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Age is decisive factor when it comes to supporting same-sex marriage: LAPOP

by Jim Patterson (<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/author/patterjm/>) | Jun. 2, 2015, 4:43 PM | *Want more research news? [Subscribe to our weekly newsletter](http://news.vanderbilt.edu/research/research-subscribe/)* » (<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/research/research-subscribe/>)

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(<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/files/Gay-Couple-iStock.jpg>)

(iStock)

Age is a decisive factor when it comes to support for same-sex marriage in the Americas, and legislators' actions on the issue are usually in line with their constituents' wishes, says a researcher with [Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>).



(<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/files/Arturo-Maldonado.jpg>)

Arturo Maldonado
(Vanderbilt)

Analyzing data from the 2014 AmericasBarometer survey by LAPOP, Vanderbilt Ph.D. candidate [Arturo Maldonado](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/political-science/bio/arturo-maldonado) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/political-science/bio/arturo-maldonado>) found that “age is one of the factors to most consistently predict individuals’ support for same-sex marriage.”

“This variable is ... statistically significant in all 10 countries (Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay) investigated in detail for [this report](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo21en.pdf) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo21en.pdf>) (to see the report in Spanish, [click here](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo21es.pdf) (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITBo21es.pdf>)),” Maldonado says. “That is, older people are less likely to support gay marriage.”

Canada is the most accepting nation in the Americas for same-sex marriage, scoring 71.1 on a scale of one to 100. The United States is fourth, scoring 56.2. Jamaica is the least accepting of same-sex marriage, scoring 5.1, one of four countries to score below 10. The others are Haiti, Guyana and Belize.

Higher public support for same-sex marriage is found in countries that have already enacted legislation allowing some form of same-sex marriage or unions, Maldonado says. Those countries include Canada, the United States, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Colombia.

“The exception is Ecuador, which has approved civil unions despite low public support for this type of legislation,” Maldonado says. Ecuador scored 16.5 on the one to 100 scale.

Looking at the breakdown in support for same-sex marriage by age in individual countries, there is a clear trend of young persons being more in favor and older citizens being more opposed. In Argentina, individuals 25-years-old or younger scored 65.7 on a zero to 100 scale with zero not being supportive and 100 being completely supportive. For those 66 and older, the score is 37.8.

Although the results differ in terms of the overall acceptance in the other countries, the age difference persisted.

“In countries across the board, young people tend to exhibit higher degrees of support for gay marriage, compared to

older people,” Maldonado says.

In addition, women, more educated and wealthier people are more likely to support same-sex marriage, regardless of whether their country has approved a civil union or same-sex marriage law, Maldonado says. Catholics, evangelicals and Protestants are less likely to approve than non-Catholics, non-evangelicals and non-Protestants.

“Taken as a whole, the 2014 AmericasBarometer results reveal that legislators in the Americas tend to be in line with people’s preferences in their countries, in that pro-union/marriage legislation tends to be found in countries with more support among the mass public for extending such rights to gay individuals,” Maldonado says.

LAPOP develops, implements and analyzes the AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys. Since the 1970s, LAPOP has gathered a treasure trove of opinion data containing political perspectives from Latin American and Caribbean citizens. LAPOP data and reports are available to interested researchers at the [LAPOP website](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/)

[\(http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/\)](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/).

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