

The background of the entire page is a dark, muted illustration. It depicts a community scene with several people, including a woman in the foreground on the left and a man on the right. In the background, there are rolling hills or mountains. The style is somewhat abstract and painterly, with a focus on human figures and natural elements.

2021

Annual Report

LAPOP



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About the Lab

Vanderbilt's LAPOP Lab is a center for excellence in the study of public opinion and democracy. The lab's mission is to:



Advance research innovations



Build capacity in survey methods and analysis



Collect high-quality public opinion data



Disseminate policy-relevant research

LAPOP's core project is the award-winning AmericasBarometer, a regular survey of citizens' experiences, evaluations, and expectations regarding democratic governance in the Western Hemisphere.

LAPOP's efforts are supported by major grants from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Inter-American Development Bank, the National Science Foundation, and others, as well as financial support from Vanderbilt University. In 2021, the lab's awarded, obligated, and pending extramural grant funding – supporting work for that year and for future years – totaled \$2.9 million.

2021 at a Glance



Advancing Research Innovations



The 2021 AmericasBarometer is the first-of-its-kind, phone-based comparative survey project in the Latin America and Caribbean region

7

new AmericasBarometer question modules to assess the pulse of democracy

3

workshops for the new International Survey Methods Workshop Series

221

International Survey Methods Workshop Series attendees



Building Capacity

21

fieldwork teams training sessions

326+

interviewer training hours

946+

fieldwork interviewers

27

workshops and webinars

454

workshop and attendees

26

undergraduate research assistants and fellows

10

graduate research assistants



2021 at a Glance



Collecting Data

9th

wave of the Americas-
Barometer survey project

22

countries
surveyed

8

countries surveyed
using online interviews

9

online
surveys

64,352

interviews

324

unique survey
questions

42,631

online interviews

90

unique survey
questions



Disseminating Research

21

reports written

25

presentations of
research findings

15

partner
institutions

850+

event
attendees

300+

annual conference
registrations

36

annual conference
papers using our data

55

scholarly publications
using our data

123,718

website visitors

4,145

users of our online
Data Playground

7,700

Twitter
followers

140

news media
mentions

548,800

Twitter
impressions

400+

Twitter
mentions



Advancing Research Innovations



2021 AmericasBarometer conducted by phone

First-of-its-kind: The most extensive phone-based comparative survey project in the Latin America and Caribbean region, with 64,352 interviews across 20 countries plus online surveys in the US and Canada.

Learning & adaptation: Applied lessons learned in 2020 from pilot surveys, including remote pre-testing, questionnaire design, sample design, and quality control.

Relevance: New modules to assess the pulse of democracy in the face of the ongoing pandemic.

Comparability & quality: Innovative trunk-and-branch questionnaire minimized interview time while maximizing the number of questions in order to maintain the AmericasBarometer time series. Redesign of survey samples and post-fieldwork weighting calculations to ensure representativeness at the national level, comparability across countries, and across time.



Launched the International Survey Methods Workshop Series

This [new series](#), which continues into 2022, features experts from around the world who deliver presentations on cutting-edge survey methodology, with a focus on research in international contexts. The series is intentionally trans-institutional, engaging scholarship from multiple disciplines.

In 2021, we hosted 3 workshops on comparing survey experiments across countries, conducting phone interviews during the pandemic, and innovations in how to merge survey research with data science.

A total of 221 workshop attendees from more than 70 institutions attended this new workshop series.



Generated new discoveries on democracy and public opinion

In an [article](#) published in *PLOS One*, our lab director, Liz Zechmeister, and associate director, Noam Lupu, show how the pandemic shapes democratic attitudes.

Liz Zechmeister and Luke Plutowski, the lab's senior statistician and research analyst, were invited to revise and resubmit two research manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals. One article focuses on how, during a public health crisis like the current pandemic, citizens are more supportive of postponing elections. Their second article uses experimental evidence from lab surveys to show that starting surveys with questions about salient issues keeps respondents engaged.

Our lab also published new [Insights](#) reports on [social trust](#), [safety nets for immigrants](#), and [survey methods](#).

Building Capacity



Implementation of new protocols for fieldwork team training in the 2021 AmericasBarometer

Our lab developed new protocols for virtual training of interview teams in 20 countries across the LAC region. We conducted more than 21 fieldwork team training sessions that spanned more than 236 training hours and included nearly 1,000 interviewers.



Conducted dozens of workshops with colleagues, junior scholars, policymakers, and students

LAPOP hosted a total of 27 workshops with 454 participants. These workshops covered a variety of topics on how to conduct survey research in the LAC region, with a particular focus on transitioning from face-to-face to phone interviews.

We established regular meetings with peer survey projects, including the Arab Barometer and the Afrobarometer, to share lessons from conducting phone interviews during the pandemic.

The lab also hosted 4 "iLABPOP" workshops for affiliated Vanderbilt students, faculty, and researchers on best practices in survey research.



Record-high involvement of undergraduate students in lab research activities

The lab expanded our undergraduate research assistant team to include a total of 26 students in 2021. This is the largest number of undergraduate research assistants and fellows LAPOP has ever worked with.

Highlights of undergraduate involvement in lab research include:

- Co-authoring the [2021 Pulse of Democracy](#), the regional report for the 2021 AmericasBarometer
- Authoring dozens of [Spotlight reports](#)
- Publishing student-authored [Insights reports](#)
- Writing honors theses using our data and participating in immersion projects



New workshop component to LAPOP Lab's annual conference

For the first time, our annual academic conference included a full day of workshops on how we conduct the AmericasBarometer. Our lab experts led 4 workshops on questionnaire design and pretesting, survey sampling, fieldwork quality control, and using R to analyze AmericasBarometer data. More than 100 individuals from 20 countries registered for these workshops.

Collecting Data



Largest number of interviews for an AmericasBarometer round

2021 marked the 9th round of the AmericasBarometer, which, for the first time, was conducted by phone rather than by face-to-face interviews. To accommodate for questionnaire length challenges, we doubled the sample size from 1,500 to 3,000 interviews in each of the 22 countries surveyed.

We collected data for a record 64,362 interviews. And, although we had to shorten the length of our questionnaires to ensure phone interviews were completed successfully, we included a total of 324 unique survey questions in the 2021 round of the AmericasBarometer.



Developed a new protocol for selecting respondents using random-digit dialing

LAPOP sample designs for 2021 ensured that all eligible individuals (i.e., voting-age citizens) with access to mobile phones have an equal, non-zero chance of being selected to participate as respondents in the AmericasBarometer.

The lab worked with in-country survey firms on the development of sampling frames that included all possible combinations of mobile phone numbers in each country. From those frames, LAPOP and surveys firms drew samples of at least 300,000 cell phone numbers for each country. Respondents interviewed in the final samples were selected completely at random, ensuring a high-quality sample selection for each country survey.



Audited 100% of the interviews in the 2021 AmericasBarometer

As part of the lab's quality control standards, we requested in-country survey firms to audit all interviews carried out to ensure data reliability. Auditing protocols require that interviewers read all survey questions completely and correctly. Interviews that do not meet LAPOP's quality standards are canceled and repeated by the in-country survey firm.

LAPOP also implemented sample balance checks throughout fieldwork for the AmericasBarometer to ensure that key characteristics of the people answering our surveys matched the national distribution of population demographics.



Expanded the lab's online survey projects

In partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, our lab expanded our online survey efforts with studies in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. These surveys were designed to measure support for redistribution policies. They were based on nationally representative samples and 42,631 surveys were conducted using Computer Assisted Web Interviewing.

Disseminating Research



Annual conference in partnership with the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México

We hosted our 3rd annual [The Public and Democracy in the Americas](#) conference virtually in partnership with the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México. It blended presentations of LAPOP research findings with scholarship using AmericasBarometer data to generate important insights into public opinion and democracy and facilitated dialogue over the project, research, and democracy in the region. The event featured 36 research presentations by a diverse group of researchers, from graduate students to full professors, representing 40 institutions across 14 countries. More than 300 individuals from 31 countries registered to attend the virtual conference.



Released the 2021 Pulse of Democracy report

We published our regional report with key findings from the 2021 AmericasBarometer on November 16, 2021, in a [public event hosted in partnership with the Wilson Center](#). The virtual presentation highlighted findings of the LAC public's assessment of democratic governance, support for democratic values and institutions, perceptions of basic liberties, and how citizens experience the rule of law and engage in political life. More than 280 individuals attended this event.

We also co-hosted a public presentation of key findings of the pulse of democracy in Central America on December 7, 2021, in partnership with Florida International University and the Washington Office for Latin America. About 70 people attended this virtual event.



Delivered Topline Briefs on 2021 AmericasBarometer Findings

As part of our longstanding partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), we delivered 13 Topline Briefs and in-house presentations to select LAC country mission teams summarizing key findings for the 2021 AmericasBarometer. These reports play a valuable role in informing USAID's democratic governance programming in the region.

Disseminating Research



Expanded the use of our data by scholars and policymakers

LAPOP used a multi-faceted approach to make 2021 AmericasBarometer data publicly accessible to key stakeholders at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), policy and research audiences in Latin America and the Caribbean, other U.S. government institutions, journalists, and the general public.

LAPOP makes all its data and reports publicly available on its [website](#). In 2021, the website was visited more than 123,000 times. All AmericasBarometer country-specific and regional datasets are available, including 22 datasets for the 2021 round. Additionally, technical reports for all 22 countries surveyed in the 2021 round are now available online. These reports include sample design information, response rates, and weighting specifications.

LAPOP continued expanding the accessibility and use of its AmericasBarometer data through its [Data Playground](#), a free online, interactive data analysis tool. The Data Playground allows users to access AmericasBarometer data for every country in which the lab conducted surveys between 2004 and 2021. This includes access to 128 variables on topics including the economy, political participation, citizen security, corruption, political tolerance, and democracy.

In 2021, the Data Playground was visited by more than 4,000 users. The Data Playground is particularly useful for those who do not have the training to use advanced statistical software programs. It allows users to tabulate frequencies for a single variable, visualize cross-country comparisons on a map, and conduct crosstabulations.

Our data are also widely used by scholars and policymakers who publish their research. In 2021, we tracked at least 55 articles using LAPOP data that were published in peer-reviewed journals and in reports from international policy and research organizations.



Grew our presence on social and news media

LAPOP data and findings were referenced at least 140 times in the media, including news publications from dozens of countries across.

The lab's social media presence grew significantly in 2021. On Twitter, LAPOP had 7,700 followers in 2021, an increase of more than 5,400 new followers from 2020. In 2021, the lab had at least 548,000 impressions, nearly 42,000 profile visits, and over 400 mentions.

LAPOP

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LAPOP's broader consortium includes Founder and Senior
Advisor, Dr. Mitchell A. Seligson, as well as an extensive
set of country and topic experts across the Americas