

# LAPOP: LATIN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION PROJECT

and the Americas Barometer

Latin American Public Opinion Project

# LAPOP

Proyecto de Opinión Pública de América Latina



Americas Barometer  
Barómetro de las Américas

by LAPOP

2004

2006

2008

2010



# LAPOP: An Overview



LAPOP holds its surveys and studies to the highest standards of quality. Questionnaires are systematically pre-tested in-country; hand-held electronic systems (PDAs) are widely used to eliminate data collection and processing errors and to easily enable experimental treatments; sophisticated probability samples are designed and employed to ensure representative samples at the national and sub-national levels; and, cutting-edge statistical methods are used in data analysis.

In 2004, LAPOP established the AmericasBarometer as multi-country, regularly conducted surveys of democratic values and behaviors in the Americas, organized by a consortium of academic and think-tank partners in the hemisphere. The first round included voting-age respondents from 11 countries. The second round of surveys took place in 2006 and represented 22 countries from the hemisphere. The third round, 2008, included 24 countries in the Americas. The most recent round of surveys was conducted

The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) is a leader in the development, implementation, and analysis of public opinion surveys. Founded by Dr. Mitchell Seligson over two decades ago, its principal focus is on citizens and democracy in Latin America.

LAPOP has its origins in studies of democratic values in one country, Costa Rica. This pioneering public opinion research took place in the 1970s, a time in which much of the rest of Latin America was caught in the grip of repressive regimes that widely prohibited studies of public opinion. As democratization expanded in Latin America, LAPOP grew in scope and size. Today LAPOP regularly carries out public opinion surveys in nearly every country in Latin America, Canada, the United States, and much of the Caribbean.



in 2010, with 26 countries from North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The AmericasBarometer is the most expansive regional survey project in the Western Hemisphere.

LAPOP is housed at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Vanderbilt is a research university that for over 60 years has been a leader in the study of Latin America and the Caribbean. At this host institution, a dedicated team of faculty, staff, post-doctoral researchers, and graduate students works year-round on the design and analysis of public opinion surveys. The group also edits and publishes the bi-weekly *Insights Series* reports, each one of which examines a single facet of public opinion. LAPOP's network extends far beyond the Vanderbilt campus, to include partner institutions throughout the Americas and an international advisory board.

LAPOP functions as a consortium, working in partnership with numerous academic and non-governmental institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. It collaborates with these institutions, sharing ideas for survey content and working together to disseminate the results of the public opinion surveys to the citizens of participating countries. This dissemination of results takes the form of systematic country reports, comparative studies, panel presentations, and media interviews.

Through years of polling an expanding set of countries using sophisticated techniques, LAPOP has developed a treasure trove of high quality data on political views within the Americas. The data are used by academic researchers; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in its efforts to promote democracy and good governance in Latin America and the Caribbean; the World Bank in its Governance Indicators series; the Inter-American Development Bank in its numerous research projects; the United Nations Development Programme and the Organization of American States in their democracy programs; and perhaps most significantly, by the governments of several Latin American countries as a source of independent information with which to assess public opinion and shape policy.



LAPOP surveys have been conducted in the following countries in the Americas:

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| ARGENTINA          | HONDURAS            |
| BOLIVIA            | JAMAICA             |
| BELIZE             | MEXICO              |
| BRAZIL             | NICARAGUA           |
| CANADA             | PANAMA              |
| CHILE              | PARAGUAY            |
| COLOMBIA           | PERU                |
| COSTA RICA         | EL SALVADOR         |
| DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | SURINAME            |
| ECUADOR            | TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO |
| GUATEMALA          | UNITED STATES       |
| GUYANA             | URUGUAY             |
| HAITI              | VENEZUELA           |

The 2008 round of the AmericasBarometer included 24 countries and over 40,000 respondents, whereas in 2010, the survey grew to include 26 countries, now adding Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname.

Each survey is implemented based on a national probability design. In some cases oversamples are collected to allow precise analysis of opinion within sub-national regions. Survey participants are voting-age adults interviewed face to face in their households, except in Canada and the United States where the interviews are Web-based.

# LAPOP Methods and Practices



Cutting-edge methods and transparent practices ensure that data collected by LAPOP are of the highest quality. These methods and practices include the following:

## Pre-Survey

- Solicitation of input from a vast network of academics, practitioners, and policymakers
- Use of Vanderbilt University's experimental research lab to test new items
- Extensive in-country pre-testing of survey items
- Translation of surveys into more than 15 languages spoken in the Americas
- Expert design of national probability samples
- Approval from Vanderbilt University's Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects

## Implementation

- Rigorous training of all interviewers using guidelines published in extensive training manuals
- Partnerships with reputable survey organizations in the region
- Widespread use of electronic handheld devices (PDAs) and software specialized by LAPOP to allow multilingual interviews and extensive validity checks

## Post-Survey

- Use of cutting-edge statistical programs and methods
- Presentation of results in clear, user-friendly graphs
- Public dissemination of results in surveyed countries
- Posting of survey design and methods on the LAPOP website
- Immediate uploading of data into LAPOP's free interactive data analysis program

LAPOP's resources and expertise allow it to conduct special projects requested by government institutions and agencies concerned with democratic development. These have recently included novel experiments embedded within national surveys to assess issues of ethnicity and violence. In addition, these include an extensive new focus on randomized block experiments as a means of program evaluation.



# Use of LAPOP Data

LAPOP reports are publicly available and address a wide range of topics related to democratic values and behaviors in the Americas. LAPOP and its partners develop and publish comprehensive reports for each country included in the AmericasBarometer. In addition, its researchers regularly analyze and report on the data, looking at specific themes.

A sample of the topics researched by LAPOP faculty, graduate students, and former students includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Trust in institutions
- Political tolerance
- Civil society participation
- Evaluations of the economy
- Support for democracy
- Political legitimacy
- Electoral behavior
- Corruption and crime victimization
- Engagement in and attitudes toward local government

LAPOP data have been used in numerous academic, governmental, and non-governmental reports beyond those generated by its own network of researchers and analysts. LAPOP also has provided seed funding for researchers at several institutions to support research on public opinion in Latin America and the Caribbean using its data. These small grants have resulted in research papers that provide additional insight into democratic politics in Latin America.

LAPOP data and questionnaires are openly available.

The LAPOP website, [www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org), includes a free and publicly available, interactive program in both English and Spanish that allows analyses from simple tabulations through complicated multivariate analysis of all AmericasBarometer data sets. The website further identifies all surveys and allows free access to all questionnaires and technical manuals. In addition, many institutions in the United States have subscribed to the data sets, making them available to their own researchers and students.

Reports using LAPOP data are available at:

[www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studies-articles-books.php](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studies-articles-books.php)

LAPOP's online interactive data analysis program is available at:

<http://lapop.ccp.ucr.ac.cr/>

Information on data access and subscriptions is available at:

[www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/about-americasbarometer.php](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/about-americasbarometer.php)



# Selected Data Sets Available from LAPOP

## Argentina

2008  
2010

## Belize

2008  
2010

## Bolivia

1998  
2000  
2002  
2003  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Brazil

2006/07  
2008  
2010

## Canada

2006  
2008  
2010

## Chile

2006  
2008  
2010

## Colombia

2001  
2004  
2005  
2006  
2007  
2008  
2009  
2010

## Costa Rica

1973  
1976  
1978  
1980  
1983

1985

1987  
1990  
1995  
1999  
2002  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Dominican Republic

2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Ecuador

1986  
2001  
2002  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Guatemala

1992  
1993  
1995  
1997  
1998  
1999  
2001  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Guyana

2006  
2008  
2010

## Haiti

2006  
2008  
2010

## Honduras

1983  
1985  
1991  
2001  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Jamaica

2006  
2008  
2010

## Mexico

1978  
1979  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Nicaragua

1989  
1991  
1995  
1996  
1997  
1998  
1999  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Panama

1991  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Paraguay

1996  
1998  
2006  
2008  
2010



## Peru

1996  
1997  
1998  
2006  
2008  
2010

## El Salvador

1991  
1993  
1995  
1999  
2004  
2006  
2008  
2010

## Suriname

2010

## Trinidad and Tobago

2010

## United States

2006  
2008  
2010

## Uruguay

2006/07  
2008  
2010

## Venezuela

1995  
2006/07  
2008  
2010

# AmericasBarometer *Insights* Series

The *Insights* Series provides short, pithy analyses of key, policy-relevant data gathered by the AmericasBarometer. Normally released every two weeks, the studies are written mainly by LAPOP scholars and graduate students. They are published in both English and Spanish. The studies are accessible at [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/). Subscription is free and available by emailing your name to [insight@mail.americasbarometer.org](mailto:insight@mail.americasbarometer.org).



*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2009 (No. 31)\**

## Who Should Manage Public Funds in Latin America?<sup>1</sup>

By Daniel Montalvo  
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Academics debate the mixed effects, both normative and behavioral, of fiscal decentralization. Widely known as *the devolution of taxing and spending authority*, fiscal decentralization is expected to economically and politically empower intermediate and local levels of government. Indeed, advocates argue that fiscal decentralization increases economic and political efficiency as a result of the improved match between specific local needs and government outputs (Tiebout 1956, Weingast 1995, Oates 1999). However, detractors warn that fiscal decentralization can lead to inefficiently high tax and regulation burdens as well as increased demands for intergovernmental transfers of scarce resources (Keen 1998, Treisman 2006).

But who does the average citizen believe should administer public monies? Public opinion on fiscal decentralization has been largely absent in the scholarly literature on federalism and

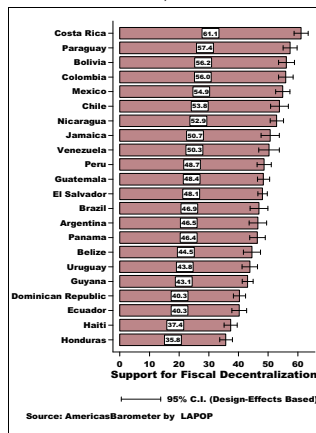
<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insights Series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>  
<sup>2</sup> The Insights Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

decentralization (Montero and Samuels 2004). This new paper in the *AmericasBarometer Insight Series* attempts to add citizens' views of this state reform to the fiscal decentralization puzzle.

For this purpose, we query the 2008 database provided by the AmericasBarometer survey carried out by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) in 24 nations in the Western hemisphere.<sup>2</sup> In this survey 33,529 respondents answered the following question:<sup>3</sup>

**SGL1.** And taking into account the available economic resources in the country, who should manage more money? [Read options]: (1) Much more the central government; (2) Somewhat more the central government; (3) The same amount the central government and the municipality; (4) Somewhat more the municipality; or (5) Much more the municipality.

**Figure 1.**  
 Average Support for Fiscal Decentralization in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.  
<sup>3</sup> The non-response rate for this question was 9.47 percent.

# Country Studies

For many countries, LAPOP's partner scholars write extensive, book-length country studies for each round of the AmericasBarometer. These studies cover a wide range of topics, are fully illustrated with graphs and charts, and also contain full information on the sample design as well as the full version of the questionnaire. These studies are published locally, donated to libraries around the world, and also available as pdfs at no charge on our website. All studies may be downloaded at no cost at [www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org).

## Mexico and Central America

2004	2006	2008	2010
Costa Rica	Costa Rica	—	Costa Rica
Guatemala	Guatemala	Guatemala	Guatemala
Honduras	Honduras	Honduras	Honduras
Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
Nicaragua	Nicaragua	Nicaragua	Nicaragua
Panama	Panama	Panama	Panama
El Salvador	El Salvador	El Salvador	El Salvador

## Andean/Southern Cone

2004	2006	2008	2010
—	—	—	Argentina
Bolivia	Bolivia	Bolivia	Bolivia
—	—	—	Brazil
—	Chile	—	Chile
Colombia	Colombia	Colombia	Colombia
Ecuador	Ecuador	Ecuador	Ecuador
—	Guyana	Guyana	—
—	Peru	Peru	Peru
—	—	Uruguay	Uruguay
—	Venezuela	Venezuela	—

## Caribbean

2004	2006	2008	2010
Dominican Republic	Dominican Republic	Dominican Republic	Dominican Republic
—	Haiti	—	Haiti
—	Jamaica	Jamaica	Jamaica
—	—	—	Suriname
—	—	—	Trinidad and Tobago



Country studies from previous years for selected countries can be accessed at LAPOP's website [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/publications.php](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/publications.php).

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## The AmericasBarometer 2010 Start-Up Meeting in San Salvador



Country teams, LAPOP staff, and donor representatives gathered in San Salvador to launch the 2010 round of survey research.





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