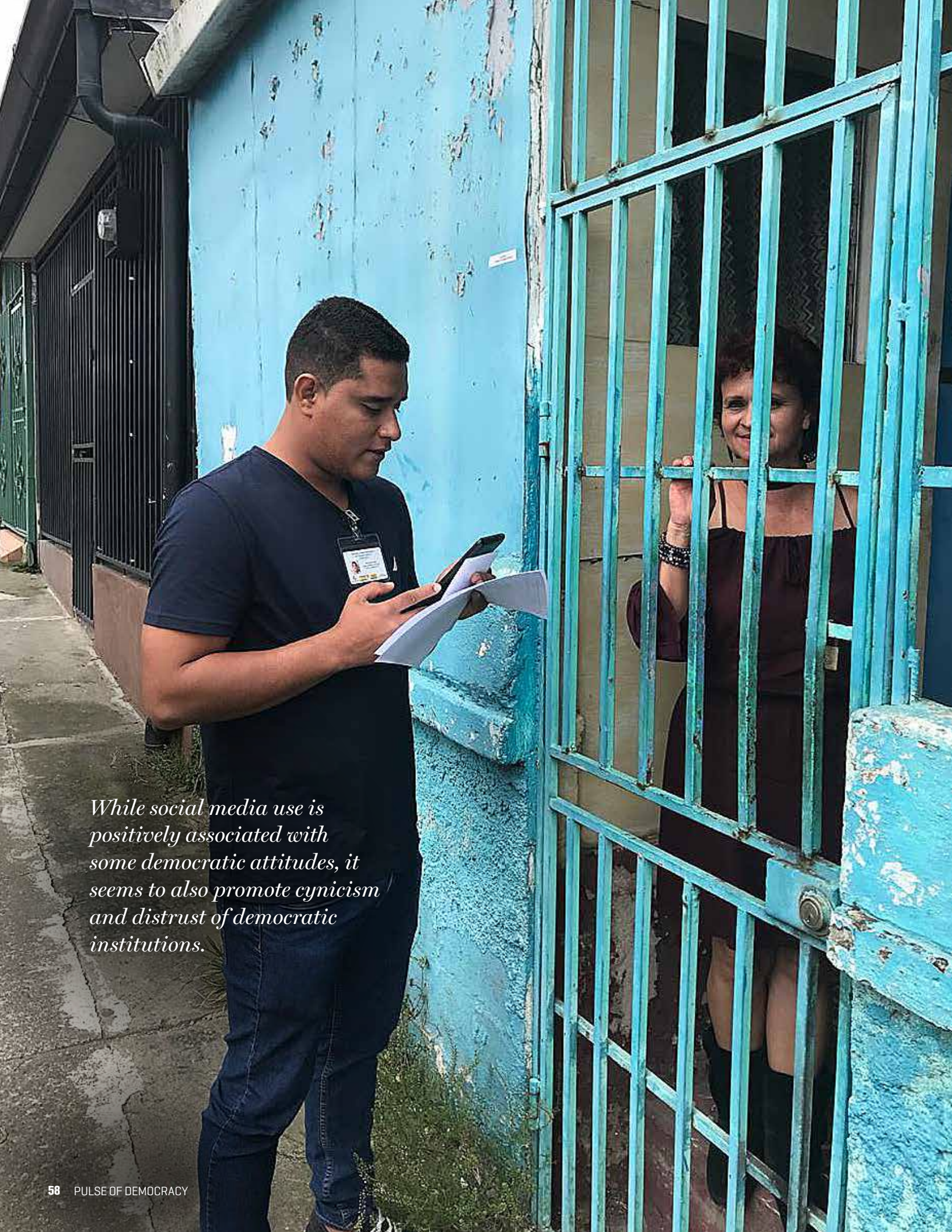
SMEDIA9. How often do you see political information on WhatsApp?

Among those with social media accounts, frequency of viewing content differs substantially depending on the social platform they use. Account holders could indicate that they engage in general content and/or political information on these social platforms daily, a few times a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, or never. Considering information in general, Figure 3.3 shows that frequently viewing content on WhatsApp and Facebook is very common among users in the LAC region, while this behavior is comparatively less common on Twitter.¹⁵

Figure 3.3. Frequency of Social Media Use in the LAC Region



In fact, among WhatsApp users, 81.7% report using it daily, and most of the remaining users (15.2% of the total user community) report using it a few times a week. Facebook users also tend to frequently access that platform: more than half of the Facebook users check its content daily (57.2%), and almost one-third (32.5%) do so a few times a week. In contrast, among Twitter users, 37.4% view content on this social media platform daily, while another 33.9% do so a few times a week. Furthermore, 19.6% of Twitter users report engaging with it to view content a few times a month and 9% access content on the platform a few times a year.

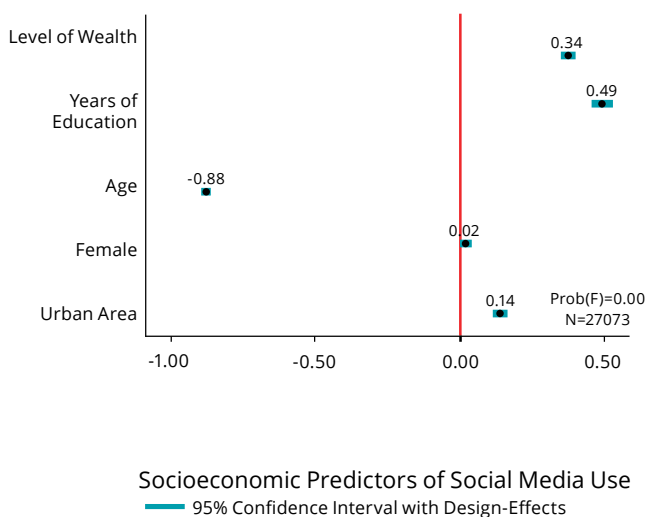


While social media use is positively associated with some democratic attitudes, it seems to also promote cynicism and distrust of democratic institutions.

What individual-level characteristics predict social media use, versus non-use? We consider five demographic and socioeconomic factors that may affect the propensity to use social media: place of residence, gender, age, education, and wealth.¹⁶ The dependent variable, *Social Media User*, is based on responses to the three questions about holding accounts from Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. This dichotomous measure distinguishes between those individuals who use accounts from one or more of these platforms, compared to those who do not engage with any social media account.¹⁷

Figure 3.4 shows the results of a logistic regression analysis that regresses social media use on measures of place of residence (urban vs. rural), gender (female vs. male), age, education, and wealth. For all such analyses in this report, country fixed effects are included but not shown. The dots in Figure 4 are the predicted changes in the probability of the dependent variable taking on the value of “1” (social media user), given a change from the minimum to maximum value on the independent variable. The results demonstrate that, on average across the LAC region in 2018/19, younger, urban, more educated, and wealthier individuals are more likely to be social media users. Gender is also a significant predictor of social media use (men more likely to be social media users), but its effect is small compared to the other predictors.

Figure 3.4. Regression Model Predicting Social Media Use in the LAC Region, 2018/19



49.0

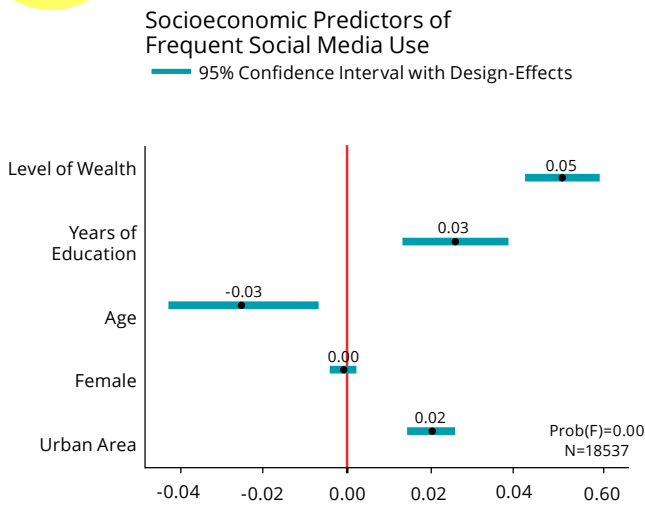
A min-to-max increase in education is associated, on average, with a 49 percentage point increase in the probability of social media use.

Age is by far the strongest predictor of being a user (vs. non-user) of social media. On average, a min-to-max (youngest to oldest) increase in age is associated with an 88 percentage point decrease in the predicted probability of being a social media user. Education level is also a strong predictor of usage of social media. A min-to-max (lowest to highest) increase in level of education is associated, on average, with a 49 percentage point increase in the probability of social media use. Similarly, wealth is positively associated with the probability of social media use: those who belong to the wealthiest quintiles are 34 percentage points more likely to be social media users than those who are from the poorest stratum. Those who live in the urban area (vs. rural places of residence) are, on average, 14 percentage points more likely to be social media users.

What individual-level characteristics predict high use of social media? In order to answer that question, we created a second measure, also based on the three questions about frequency of use. This measure, “High Social Media Use” is a dichotomous variable that distinguishes between those users who access content on any one or more of these platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter) a few times a week or daily, and those individuals who have one or more social media accounts but do not often access any of them (that is, they have accounts but access social media only a few times a month, or a few times a year).

Figure 3.5 shows the results of a logistic regression analysis that regresses high use of social media (vs. low use) on the same set of demographic and socioeconomic factors. The results indicate that, on average across the LAC region in 2018/19, those who are younger, more educated, wealthier, and urban individuals are more likely to be high frequency social media users (among those with social media accounts). The predicted effect of these individual characteristics is small compared to the analysis predicting social media use (vs. none). Further, whereas gender was marginally relevant in explaining usage, it is not a significant predictor of high (vs. low) social media use.

Figure 3.5. Regression Model Predicting High (vs. Low) Social Media Use, 2018/19



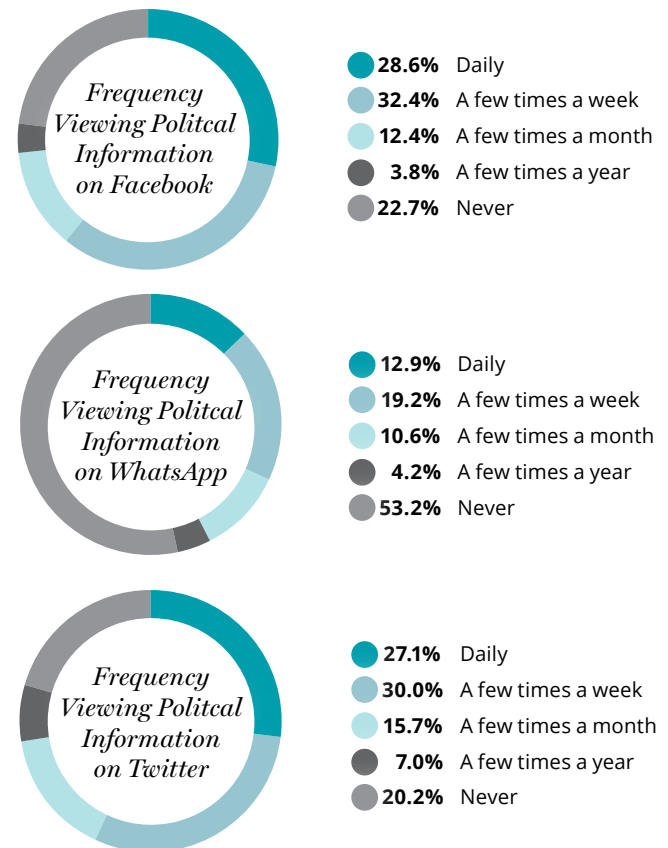
Age is negatively associated with the likelihood of high use of social media: a min-to-max (youngest to oldest) increase in age is associated with a 3 percentage point decrease in the likelihood that the person is a “high social media user” (vs. a low user). Conversely, those in the wealthiest quintiles are 5 percentage points more likely to be high social media users than someone who is from the poorest stratum. Likewise, a min-to-max (lowest to highest) increase in the level of education is associated with a 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of high (vs. low) social media use. Urban place of residence is also a significant predictor of high use of social networks: on average, social media users who live in urban areas are 2 percentage points more likely to be high (vs. low) social media users.

Political Engagement on Social Media

Those who view content on social media vary in the extent to which they encounter political information. Figure 3.6 displays, for the region as a whole, the frequency of viewing political information on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, among those who are social media users. There is a higher tendency for Facebook and Twitter users to view political information on a regular basis. WhatsApp users report viewing political information less often. More specifically, 28.6% of Facebook users report viewing political information on the platform daily, while about a one-third view this type of information a few times a week (32.4%). A similar proportion of Twitter users, 27.1%,

indicate that they view political information on this social media daily, and 30% do so a few times a week. Users view political information in WhatsApp less often. Although more than half of those who use WhatsApp mention that they never view political information on this social media platform, still nearly 1 in 3 WhatsApp users (i.e., 12.9% “Daily” plus 19.2% “A few times a week” totals 32%) regularly access political information via the platform. This is a reminder that the platform is used not only for connecting friends and family on apolitical mundane matters, but also for the dissemination of political opinions and content.

Figure 3.6. Frequency Viewing Political Information on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, 2018/19

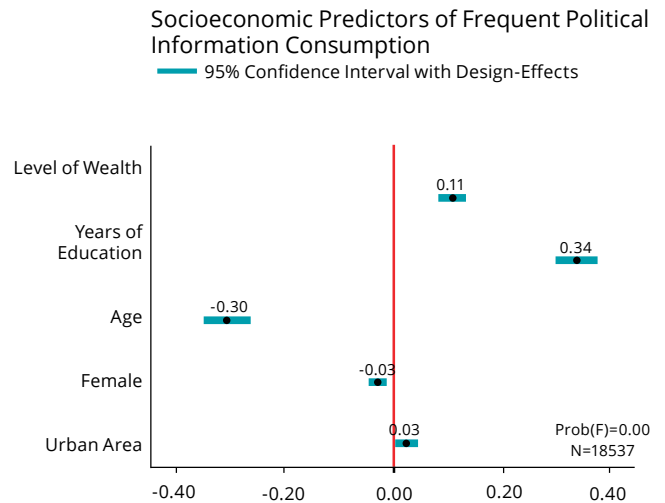


What individual-level factors explain frequently viewing political information on social media? To answer this question, we created a “high frequency of viewing political information measure” by compiling answers to the questions about the three social media platforms. This new variable, “high frequency of viewing political information” distinguishes among social media users who use one or more account to view political information a few times a week or daily, and those who engage in political content on social media a few times a month, a few times a year, or never. We then analyzed the predictors of this dependent variable with the same model (that is, the same socioeconomic and demographic factors) used in the analysis of predictors of high social media use.

Figure 3.7 shows the results of this logistic analysis that regresses high political information consumption on social media on these demographic and socioeconomic factors. The results show that, on average across the LAC region in 2018/19, younger social media users, as well as those who have higher levels of education and wealth, are more likely to view political information more frequently in social media. Further, gender and place of residence also have a significant, though small association with the probability of high political information consumption via social media (among social media users), such that women and rural users are marginally less likely to be high political information consumers.

On average within the social media community, a min-to-max increase in age is predicted to decrease the probability of frequently viewing political information on social media by 30 percentage points. Conversely, a min-to-max increase in years of education is associated with a 34 percentage point increase in the probability of being a high political information consumer among social media users. Further, on average, an increase from the lowest level of wealth to the highest is associated with an 11 percentage point increase in the probability of high political information consumption among social media users. In comparison, urban area and gender are less consequential variables. Among those with social media accounts, living in urban areas leads to a 3 percentage point increase in the probability of high political information consumption via social media, and women are 3 percentage points less likely to be frequent consumers of this kind of information.

Figure 3.7. Regression Model to Explain Frequently Viewing Political Information on Social Media in the LAC Region, 2018/19



Social Media Use and Political Attitudes

Do frequent social media users express different political opinions than those who use social media less, or who do not have any social network account? To assess this, we consider in our analysis those who have one or more of the three social media accounts considered in this report: WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter.¹⁸ We use the same coding as in the prior section, to distinguish among those who access social media often (those with accounts who access any one or more of them a few times a week or daily) and those who do not access social media very frequently (those with accounts who access them a few times a month or a few times a year). We also include non-users: those who do not hold any social media account (those who indicate that they do not have a Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp account) and those who have an account but never access it. We consider several different political attitudes: political tolerance, support for democracy in the abstract, satisfaction with democracy, and trust in various institutions.

37.7%

On average, 37.7% of frequent social media users, vs. 43.8% of non-users, are satisfied with democracy.

The results, in Figure 3.8, show that high social media users are more tolerant, and more supportive of democracy as a system of government than are low social media users or non-users. On average across the LAC region, 51.8% of high social media users display high levels of tolerance, while that rate is 47.9% among low social media users, and 43.3% among non-users.¹⁹ The differences among each of these groups – non-users, high users, and low users – are statistically significant. Moreover, 59.2% of high social media users support democracy, compared to 54.2% of low social media users, and 54.8% of non-users.²⁰ The difference between support for democracy among high users of social networks, on the one hand, and both low social media users and non-users, on the other hand, is statistically significant.

Figure 3.8. Tolerance Level, and Support for Democracy by Type of Social Media Use and Non-Users, 2018/19

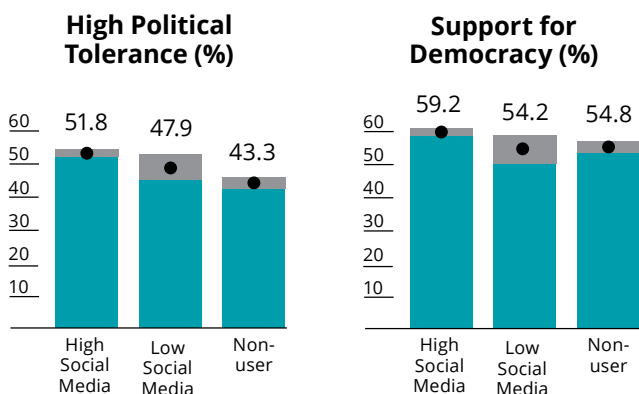
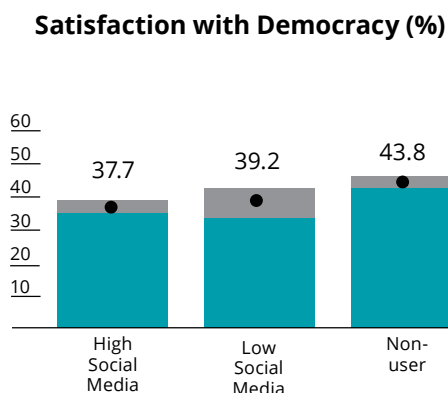


Figure 3.9. Satisfaction with Democracy by Type of Social Media User and Non-account Holders, 2018/19



High social media users are also less trusting in the country's institutions.²² As Figure 3.10 displays, among high social media users, 30.4% of them trust in the Supreme Court, while 36.8% of low social media users, and 38.8% of non-users express trust in this institution. Similarly, 44.4% of high social media users trust in mass media; that rate is 52.8% among low social media users, and 56.2% among non-users.²³ Likewise, 36.7% of high social media users indicate that they trust in local government, while this proportion is 42.2% among low social media users, and 44.7% among non-users.



At the same time, Figure 3.9 shows that social media users are less satisfied with how democracy is working in their country.²¹ Among high social media users, 37.7% report that they are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, while 39.2% of low social media users and 43.8% of non-users are satisfied with how democracy works in their country. The differences between the two groups of social media users (high and low) on the one hand and non-users on the other are statistically significant – but the slight difference between high and low users is not.

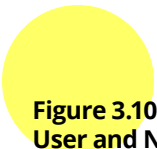
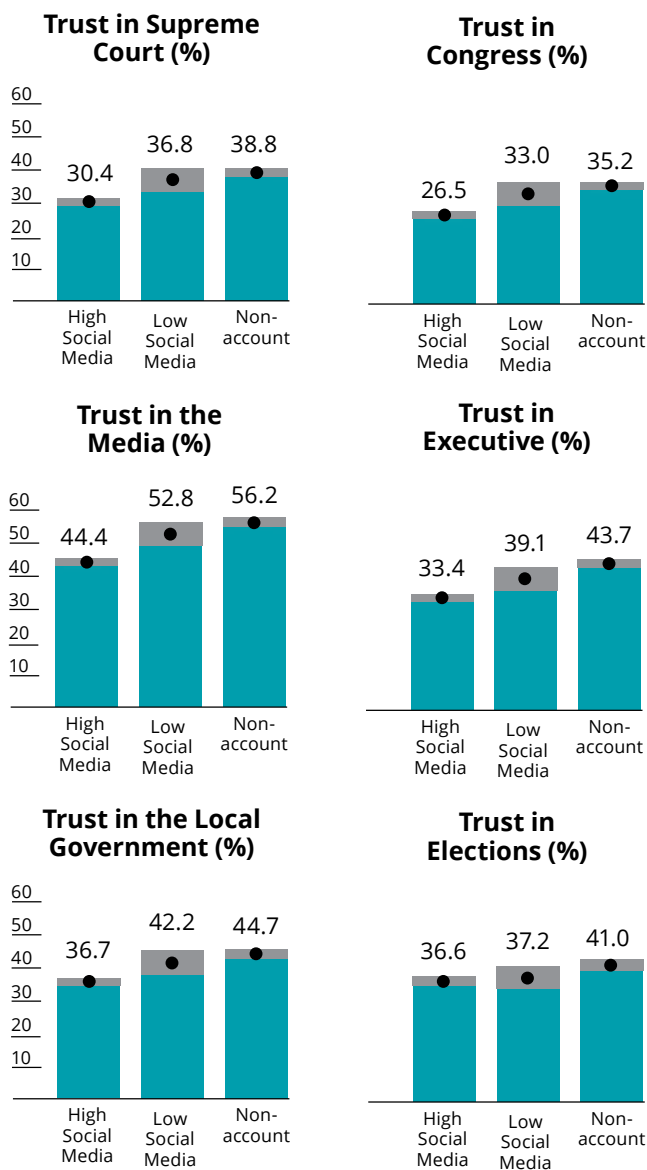


Figure 3.10. Trust in Institutions by Type of Social Media User and Non-account Holders in the LAC Region, 2018/19



We further see that 26.5% of high social media users trust in the National Congress, while 33% of low social media users and 35.2% of non-users report trust in this political institution. In addition, 33.4% of high social media users trust the Executive –that is, the President or Prime Minister–, while this proportion rises to 39.1% among low social media users, and to 43.7% among non-users. Finally, 36.6% of high social media users express their trust toward elections in their country, yet this proportion rises to 37.2% among low social media users, and 41% among non-users. In each case, these differences are statistically significant: on average across the Americas, high social media users are more politically cynical than their counterparts.²⁴

Conclusion

Social media are widely used across the LAC region. WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular platforms, although the rates of engagement also vary across countries. Nearly 2 in 3 adults in the LAC region use WhatsApp and nearly 3 in 5 use Facebook. Moreover, many users of one social media platform also use the other. At the same time, Twitter, a popular platform in other parts of the world, is not as widely used in the LAC region. Across the region, the average social media user is younger, more likely to live in an urban area, relatively wealthier, and more educated, compared to the average non-user. Among social media users, Twitter users are the most affluent and most educated. And while there are no differences across genders in WhatsApp and Facebook use, Twitter users are more likely to be men.

Among social media users, there are also notable differences in how frequently they use it and how often they engage with political information on social media. Most WhatsApp and Facebook users use these platforms frequently, but Twitter users tend to use it less frequently. In the LAC region, frequent social media users tend to be wealthier, more educated, and slightly younger. While they use the social media platforms regularly, users in the LAC region see political content on the platforms less frequently. This is especially true among users of WhatsApp, who tend to use the platform very frequently but see political content on it infrequently. Facebook users are substantially more likely to report seeing political content on the platform on a frequent basis. Again, it is primarily younger, more educated, and wealthier individuals who see political content on social media more frequently.

How is the use of social media related to democratic attitudes and evaluations? While frequent social media users are more tolerant and somewhat more supportive of democracy in the abstract, they are also less satisfied with how democracy works in their country, and less trusting in the political institutions. In the LAC region, frequent social media use does not seem to net an exclusively positive or negative effect on political attitudes. While it is positively associated with some democratic attitudes, it seems to also promote more cynicism and distrust of fundamental democratic institutions. The continuing spread of social media will clearly shape politics in the region, but its effects on democratic attitudes at this point seem mixed.

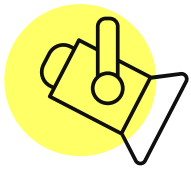
Dr. Noam Lupu is Associate Professor of Political Science, Dr. Elizabeth J. Zechmeister is Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science, and Mariana V. Ramírez Bustamante is a graduate student in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University.

Notes

- 1 Data on social media penetration in Latin America are available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244930/social-network-penetration-in-latin-america/>.
- 2 On a positive connection between social media and cynicism, see Ceron 2015, Ceron and Memoli 2016, Johnson and Kaye 2015, and Yamamoto and Kushin 2013; but also see Hanson et al. 2013 and Yamamoto, Kushin, and Dalisay 2017.
- 3 Salzman 2015.
- 4 Gainous, Wagner, and Gray 2016; Salzman 2018; Valenzuela et al. 2016.
- 5 Questions on social media use were also asked in the 2019 AmericasBarometer surveys of the U.S. and Canada, but these countries are not analyzed here.
- 6 Data on the popularity of social media platforms worldwide are available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>. Although WhatsApp is primarily a messaging platform, we include it as a social media platform because of the way it is commonly used in the LAC region. Studies show that WhatsApp is widely used there for sharing news and information, coordinating political activities and discussing political issues (Bradshaw and Howard 2018). In Argentina's 2019 election campaign, for instance, WhatsApp was considered an important campaign tool (Gian 2018; Miri 2019). WhatsApp also played a key role in the 2018 election campaigns in Brazil (Capetti 2019; Nemer 2018).
- 7 For each platform, we identify users with a combination of two sets of survey questions. First, we identify users as those who respond positively to the questions, SMEDIA1/SMEDIA4/SMEDIA7. Do you have a Facebook/Twitter/WhatsApp account? Then, we recode as non-users those who respond "never" to the follow-up questions, SMEDIA2/SMEDIA5/SMEDIA8. How often do you see content on Facebook/Twitter/WhatsApp?
- 8 Household assets are measured using two AmericasBarometer survey items included in a battery that begins, "Could you tell me if you have the following in your house": R4A. Cellular telephone (accept smartphone), R18. Internet from your home (including phone or tablet).
- 9 Pew Research Center 2018.
- 10 Since 2016, WhatsApp can be used on a smartphone or computer, through a web interface or via an app.
- 11 Due to space constraints in the El Salvador survey, the AmericasBarometer randomly assigned each respondent to be asked about only one of the three social media platforms. As a result, we do not have information about users of multiple platforms for that country, and it is omitted from the data in Figure 3.2.
- 12 In analyses of the region, we follow LAPOP's standard practice and weight each country equally. Averages for the region, then, can be interpreted as values that one would expect to find in the average country in the region.
- 13 Graber and Holyk 2011; Tucker et al. 2017.
- 14 Baumgartner and Morris 2010: 28-9.
- 15 Questions SMEDIA2, SMEDIA5, and SMEDIA8 were recoded so that those respondents who report never seeing content on Facebook and Twitter, and those who indicate never using WhatsApp, are considered as non-users of these social media platforms.
- 16 Age and education are measured in years, rescaled to 0 to 1, where 0 indicates the youngest or the lowest level of education, and 1 the oldest or the highest level of education. Wealth is an ordinal variable, rescaled to 0 to 1, where 0 indicates the lowest level of wealth, and 1 the highest level of wealth. Place of residence is coded 1 for urban and 0 for rural. Gender is coded 1 for female and 0 for male.
- 17 Account-holders who say they never access content on any of these platforms are considered non-users.
- 18 See the percentage of high and low social media users, and non-users by country in the appendix material found on our project website (www.lapopsurveys.org).
- 19 This variable was measured with LAPOP's political tolerance index, which is calculated based on the degree to which individuals disapprove or approve of the right of regime critics to exercise the right to vote, the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations, the right to run for office, and the right to make speeches (D1-4). This 0-100 index was rescaled so that values from 51 to 100 are considered "tolerant", and 0-50 are not.
- 20 This variable was measured with the following question: ING4. Changing the subject again, democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? [scale from 1 Strongly disagree to 7 Strongly agree]. This variable was rescaled as follows: from 5 to 7 are coded as supporting democracy, and response 1-4 are not.
- 21 We measure satisfaction with democracy with PN4. In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in (country)? [1 Very satisfied 2 Satisfied 3 Dissatisfied 4 Very dissatisfied]. We code respondents who chose (1) or (2) as satisfied with democracy.
- 22 Trust in political institutions was analyzed in this section based on the following questions: B31. To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court of Justice? B37. To what extent do you trust the mass media? B32. To what extent do you trust the local or municipal government? B13. To what extent do you trust the National Congress? B21A. To what extent do you trust the President/Prime Minister? B47A. To what extent do you trust elections in this country? Respondents answered on a 1-7 scale, and we code responses (5), (6), and (7) as indicative of trust.
- 23 We note that this result updates and reverses a finding presented in Salzman (2015), where no clear link was found between social media use and trust in the media.
- 24 See online appendix for regressions that control for individual-level characteristics in predicting the relationship between social media and trust in political institutions in the LAC region, 2018/19.

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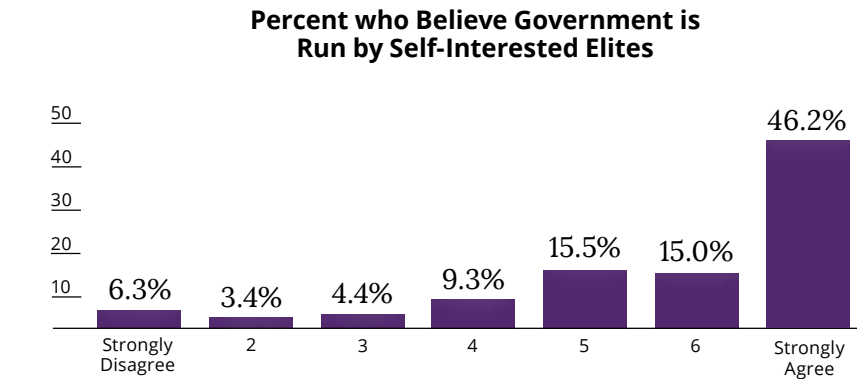
Spotlight on Anti-Elite Attitudes in Costa Rica

By Kaitlen J. Cassell¹

Populism is making a comeback in Latin America. Compared to the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, Costa Rica's 2018 presidential election barely registers in regional accounts of populism's rise. Yet, the election did feature at least one politician, Fabricio Alvarado, who displayed populist tendencies.² To what extent are Costa Ricans embracing the type of anti-establishment, anti-elite attitudes that are often championed by populist candidates? A unique battery included in the 2018 AmericasBarometer reveals that Costa Ricans display high levels of one marker of populist tendencies: anti-elite attitudes. For example, when asked whether people believe that the government is run by big interests who only look after themselves, 46.2% of respondents strongly agree, while only 6.3% strongly disagree.³

Who is more likely to agree that government is run by a cabal of self-interested elites? Analyses of the 2018 Costa Rica AmericasBarometer data reveal a generational divide: younger individuals, particularly those aged 26-45, display the highest levels of such anti-elite attitudes. Additionally, respondents with higher levels of education are likely to question elites' intentions. Perhaps in keeping with the fact that this type of anti-elite attitude is widely distributed throughout the population, there are no statistically significant differences by gender, wealth, place of residence (urban v. rural), or religious affiliation.

The implications of these findings are particularly concerning in a regional and global climate that is



struggling to maintain democratic support. Though not always explicitly anti-democratic, populists are often critical of traditional liberal democratic processes and institutions. In fact, the 2018 Costa Rica AmericasBarometer data indicate a positive relationship between anti-elite attitudes and likelihood to vote for populist Fabricio Alvarado (compared to the now-president, Carlos Alvarado). More problematic is the finding that Costa Ricans with anti-elite attitudes display somewhat lower support for the system, an important gauge of the health of democracy.⁴ Unsurprisingly, these individuals also report higher dissatisfaction with how democracy works in Costa Rica compared to individuals who view political elites in a more favorable light.

These results are particularly concerning given that Costa Rica's political situation has declined since the survey was fielded:⁵ the government of Carlos Alvarado has become increasingly unpopular and currently faces union protests and a rising unemployment rate,⁶ which will likely increase anti-elite attitudes.

Though Fabricio Alvarado lost the election, his strong candidacy and the 2018 AmericasBarometer results demonstrate that populist platforms have a broader appeal in the region than many may realize.

¹ Kaitlen J. Cassell is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and a LAPOP-affiliated researcher

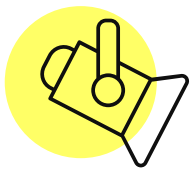
² Fabricio Alvarado lost the election after running a religious rightwing populist campaign. For more information, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/02/costa-rica-quesada-wins-presidency-in-vote-fought-on-gay-rights>.

³ The AmericasBarometer asks the following question in the 2018 Costa Rica survey: ANTI. The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves. (1) Strongly disagree (7) Strongly agree.

⁴ See Booth, John and Seligson, Mitchell. (2009). *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵ This survey was carried out between September 24th and October 31th of 2018.

⁶ https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/08/09/america/1565305703_145730.html.



Spotlight on Corruption Tolerance in Ecuador

By J. Daniel Montalvo ¹

In recent years, corruption has shocked Ecuadorian politics and economics. As of July 2019, twenty-two high-ranking officials, including a former vice-president, are incarcerated and serving sentences on corruption charges. Fifteen others have fled the country to avoid arrest.² The National Commission against Corruption estimates a loss of over 35 billion U.S. dollars due to corruption in the last ten years,³ which amounts to 32.4% of the country's nominal GDP.⁴ Ecuador's climate of pervasive corruption occurs at a time when 63.8% of the population thinks that the national economy has worsened in the last twelve months, 40.3% report that their household income has deteriorated in the past two years, and 15.7% are actively looking for a job.⁵

In theory, the grim economic context could lead Ecuadorians to feel particularly fed up with corruption. However, this is not the picture that emerges from the AmericasBarometer data. Tolerance for this social ill has

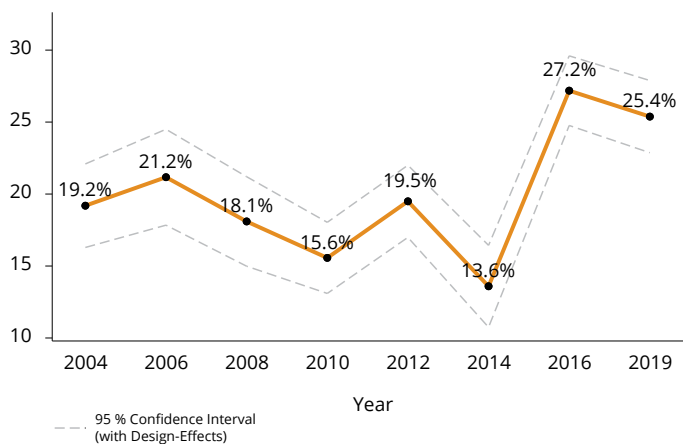
not only increased, it has almost doubled since 2014. When asked if they think paying a bribe is justifiable,⁶ 27.2% of respondents in 2016 and 25.4% in 2019 answered favorably, compared to only 13.6% in 2014 (the lowest value in 15 years).

Who are these individuals? Results suggest that, in 2019, Ecuadorians who justify corruption are more likely to be younger:⁷ as individuals age, they tend to reject the idea that paying a bribe is justifiable. Further analysis shows that this could also be a generational phenomenon in Ecuador: people in the Silent Generation (birth years 1928-45) and Baby Boomers (birth years 1946-64) are less tolerant of corruption than people in Generation X (1965-80) and Millennials (1981-96).

Interestingly, people who have been previously victimized by corruption themselves are more likely to tolerate corruption, a finding that is not germane to Ecuador. In the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer, we encountered the same vicious cycle

in an aggregate analysis of 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries.⁸ In Ecuador, 26.6% reported they were victimized by corruption at least once in the 12 months prior to the 2019 survey, which corresponds to the percentage of individuals who justify corruption (see the below figure). How to break this vicious cycle is a complicated question that warrants further research; however, this spotlight suggests that efforts to curb corruption could start by focusing on the youth.

Percent who Justify Bribery in Ecuador



1 J. Daniel Montalvo holds a Ph.D. in political science from Vanderbilt University and is Director of Survey Research Operations at LAPOP.

2 <https://www.eltegrafo.com.ec/noticias/politica/3/funcion-transparencia-plan-nacional-lucha-contracorruption>

3 <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2018/12/27/lenin-moreno-corrupcion/>

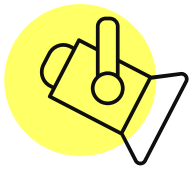
4 Percentage computed by the author using 2018 data obtained in the following World Bank's URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CN?locations=EC>

5 Data from the 2018/19 round of the AmericasBarometer in Ecuador.

6 The AmericasBarometer has been asking the following question since 2004: EXC18. Do you think given the way things are, sometimes paying a bribe is justified? (0) No (1) Yes.

7 We find no statistically significant differences in terms of gender, educational attainment, level of wealth, place of residence (urban v. rural), and perception of corruption among public officials.

8 https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2016/AB2016-17_Comparative_Report_English_V2_FINAL_090117_W.pdf



Spotlight on Insecurity in Mexico

By Kaitlen J. Cassell¹

Crime and violence are pressing issues in Mexico. Crime persistently afflicts the country, and has increased in recent years: according to the AmericasBarometer Mexico survey, 24% of Mexican adults had been victimized by crime in the year prior to the 2014 survey, while 33% reported the same in 2019. Violence increased after 2006, when Mexico's military took a more active role in fighting drug cartels. The year 2018 was especially violent, marking the highest homicide rate in Mexico's recent history, with an average of 91 homicides per day.² Further, an unprecedented 132 political candidates were murdered during the country's 2018 elections.³

Does public opinion reflect this grim reality? Yes, according to the AmericasBarometer. In the early 2019 Mexico national survey, when asked about the country's most important problem, 52% of people mentioned security-related concerns.⁴ Strikingly, this percentage more than doubled between 2017 and 2019, in line with the aforementioned increase in violence. While the majority identified security as Mexico's biggest problem in 2019, considerably fewer expressed the belief that the most important issue is economic (18.6%), political (10.5%), or something else (18.9%). This finding is even more notable given that a majority in Mexico consistently mentioned an economic issue as the most important problem in every previous AmericasBarometer survey—until 2019.

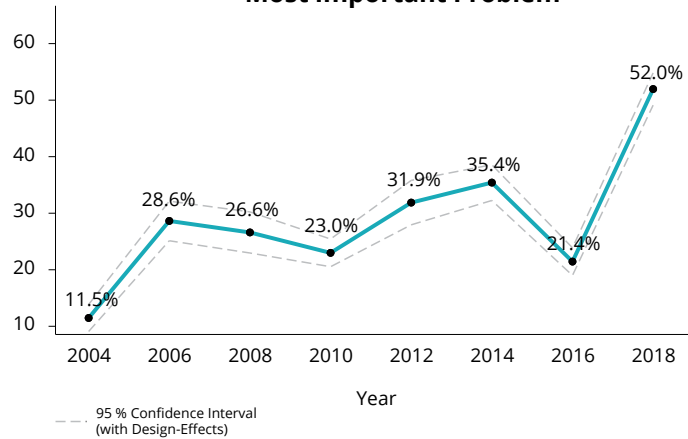
Who is more likely to report that security is the most important problem facing Mexico? Analyses of the 2019 data reveal that women and older people are more likely to identify security as Mexico's most important

problem. Individuals' opinions also appear to be shaped by evaluations of their own neighborhoods—those who feel unsafe in their own neighborhoods are considerably more likely to voice concern about the country's security. That said, crime victims are no more likely than non-victims to view insecurity as the paramount national concern.⁵ It appears that not all individual experiences are factored into peoples' beliefs regarding the issue that should dominate the nation's agenda.

Interestingly, individuals who cite insecurity as Mexico's most critical problem do not stand out as voting for a particular presidential candidate, such as Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), whose successful 2018 campaign focused heavily on security issues. Nonetheless, it does appear that the public has granted AMLO a strong mandate to tackle security issues. On July 1, 2018, 53.19% of Mexico voted AMLO into office. AMLO won a plurality of votes in 31 of 32 states, while his closest competitor, Ricardo Anaya, won the remaining

state (and 22.27% of the national vote). Meanwhile, AMLO's party, MORENA, attained an electoral majority in both chambers of congress, granting AMLO significant authority to implement his agenda.⁶ Though López Obrador has only been in office for less than a year, crime and violence represent two of the most significant challenges facing his presidency. Given that the public has placed these issues squarely at the top of the national agenda, we can assume that expectations are high that he can deliver safer times.

Percent who Report Security is the Most Important Problem

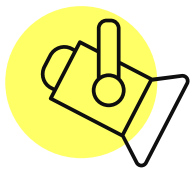


¹ Kaitlen J. Cassell is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and LAPOP-affiliated researcher

² <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/23/687579971/mexico-reports-highest-ever-homicide-rate-in-2018-tops-33-000-investigations>

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/27/americas/mexico-political-deaths-election-season-trnd/index.html>

⁴ This question is open ended, and then coded into the field into a set of 30-40 categories; for the purpose of this analysis, those who stated crime/insecurity/violence concerns were coded as an affirmative response. The figure, then, shows the percentage who respond with a security-related issue, as opposed to any other issue.



Spotlight on Tolerance of Executive Coups in Peru

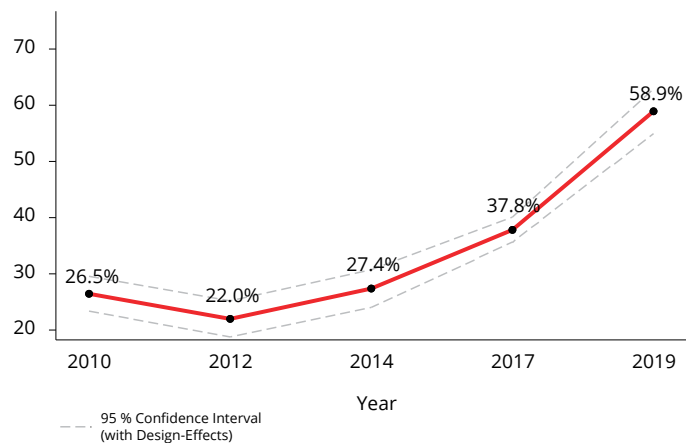
By Mariana V. Ramírez Bustamante¹ and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister²

According to the 2019 AmericasBarometer national survey of Peru, nearly 3 in 5 Peruvians (58.9%) believe that it is justifiable for the president of the country to close Congress and govern without this institution in times of crisis.³ In short, a clear majority of citizens expresses tolerance for executive coups or “auto-golpes.” Further, this attitude has been on the rise since 2012: from 2017 to 2019 alone, affirmative answers to this question increased by 21.1 percentage points.

Who is more likely to justify an executive coup during times of crisis? In the rest of the LAC region, the poor (vs. the wealthier) and those who are in the youngest and oldest age cohorts (vs. the middle age cohorts) are more tolerant of hypothetical executive coups. Notably, public opinion in Peru trends in the opposite direction. Analyses of the 2019 Peru AmericasBarometer data show that those in the poorest wealth quintile are less likely to express tolerance of executive coups. Further, individuals in the youngest (18-25) and oldest (66 or above) age cohorts are less likely to perceive executive coups as justifiable, compared to those aged 26 to 65.

According to the Peruvian Constitution (Art. 134), the president can dissolve Congress if the latter censures or rejects the “vote of confidence” of two Cabinet Councils. In other words, the president has the legal authority to close Congress in some cases, so invoking this procedure is not necessarily at odds with democratic processes. In fact, in a multiple regression analysis that controls for socioeconomic and demographic factors, neither satisfaction with nor support for democracy predicts tolerance for executive coups in Peru.

Percent who Express Tolerance for Executive Coups



Interestingly, approval of the president also does not predict tolerance for auto-golpes.

However, those who have low levels of trust in Congress are nearly twice as likely to express tolerance for executive coups that would shutter Congress.⁴ This finding is important because trust in Congress in Peru is low and has been declining over time. In the period between 2006 and 2017, on average, 15.9% of Peruvians expressed trust in Congress. From 2017 to 2019 alone, that figure has dropped to 8.8%. One contributing factor may be increased perceptions of corruption in politics. Between 2017 and 2019, the proportion of Peruvians who report that more than half or all politicians to be corrupt increased from 77 to 85%. The data also show that those who perceive more corruption trust Congress less and are more tolerant of executive coups. Combatting corruption and restoring confidence in Congress may be two important and related paths toward decreasing tolerance for executive coups in Peru.

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² Elizabeth J. Zechmeister is Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and Director of LAPOP.

³ Support for executive coups is measured with the following AmericasBarometer survey question: JC15A. Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Congress/Parliament and govern without Congress/Parliament? (1) Yes, it is justified (2) No, it is not justified.

⁴ The AmericasBarometer asks about trust in the national congress on a 7-point scale; for this analysis, we coded responses 1, 2, and 3 as low trust and responses 5, 6, and 7 as high trust. Among those with low trust in congress, 63.4% indicate that an executive coup can be justifiable, while that rate is 35.9% among those with high trust in congress.

AmericasBarometer Data and Reports

LAPOP produces numerous reports on the AmericasBarometer and other projects. Our goal is to provide analysis and evidence for scholars and practitioners of public opinion and democratic governance.

Insights reports are short briefs produced by students, network affiliates, our researchers, and

our faculty. Standard *Insights* engage social science research and AmericasBarometer data to develop and assess theories regarding links between public opinion and democracy. Topical Insights use project data to provide evidence and context on a current event. Methodological Insights offer windows into our cutting-edge approaches,

report on our innovations, and engage scholars who work at the survey research frontier. Spotlight Insights, new for this round, present an AmericasBarometer question across countries, time, and subgroups. Global Insights introduce findings from LAPOP-affiliated research outside the Americas. The series is used by journalists, policymakers and scholars

The AmericasBarometer database includes national surveys in 34 countries across the Americas. The following country datasets are available for free download on our project website (www.lapopsurveys.org):

Country	AB2004	AB2006	AB2008	AB2010	AB2012	AB2014	AB2016/17	AB2018/19
Mexico								
Guatemala								
El Salvador								
Honduras								
Nicaragua								
Costa Rica								
Panama								
Colombia								
Ecuador								
Bolivia								
Peru								
Paraguay								
Chile								
Uruguay								
Brazil								
Venezuela								
Argentina								
Dominican Republic								
Haiti								
Jamaica								
Guyana								
Trinidad & Tobago								
Belize								
Suriname								
Bahamas								
Barbados								
Grenada								
St. Lucia								
Dominica								
Antigua and Barbuda								
St. Vincent and the Grenadines								
St. Kitts and Nevis								
United States								
Canada								

worldwide. Subscription is free and available by emailing insight@mail.americasbarometer.org.

Country reports are book-length, contain more extensive analyses, and are organized thematically to address findings relevant to democratic governance, strengthening, and stability. They include a focus on

topics that stakeholders, especially USAID Missions, identify as important in the local context.

New reports from the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer study will be posted as they are produced.

For prior rounds, the following book-length reports can be found on the LAPOP website (www.lapopsurveys.org):

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016/17
Regional							
Argentina							
Bolivia							
Brazil							
Canada							
Chile							
Colombia							
Costa Rica							
Dominican Republic							
Ecuador							
El Salvador							
Guatemala							
Guyana							
Haiti							
Honduras							
Jamaica							
Mexico							
Nicaragua							
Panama							
Paraguay							
Peru							
Suriname							
Trinidad & Tobago							
Uruguay							
Venezuela							

Training Students in International Survey Research

"Helping with LAPOP's projects has allowed me to practice my Spanish and strengthen my research skills. Furthermore, I've gotten to see what political science research looks like firsthand."

-L. S., LAPOP undergraduate research assistant



LAPOP graduate student and research affiliate, Facundo Salles Kobilanski, pretesting in Honduras.

"I began my work at LAPOP with auditing interviews for quality control purposes; it was very interesting to see how respondents from certain countries answered the questions. It also helped improve my Spanish greatly." -C. B. LAPOP undergraduate research assistant

"I have gained invaluable expertise about different practical components surrounding the craft and analysis of surveys... and most importantly, teamwork [and]... the opportunity to do fieldwork". - F. S., LAPOP graduate student affiliate from Argentina

"I have acquired valuable knowledge about the multiple steps that need to be taken in order to conduct survey research, and I've improved my statistical training to analyze survey data." - M. R., LAPOP graduate student affiliate from Peru

“Working as an RA for LAPOP has given me important knowledge in the statistical and substantive analysis of survey data, a crucial skill for a political science graduate student interested in political behavior and attitudes”.
 – A. W., LAPOP graduate student affiliate from the U.S.



LAPOP provides multiple opportunities for students to be immersed in a public opinion research lab and build skills for evidence-based analysis and decision-making.

Undergraduate and graduate students engage in LAPOP via paid research assistantships, internships, and our research affiliate and fellows programs. Students attend LAPOP workshops, receive training in data analysis, and participate in various aspects of survey research: questionnaire development, programming, pretesting, training, quality control, dataset processing, and report production.

Students have the opportunity to design independent or co-authored research projects with mentoring from faculty, advanced graduate students, and research staff. Some final projects are presented at research conferences and many are published in LAPOP’s *Insights* series.

Topics of student investigations have included trust in the media, law and order, courts, local government, tolerance, health care, corruption, economic policy preferences, national pride, elections, climate change, survey methods, and more.

Student-generated *Insights* reports have yielded numerous insights into public opinion and democratic governance. Some recent discoveries include:

- **In the average country, more educated people have less trust in the media.**
- **When people have more confidence in courts, they perceive better human rights protection.**
- **Insecurity is connected to support for harsher criminal punishments.**
- **Education can be a positive predictor of political tolerance.**
- **Less than one-quarter in the LAC region can reach emergency care in under ten minutes.**
- **Younger individuals are more likely to support government-led efforts to reduce inequality.**
- **Those who perceive greater risk from disaster believe climate change is a serious problem.**

Students trained by LAPOP have gone on to careers in the USG, survey research, academia, the private sector, law, international development, and more.



Building Capacity in Survey Research Organizations

During the 2018/19 round of the AmericasBarometer, LAPOP teams trained 709 interviewers and 164 supervisors in 18 countries for a total of 640 hours of training. In addition, LAPOP project leaders conducted more than 12 survey methods workshops for scholars and practitioners across the Americas.

LAPOP training is standardized and rigorous, and focuses on improving the quality of public opinion research. Our teams work with local survey organizations to pretest questionnaires, and we transfer skills related to programming, sample design, best practices in fieldwork, and innovations in quality control. We also learn from our engagement with partners across the Americas, who provide important input on issues such as security, response rates, questionnaire flow, and fieldwork management.

LAPOP is a leader in the development and transfer of expertise on the use of electronic devices for data collection and quality control. Local survey organizations have been able to increase the quality and quantity of their work by applying knowledge and experience gained through collaborations with LAPOP.



LAPOP Graduate Student Research Affiliate, Sebastian Meyer, training a team in El Salvador.

“Before working with LAPOP, our organization did not work with such scattered samples. Now we have incorporated sample designs similar to LAPOP’s into some of our studies. As per the training, we have learned from the training sections and materials. ... When we started working with LAPOP we moved from data collection using paper to electronic devices, which was a great leap for us. We also learned to have greater quality controls with the use of the SurveyToGo program, which we now use in some of our projects. I believe that our greatest benefit has been to have worked with such professional and trained team that they have taught us how to execute effective project management while maintaining an excellent relationship with the client.” – LAPOP Partner in Honduras

“As a company, working with LAPOP has pushed us to significantly improve our field procedures and quality standards. It has meant an important technological transfer for our firm, mainly with CAPI platforms and automated and remote quality control and supervision. LAPOP directly and indirectly has invested in our development as a public opinion research provider and has contributed to position us as a company at the forefront of research in our country. More than 90% of our current work is done with modes, platforms, procedures and standards that have, in one way or another, their origin in our relationship with LAPOP”. – LAPOP Partner in Mexico



“The incorporation of these new [LAPOP] standards not only has forced interviewers to do a much neater job, but also has allowed us to more closely accompany and monitor the work they do, being able to quickly resolve different conflicts that may arise in the field.” – LAPOP Partner in Chile

At the Frontier of Survey Methodology

LAPOP recently launched a new state-of-the-art quality control program - FALCON (Fieldwork Algorithm for LAPOP Control over survey Operations) – and electronic contact forms. Using project-specific coding and software, our survey teams assess five critical QC dimensions in real time.

1. **Geofences monitor whether interviews take place in the correct location.**
2. **Audits of image captures confirm surveys are conducted by a project-trained interviewer.**
3. **A software subroutine flags questions and interviews that are too short to be credible or that take place at unreasonable hours.**
4. **Audio file reviews check that questions are read completely and without alteration.**
5. **Electronic contact forms and e-crumbs track response rates efficiently and accurately.**

In addition to its core AmericasBarometer project, LAPOP develops, advises, and supports research projects that are

implemented around the globe. These studies are often focused on particular subgroups or subregions within a country. Recent “special topics” studies include:

- **Identity, community, and safety on Nicaragua’s Atlantic Coast**
- **Security in Western Honduras**
- **Post-disaster evaluations and experiences in Mexico**
- **Integrated Governance in Nepal**

We have experience and expertise in a range of data collection methods including face-to-face interviewing,

online studies, experiments, infrastructure audits, focus groups, and in-depth interviews. Our team is experienced in public opinion research, impact evaluations, and training.

Since 2010, we have conducted 43 “special topics” studies with over 90,000 face-to-face interviews, collaborated in research projects on 4 continents, conducted 103 focus groups and 842 in-depth interviews, and gathered public opinion data via online surveys of 6,000 individuals.



From the coast of Nicaragua to the mountains of Nepal

Understanding the Figures in this Report

AmericasBarometer data are based on national probability samples of respondents drawn from each country; naturally, all samples produce results that contain a margin of error. It is important for the reader to understand that each data point (for example, a country's average confidence in political parties) has a confidence interval, expressed in terms of a range surrounding that point. Most graphs in this study show a 95% confidence interval that takes into account the fact that our samples are "complex" (i.e., stratified and clustered). In bar charts this confidence interval appears as a separately colored block, while in figures presenting the results of regression models it appears as a horizontal bracket. The dot in the center of a confidence interval depicts the estimated mean (in bar charts) or coefficient (in regression charts). The numbers next to each bar in the bar charts represent the estimated mean values (the dots). When two estimated points have confidence intervals that overlap to a large degree, the difference between the two values is typically not statistically significant; conversely, where two confidence intervals in bar graphs do not overlap, the reader can be confident that those differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Graphs that show regression results include a vertical line at "0." When a variable's estimated (standardized) coefficient falls to the left of this line, this indicates that the variable has a negative relationship with the dependent variable (i.e., the attitude, behavior, or trait we seek to explain); when the (standardized) coefficient falls to the right, it has a positive relationship. We can be 95% confident that the relationship is statistically significant when the confidence interval does not overlap the vertical line.



The AmericasBarometer

The AmericasBarometer is a regional survey carried out by LAPOP, a center for excellence in international survey research based at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. LAPOP has deep connections to the Latin America and Caribbean region, established over more than four decades of public opinion research. While “LAPOP Central” is located at Vanderbilt University, the AmericasBarometer is possible due to the activities and support of a consortium of institutions located across the Americas. To carry out each round of the study, LAPOP partners with local individuals, survey firms, universities, development organizations, and others in up to 34 countries within the Western Hemisphere. Project efforts are informed by the four core components of LAPOP’s mission: to produce objective, non-partisan, and scientifically sound studies of public opinion; to innovate improvements in survey research; to disseminate project findings; and, to build capacity and strengthen international relations.

Since 2004, the AmericasBarometer has received generous support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Vanderbilt University. Other institutions that have contributed to multiple rounds of the survey project include Ciudadanía, Environics, Florida International University, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Tinker Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, the Universidad de los Andes, and the World Bank. Over the years, the project has also benefited from grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development in Brazil (CNPq), the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, and numerous academic institutions across the Americas.

The 2018/19 AmericasBarometer was carried out via face-to-face interviews in 18 countries across the Latin America and Caribbean region, and via the internet in Canada and the U.S. All samples are designed to be nationally representative of voting-age adults and electronic devices were used for data collection in all countries. In all, more than 31,000 individuals were interviewed in this latest round of the survey. The complete 2004-2019 AmericasBarometer dataset contains responses from over 300,000 people across the region. Common core modules, standardized techniques, and rigorous quality control procedures permit valid comparisons across individuals, certain subnational areas, countries, regions, and time.

AmericasBarometer data and reports are available for free download from the project website: www.lapopsurveys.org. Datasets from the project also can be accessed via “data repositories” and subscribing institutions across the Americas. Through such open access practices and an extensive network of collaborators, LAPOP works to contribute to the pursuit of excellence in public opinion research and ongoing discussions over how programs and policies related to democratic governance can improve the quality of life for individuals in the Americas and beyond.



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