Latin American Public Opinion Project and the AmericasBarometer
LAPOP: AN OVERVIEW

The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) is a leader in the development, implementation, and analysis of data on individual opinions and behavior. As a center for excellence in survey research, LAPOP uses “gold standard” approaches and innovative methods to carry out targeted and national surveys; conduct impact evaluation studies; and produce reports on individual attitudes, evaluations, and experiences.

LAPOP’s origins are grounded in research conducted by Dr. Mitchell Seligson in the 1970s on democratic values in Costa Rica. This pioneering effort took place during 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. Dr. Elizabeth Zechmeister, an expert in experimental methods and public opinion research, joined LAPOP in 2008 and, as of 2014, has assumed the role of LAPOP Director. Today, LAPOP conducts research in every country in Latin America, Canada, the United States, and much of the Caribbean.

LAPOP holds its surveys and studies to the highest standards of quality. This unparalleled quality control is inserted at each stage of the project: questionnaire and sample design; pre-testing; fieldwork oversight; expert data processing and analysis; and reporting.

LAPOP is housed at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Vanderbilt is a research university that has been a leader in the study of Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 60 years. At Vanderbilt, a dedicated team of faculty, staff, postdoctoral researchers, and students works year-round on the design and analysis of public opinion studies. This team also edits and publishes the bi-weekly Insights series, which features brief reports on individual facets of public opinion.

LAPOP’s network extends across the Americas. LAPOP functions as a consortium, working in partnership with numerous academic and nongovernmental institutions and individuals. These partners provide country-specific feedback on survey content and work with LAPOP to disseminate the results of the public opinion surveys to the citizens of participating countries.

Through years of polling an expanding set of countries using sophisticated techniques, LAPOP has developed a tremendous amount of high quality data on citizens’ views and behaviors across the Americas. As a pioneer in cutting-edge methods, LAPOP is a resource for all those interested in public opinion data of the highest quality.

LAPOP HAS CONDUCTED SURVEYS IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS:

- Argentina
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United States
- Uruguay
- Venezuela
LAPOP: WHAT WE PRODUCE

AmericaBarometer

LAPOP’s AmericaBarometer regional survey is the only scientifically rigorous comparative survey that covers all of the mainland independent countries in North, Central, and South America, as well as a significant number of countries in the Caribbean. With the AmericaBarometer, LAPOP measures values, behaviors, and socio-economic conditions in the Americas using national probability samples of voting-age adults. Standardization of methods across the national surveys and a common core questionnaire permits valid comparisons across countries and time, allowing the AmericaBarometer to serve as a valid “barometer” of levels and shifts in individual opinions and behaviors. Stratified sample designs, available on LAPOP’s website, permit complex analyses of individuals nested within sub-regions. In addition to a common core, individual questionnaires contain country-specific modules that allow experts to assess topics of particular relevance to the country.

The AmericaBarometer series begins in 2004 and includes 28 countries and more than 228,000 interviews.

Insights

The Insights series provides short, pithy analyses of key, policy-relevant data gathered by the AmericaBarometer. Normally released every two weeks, the studies are written mainly by LAPOP faculty and researchers and are published in both English and Spanish. The studies are accessible at vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php. Subscription is free and available by emailing your name to insight@mail.americasbarometer.org.

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

- Trust in institutions
- Electoral engagement
- Democratic governance
- Economic well-being
- Policy preferences
- Crime and violence
- Health and happiness

One example of some of the interesting work presented in our Insights series is shown in the graph below, from a recent report on Colombia titled “Acceptance of a Hypothetical Victory by the FARC in a 2015 Local Election.”

Acceptance of a Hypothetical Victory by the FARC in a 2015 Local Election

- Would not accept
- Would accept
- DK/DA

Source: AmericaBarometer by LAPOP, 2013; Colombia v1.
Country and Comparative Studies
LAPOP and its partner scholars write extensive, book-length country and comparative studies for each round of the AmericasBarometer. These studies include:
- Coverage of a wide range of topics
- Fully illustrated graphs and charts
- Information on the sample design
- The complete version of the questionnaire

These studies are published locally, donated to libraries around the world, and are also available as PDFs at no charge on our website. All studies may be downloaded at LapopSurveys.org.

Special Purpose Studies and Consultancies
Through its state-of-the-art methods and wide-ranging capabilities, LAPOP is at the forefront of research on public opinion. LAPOP can provide:
- Customized briefings and reports on public opinion within and across Latin America and the Caribbean
- Special studies on critical topics such as corruption and crime victimization, economic sentiment, political stability, judicial trust, and law enforcement
- Multi-method research (focus groups, elite interviews, experiments, and surveys) and impact evaluation studies
- Assistance with and advice on specialized approaches to public opinion research in any region of the world

Corruption Victimization
LAPOP measures street-level corruption using a battery of questions about bribe solicitation; the graph shows the percent of individuals in 2014 in each country who were asked to pay a bribe on at least one occasion in the past year.

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2014; v.GM14_0912
LAPOP: METHODS AND PRACTICES

Each country 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.

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 several 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 detailed training manuals
- Partnerships with reputable survey organizations in the region
- Widespread use of electronic handheld devices and specialized software by LAPOP to allow multilingual interviews and extensive validity checks

Post-Survey
- Use of cutting-edge statistical programs and methods to audit, process, and analyze the datasets
- Clear, user-friendly graphs featured in reports
- Public dissemination in surveyed countries
- Posting of survey design and methods on the LAPOP website
- Uploading of data onto LAPOP’s website and into LAPOP’s free interactive data analysis program
LAPOP DATA: USE AND ACCESS

The AmericasBarometer datasets feature a common core set of questions that has been asked from 2004 to present day. In addition, LAPOP has datasets that date back to the 1970s. Questionnaires and information on each dataset are available on LAPOPS’s website at LapopSurveys.org.

Who uses LAPOP data?
• Academic researchers
• The United States Agency for International Development
• The World Bank
• The Inter-American Development Bank
• The United Nations Development Programme
• The Organization of American States
• Several governments across Latin America
• And many more

LAPOP also has provided seed funding for researchers at several institutions who are using its data to support research on public opinion in Latin America and the Caribbean. These small grants have resulted in research papers that provide additional insight into democratic politics in the region.

How can I access LAPOP data?
The LAPOP website, 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, LAPOP’s raw data files are available through three channels:
1. Any individual worldwide can access individual datasets via LAPOP’s website free of charge.
2. Individuals and institutions can become premium access subscribers and receive the following additional benefits:
   • Access to merged databases (cross-time, cross-country)
   • Single files with data for all countries for a given survey wave
   • Access to LAPOP-created Stata code to present statistical analyses in user-friendly graphs
   • Access to LAPOP technical support
3. Institutions can purchase datasets to create enduring data repositories

The LAPOP Website
Our website provides access to publications, subscription information, survey data, and much more! Please visit our site and browse our exciting information at LapopSurveys.org.

For subscription information including packages and pricing, click on the Subscribers/Become a Subscriber tab.

For information on survey data, click the Survey Data tab.

For access to our various reports, click on the Publications tab.
LAPOP CENTRAL

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LAPOP also has many esteemed alumni who have gone on to take prestigious positions at universities, NGOs, and governments around the world.

International Advisors

LAPOP frequently consults and collaborates with experts on public opinion, survey, and related research areas. A group of esteemed researchers from around the globe advises LAPOP projects, in particular the AmericasBarometer.

LAPOP is committed to capacity building, training, and exchange. LAPOP provides a platform for graduate students to contribute to the design, implementation, and analysis of policy-relevant research projects. Students acquire hands-on experiences that create a foundation for their own research efforts during and after graduate school. LAPOP’s Undergraduate Research Fellow Program allows college students the opportunity to hone transferable skills and develop reports circulated in LAPOP’s Insights series. On occasion LAPOP hosts visiting scholars for the purpose of learning and collaboration. For more information on any of these opportunities, please contact the Director of LAPOP, Liz Zechmeister, by email at liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu.
LAPOP’S NETWORK OF SUPPORTERS AND COLLABORATORS
RED DE DONANTES Y COLABORADORES DE LAPOP
LAPOP operates as an academic consortium of partners. The current partnerships are as follows:
LAPOP opera como un consorcio de socios académicos. Las sociedades actuales son las siguientes:

### Mexico and Central America
**México y Centroamérica**
- Costa Rica
- Honduras
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Mexico

### Caribbean/Caribe
**Dominican Republic**
- República Dominicana
- República de las Bahamas
- Guatemala
- Trinidad & Tobago
- Jamaica
- Suriname
- Colombia
- Uruguay

### Andean/Southern Cone
**Andes y Cono Sur**
- Ecuador
- Bolivia
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Brazil
- Chile
- Guyana
- Haiti

### Canada and the United States
**Canadá y Estados Unidos**
- Canada
- United States
- Argentina
- Brazil
- Mexico
- Republic of Surinam