

# AmericasBarometer: Topical Brief – November 10, 2015

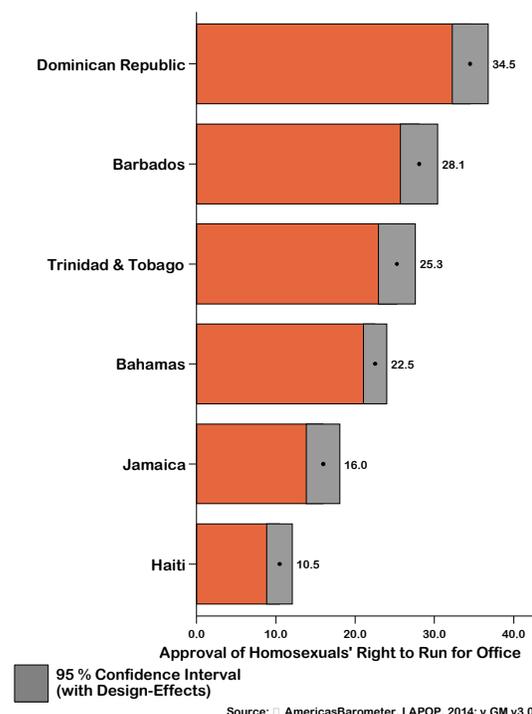
## Low Support for Homosexuals' Political Rights is Commonplace in the Caribbean

By Daniel Montalvo and Emily Saunders

The *New York Times* recently published an OpEd highlighting “the many voices of queer individuals in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean who have been assaulted, forced into pretending to be heterosexual or cisgender, or even murdered” (Bellot, 2015). Outside the Caribbean, several countries in the Americas have legalized same-sex marriage or passed civil union laws. While public support for gay rights is far from universal even in these countries, tolerance for LGBTQ rights is particularly low in the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> As reported in a previous *Topical Brief*, tolerance for gay marriage in the Caribbean countries is quite low (with all surveyed Caribbean countries registering below 23 degrees on a 0-100 tolerance scale from 0-100).<sup>2</sup>

This *Topical Brief* examines levels of approval of homosexuals' political rights in six Caribbean countries: the

Figure 1. Average Degrees of Approval of Homosexuals' Political Rights, 2014



Dominican Republic, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, the Bahamas,

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITB021en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITB021en.pdf>

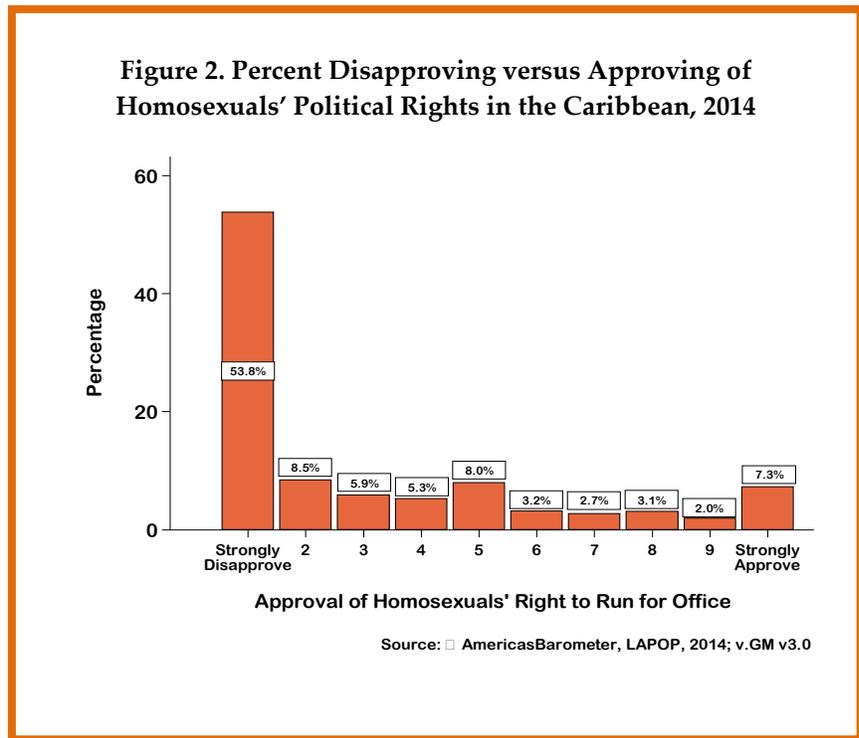
Jamaica, and Haiti. In the 2014 round of the AmericasBarometer, we asked:

D5. And now, changing the topic and thinking of homosexuals, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to run for public office?

This question is useful because it moves us away from looking only at tolerance toward gay marriage, a dimension commonly examined when scholars and journalists consider this topic, to one that is critical to the full exercise of democratic citizenship – the ability to participate as a candidate in public elections. As shown in Figure 1, the Dominican Republic has the highest level of approval (on a 0-100 scale) and yet averages only 34.5 degrees, and Haiti registers the lowest with a mean approval of 10.5 degrees.

In combining the six Caribbean countries in Figure 2, we find that *53.8% of those surveyed “strongly disapprove” of homosexuals running for public office, and only 7.3% “strongly approve,”* when given the question on the original 1-10 scale.<sup>3</sup> Even if we

combine 7-10 assuming that these answers denote *some* form of approval,



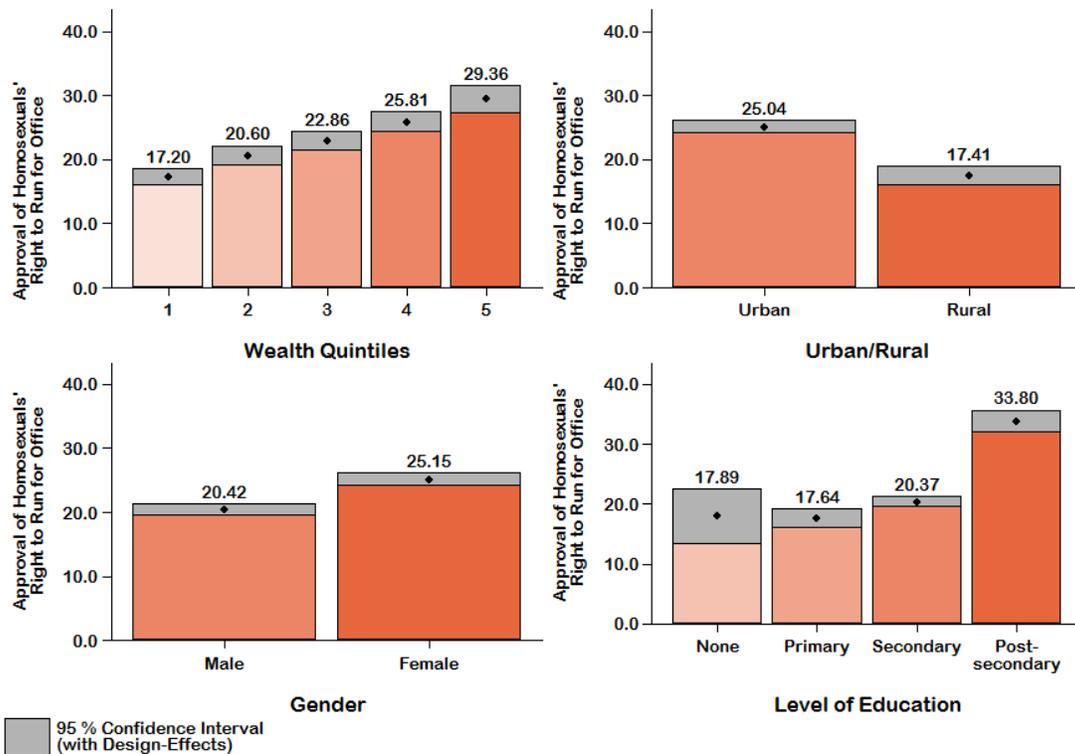
only 15.1% of the survey respondents chose one of these answers. These low numbers indicate that the vast majority of the population of the surveyed Caribbean countries disapprove of homosexuals' political rights.

When we break down the answers to this question by common sociodemographic features, we find some interesting results. As can be seen in Figure 3, *the wealthy, those living in urban areas, women, and the more educated are more approving of homosexuals' political rights than their counterparts.* Regarding quintiles of wealth,<sup>4</sup> we find that there is a 12.2

<sup>3</sup> These numbers reflect the average percent for the six countries presented here.

<sup>4</sup> Wealth: The wealth measure is a five category variable that is generated using a series of items about household possessions;

**Figure 3. Average Degrees of Approval of Homosexuals' Political Rights by Wealth, Place of Residence, Gender, and Level of Education in the Caribbean, 2014**



Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2014; v.GM v3.0

degree difference between the poorest and wealthiest in our survey, a difference that is statistically significant. Those living in urban areas register 7.6 degrees higher on the approval scale than those living in rural areas. Likewise, women also register higher degrees of approval (25.2 degrees) than do men (20.4 degrees). There is also a significant difference when considering the education levels of the respondents; those with a post-secondary education score 33.8 degrees as opposed to those with no education (17.9 degrees) a significant difference of 15.9 degrees.

While progress has been made on the issue of gay marriage in much of the LAC region, there is work to be done to achieve equality for all. In this report we extend beyond looking at support for marital rights to another dimension of gay rights – participation in politics – and we find that in the Caribbean region in particular, the public tends against the realization of such political rights. That being said, some are more approving than others; in brief, the wealthy, those living in urban areas, women, and the more educated are

for more information see Córdova 2009 (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0806en.pdf>).

more approving of homosexuals' political rights.

## References

Bellot, Gabrielle. 2015. "On Being Queer in the Caribbean." *The New York Times* October 31. Accessed November 4, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/opinion/sunday/on-being-queer-in-the-caribbean.html>

Daniel Montalvo is the LAPOP Program Manager. He can be reached at [Daniel.montalvo@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Daniel.montalvo@vanderbilt.edu)

Emily Saunders is the LAPOP Research Outreach Coordinator. She can be reached at [Emily.c.saunders@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Emily.c.saunders@vanderbilt.edu)

Full results of the 2014 AmericasBarometer and previous rounds can be consulted on-line at [www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org). The full data set is available for on-line analysis or download (in SPSS and Stata formats) at no cost.