



Political Culture of  
Democracy in Haiti and  
in the Americas 2021:  
Taking the Pulse of  
Democracy

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AmericasBarometer  
*Barómetro de las Américas*



## Our Mission

LAPOP Lab is a center for excellence in international survey research. Located at Vanderbilt University, our mission is to:

- Produce high-quality public opinion data
- Develop and implement cutting-edge methods
- Build capacity in survey research and analysis
- Generate and disseminate policy-relevant research

The lab is led by scholars with expertise in survey methodology and innovative approaches to the study of public opinion, a dedication to pedagogy, and a commitment to providing high-quality input into evidence-based decisions about programs and policy.



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## A Letter from USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a proud supporter of the AmericasBarometer, an award-winning project that captures the voice of the people of the Americas. In numerous ways, the AmericasBarometer informs discussions over the quality and strength of democracy in the region.

USAID relies on the AmericasBarometer to inform strategy development, guide program design, and evaluate the contexts in which we work. The AmericasBarometer alerts policymakers and international assistance agencies to key challenges. Importantly, the project provides citizens with information about democratic values and experiences in their country, over time and in comparison to other countries.

While the AmericasBarometer is coordinated by LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University, it is a collaborative international project. LAPOP consults with researchers across the Americas, local survey teams, USAID, and other project supporters at each stage. These rich discussions increase the relevance and validity of questionnaires; improve sample designs; build and maintain state-of-the-art quality control protocols; and support the development and dissemination of data and reports. As a collaborative project, the AmericasBarometer also builds capacity in public opinion research via knowledge transfers to local teams, student participation in the project, and frequent workshops.

USAID has been the largest supporter of the surveys that form the core of the AmericasBarometer. In addition, each round of the project is supported by numerous other individuals and institutions. USAID is grateful to that network of supporters, the LAPOP team, their outstanding former and current students, the many expert individuals and institutions across the region that contribute to and engage with the project, the local fieldwork teams, and all those who took the time to respond to the survey.

**Stephanie Molina**

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## UNDERSTANDING THE FIGURES IN THIS REPORT

AmericasBarometer data are based on national samples of respondents drawn from each country; naturally, all samples produce results that contain a margin of error. It is important for the reader to understand that each data point (for example, a country's proportion of citizens who support democracy) has a confidence interval, expressed in terms of a range surrounding that point. Many graphs in this study show a 95% confidence interval that takes into account this sampling variability. When two estimated points have confidence intervals that overlap to a large degree, the difference between the two values is typically not statistically significant; conversely, where two confidence intervals do not overlap, the reader can be confident that those differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Estimates for the 2021 AmericasBarometer are based on weighted data. Weights are calculated by estimating baseline probabilities adjusted for eligibility and non-response. Then we calibrate the weights to 2018/19 AmericasBarometer country samples on gender, education, age, and region to obtain overall weights. Cross-time and cross-country weights are standardized so that each country/year has the same effective sample size. Data for this report are based on a preliminary dataset; analysts may find small differences in point estimates when using later fully processed datasets released by LAPOP.

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# Introduction

By François Gélinau

Since the end of the Duvalier regime in 1986, the Haitian political landscape has been marked by highly volatile electoral cycles. The political elite has been in a constant battle for power. In a country devastated by an ever-ending series of natural cataclysms and an impoverish economy, getting control of the government has been one of the rare ways of gaining access to resources and influence. For Haitian political actors, elections have been a zero-sum game.

Three recent history accounts illustrate quite well the very fisty nature of the country's political battlefield.

## **Differences Over Constitutional Interpretation Led to Major Unrest in 2021**

Had the 2015 presidential election cycle been completed according to the planned calendar, President Jovenel Moïse would have served his last day in office on February 6th, 2021. The new President would have been sworn in the following day, as dictated by the country's Constitution. Yet, this is not exactly how it played out.

Despite the fact that the top three contenders received over 70 percent of the valid votes on election day on October 25th, 2015, with respectively 32.81 percent, 25.27 percent, and 14.27 percent, the results were harshly contested by several political parties. These claimed that the results had been manipulated by

the outgoing administration to favor the party's candidate, Jovenel Moïse, who finished in first place. What ensued was a period on violent protests. The second round, originally scheduled for December 27th of the same year, was eventually cancelled all together. Once President Michel Martelly's mandate expired, on February 6th, 2016, Jocelerme Privert, the Senate President, was sworn in as interim President.

The fact that Haiti 2015 elections were postponed for over a year, with the run-off taking place on November 20th, 2016, lead to a constitutional crisis. Had a president been duly elected in the Fall of 2015, the new President would have taken office on February 7th, 2016, for a five-year term, ending in February 2021. Capitalizing on this reasoning, several political groups, highly critical

of Jovenel Moïse, claimed that his presidency should have expired on February 7th, 2021, and demanded new elections to replace the “now illegitimate” President. Yet, according to Article 124.1 of the Constitution, “the presidential mandate lasts five years. This period begins and ends on the 7th of February following the election.” On that basis, President Moïse considered that his five-year constitutional mandate began on February 7th, 2016 and should thus end on February 7th, 2022. President Moïse was planning to hold presidential elections for September 2021.

The Spring of 2021 was marked by popular unrest, especially in the streets of Port-au-Prince. Parties of the opposition were calling on Haitians to protest against the illegitimate president. Amid this constitutional controversy, President Moïse proposed a referendum aimed at reforming the Constitution. This only serve to increase popular unrest. Unable to restore public peace, in early June of the same year, President Moïse announced that the referendum would be postponed.

A few weeks later, on the early hours of July 7th, 2021, President Moïse was assassinated in his Port-au-Prince residence by a heavily armed squad, plunging the country into another political crisis that has yet to unfold.

### **Lack of Consensus Over Vote Tally in 2010 Led to a Controversial Decision to Exclude Candidate in the 2011 Run-Off**

In the early afternoon of the 2010 election day, before the end of the electoral journey concluded, Michel Martelly, along with three other candidates, held a news conference, calling for the annulment of the election.<sup>1</sup> The disgruntled candidates claimed the electoral process had been tainted by widespread fraud. Many Haitians took the street. Several polling stations were vandalized,<sup>2</sup> making it impossible to tally thousands of votes. The allegations of fraud, along with the destruction of voting material, left the vote count highly unreliable.

In early January of 2011, news agencies reported that the Organization of American States was about to release a report challenging the preliminary election results published in December by the Haitian electoral body.<sup>3</sup> The results tallied by the Provisional Electoral Council implied that candidates Mirlande Manigat and Jude Celestin would be competing in the January 2011 run-off, leaving Michel Martelly out. Popular protest and foreign intervention allegedly forced the Electoral Council to exclude Jude Celestin from the run-off which would bring Michel Martelly to the Haitian Presidency.<sup>4</sup>

### **Popular Protest Over Allegations of Massive Fraud Forces Authorities to Interpret the Constitution in a Way to Avoid a Run-Off Election in 2006**

In the days following the 2006 Presidential election, as the results were slowly being tallied by Haiti's electoral commission, the initial lead Rene Preval was credited in the national capital slowly eroded when votes from the provinces were included in the tally. By the time the electoral commission published the preliminary results, Preval's lead had eroded, and his votes dropped below the 50-percent mark needed to avoid a run-off election. Preval's supporters took the street, encouraged by political leaders, claiming the election was being stolen by massive fraud (Dupuy 2006).

The fear of a bloodbath incited the international community to broker an extra-constitutional solution that consisted of distributing the blank votes proportionally to the candidates instead of simply adding them to the total.<sup>5</sup> Mathematically, this pushed Preval's 49 percent just over the 50 percent mark. By avoiding the run-off in this way, Preval became the 41st President of the Republic.

### **Haiti's Democracy Repeatedly Fails to Deliver on its Own**

While these three accounts illustrate quite eloquently the fragility of the Haitian political context, they also

point to the lack of maturity of the country's political institutions. In all three cases, differences over the interpretation of the rules or decisions published by formal institutions have been used by political actors to challenge the regular course of democracy. By taking these issues "to the street," political actors have repetitively invited the Haitian population to wage what would often turn to violent protests against the alleged injustices. Whether these protests were justified is not the object here. Each and every time, the solution to the crisis has been to "reinterpret the rules" in order to appease the dissension. In every instance, the democratic institutions failed to operate on their own. Political intervention has had to save the day on every occasion.

Although one could argue that finding creative solutions to complex political problems is an intrinsic requirement of democracy, the repeated incapacity of the Haitian democratic institutions to inspire confidence is problematic. Democracy is all about mitigating conflicts, but when actors systematically contest the institutions accusing them of lack of impartiality, it raises questions on their legitimacy. For democratic institutions to inspire confidence, they need to be the only solution to the political conflicts. In Haiti, this is hardly the case. Extra constitutional arrangements, foreign interventions,

political violence, coup d'état, and more recently political assassination, too often have been part of the normal course of affairs.

If the Haitian political elite is constantly challenging the democratic institutions, what does it say about the country's population? How do Haitian citizens perceive their democracy? Do Haitians have confidence in the institutions? Do they display attitudes conducive to democracy? These are all questions that have been documented by the AmericasBarometer in Haiti since it first administered the survey in the country in 2006. The last wave of the survey took place in May and June of 2021 and offers the most recent insight in the country's political culture. The current report explores the data by comparing the attitudes of Haitians to those of the citizens of the Americas, and by tracing their evolution over the course of the past two decades.

The report draws a highly critical portrait of the Haitian political culture. After three decades of democratic practice, the country is still very fragile, with many indicators showing recent deterioration. However, this journey into the democratic culture of Haitians can serve as a roadmap to those invested in building the Haiti of tomorrow. Where some will see challenges, others will see opportunities for improvement. This is, at the very least, our intention.

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1 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/haiti-election-a-massive-fraud-1.941996> (last consulted on June 7th, 2022).

2 <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-nov-29-la-fg-haiti-election-20101129-story.html> (last consulted on June 7th, 2022).

3 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-elections-idUSTRE70969620110111> (last consulted on June 9th 2022).

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jan/10/haiti-oas-election-runoff> (last consulted on June 9th, 2022).

5 The Haitian Constitution stipulates that blank vote must be treated as valid votes. The Constitution does not indicate, however, how they must be counted.

Chapter 1

# Support for Democracy and Its Alternatives

Colombia, 2021:  
Protesters march  
during a national strike  
against President Ivan  
Duque's government  
(Sebastián Barrios/  
VWPics via AP Images)

Oscar Castorena and Adriana Rosario





**T**he robustness of a democracy depends on the degree to which its citizens' commit to democratic principles of government. According to data from previous rounds of the AmericasBarometer, the Latin America and Caribbean region has experienced a decline in public support for democracy as the best form of government and in satisfaction with what democracies are delivering. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed stress on this comparatively weakened commitment to democracy. This chapter examines current regional trends in citizens' attitudes toward democracy, their commitment to its key principles, and their preferences for alternative political systems.

## Main Findings

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- **Support for democracy has not recovered to levels recorded a decade ago**
- **While citizens are less likely to tolerate a military takeover than they were a decade ago**, they are considerably more likely to tolerate an executive who rules without the legislature in times of crisis
- **Satisfaction with democracy rose slightly, but remains lower than a decade ago**
- **Citizens across the region are willing to sacrifice elections for a system that guarantees income and basic services**, but they are less willing to sacrifice freedom of expression
- **Large majorities across the region prefer direct democracy over electing representatives**
- **Individuals who express a preference for elections, freedom of expression, and elected representatives are more likely to support democracy in the abstract**
- **These preferences are associated with commitment to democracy**, with those preferring elections and rule by elected representatives more likely to support democracy

Research measuring global trends shows that democracy is under threat from a wave of autocratization across the world.<sup>1</sup> And this threat may be compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which provides would-be autocrats with an opportunity to extend their powers in the name of addressing the public health emergency. In this context, it is especially important to understand the public's commitment to democracy. Longstanding theories of democracy and recent empirical research emphasize the link between the public's support for democracy and the durability of democratic government. If the public's commitment to democracy is waning, it is also important to examine what citizens want instead.

The AmericasBarometer asks respondents in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region about

their support for democracy versus alternative forms of government, their tolerance for military coups, and their satisfaction with democracy. These core questions have been included in the questionnaire since 2004, providing a consistent measure of the public's commitment to democracy for over a decade and a half. The data provide insight not only into the effect of recent events such as the pandemic, but also long-term changes in attitudes toward democracy. Supplementing this rich time-series, the 2021 AmericasBarometer survey included several new questions that probe citizens' attitudes about democracy. These include preferences between direct democracy, election of representatives, freedom of expression, guaranteed basic income and services, and rule by experts.

**Chile, 2019:**  
Anti-government  
protesters march  
during a general  
strike that demanded  
improvements in  
education, health care,  
and wages (Rodrigo  
Abd/AP Photo)



## Majorities Support Democracy, but Support Remains Comparatively Low

**H**ow strong or weak is citizen support for democracy across the LAC region? Has this support fluctuated over the previous decade? Since its initial 2004 wave, the AmericasBarometer has asked citizens about their commitment to democratic government with the following question:

**Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?**

Responses range from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). For this analysis, we code answers on the agreement end of the scale (values ranging from five to seven) as support for democracy. As seen in **Figure 1.1**, the proportion of adults in each country who express support for democracy ranges from a low of 46% in Haiti to a high of 80% in Uruguay. In all but four countries (Haiti, Honduras, Peru, and Paraguay), majorities express support for democracy in the abstract.

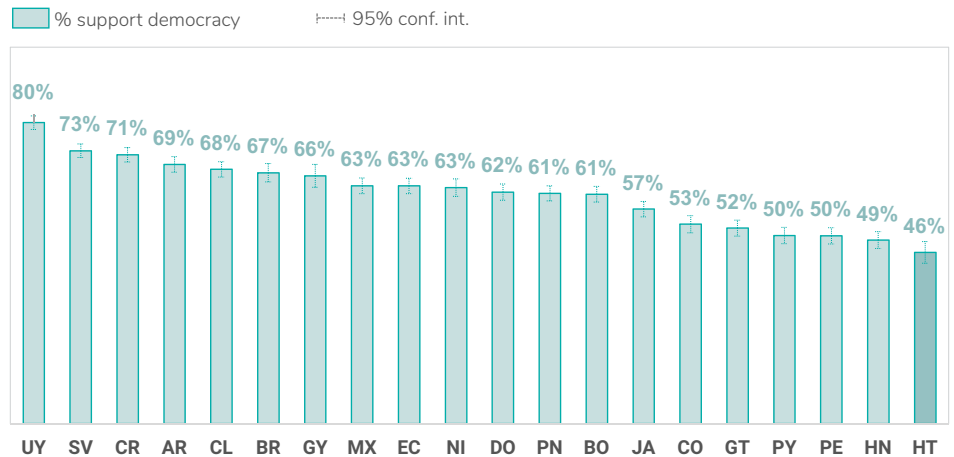
El Salvador stands out as having the second highest percentage of citizens who support democracy. In the 2018/19 round, El Salvador was firmly in the middle of the distribution, with 59% supporting democracy. This indicates a substantial increase in Salvadoran's commitment to democracy, no doubt a result of the 2019 election of Nayib Bukele, a popular politician who is not affiliated with the country's traditional but unpopular political parties. Meanwhile, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Uruguay have consistently appeared among the top countries in support for democracy.

# 61%

On average in the Latin America and Caribbean region, about two-thirds agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government

**Figure 1.1**

**In most LAC countries, majorities express support for democracy**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

LAPOP

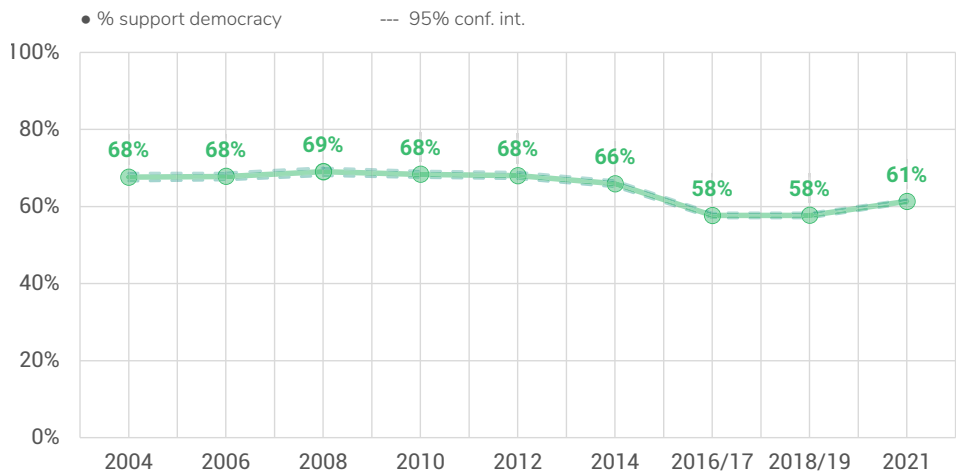
Are public attitudes about democracy in the LAC region following global trends of decline?

**Figure 1.2** shows that, on average, 61% agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government, a slight increase from 2018/19.<sup>2</sup> But these levels

of support do not reach the highs recorded prior to 2016. Each of these previous waves register statistically significant higher levels of support for democracy. Support for democracy may be rebounding, but it has yet to reach the levels recorded a decade ago.

**Figure 1.2**

**Support for democracy in the LAC region remains lower than a decade ago**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2004-2021

LAPOP

In order to dig deeper into democratic attitudes, the AmericasBarometer asked respondents about alternatives to democratic government under particular scenarios. One of these is a military takeover, clearly an autocratic alternative to government by elected representatives. To assess the conditions under which citizens in the region may tolerate a military coup, the 2021 survey asked the following questions:

**Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the military of this country to take power by a coup d'état (military coup). In your opinion, would a military coup be justified under the following circumstances?**

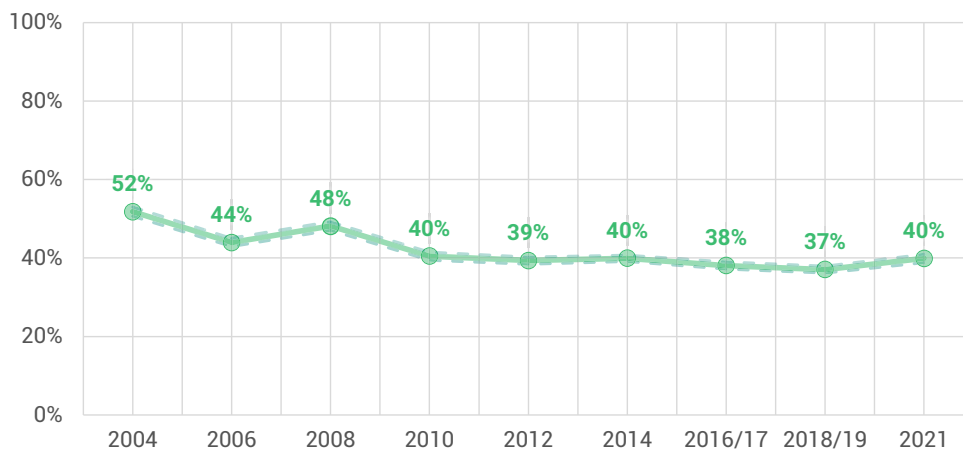
**When there is a lot of corruption. (1) It would be justified (2) No, it would not be justified**

**When there is a public health emergency like the coronavirus. (1) It would be justified (2) No, it would not be justified**

Respondents answer in either the affirmative, “a military take-over of the state would be justified” or the negative, “a military take-over of the state would not be justified.” **Figure 1.3** shows that the proportion of respondents who say they would tolerate a military coup under conditions of high corruption rose slightly between 2018/19 and 2021. At 40%, this proportion is substantial, but it remains lower than it was just over a decade ago, in the first rounds of the AmericasBarometer.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the cross-time analysis of support for democracy in the abstract, citizens’ commitment to this particular tenet of democracy—not tolerating military coups—has remained relatively stable over the last decade and a half.

**Figure 1.3**

**Tolerance for military coups remains lower than in early rounds of the AmericasBarometer** ● % coup is justified when corruption is high --- 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2004-2021

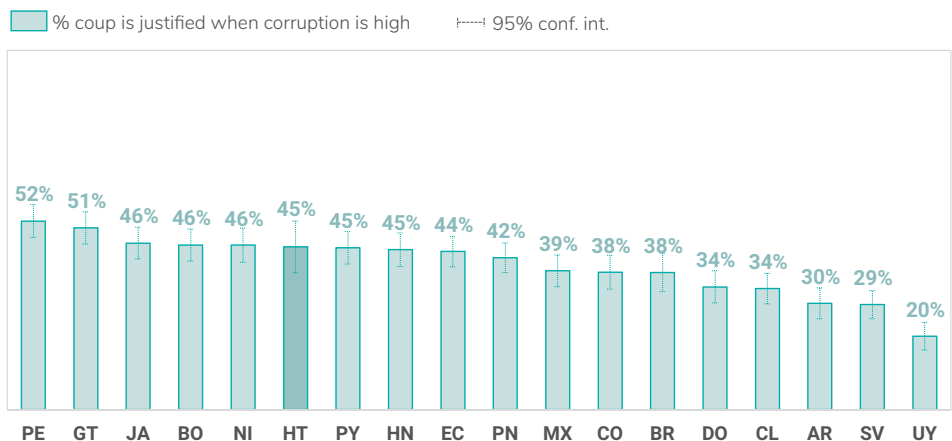


We see similar overall stability in this attitude at the level of individual countries. **Figure 1.4** shows the proportion that say they would tolerate a military coup under conditions of high corruption in each country. Here the proportions range from 20% (Uruguay) to 52% (Peru). While majorities say

they would tolerate a coup under these conditions in only two countries (Guatemala and Peru), the proportions are still substantial in every country. Overall, the ordering of countries across the LAC region remains very similar to what we observed in the 2018/19 round.

**Figure 1.4**

**In most countries of the LAC region, one-third or more would tolerate a military coup under high corruption**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

LAPOP



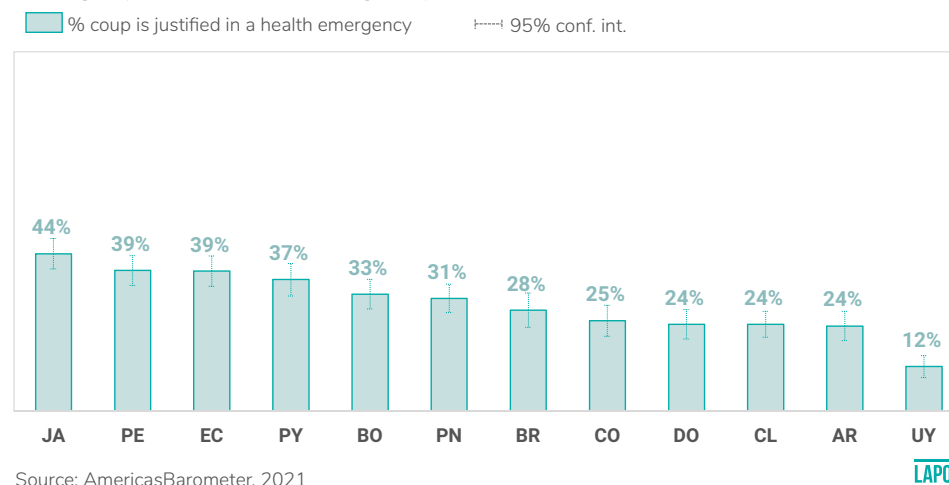
The public is less likely to justify a coup in a public health emergency compared to when there is high corruption

In some countries, the 2021 AmericasBarometer introduced the alternative scenario of a public health emergency to evaluate whether the context of the pandemic affects citizens' views on autocratic alternatives like a military takeover. **Figure 1.5** shows the proportion of respondents in each country where the question was asked who said they would tolerate such a takeover under conditions of a public health emergency. In every country that

included both scenarios, we see that the public is less likely to justify a coup in a public health emergency compared to when there is high corruption. There is no country in which a majority say they would tolerate a coup in a health emergency. As with military coups under high corruption, Uruguay has smallest share of respondents who say they would tolerate a coup under this scenario (12%).

**Figure 1.5**

**One-quarter to one-third across the LAC region would tolerate a coup during a public health emergency**



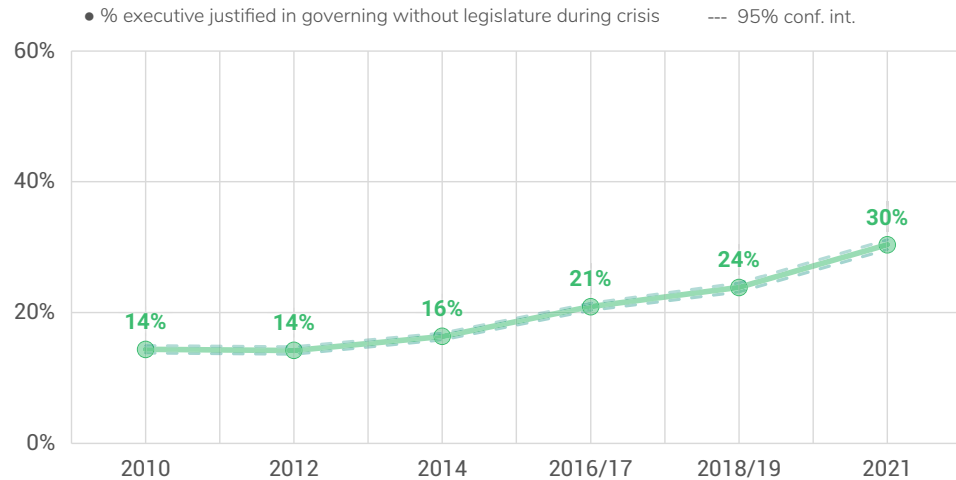
Over the long term, the public in the LAC region has grown less tolerant of the most flagrant form of authoritarianism, military rule. This attitudinal shift is consistent with the fact that actual military takeovers have become a less prominent threat to democracies in the region. Instead, democracies are increasingly under threat from elected leaders who seek to expand their authority beyond constitutional constraints. This is especially problematic for a region like Latin America, where presidential systems can lead to inter-branch conflict between an executive with a popular mandate and other branches of government. The 2021 AmericasBarometer survey included the following question tapping into executive overreach:

**Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Congress/Parliament and govern without Congress/Parliament?**

Respondents could answer “yes” or “no.” **Figure 1.6** shows that the public in the LAC region has become steadily more tolerant of executive coups since the question was first asked in 2010. In fact, the proportion of individuals tolerating executive coups doubled between 2010 and 2021. This is a sharp contrast to levels of tolerance for military coups, which have been steadier.

**Figure 1.6**

**Tolerance for executive coups continues to rise in the LAC region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2010-2021

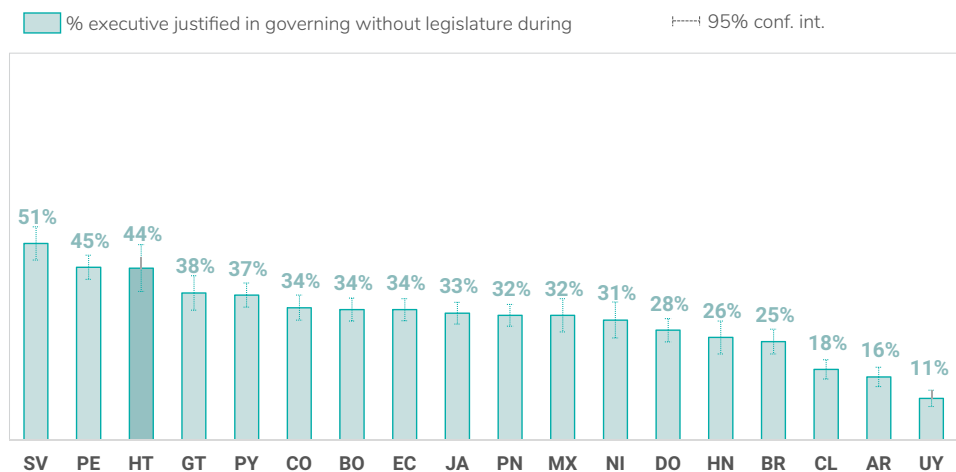


**Figure 1.7** shows these results for each country, demonstrating much more heterogeneity across countries than tolerance for military takeovers. In terms of tolerance for executive coups, there is a 40-percentage point difference between the most

coup-tolerant country (El Salvador) and the least coup-tolerant (Uruguay). In contrast, the difference between the highest and lowest ranked countries for the military coup under a scenario of high corruption is 32 percentage points.

**Figure 1.7**

**In most countries, a third or less would tolerate an executive coup**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021





El Salvador is again notable. While support for democracy surged in El Salvador between 2018/19 and 2021, so did Salvadorans' willingness to tolerate an executive coup—an undemocratic move. Generally, countries with the highest tolerance for executive coups are also those with the highest tolerance for military coups. But here El Salvador is an exception: it is the third least tolerant of military coups (at 29%) and the most tolerant of executive coups (at 51%). This may be partly explained by the enormous popularity of its president. According to the survey, 61% of Salvadorans believe he is doing a very good job. Recent research has indeed found that popular executives can potentially undermine citizens' opposition to anti-democratic executive actions while, at the same time, bolstering satisfaction with democracy.<sup>4</sup>

To further assess attitudes about centralizing power in the executive, the 2021 AmericasBarometer

included a new question measuring citizens' preferences for a strong leader who may bend the rules:

**Having a strong leader in the government, even if the leader bends the rules to get things done. Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad, or very bad as a form of government for our country?**

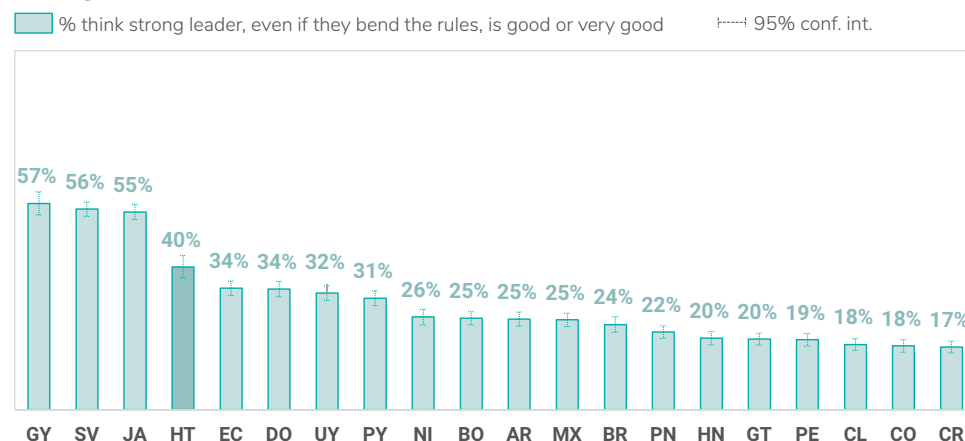
Figure 1.8 shows the proportion that answered “very good” or “good” in each country. Guyana, which was not among the countries asked the military and executive coup questions, has the highest levels of support for a strong leader, but El Salvador is a close second—consistent with the responses about executive coups. Interestingly, Uruguay, whose public is consistently the least tolerant of military and executive coups, is towards the middle of the distribution when it comes to preferring a strong leader who bends the rules to get things done.



Popular executives can potentially undermine citizens' opposition to anti-democratic executive actions while at the same time bolstering satisfaction with democracy

**Figure 1.8**

**In all but three countries in the LAC region, less than half support a strong leader who bends the rules**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



## Across Most of the Region, Citizens Remain Dissatisfied with Democracy

**W**hile individuals may be highly committed to democracy in the abstract, they may not necessarily think the government in their country is living up to democratic ideals. Over the long run, dissatisfaction with how democracy works in practice may erode support for democracy in the abstract. The AmericasBarometer directly asks respondents about their evaluation of democracy with the following question:

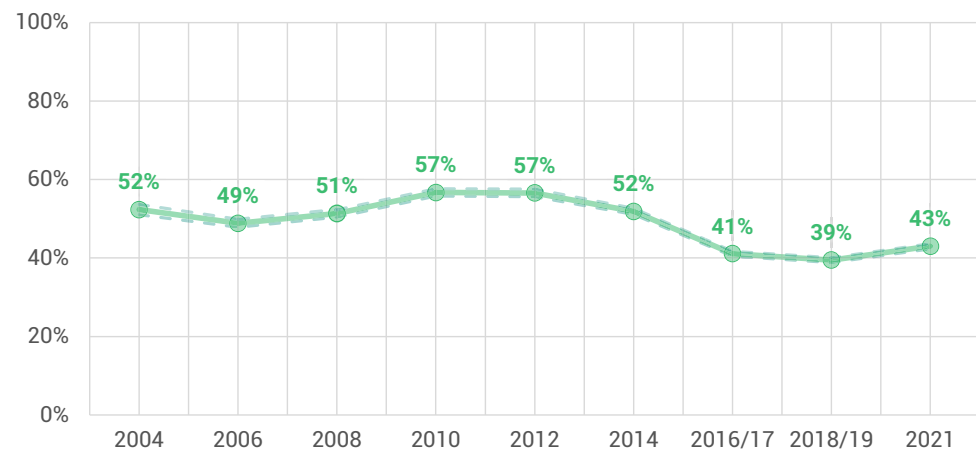
**In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?**

satisfied" with democracy in each round of the AmericasBarometer. The 2021 round shows a slight increase in satisfaction since 2018/19, although the level of satisfaction is still lower than it was over a decade ago. These trends thus mirror over-time change in support for democracy in the abstract.

**Figure 1.9** shows the proportion across the LAC region that said they were either "satisfied" or "very

**Figure 1.9**

**Despite a recent increase, satisfaction with democracy remains lower than in earlier rounds** • % satisfied with democracy --- 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2004-2021

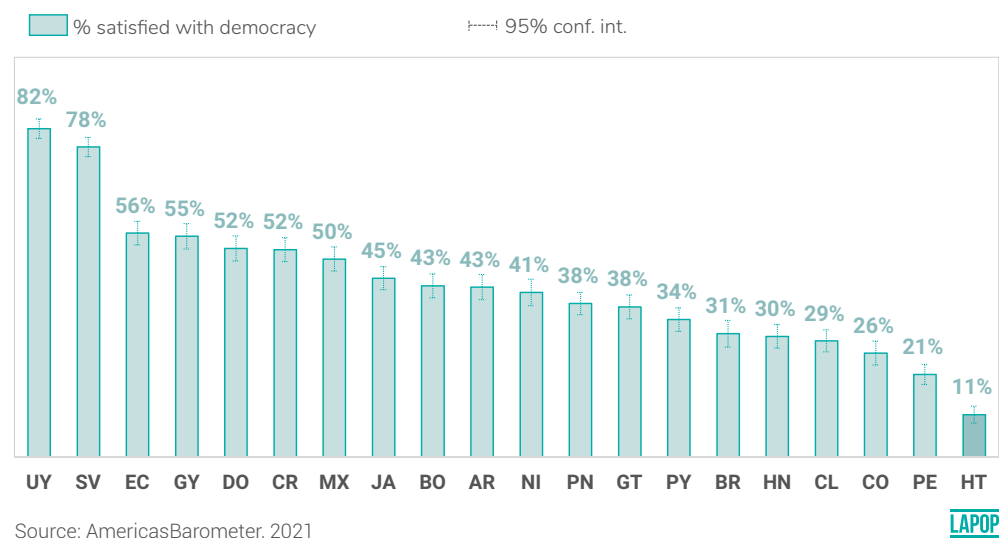


**Figure 1.10** shows how these levels of satisfaction vary across the countries in the LAC region in 2021. One of the most striking aspects of the figure is the range of variation between countries, going from a low of 11% in Haiti to a high of 82% in

Uruguay. Also notable is that levels of satisfaction are substantially higher in El Salvador and in Uruguay than in other countries. Only majorities in six countries in the region say that they are satisfied with how democracy works in their country.

**Figure 1.10**

**In most countries, majorities are dissatisfied with democracy**



Colombia, 2021: Demonstrators at the Plaza Bolívar in Bogotá protesting during a national strike against national violence and government measures (Jc.roll99/ Shutterstock)

## The Public is Only Weakly Committed to Elections and Representative Democracy

**T**o the degree that democratic support and satisfaction remain relatively low across most of the LAC region, what systems of government would the public prefer?

To answer this question, the 2021 AmericasBarometer survey included a new module of questions:

**Which political system seems best for [country]: a system that guarantees access to a basic income and services for all citizens, even if the authorities cannot be elected, or to be able to vote to elect the authorities, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services?**

**Which political system seems best for [country]: a system that guarantees access to a basic income and services for all citizens, even if they cannot express their political opinions without fear or censorship, or a system in which everybody can express their**

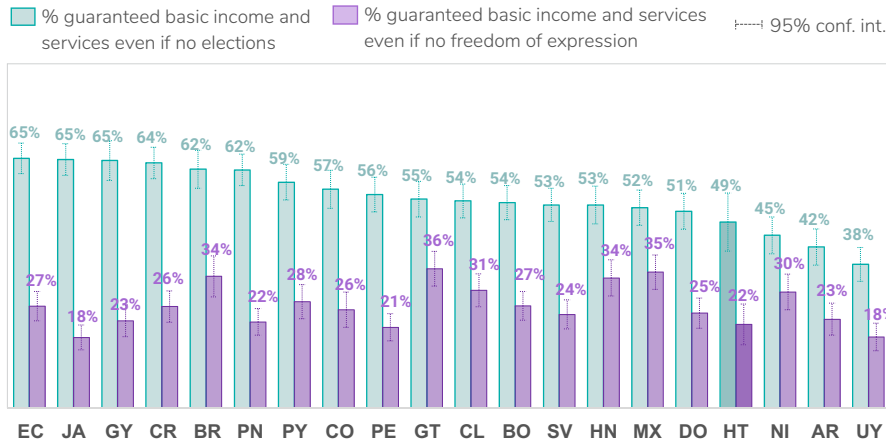
**political opinions without fear or censorship, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services?**

These questions measure the extent to which respondents are willing to sacrifice elections and freedom of expression in exchange for a system that guarantees material wellbeing.

**Figure 1.11** shows the proportion of individuals who said they preferred guaranteed income and services over those political rights. The striking finding in this figure is that *the public is far more willing to sacrifice elections than freedom of expression.*

**Figure 1.11**

**In most countries, majorities prefer a system that guarantees basic income/services over elections but not over freedom of speech**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

**LAPOP**



**The public is far more willing to sacrifice elections than freedom of expression**

In all but four countries, majorities would be willing to give up holding elections in exchange for guaranteed income and services. In contrast, only a minority in each country is willing to give up freedom of expression for those same guarantees. Interestingly, Haiti appears toward the bottom in both measures. Compared to most other countries, Haitians appear less willing to sacrifice elections and freedom of expression for guaranteed basic income and services, even though they also express high levels of dissatisfaction with their democratic system.

Citizens in the LAC region seem willing to compromise on elections when considering alternative systems of government. This is troubling because a core component

of liberal democracies is the rule of elected representatives. What kinds of governments would citizens in the LAC region prefer if not electoral democracy? To provide further insight, the 2021 AmericasBarometer included two more new questions in a subset of countries:

**In deciding what laws to make, what do you think is best for [country]: should elected representatives of the people decide, or should citizens vote directly to decide each issue?**

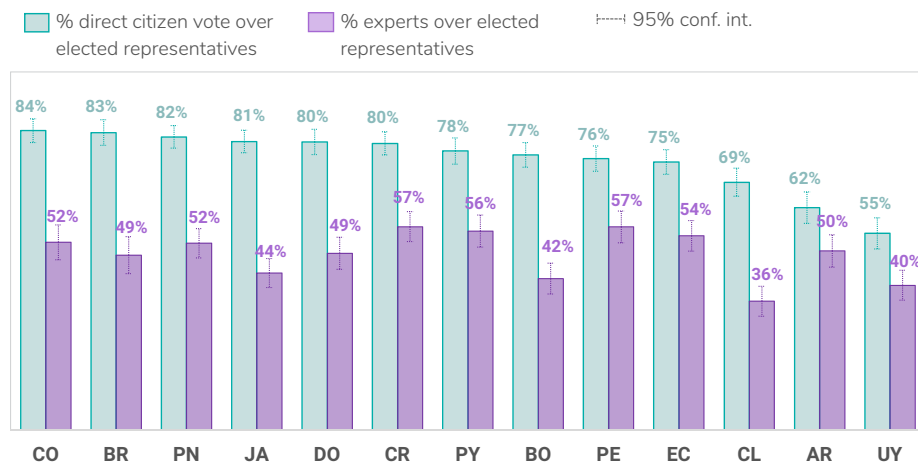
**In deciding what laws to make, what do you think is best for [country]: should a group of experts decide, or representatives elected by the people decide?**

**Figure 1.12** shows the proportion of individuals who said they prefer either direct democracy or rule by experts over government by elected representatives. Most notable, large majorities in every country where these questions were asked prefer direct democracy, with citizens voting directly on each issue. There

is considerably lower support for rule by a group of experts instead of elected representatives. However, even in this scenario, in half of the countries where this question was asked, a majority of the public expressed a preference for an alternative to representative democracy.

**Figure 1.12**

**Majorities across the LAC region prefer direct democracy, but not rule by experts**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



What do these responses tell us about the public's more general commitment to democracy? One way to find out is to ask whether those individuals who are less committed to elections, freedom of expression, and elected representatives also express lower levels of support for democracy in the abstract. Finding such a correlation would suggest that those who express lower support for democracy may do so because they

see less value in these features of a modern democratic system.

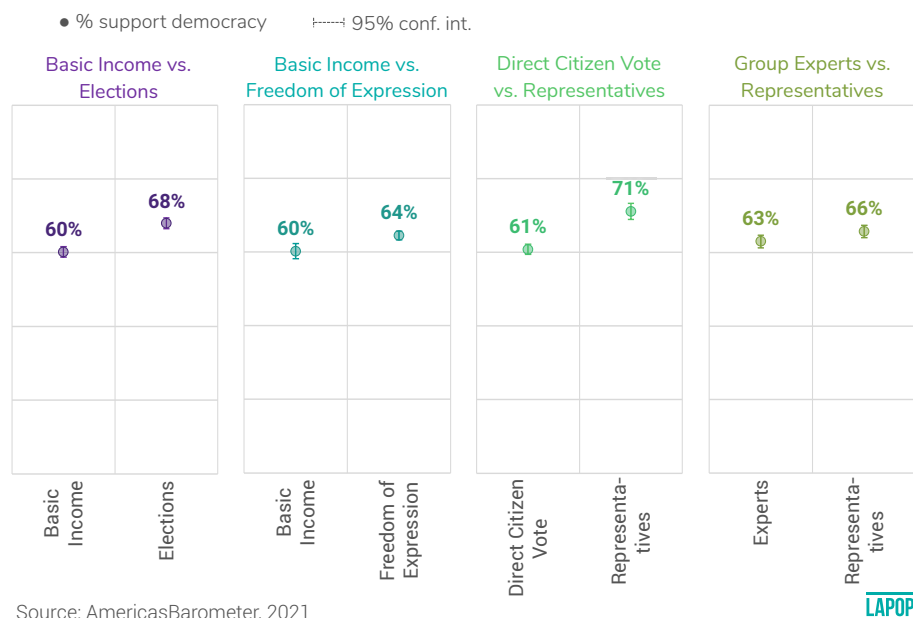
**Figure 1.13** shows how overall support for democracy in the abstract relates to the four tradeoff questions. Those who prefer a system that guarantees basic income and services are less likely to support democracy than those who prefer a system that includes elections or protects freedom of expression. The differences are

statistically significant.<sup>5</sup> For the mass public in the LAC region, there seems to be an association between the concept of democracy on one hand and elections and freedom of expression on the other. To the

extent that citizens value elections and protection from censorship, they are more likely to support democracy over alternative forms of government.

**Figure 1.13**

**Those who prefer elections, freedom of expression, and elected representatives are more likely to support democracy**



**Figure 1.13** also shows that those who believe elected representatives should make the laws are more likely to support democracy in the abstract compared to those who believe laws should be made by direct citizen vote on each issue. This difference is statistically significant.<sup>6</sup> Once again, there appears to be a strong association in the minds of LAC citizens between democracy and representation through elections.

On the other hand, we find no difference in levels of support for democracy in the abstract between citizens who prefer that experts make laws versus those who prefer elected representatives. In this case, the difference we observe is not statistically significant. It appears that attitudes about direct versus representative democracy are more consequential for support for democracy than attitudes about rule by experts versus representative democracy.

## Conclusions: Implications for Citizen Commitment to Democracy

**T**he results from the 2021 AmericasBarometer are not particularly good news for the state of public commitment to electoral democracy in the region. Despite recent gains at the margins, levels of support for and satisfaction with democracy remain lower than they were about a decade ago. And while citizens' tolerance for military coups has remained below the levels recorded a decade ago, their tolerance for executive coups has grown steadily.

The new questions introduced in the 2021 AmericasBarometer reveal that these patterns may stem from discontent with elections and elected representatives. In most countries where the question was asked, majorities are willing to sacrifice elections for a system that guarantees basic income and services. Large majorities in every country prefer that policy issues be decided by direct vote rather than by elected representatives. And those who prefer these alternatives to elections and elected representatives are less likely to say they support democracy over

any alternative form of government. Across the LAC region, people's commitment to democracy seems to be waning because they have become disillusioned with elections and with the legitimacy of their elected representatives.

***Oscar Castorena holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University and is a statistician at LAPOP Lab.***

***Adriana Rosario is a student at the University of Puerto Rico and was a LAPOP Research Fellow in the summer of 2021.***

### Notes

- 1 Lührmann and Lindberg. 2019.
- 2 We do not observe this increase if we instead plot the mean level of support for democracy. This reflects the fact that, either due to the change in mode (from face-to-face to telephone) or due to true polarization of beliefs, people were more likely to respond with extreme values on the scale (strongly disagree or strongly agree) in 2021.
- 3 The number of countries included in the AmericasBarometer has increased since the initial rounds. Our conclusions in over-time analyses do not change if we focus only on the countries surveyed consistently since 2004.
- 4 Cohen, Smith, Moseley, and Layton. Forthcoming.
- 5 These findings hold when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.
- 6 These findings hold when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.





Chile, 2020: Protesters at the Plaza Baquedano in Santiago during a demonstration against inequality (R.M. Nunes/ Shutterstock)

## Chapter 2

# Trust in Elections and Electoral Integrity

Ehab Alhosaini and Oscar Castorena

Dominican Republic, 2020: Rocks are used as weights to prevent ballots from flying away while officials count votes during the presidential election (Tatiana Fernandez/AP Photo)

**E**lections are central to democracy, and large-scale modern polities require government by elected representatives. But for elections to be an effective means of selecting governing representatives, citizens need to trust that electoral institutions are unbiased, elections are free and fair, and that the policies they pursue and the political system they uphold are legitimate. This chapter examines how much trust citizens of the Latin America and Caribbean region trust elections in their countries, as well as their perceptions of the integrity of elections.

## Main Findings

---

- **Trust in elections recovered across the region from 38% in 2018/19 to 42% in 2021**, but most people continue to express low trust in their electoral systems
- **There is wide variation across countries in terms of beliefs about election integrity:** 75% of Uruguayans believe that votes are always counted correctly, but only 18% in Colombia, Guyana, and Jamaica agree
- **Across the region, half of the public believes foreign governments sometimes influence elections**
- **Beliefs about election integrity correlate with overall trust in elections and support for democracy**

The legitimacy of elections faces substantial threats in developing democracies like those in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. Irregularities and allegations of vote tampering are widespread, as in the high-profile cases of presidential elections in Bolivia in late 2019 and Peru in early 2021, where losing candidate Keiko Fujimori decried Pedro Castillo's victory as "fraudulent."<sup>1</sup> High levels of violence in the region also threaten the safety of elections in the region, as highlighted by Mexico's recent national elections, where political assassinations had increased by 33% over the prior election.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic added additional stress to electoral systems already facing challenges. National elections were postponed in numerous LAC countries because of restrictions related to the pandemic. Often these postponements were criticized by opposition leaders as an undemocratic power grab by incumbent governments.<sup>3</sup> Participation in these elections also

became far more challenging than normal. In countries with bans on public transportation due to public health concerns, rural voters found it more difficult to reach their polling places. In others, voters concerned about the pandemic preferred to avoid the crowds and lines typically associated with Election Day. In two of the more dramatic cases, turnout declined 16% in the Dominican Republic and a staggering 21% in Jamaica.<sup>4</sup>

The AmericasBarometer provides important insights into how the public in the LAC region views elections. Aside from providing a cross-national and over-time analysis of trust in elections, the 2021 survey includes novel questions that allow us to better understand citizen attitudes towards the conduct of elections in their country. What aspects of the conduct of elections are most consequential for their overall legitimacy? Can deficiencies in the integrity of elections undermine support for the political system more broadly?

**Nicaragua, 2021: A polling official uses indelible ink to mark the thumb of a voter after he cast his ballot during the presidential election on November 7, 2021 (Jorge Torres/Shutterstock)**



# Trust in Elections Increased, but Levels Are Still Low

The AmericasBarometer measures citizens' trust in the electoral process with the following item:

**To what extent do you trust elections in this country? Using any number on a scale from 1, "Not at all" to 7, "A lot"**

Trust in elections is measured via a 1-7 scale. We recode responses into a binary indicator where responses 1-4 are coded as not trusting and 5-7 are coded as trusting elections.

Figure 2.1 shows the proportion of respondents who trust elections

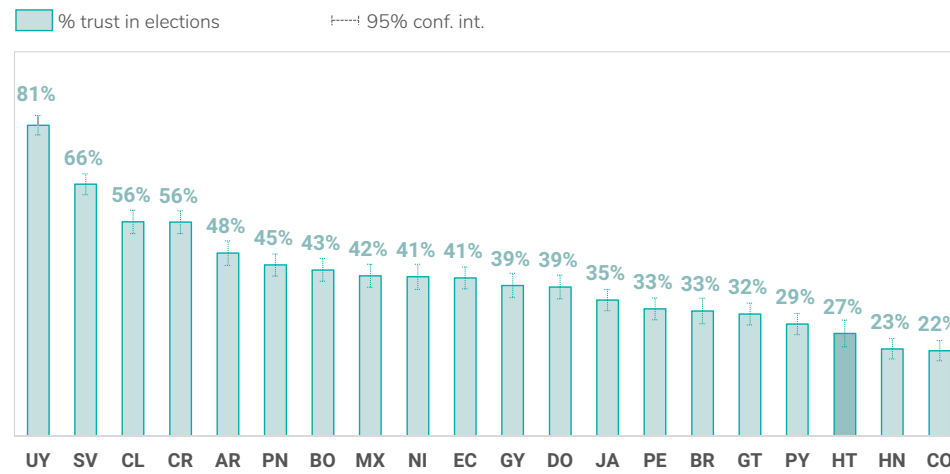
across the countries included in the 2021 round. The figure reveals considerable variation across countries, with a 59 percentage-point gap between the country with the highest level of trust (Uruguay at 81%) and the country with the lowest (Colombia at 22%). A majority of respondents express trust in elections in only 4 out of the 20 countries in the round.



A majority of respondents express trust in elections in only 4 out of the 20 countries in the round

**Figure 2.1**

**Trust in elections highest in Uruguay and lowest in Colombia**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021





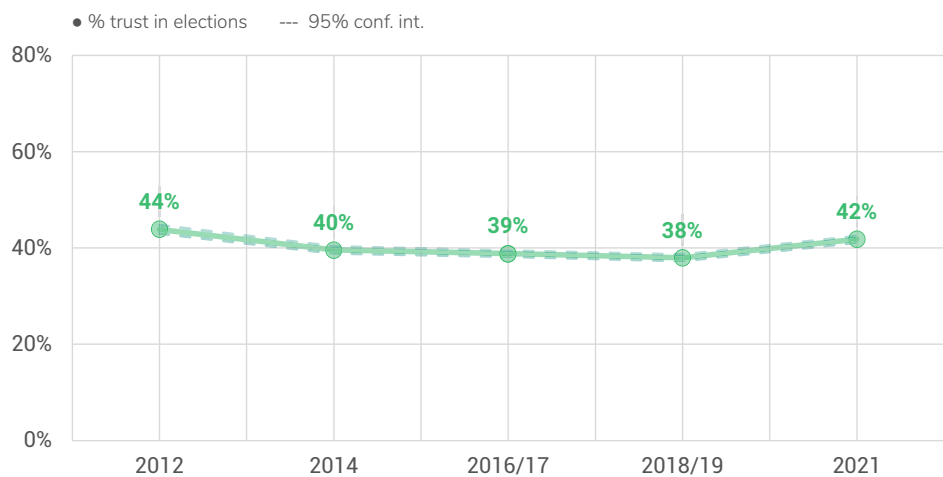
Older citizens have more positive assessments of their electoral systems than younger ones

The current levels of trust in elections reflect some change over previous rounds of the AmericasBarometer. **Figure 2.2** shows that while trust in elections was higher on average across the

LAC region in 2012, it declined subsequently and remained stable over multiple rounds. The findings in 2021 reflect something of a rebound in trust in elections from 38% in the 2018/19 round to 42% in 2021.

**Figure 2.2**

**Trust in elections rebounds to over 40% across LAC region in 2021**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2012-2021



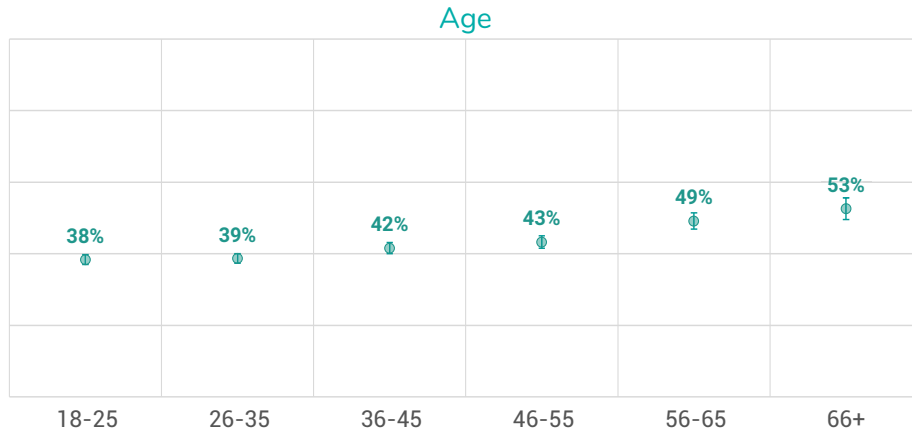
While trust in elections varies across countries, it also varies across individuals in the LAC region. In particular, **Figure 2.3** shows that age is an important predictor of trust in elections, with trust increasing as respondents get older. Across the region, only 38% of 18-25-year-olds express high levels of trust in

elections in their country, but this rises to 53% for respondents who are older than 66. Older citizens have more positive assessments of their electoral systems than younger ones, a finding that is consistent with trends we observed in the 2018/19 round.

**Figure 2.3**

**Older citizens are more likely to express trust in elections**

● % trust in elections    ▬ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



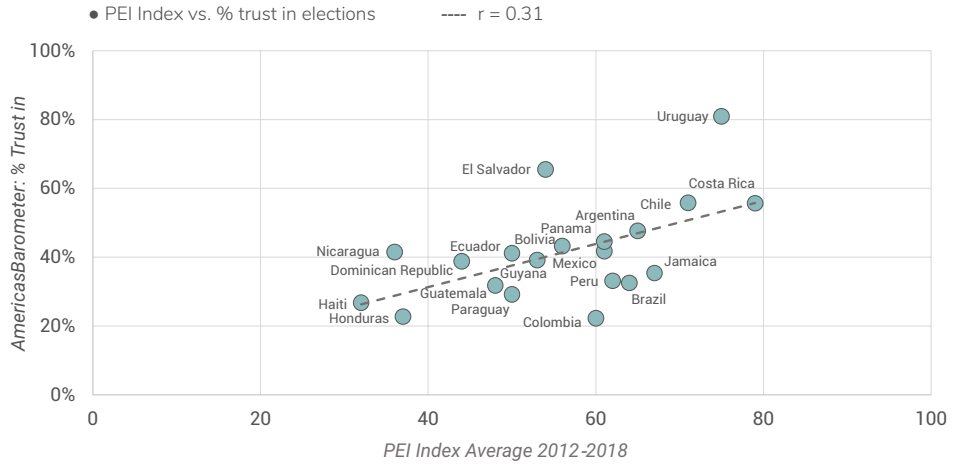
Along with age, we also analyzed the relationship that gender, education, and wealth have with trust in elections. For none of these demographic variables do we find a statistically significant linear relationship with trust in elections. Of the demographic characteristics in the AmericasBarometer, age appears to be the most relevant in predicting an individual's trust in elections.

How do these evaluations by the public compare to expert evaluations of electoral integrity? **Figure 2.4** answers this question by comparing the proportion of respondents who trust elections in each country of

the AmericasBarometer in 2021 and that country's mean score on the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Index between 2012 and 2018. The Electoral Integrity Project creates this index by fielding surveys of experts in electoral processes.<sup>5</sup> Overall, we see that expert assessments correlate strongly with the views of the public, but there are some notable outliers. Whereas Colombians express extremely low levels of trust in their elections, expert assessments are substantially more positive. Conversely, Salvadorans express high levels of trust in their elections despite expert assessments that are less rosy.

**Figure 2.4**

**The public's evaluations of elections correlate with expert assessments**



Source: PEI, 2012-2018; AmericasBarometer, 2021



AmericasBarometer results show considerable variation across countries in trust in elections, with few cases in which most citizens express trust in elections. At the same time, levels of trust in elections across the LAC region have rebounded since the 2018/19

round. Consistent with previous findings, age stands out as significant predictor of trust in the elections, with younger respondents expressing more skepticism about the electoral process. Finally, the public's evaluations of elections track expert assessments.

Peru, 2020: Man looks over protest posters that depict messages against presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori (Joel Salvador/Shutterstock)





# Views on Election Integrity Track Trust in Elections and Support for Democracy

The 2021 round of the AmericasBarometer included a new set of questions that give a more nuanced picture of the public's views of the electoral process.<sup>5</sup> These questions are the following:

I will mention some things that can happen during elections and ask you to indicate if they happen in [country]...Votes are counted correctly and fairly. Would you say it happens always, sometimes or never?

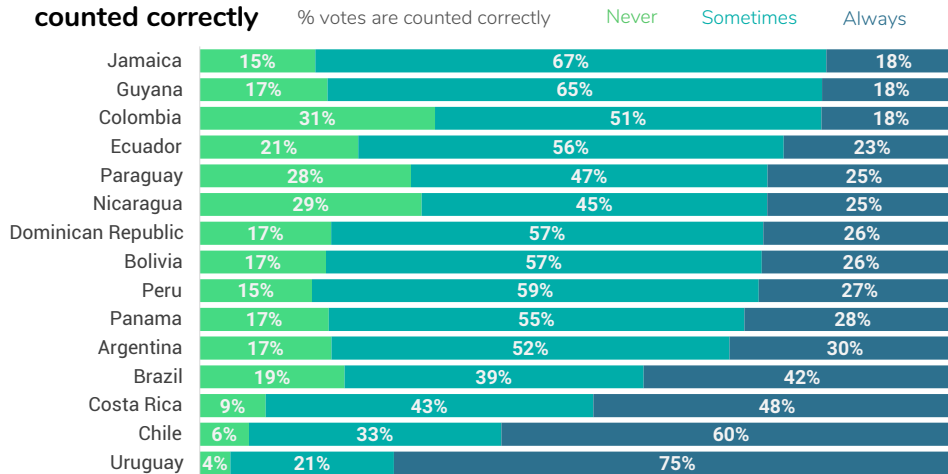
Politicians can find out who each person voted for. Would you say it happens always, sometimes or never?

The rich buy the election results. Would you say it happens always, sometimes or never?

Some foreign governments may influence the election results of [country]. Would you say it happens always, sometimes or never?

Figure 2.5

Only in Uruguay and Chile do majorities believe votes are always counted correctly



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



Figure 2.5 shows responses to the question about whether votes are counted correctly. Uruguay and Chile show widespread positive evaluations, with 75% and 60% respectively, saying that votes

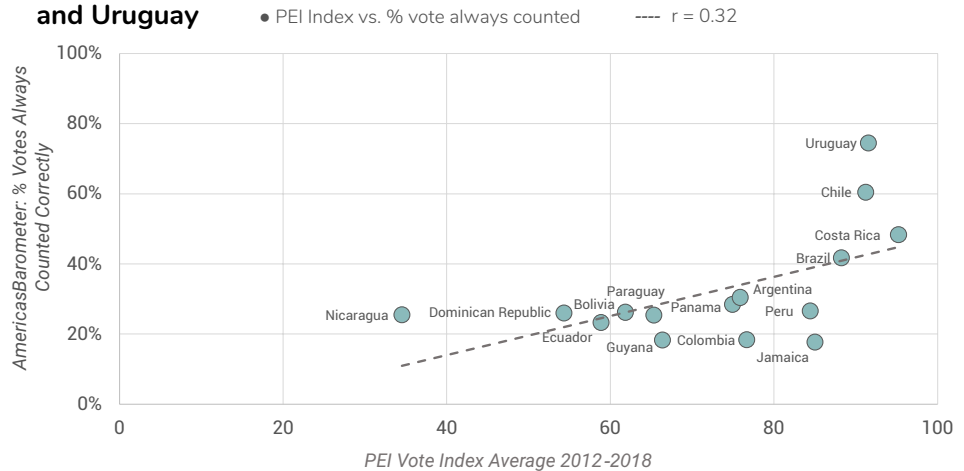
are always counted correctly. In contrast, only 18% of respondents in Guyana, Colombia, and Jamaica believe that votes are always counted correctly in their countries.

In order to provide greater context for the cross-national patterns we observe in **Figure 2.5**, we turn again to data provided by the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity project. Among the individual factors that make up the project's summary index of electoral integrity is an assessment of the vote count, which the PEI project constructs from expert

evaluations of ballot box security, whether results were announced without undue delay, whether votes are counted fairly, and whether international or domestic monitors were restricted. The resulting index ranges from 0 to 100, with higher values denoting higher integrity of the count.

**Figure 2.6**

**Both the public and the experts assess the vote count highly in Chile and Uruguay**



Source: PEI, 2012-2018; AmericasBarometer, 2021

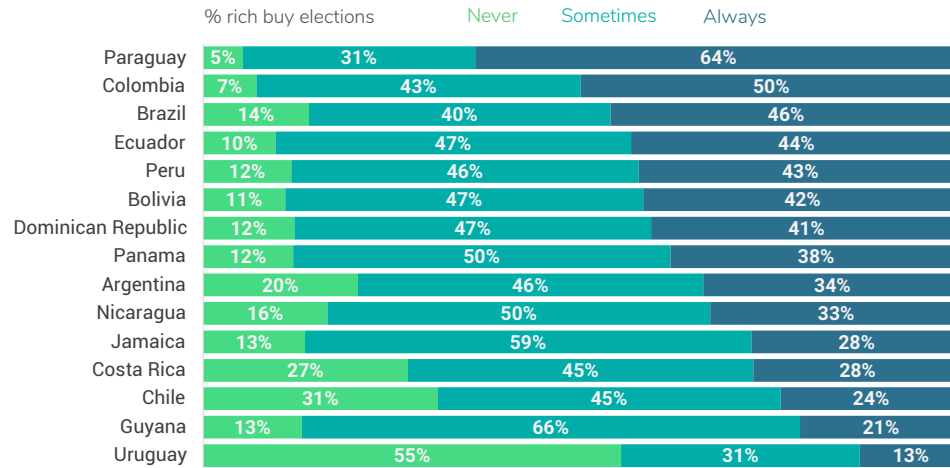


**Figure 2.6** shows the relationship between these expert assessments and the public's evaluation of the counting of votes. Only among the high-performing cases is there agreement between the public and the experts. In Uruguay and Chile (and to a lesser extent, Costa Rica and Brazil) both the public and experts evaluate the counting process highly. These are the only

countries in the LAC region where more than a third of the population believes votes are always counted correctly. For the rest of the cases, there appears to be no correlation between the public's evaluations and expert assessments. In most of these cases, the public is far more skeptical than the experts about the degree to which votes are counted correctly.

**Figure 2.7**

**Nearly two-thirds of Paraguayans believe the rich always buy elections**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



Our second question on election integrity asked respondents the extent to which they thought the rich are able to buy elections in their country. **Figure 2.7** shows that Paraguay stands out in the region, with nearly two-thirds of Paraguayans believing the rich always buy elections. In Colombia, this assessment reaches 50%. In no other country does a majority believe the rich always buy elections,

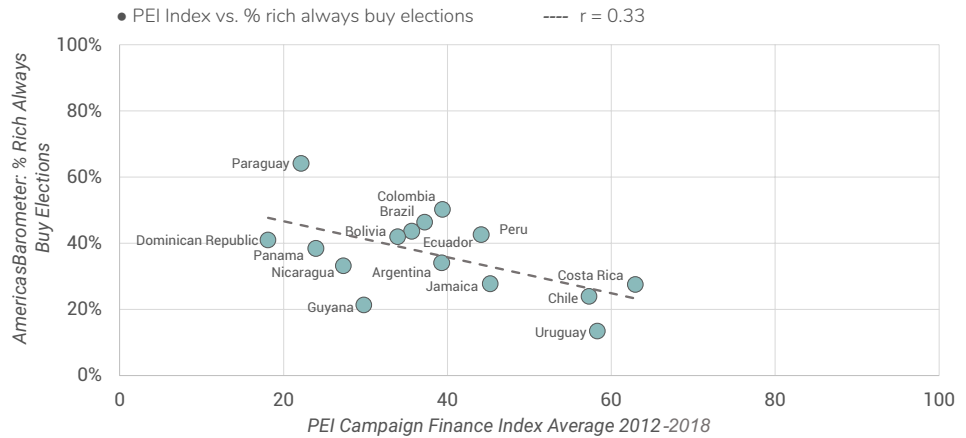
but majorities in every country but Uruguay believe the rich either sometimes or always buy elections. In only in two countries (Chile and Uruguay) is the share of those saying the rich never buy elections larger than the share that say they always do. Across the LAC region, the large swaths of the public believe that elections are tilted in favor of the rich.



**Majorities in every country but Uruguay believe the rich either sometimes or always buy elections**

**Figure 2.8**

**Public beliefs about the influence of the rich correlate with expert assessments of the integrity of campaign finance**



Source: PEI, 2012-2018; AmericasBarometer, 2021

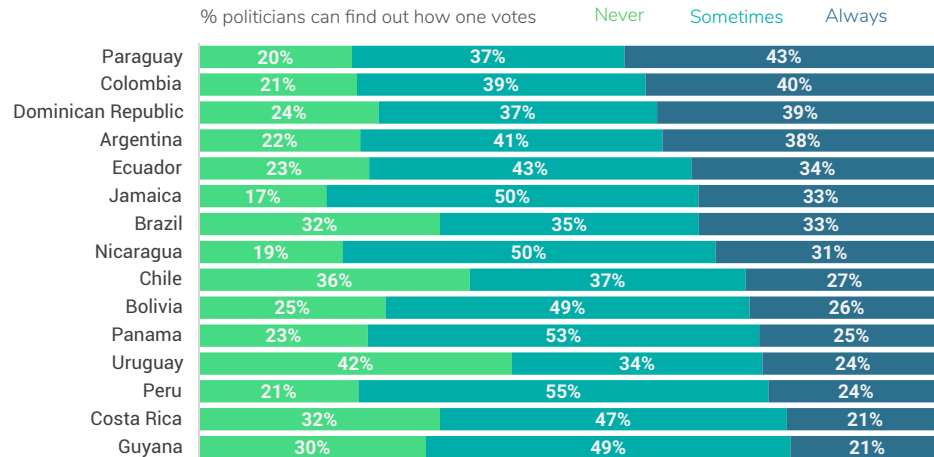


**Figure 2.8** again compares these results with the assessments of experts. Among the factors that make up the PEI project's summary index of electoral integrity is a set of measures of campaign finance, including expert evaluations of equitable access to public subsidies and political donations, the transparency of financial accounts, the influence of the wealthy in elections, and whether state resources are improperly used for campaigning. **Figure 2.8** shows a striking negative relationship

between the two measures. Countries such as Paraguay, where a high proportion of the public believe the rich always buy elections, also score very low on the index measuring the integrity of campaign finance. Conversely, countries where fewer people believe the rich always buy elections receive high ratings from experts for their campaign finance. These patterns suggest that the method in which campaigns are financed affects citizens' beliefs about election integrity.

**Figure 2.9**

**Majorities across the LAC region express skepticism about ballot secrecy**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



The AmericasBarometer also asked respondents to assess the secrecy of the ballot in their country.

**Figure 2.9** shows the cross-national variation on this question. Here, Paraguay and Colombia again show very negative assessments, with 43% and 40% of respondents, respectively, believing that politicians can always find out how an

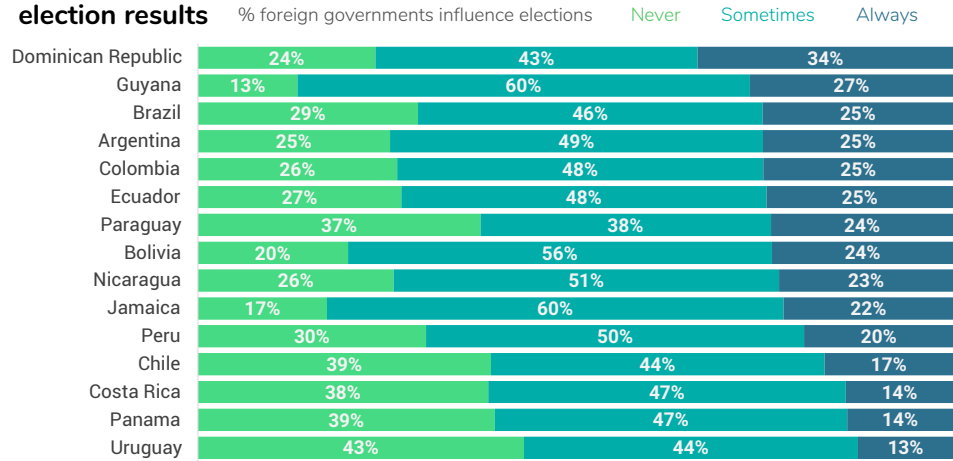
individual votes. In contrast, in Guyana and Costa Rica, only about one in five respondents expressed that sentiment. Strikingly, majorities in every country believe that politicians can at least sometimes find out how an individual votes, pointing to serious public concerns about ballot secrecy.



**Strikingly, majorities in every country believe that politicians can at least sometimes find out how an individual votes, pointing to serious public concerns about ballot secrecy**

**Figure 2.10**

**Large majorities believe foreign governments at least sometimes influence election results**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



Finally, respondents were asked whether they think foreign governments influence elections in their country. **Figure 2.10** shows substantially less variation across countries on this score. A majority of respondents in the LAC region, sometimes large majorities,

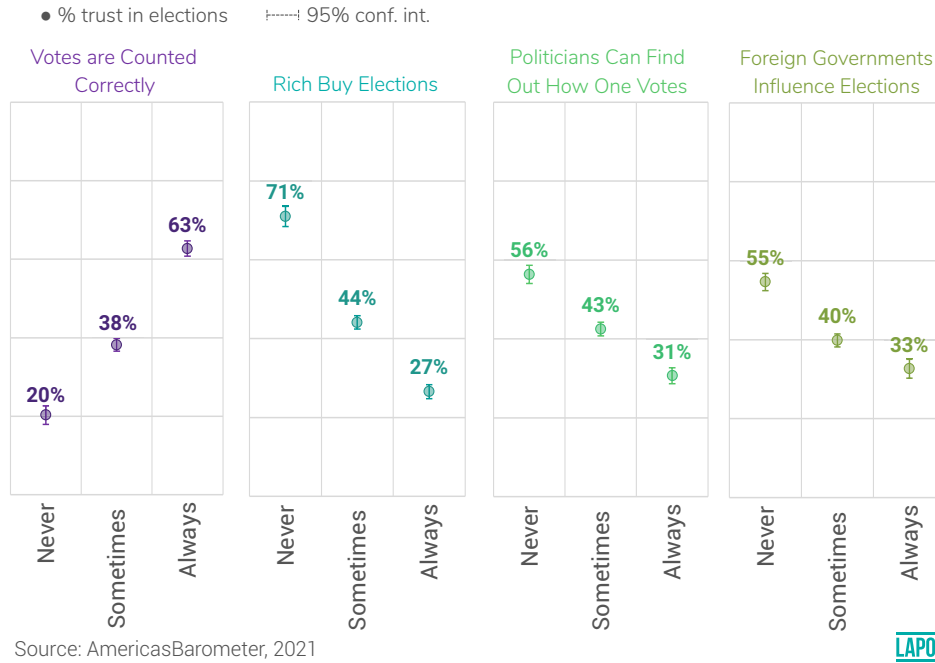
believe that foreign governments sometimes or always influence elections in their country. The rates of those who think this always happens are highest in the Dominican Republic, with 34%, and lowest in Costa Rica (14%), Panama (14%), and Uruguay (13%).

**Ecuador, 2021: Presidential candidate Guillermo Lasso during a campaign event in Quito days before the election (Vincent Ricci/ Shutterstock)**



**Figure 2.11**

**Assessments of election integrity predict overall trust in elections**



Of these evaluations of election integrity, which is most important for overall trust in elections? **Figure 2.11** shows the proportion of respondents who trust elections based on how they answered each of our four electoral integrity questions. All four appear to be correlated with overall trust in elections: those who express more skepticism about the integrity of the vote count and ballot secrecy, those who think the rich buy elections, and those who think foreign governments influence elections more often all express substantially lower levels of overall trust in elections.<sup>6</sup>

Still, there are important differences in the magnitudes of the relationships between these responses. Those who think votes are never counted correctly are 68% less likely to express overall trust in elections

than those who say votes are always counted correctly (a difference of 43 percentage points). Similarly, those who say the rich always buy elections are 62% less likely to trust their elections than those who say the rich never buy elections (a difference of 44 percentage points). In contrast, those who think politicians can always find out an individual's vote or who say foreign governments always influence elections are 45% and 40% less likely to express trust in their elections, respectively, than those who say politicians can never find out how one voted or that foreign governments never influence elections (differences of 25 and 22 percentage points, respectively). Assessments about the vote count and the influence of the rich appear to be especially consequential for citizens' overall trust in their electoral processes.



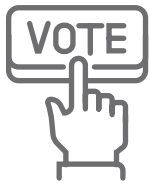
**Assessments about the vote count and the influence of the rich appear to be especially consequential for citizens' overall trust in their electoral processes**

How do these evaluations of election integrity relate to broader democratic attitudes? Are citizens who are skeptical about the integrity of their electoral process still committed to democratic institutions in principle? To answer this question, we study the relationship between assessment of election integrity and our measure of support for democracy based on the following question:

**Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent**

**do you agree or disagree with this statement? With responses ranging from 1 “Strongly disagree” to 7 “Strongly agree”**

We code responses on the agreement end of the scale (values ranging from five to seven) as support for democracy. **Figure 2.12** shows the proportion of respondents who support democracy based on how they answered each of our four electoral integrity questions.

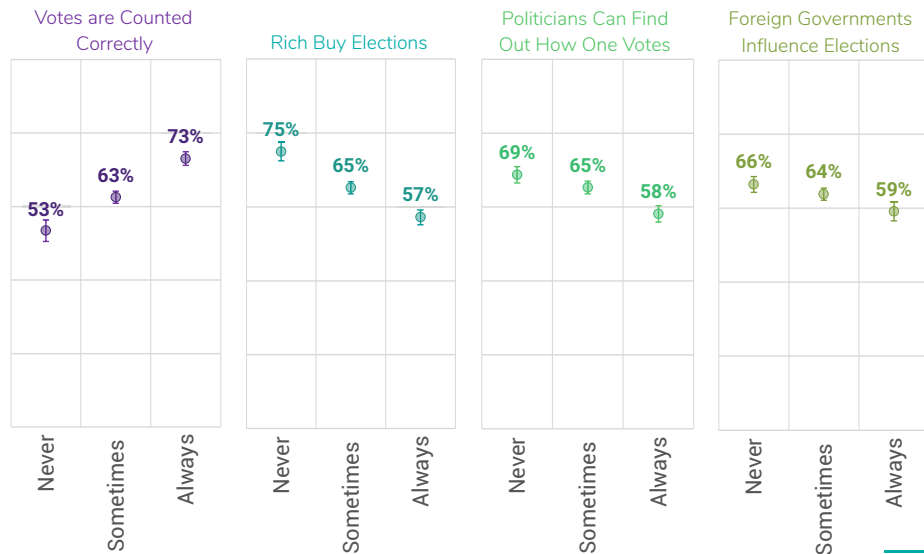


Beliefs about votes being counted correctly and whether the rich buy elections are more strongly associated with democratic support than the other measures of electoral integrity

**Figure 2.12**

**Assessments of election integrity predict overall support for democracy**

• % support for democracy    +-----+ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



The results in **Figure 2.12** mirror those with regard to trust in elections. In general, citizens in the LAC region who have more negative views of election integrity also express less support for democracy as a principle. Those who express more skepticism about the integrity of the vote count and ballot secrecy, who think the rich buy elections, and who think foreign governments

influence elections more often all express lower levels of support for democracy as a better form of government than the alternatives.<sup>7</sup> As with overall trust in elections, beliefs about votes being counted correctly and whether the rich buy elections are more strongly associated with democratic support than the other measures of electoral integrity.



# Conclusions: Implications for the Legitimacy of Elections

Data from the 2021 round of the AmericasBarometer show that while overall trust in elections has rebounded somewhat in the LAC region, large portions of the public remain skeptical about the integrity of the electoral processes in their country. Moreover, these attitudes about the integrity of elections, which include beliefs about the vote count, ballot secrecy, the influence of the rich, and foreign influence, are consequential for both the legitimacy of elections and support for democracy more generally. Given recent controversies and conflicts over election results across the region, these views of election integrity pose a potential threat for the health of democracy.

At the same time, our findings offer some basis for optimism. We find that beliefs about whether votes are counted correctly and the influence of the rich are most related to trust in elections and support for democracy. These particular

attitudes also correlate with expert assessments about the quality of these processes, showing that public perceptions do reflect tangible policy choices and outcomes in election administration. This is especially the case for the influence of the rich in elections, where we see a clear connection between the integrity of campaign finance and public perceptions. This suggests that concrete policy changes, like those that provide equitable access to campaign resources, may help improve citizens' beliefs about election integrity, their overall trust in elections, and their support for democracy.

***Ehab Alhosaini is a student at Vanderbilt University and was a LAPOP Research Fellow in the summer of 2021.***

***Oscar Castorena holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University and is a statistician at LAPOP Lab.***

## Notes

- 1 See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/20/peru-elite-election-pedro-castillo-keiko-fujimori>
- 2 See <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/bloody-mexican-election-campaign-exposes-chronic-security-woes-2021-05-23/>
- 3 See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bolivia-politics-election/bolivia-election-delayed-to-october-as-pandemic-bites-opposition-cries-foul-idUSKCN2402PY>
- 4 See <https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/presscenter/director-s-graph-for-thought/the-virus-and-the-votes--how-is-covid-19-changing-voter-turnout-.html>
- 5 Norris and Grömping 2019.
- 6 These findings hold when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.
- 7 These findings hold when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.

## Chapter 3

# Rule of Law: Corruption, Crime, and Justice for Gender-Based Violence

Mariana V. Ramírez Bustamante,  
Facundo Salles Kobilanski, and Adam D. Wolsky

Mexico, 2020:  
Protesters march  
against gender-based  
violence in Mexico City  
on International Day  
for the Elimination  
of Violence against  
Women. Erika  
Martínez, speaking  
through a megaphone,  
became an activist after  
authorities refused to  
investigate the sexual  
abuse of her 7-year-old  
daughter (Bénédicte  
Desrus/Sipa via AP  
Images)



**D**emocracy thrives when the public experiences and perceives a robust rule of law. The AmericasBarometer permits a multi-dimensional assessment of the public's view on the rule of law. In this chapter, we focus on (1) experiences with corruption and crime, (2) perceptions of political corruption and neighborhood insecurity, and (3) expectations regarding police and judicial responses to gender-based violence (GBV). The assessment yields a mix of some positive and some concerning results regarding the state of the rule of law in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region.

## Main Findings

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- **More than three in five people in the average LAC country believe that most or all politicians are corrupt.** Those who are more educated are more likely to believe that there is widespread corruption among politicians
- **Corruption victimization by the police remains stable, but bribe solicitation by public officials has increased in 2021 compared to the 2018/19 round.** Women, younger individuals, those with more education, and those who are wealthier are more likely to be victims of bribe solicitation
- **Crime victimization decreased in 2021 compared to 2018/19.** Men, younger, more educated, and wealthier individuals are more likely to be victims of crime
- **Neighborhood insecurity decreased in 2021 compared to 2018/19.** Women are more likely to say they feel unsafe in their neighborhood, as compared to men
- **Perceptions of fair treatment and due process for gender-based violence (GBV) victims are gendered:** women are less likely to agree that GBV perpetrators will be punished. That difference in perceptions persists when accounting for age, education, and wealth
- **Deficiencies in the rule of law shape trust and support for democracy:** those who perceive and experience a failure of institutions are less trusting of those in their community and the national government and are less supportive of democracy

## What is the Rule of Law?

**A** country with a strong rule of law exhibits laws that allow for accountability (for government and private actors), justice (laws are clear, applied evenly, and protect fundamental rights), transparency (processes are accessible and transparent), and equitable and impartial dispute resolution (justice is swift and ethical). According to the World Justice Project (WJP), these four principles jointly signal to citizens that all experience equal treatment with respect to the provision of law and order.

For decades, researchers have shown that the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region's rule of law tends to be informal and weak: there often exists a gap between the law as it is written and the law as it is abided and enforced. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a modern lens through which to perceive this

distinction, with constitutionally questionable enforcement of strict lockdown measures in some places and vaccine distribution scandals in others. Quite often citizens are left to march through a landscape in which justice is unevenly applied and in which public officials seem distant and unreliable. An inconsistent

**Bolivia, 2020: Former interior minister, Carlos Romero, is escorted by police after a Supreme Court judge ordered he remain in custody. Romero, who served under former President Evo Morales, was arrested on corruption charges (Juan Karita/AP/Shutterstock)**



adherence to rules is likely to shape citizens' views of who benefits from democratic governance and, when those views are negative, may erode satisfaction with and – potentially – support for democracy itself.

When assessing the rule of law from the perspective of citizens' views and experiences, a key question is the extent to which both citizens and public officials abide by formal rules guaranteeing security and justice. Experts on the rule of law advocate for multi-dimensional assessments that are anchored by measures of corruption, security, and justice. The World Justice Project (WJP) takes such an approach<sup>1</sup> and finds considerable variability in the strength of rule of law in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Pre-pandemic change tracked by the WJP found that most countries saw modest improvements in the rule of law score between 2017-2018 and 2020, with the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, and El Salvador making relatively big gains.<sup>3</sup> In the latter case, El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, elected in 2019, has been controversial in his leadership style but oversaw a reduction in crime, which boosted the country's WJP score. On the other hand, Nicaragua saw a major drop in its score on the rule of law.

A more recent perspective is provided by V-Dem's Pandemic Backsliding Project (PanDem), which tracked violations of rights and executive overreach from March 2020 to June



Peru, 2020: Supporter of ousted President Martín Vizcarra confronts riot police in Lima as officers block protesters from reaching Congress while lawmakers swear in Manuel Merino as interim president (Rodrigo Abd/AP/Shutterstock)



People who experience a failure of political institutions are less trusting of the government and less supportive of democracy

2021. Both high-scoring countries on the WJP index, such as Chile and Argentina, and low-scoring countries, such as Ecuador and Honduras, registered at least moderate violations of civil rights by security agents. El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico have recently experienced executive overreach. For example, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Bukele ordered armed forces in El Salvador to occupy the legislature as a forceful demonstration of support for legislation that would provide millions of dollars to security forces.<sup>4</sup> In Guatemala, Alejandro Giammattei and his legislative allies have purged and/or blocked independent figures in the judiciary.<sup>5</sup>

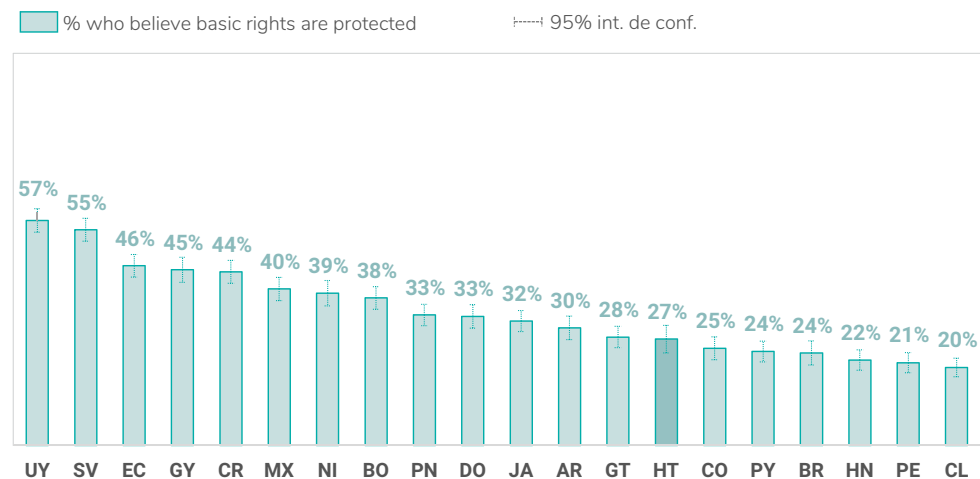
How does the public *perceive* the extent to which basic rights are protected in the region in 2021? The AmericasBarometer offers unique insight into the mass public's views

of the application of the rule of law during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2004, the AmericasBarometer has asked how well individuals feel that their basic rights are protected.

**Figure 3.1** shows the proportion reporting that basic rights are protected across countries in the 2021 AmericasBarometer. There are only two countries in which more than 50% said their basic rights are protected—Uruguay and El Salvador. It is notable that in Chile, a country that ranks quite high in the WJP index, only about one in five say their basic rights are protected, a result that is on par with Peru and Honduras. This discrepancy—between how experts rank the rule of law and citizens' perceptions of how extensively basic rights are protected—underscores the importance of an opinion-based assessment of the rule of law.

**Figure 3.1**

**In half of the LAC region, less than 33% report basic rights are protected**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



In this chapter, we offer a multi-dimensional assessment of the public's view on the rule of law, with a focus on three core dimensions: corruption, crime, and justice. Specifically, we focus on (1) perceptions of and experience with corruption, (2) perceptions of insecurity and crime victimization, and (3) the enforcement and punishment of GBV. Our investigation reveals who in the LAC mass public experiences a rule of law that is more (or less) effective. From a normative perspective, deficiencies in the rule of law are problematic and have

consequences. In that regard, we assess the relationship between citizen reports on corruption, crime, and gender-based violence, on the one hand, and their levels of interpersonal trust, trust in the government to do what is right, and support for democracy, on the other. We find that those who perceive and experience a failure of institutions are less trusting of those in their community, trust the government less, and are less supportive of democracy over other forms of government.

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## Corruption

**C**orruption is pervasive across the LAC region. Many residents have experienced being asked for bribes by public officials in the education sector, in the courts, and by the police.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, high-level corruption scandals have plagued the region, with little heed to level of development: scandals have emerged in relatively poor countries like Guatemala and Haiti and in the more developed Chile and Costa Rica.

This is highlighted by the fallout from 2014 to present day of the “Lava Jato” (Car Wash in English) investigations in Brazil, which uncovered a massive corruption scheme involving the Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht and high-profile politicians in many countries in the LAC region. Equally troubling is the recent shut down of internationally backed corruption commissions across Central America.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in 2020-2021, the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it new opportunities for graft, unfair access to resources (e.g., vaccines), and disregard for official rules (e.g., COVID-19 protocols) by political elites.<sup>8</sup>

Corruption violates the norm of democratic political equality by excluding average citizens from public services of which they are entitled.<sup>9</sup> As such, corruption not only has deleterious economic impacts,<sup>10</sup> but it also holds the potential to reduce trust in the government and institutions.<sup>11</sup> This can create a vicious cycle: as perceptions of corruption reduces trust in political institutions, people become more tolerant of corruption.<sup>12</sup> Direct experience with corruption can weaken both citizens' trust in institutions and their levels of interpersonal trust.<sup>z</sup>

## Most Citizens in LAC Region Believe Political Corruption is Widespread

To what extent does the public perceive corruption among the political class? To answer this, the AmericasBarometer asks the following:



About one in four say that all politicians in their country are involved in corruption

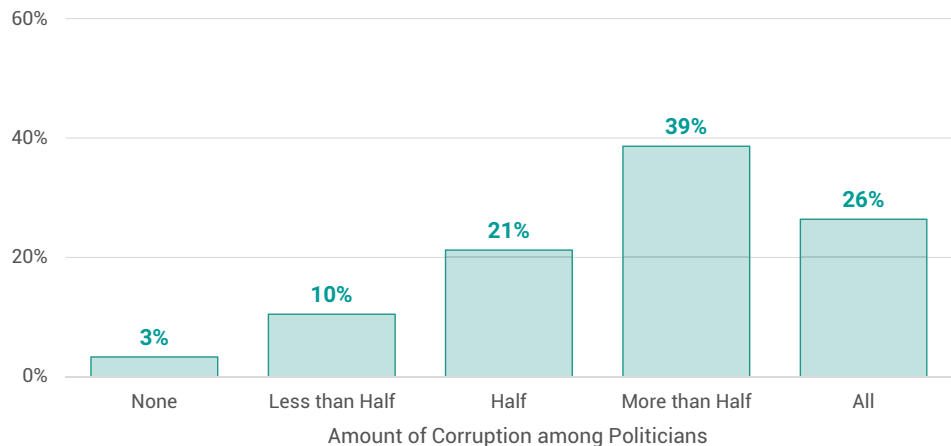
**Thinking of politicians in [country], how many do you believe are involved in corruption?**  
**(1) None (2) Less than half of them (3) Half of them (4) More than half of them (5) All**

corrupt. About one in four say that *all* politicians in their country are involved in corruption. Conversely, only 13% say fewer than half or no politicians in their country are corrupt. These levels of perceived corruption have been relatively stable over time. Since the question was first asked in the 2016/17 round, more than three in five citizens in the average country have said that more than half their politicians are corrupt.

**Figure 3.2** shows the region-average distribution of perceived political corruption. The results are striking: nearly two-thirds of citizens in the LAC region believe that more than half or all politicians are

**Figure 3.2**

**Nearly two-thirds in the LAC region believe that most politicians are corrupt in 2021**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

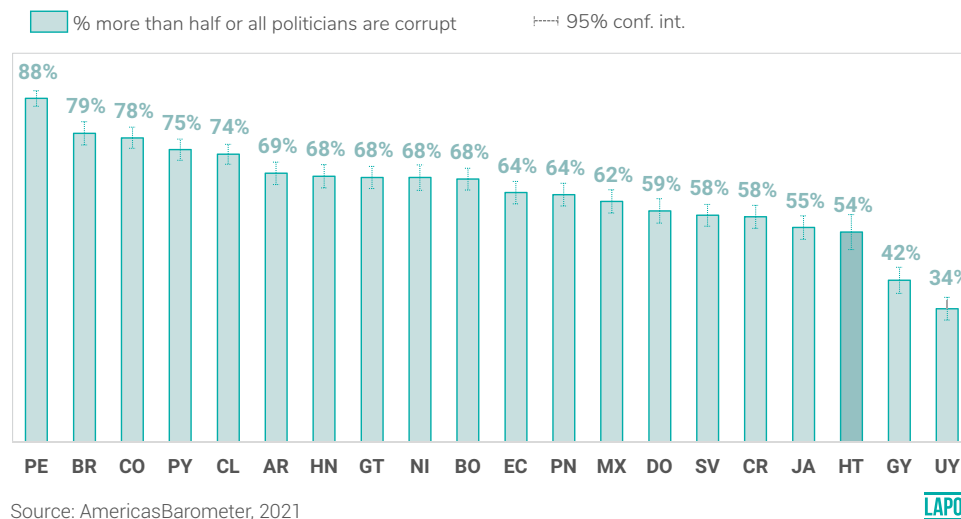
LAPOP



Perceptions of political corruption vary across countries. **Figure 3.3** reports the percentage of those in each country who said more than half or all politicians are corrupt. Peru and Brazil top the list with over four in five saying that more than half or all politicians in their country are corrupt. Both Peru and Brazil have experienced corruption scandals

involving recent ex-presidents and other major political figures, with new cases emerging near or during the 2021 fieldwork for the AmericasBarometer. On the other end of the spectrum is Uruguay, where only just over one in three say that more than half of politicians are corrupt.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 3.3**  
Corruption perceptions are highest in Peru and lowest in Uruguay



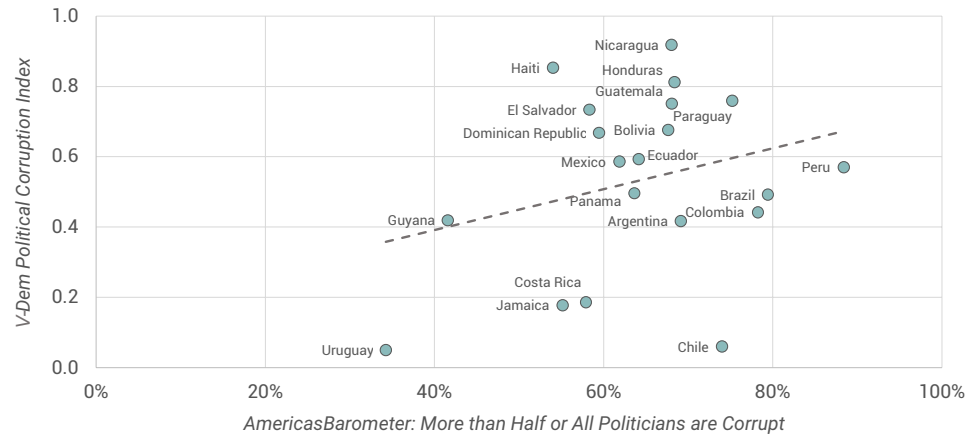
To what extent do perceptions of corruption among the public line up with assessments by experts? The V-Dem project calculates a corruption score for each country based on a survey of experts. **Figure 3.4** shows the relationship between V-Dem's 0-1 score and the percentage of those who believe that more than half or all

politicians in their country are corrupt. Although the correlation is positive, it is relatively weak: in particular, experts assess political corruption to be far lower than citizens report in Chile, Jamaica, and Costa Rica and higher than citizens report in countries such as Nicaragua and, especially, Haiti.

**Figure 3.4**

**The public does not always agree with expert views on political corruption**

● % more than half or all politicians are corrupt vs. V-Dem score    ---  $r = 0.08$



Source: V-Dem, 2020; AmericasBarometer, 2021



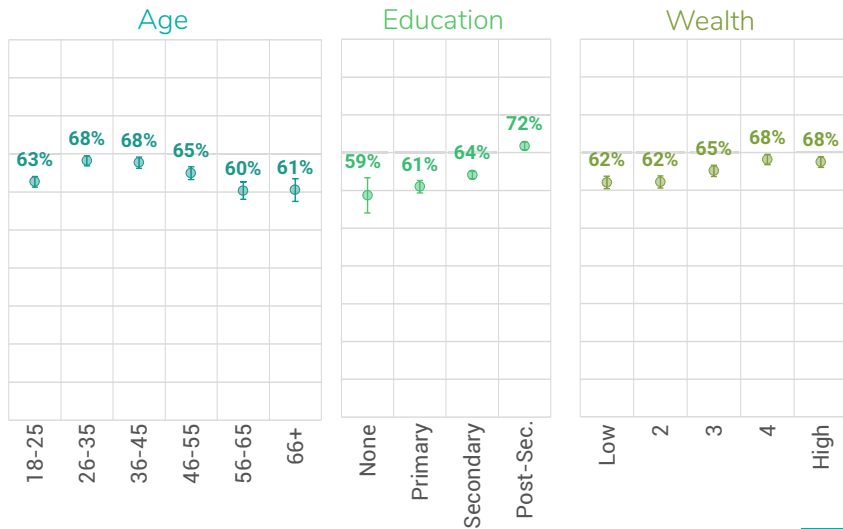
Who perceives high levels of corruption among politicians in the region? While there are no differences between men and women in the percentages that believe more than half or all politicians are corrupt, there are significant patterns by education, age, and wealth. **Figure 3.5** shows that the youngest cohort and those who are 56 and older have lower perceptions of political corruption when compared to those who are 26-55. Those who have more

education—who tend to be wealthier and have a higher income—have higher perceptions of corruption among politicians. There is an over 13-percentage point difference between those with at least a post-secondary education as compared to those who have no formal education. The wealthiest respondents are about five percentage points more likely to say more than half or all politicians are corrupt as compared to the least wealthy.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 3.5**

**The less educated, least wealthy, youngest, and oldest have lower perceptions of corruption**

● % more than half or all politicians are corrupt      |-----| 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



Spain, 2020: People from various Latin American countries hold flags as they protest the violation of the rights of indigenous people (Yana Demenko/ Shutterstock)

## For the First Time in the AmericasBarometer, the Rate of Experiences with Corruption Victimization by Government Employees Matches that by the Police

**D**ay-to-day, or street-level “petty corruption,” is another deviation from strict adherence to the rule of law. As we have seen in the history of the AmericasBarometer, it is common to hear about instances in which the police or government employees take advantage of their position by soliciting a bribe from a citizen for services to which all are entitled. To measure this form of corruption victimization, the 2021 AmericasBarometer asked respondents if they had been solicited a bribe by the police or by public officials.

**Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last twelve months?**  
(0) No (1) Yes

**In the last twelve months, did any government employee ask you for a bribe?** (0) No (1) Yes

**Figure 3.6** displays the percentage of the public that is solicited for a bribe by police (right panel) and/or public officials (left panel).

Across both measures, Mexico has the highest levels of experiences with bribe solicitation while Chile, Uruguay and Brazil have the lowest. In general, corruption victimization by the police is more common than by public officials, although some populations—e.g., those in Mexico, Paraguay, and Guatemala—are about equally likely to be solicited for both types of bribes.<sup>17</sup>

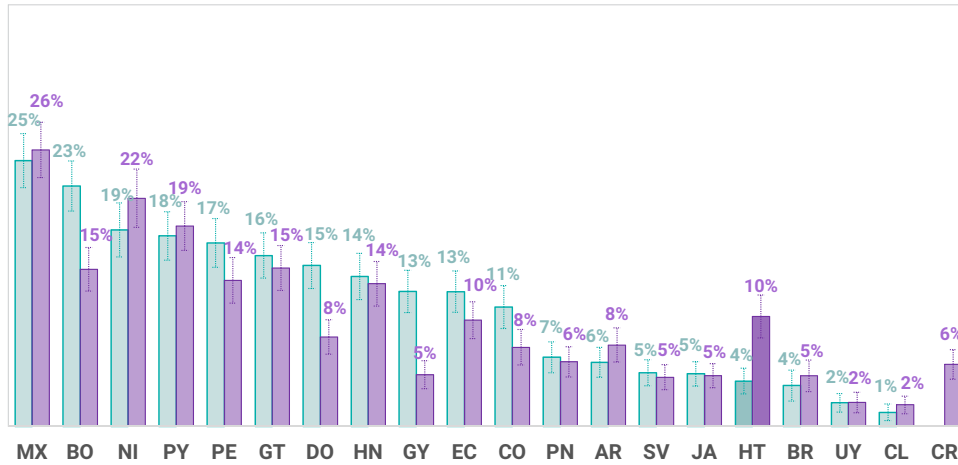
Mexico, 2021:  
Mexican Federal  
Police patrol the  
streets in the city  
of Ciudad Juarez  
(Frontpage/  
Shutterstock)



**Figure 3.6**

**Bribe solicitation in 2021 is highest in Mexico and lowest in Chile**

■ % police officer solicited a bribe ■ % public official solicited a bribe |-----| 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



**Figure 3.7** shows that levels of bribe solicitation by police officers have nudged upwards a small amount but generally remained relatively

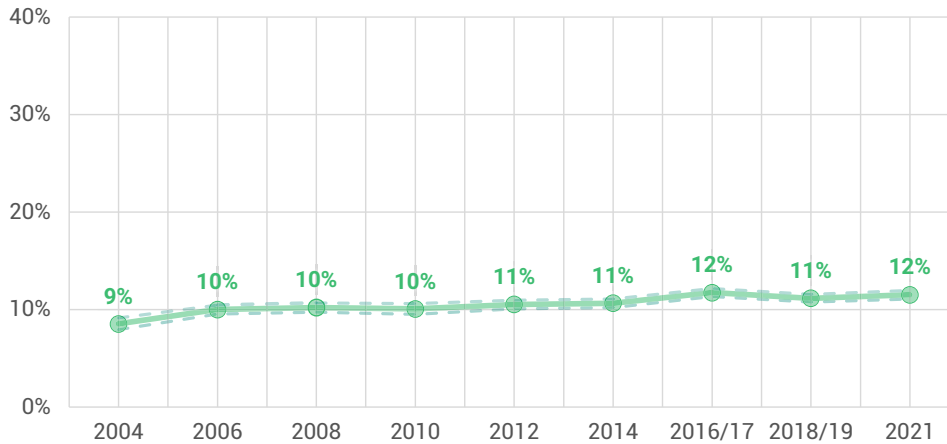
constant: since 2006, between 10 to 12 percent of LAC residents report being solicited for a bribe from police.



**Figure 3.7**

**Bribe solicitation by police in the LAC region has remained steady since 2006**

● % police officer solicited a bribe --- 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2004-2021



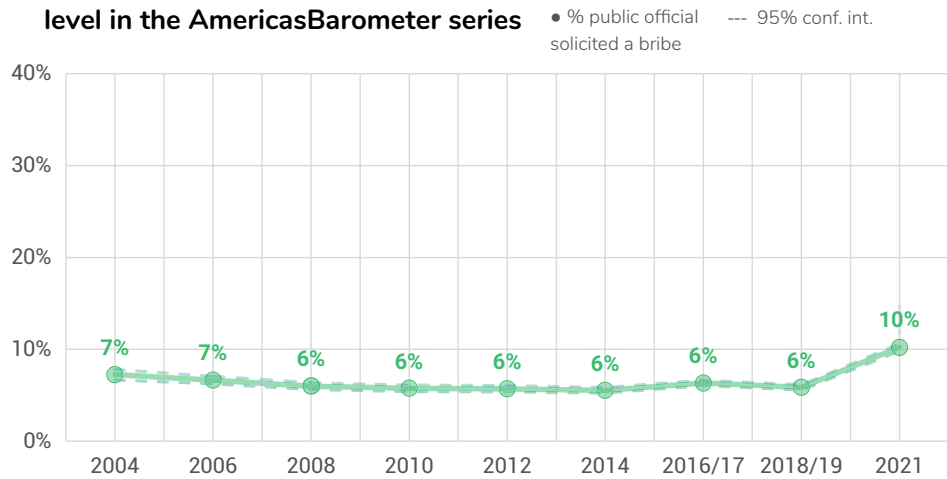
Since 2006, between 10 and 12 percent of LAC residents report being solicited for a bribe from police

**Figure 3.8** shows that rates of experience with bribe solicitation by public officials have significantly increased in the last two years or so: from 6% to 10%. Between 2004 and 2019 about 5-7% of LAC residents—on average—had suffered bribe victimization by public officials. This number increased to over 10% in 2021. Between the 2018/19 and the 2021 AmericasBarometer, bribe victimization either remained the same or increased in all LAC countries surveyed in both rounds.

The increase was particularly stark in Nicaragua (18 percentage points), Mexico (12 percentage points), and Paraguay (11 percentage points). What accounts for this big rise? The pandemic may provide some answers. For example, Transparency International has highlighted how corruption has infiltrated into the public health domain, with some of those in charge of resources soliciting bribes for COVID-19 tests, treatment, and other health services.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 3.8**

**Bribe solicitation by public officials in the LAC region reached its highest level in the AmericasBarometer series**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2004-2021

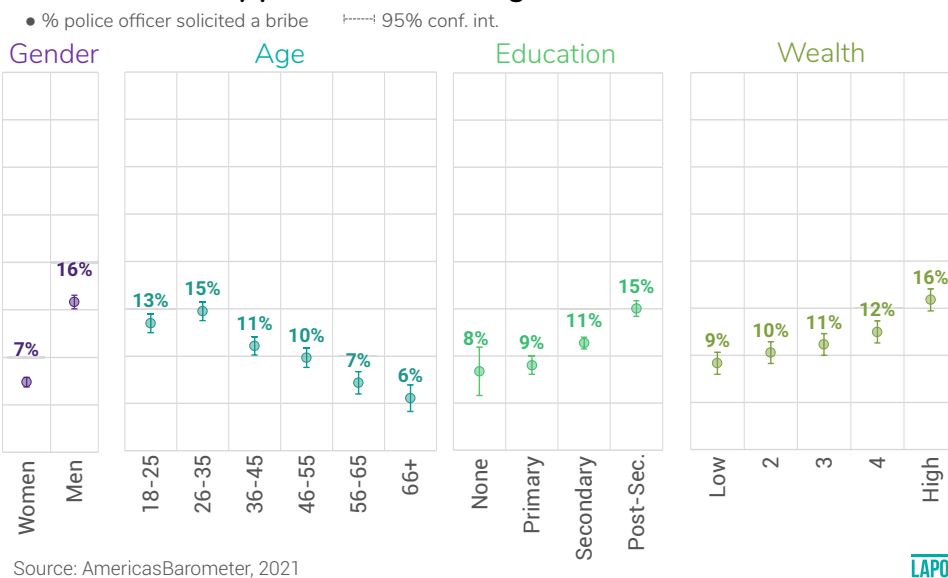


Who is most likely to be solicited for a bribe by the police or a public official? Because the patterns are quite similar for corruption victimization by police and by public officials, **Figure 3.9** plots the demographic and socioeconomic correlates of police bribe solicitation.<sup>19</sup> The figure shows that men, younger age cohorts, better educated individuals, and those who are wealthier are more likely to have been asked for a bribe as compared to their counterparts in those subgroups. The gender gap

is substantial: men are more than twice as likely to be asked for a bribe from the police when compared to women (16% versus 7%).<sup>20</sup> In addition, while around 13-15% of the youngest cohorts were asked for a bribe, only about 6% of those over 65 were. Finally, there is a 7-percentage point gap between those with higher education compared to those with no formal education and a similar difference between the least and most wealthy.

**Figure 3.9**

**Men, younger, better educated, and wealthier individuals are most likely to be victimized by police in the LAC region**



Are those who have been victimized by corruption more likely to perceive high levels of corruption among politicians in their country? On the one hand, one might expect that “all bad things go together,” such that a system that is corrupt in one realm is similarly corrupt in others. But, on the other hand, these instruments capture distinct concepts: perceptions of high-level political corruption and experiences with street-level bribes. In analyses of the AmericasBarometer 2021 data, we find that—at the aggregate level—there is not much of a correlation. At the individual level, however, there is a non-trivial relationship worthy of more exploration: e.g., victims of police bribery are 14 percentage points more likely to say more than half of politicians are corrupt than those who have not been solicited bribes by police.

The implications for the rule of law for these findings on corruption are mixed. It is encouraging that, compared to the 2018/19 round, there has not been an increase in the percentage of the public that feels that most or all politicians are involved in corruption. Yet, on average, nearly two-thirds continue to see widespread corruption among politicians. Experiences with bribe solicitation by police and public officials continue to mar the rule of law in the region. The jump in bribe solicitation among public officials, to its highest level in the series, is concerning. It is important to know that the most educated are more likely to perceive high levels of corruption and be subjected to bribe solicitation: these dynamics may fuel frustration within this subgroup over a lack of accountability among political elites along with resentment at having to pay bribes in dealings with both police and public officials.

Some of the most  
unsafe countries  
in the world are  
located in the  
Latin America and  
Caribbean region

## Crime

The rule of law encompasses the principal of protecting fundamental rights, such as the security of citizens. Hence, we analyze crime victimization and perceptions of insecurity in the LAC region to assess the extent to which the state provides security for its citizens. Increases in crime and violence have been a defining characteristic of the region since the 1980s, and, as a result, fear of crime is high in many countries.<sup>21</sup> In fact, these days, some of the most unsafe countries in the world are located in the LAC region.<sup>22</sup> Crime and violence have direct consequences for quality of life: they take a psychological toll on individuals, they lead to changes in consumer, social, and political behavior, and they reduce average life spans.<sup>23</sup>

At the beginning of the pandemic and lockdowns in 2020, various violent and non-violent crimes appeared to decrease.<sup>24</sup> Lockdowns themselves appeared to contribute to a decrease of crime and violence.<sup>25</sup> However, the drop in violence was neither lasting nor uniform across the region. Further, after an initial decrease in crime, organized criminal factions strengthened in the face of weakened

state capacity.<sup>26,27</sup> Such dynamics would imply that impunity has become more common during the pandemic. The individual level data in the AmericasBarometer provides insights into the current security situation in the LAC region, and also elucidates how things have evolved over time and who is most likely to experience crime or perceive a lack of security.





## On Average Across the LAC Region, One in Five Reports Having Been the Victim of a Crime

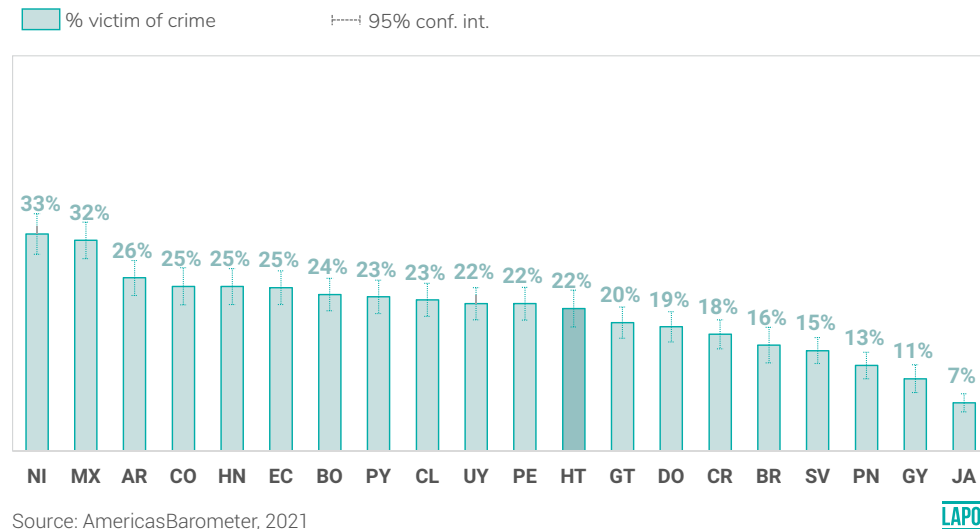
To what extent have individuals in the LAC region been victims of crime? Each round, the AmericasBarometer provides an answer; since 2010, the project has used the following question to assess experiences with crime victimization:

**Now, changing subject, have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of a robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threats or any other type of crime in the past 12 months? (1) Yes (2) No**

**Figure 3.10** displays the percentage of crime victims for each country in 2021. In more than half of the countries, more than 20% of the public is a crime victim. Crime victimization ranges from a low of 7% in Jamaica to a high of 33% in Nicaragua. The percentage of crime victims is the lowest in Jamaica and Guyana and highest in Mexico and Nicaragua.

**Figure 3.10**

**In more than half the LAC region, more than 20% are crime victims**



How do rates of experience with crime victimization in 2021 compare to past years? According to **Figure 3.11**, on average across the LAC region, 21% of citizens have been victims of crime in 2021. This represents a statistically significant 3-percentage point decrease in crime victimization

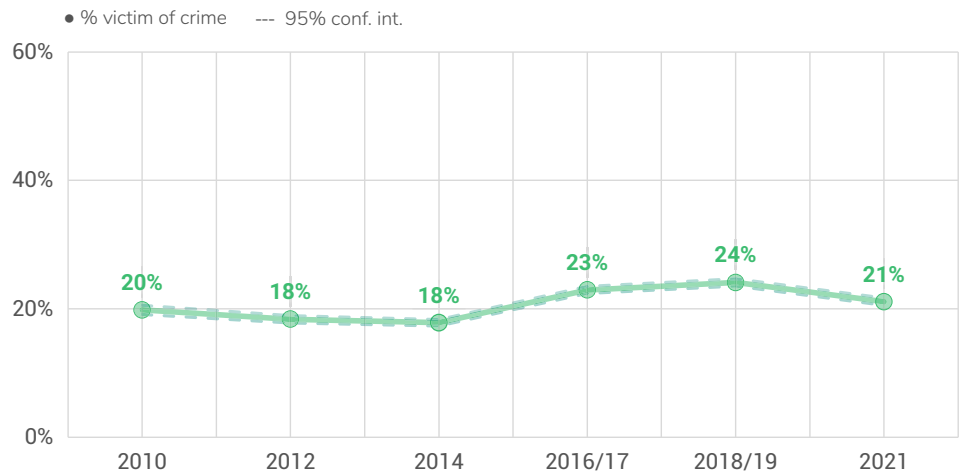
from the 2018/19 survey round. However, the proportion of crime victimization is not lower than the one in 2014 and prior years, which means that crime victimization remains a persistent challenge in the LAC region.



Crime victimization remains a persistent challenge in the LAC region

**Figure 3.11**

**Crime victimization in the LAC region decreased slightly in 2021**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2010-2021

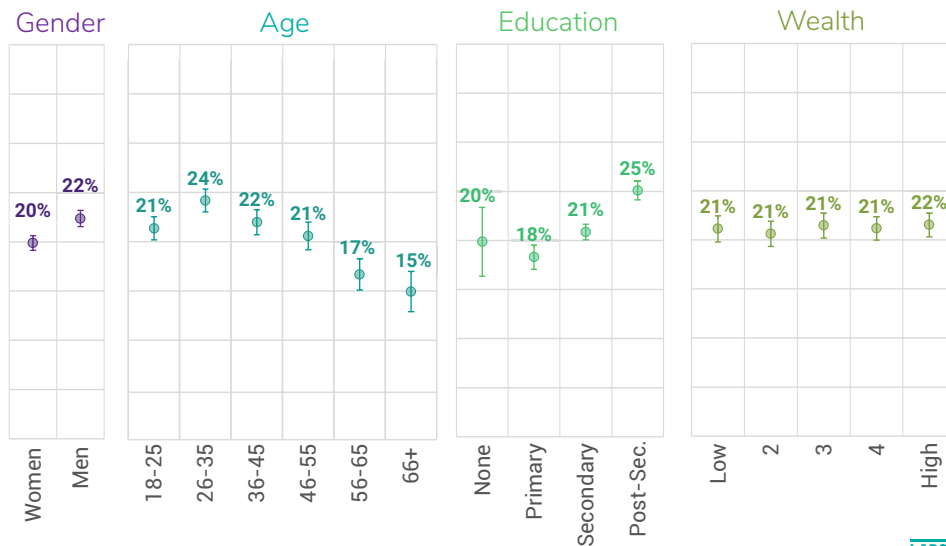


Who is most likely to be a victim of crime? **Figure 3.12** shows that the most educated are more likely to report having been victims of crime than less educated individuals. Men are slightly more likely to express being a victims of crime

than are women. Generally, younger individuals are also more likely to report being victims of crime than are older citizens. Those who are wealthier are marginally more likely to indicate being victims of crime than those who are least wealthy.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 3.12**

**More educated, men, and younger individuals in the LAC region are the most likely to be crime victims** ● % victim of a crime — 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



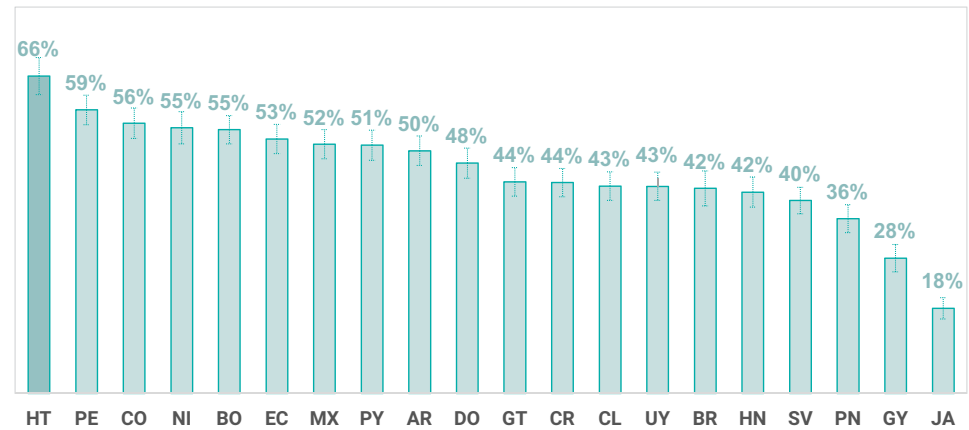
To what extent do individuals in the LAC region feel safe in their neighborhood in 2021? Since its inception, the AmericasBarometer project has used the following question to assess this type of insecurity:

**Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?**

**Figure 3.13.** shows the percentage in each country that expresses feeling somewhat or very unsafe in their neighborhood in 2021. Over half feel somewhat or very unsafe in 8 of 18 countries, with about 66% of Haitians saying they feel unsafe in their neighborhood. Two of Haiti’s Caribbean neighbors—Guyana and Jamaica—have the lowest levels of perceptions of insecurity in their neighborhood: fewer than one in five Jamaicans and fewer than three in ten Guyanese report feeling unsafe.

**Figure 3.13**

**In most LAC countries, at least two in five say they feel somewhat or very unsafe**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

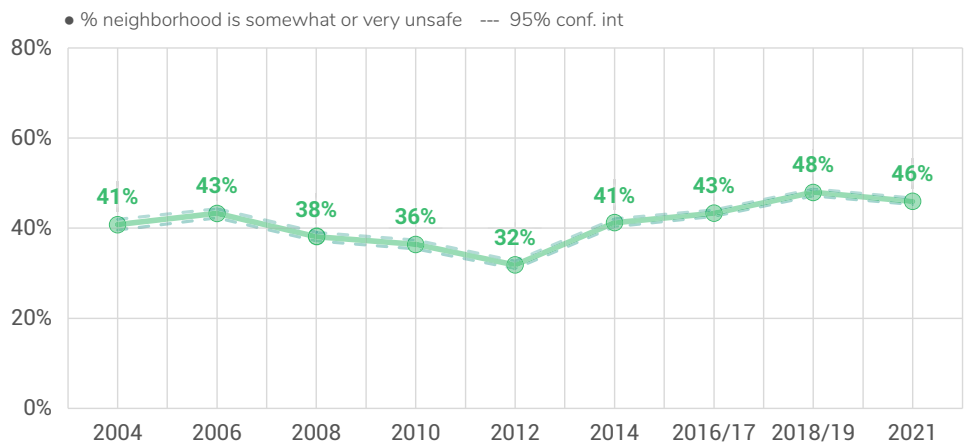
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**Figure 3.14** documents changes over time in level of neighborhood insecurity. On average across the LAC region, 46% feel insecure in their neighborhood in 2021. That value for 2021 represents a slight decrease in insecurity from the 2018/19 survey

round; though small, the difference is statically significant. Nevertheless, neighborhood insecurity remains much higher than its nadir in 2012 when fewer than one in three reported they felt unsafe in their neighborhood.

**Figure 3.14**

**Despite a decrease in feelings of insecurity in 2021, nearly half in the LAC region still say they feel insecure in their neighborhood**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2004-2021

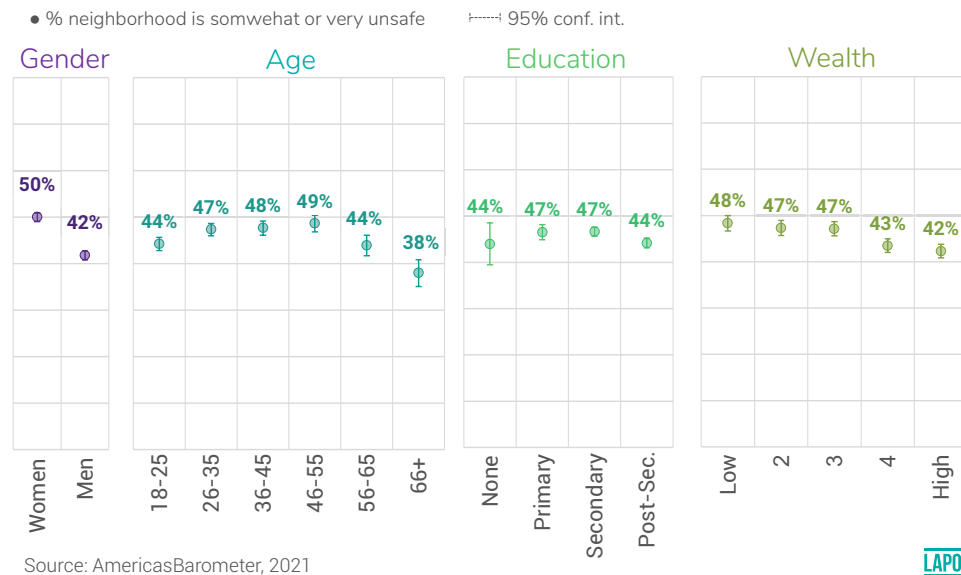
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**Figure 3.15** shows that those with post-secondary education and those with no formal education are slightly less likely than those with primary and secondary education to feel insecure in their neighborhood.<sup>29</sup> Further, women report feeling more insecure in their neighborhood compared to men; the gender gap is

8 percentage points. In addition, the least wealthy individuals are almost 6 points more likely to feel unsafe than the wealthiest in the LAC region. Individuals between 26 and 55 years old are slightly more likely to report feeling insecure in their neighborhood than those who are younger or older.

**Figure 3.15**

**Those with low levels of education, women, younger, and less wealthy individuals are most likely to say they feel insecure in their neighborhood**



To what extent does crime victimization and neighborhood insecurity relate to trust in institutions? **Figure 3.16** shows how these factors predict trust in a key institution relevant to maintaining

the rule of law—the National Police. The figure shows that both crime victimization and insecurity are associated with lower levels of trust in the police.<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 3.16**

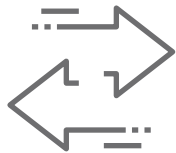
**Victims of crime and those who feel insecure in the LAC region have lower trust in the police** • % trust in the police    +-----+ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

**LAPOP**

## Justice for GBV Victims



There remains a gap between what has been aspirational and what has been realized in authorities' commitment to end gender-based violence

The third pillar in our multi-dimensional assessment of the public's view on the rule of law is justice. Specifically, we look here at beliefs regarding impunity for gender-based violence (GBV) in the LAC region. In this regard, we take an admittedly narrow look at the notion of justice, yet we do so in order to put a focus on a critical issue in the region. Scholars have traced the roots of tolerance for GBV and an underwhelming record of state-led anti-GBV measures to colonial times and authoritarian legacies.<sup>31</sup>

But, moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic—and its associated stressors including economic strain and lockdowns—increased the vulnerability of individuals, especially women, to gender-based violence,<sup>32</sup> making this an important topic to address now.

In recent decades, and spurred on by key efforts in civil society, governments across the region have started to make stronger efforts to combat GBV impunity.<sup>33</sup> Progress has been made, yet there remains a gap between what has been aspirational in terms of goals and what has been realized in authorities' everyday commitment to end GBV.<sup>34</sup>

## Majorities Across the LAC Region Believe the Police and the Justice System Respond Justly to Incidents of Gender-Based Violence

A new battery in the 2021 AmericasBarometer examines perceptions of GBV impunity. In the 2021 round, enumerators presented respondents with the following vignette: “Suppose a woman in your neighborhood was beaten by their partner.” Next, the enumerators read two follow-up questions to gauge respondents’ level of agreement that 1) the police would take the victim’s report seriously and 2) that the judiciary would convict the perpetrator.<sup>35</sup> It merits noting that these questions have not been asked in previous rounds. We therefore focus on cross-country and cross-subgroup comparisons. The wording of these two questions is as follows:

**If the incident was reported, how likely would it be that the police would take it seriously?**  
(1) Very likely (2) Somewhat likely  
(3) A little likely (4) Not at all likely

**If the case were brought to justice, how likely would the judicial system be to punish the culprit?**  
(1) Very likely (2) Somewhat likely  
(3) A little likely (4) Not at all likely



Mexico, 2021:  
Protesters in Mexico City march against gender-based violence, demanding greater safety and living conditions for women (Eve Orea/Shutterstock)

**Figure 3.17** displays the share of the public in each country that agrees that the police would treat the GBV victim seriously. Assessments of confidence in the police treating the GBV victim seriously range from 58% of Mexicans to 77% of Salvadorans.

**Figure 3.17**

**Expectations of police addressing GBV impunity are lowest in Peru and Mexico** % likely that police will take incident seriously 95% con. Int.



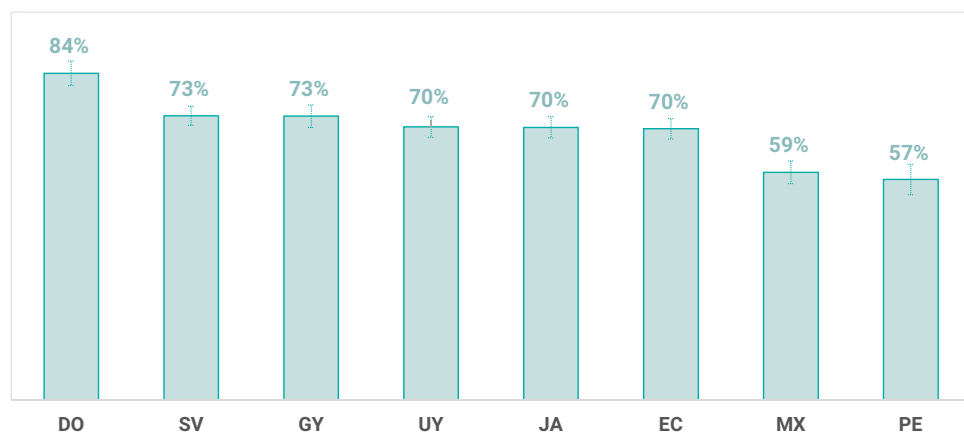
Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

LAPOP

**Figure 3.18** presents the share that agrees a judicial court will punish the person charged with a GBV crime—that is, that justice will be served. Assessments of confidence in the judiciary treating the GBV victim fairly range from 57% of Peruvians to 84% of Dominicans.

**Figure 3.18**

**Expectations of the judicial system addressing GBV impunity are lowest in Peru and Mexico** % likely that judicial system will punish culprit 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

LAPOP



Both **Figures 3.17** and **3.18** showcase that expectations of justice for GBV victims are fairly high: in every surveyed LAC country, responses on average surpass 50 percentage points. El Salvador's position in both **Figures 3.17** and **3.18** is noteworthy. El Salvador's commitment to GBV has become more salient in recent years due to the implementation of the *Ciudad Mujer* Program (CM), which has been emulated by the Honduran and Paraguayan governments. Therefore, one hypothesis is that Salvadorans' responses reflect the change that CM centers represent in justice for GBV victims, which are intended to provide a comprehensive attention to GBV victims in close cooperation with the police and the judiciary.<sup>36</sup>

There is considerable variation, however, across and within countries between views of the police and the judicial system with regards to GBV impunity. Dominicans harbor, on average, more confidence in their judiciary than in their police force, potentially reflecting a disconnect between the government's effort

in strengthening the judicial response compared to the police's first-response attention to the GBV victims.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, for Uruguayans it is exactly the opposite; in that country, access to justice for GBV victims is still limited and leniency towards putative GBV aggressors is widespread, especially in Uruguay's hinterland.<sup>38</sup>

Across both **Figures 3.17** and **3.18**, Mexico and Peru consistently rank at the bottom. There appears to be room for comprehensive improvement in how Mexicans and Peruvians perceive their police and judiciary's handling of GBV victims. In Peru, skyrocketing reports of intimate-partner violence during the pandemic suggest that the government ought to review its efforts in counter-GBV measures to foster confidence in the public.<sup>39</sup> In Mexico, President Andrés López Obrador has acknowledged shortcomings in reducing the prevalence of GBV, as the number of femicides rose sharply within the past five years.<sup>40</sup>



**Expectations of justice for gender-based violence victims in Latin America and the Caribbean are fairly high**



Argentina, 2020:  
Woman joins a protest in Buenos Aires against the government's justice reform efforts (Mariana Gaspar/Shutterstock)

## Expectations about Justice for GBV Victims are Gendered and Vary by Age and Education

**W**ho is more (or less) likely to perceive a fair and serious treatment for the GBV victim by police and courts? **Figure 3.19** places gender as a key predictor of expectations around the state's handling of a GBV report.

With men as the baseline, the figure shows that women are significantly less likely to expect the GBV victim will be fairly treated by the police (-7 percentage points) and that the courts will bring about due process

by convicting the perpetrator (-4 percentage points). In other words, women in the average LAC country are less likely to agree that the rule of law applies in the realm of justice for GBV victims.<sup>41</sup>

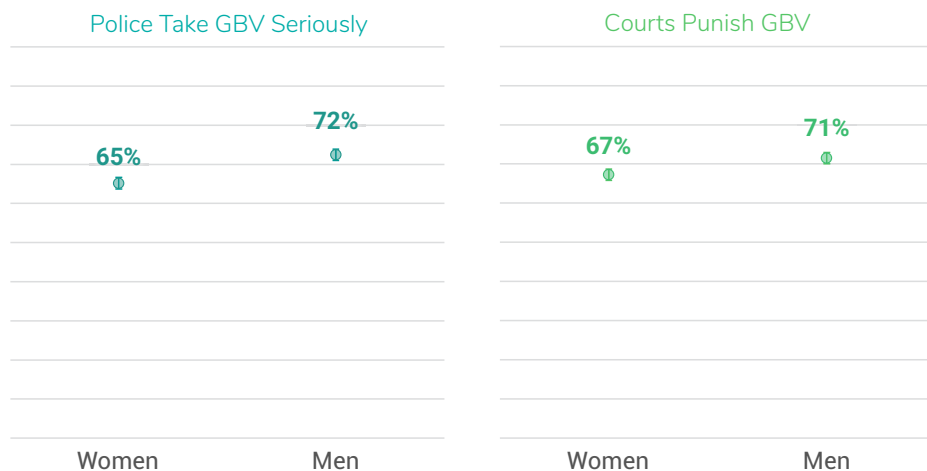
**Figure 3.19**

### Women in the LAC region expect more GBV impunity than men

● % somewhat or very likely    - - - - - 95% conf. int.



Women are less confident than men that the rule of law is strictly adhered to in cases of gender-based violence



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



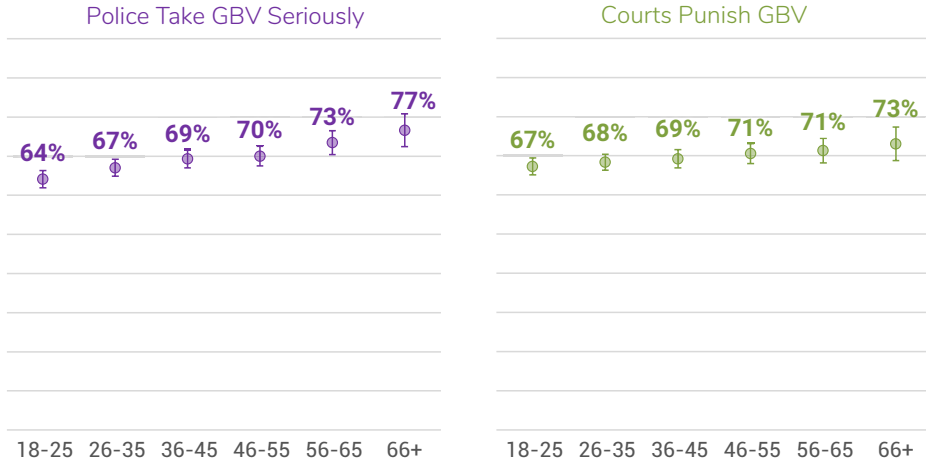
**Figure 3.20** highlights age-based variation in expectations of law-enforcement and due process. The older the age bracket, the more the cohort tends to report that a GBV report will be handled seriously by the state. There are two relevant age gaps. On the one hand, younger

cohorts (18-35) are less likely to agree GBV victims are taken seriously by the police.<sup>42</sup> When it comes to agreeing whether courts will punish the GBV perpetrator, on the other hand, the gap is less pronounced but significantly different between the 46 and older group and their younger counterparts.

**Figure 3.20**

**Younger age cohorts expect more GBV impunity**

● % somewhat or very likely    ┆ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



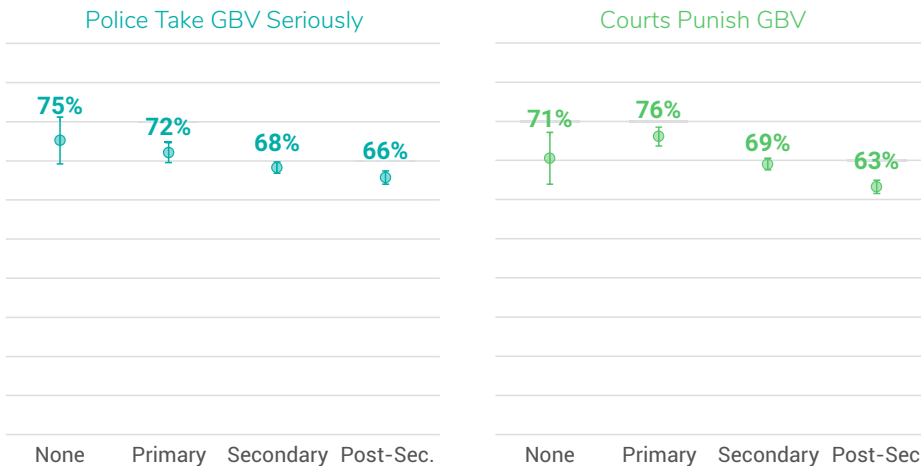
Across levels of educational attainment, **Figure 3.21** shows that the more educated individuals are, the less prone they are to expect that

a GBV victim's case will be handled seriously by the police and punished by the courts.

**Figure 3.21**

**More educated individuals expect higher GBV impunity**

● % somewhat or very likely    ┆ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

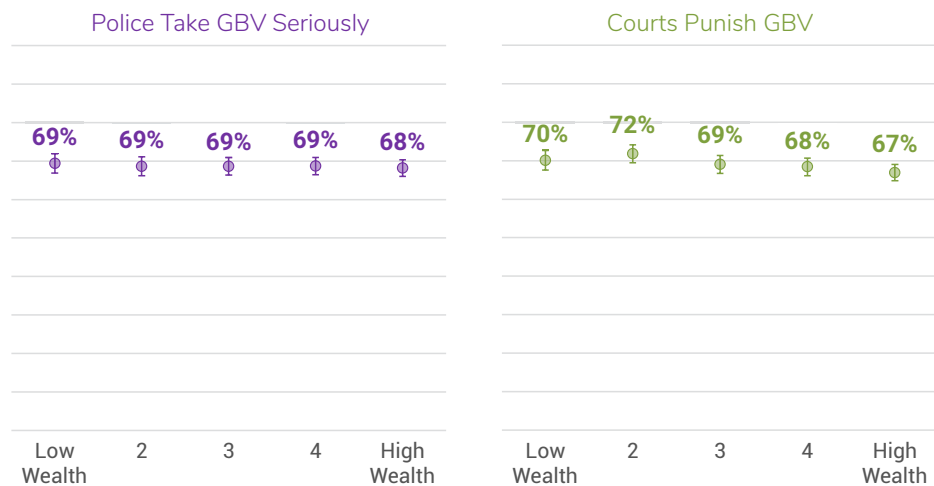


Finally, **Figure 3.22** displays that wealth has less predictive leverage over perceptions of GBV impunity. Wealth levels have no discernible impact on people's perceptions of how police tackle GBV impunity. A wealth-based gap between the most

extreme categories of respondents' wealth is only appreciable regarding the judicial system: in comparison to their less wealthy counterparts, the wealthiest people are about 3 percentage points less likely to agree GBV will be punished by the courts.

**Figure 3.22**

**Wealth predicts perceptions of GBV impunity from courts, not from police** • % somewhat or very likely    ----- 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



Generating instruments to measure the public's view on the topic of GBV is not an easy feat (e.g., Castro and Riquer 2003; Palermo et al. 2014). That said, the AmericasBarometer 2021 data permit valuable assessments of citizens' views on justice for GBV victims: the extent to which law-enforcement (the police) and the judiciary (the courts) work to tamp down on impunity in this domain. The results show

fairly high levels of confidence in the likelihood that GBV reports are taken seriously and pursued fairly in the courts; there is, of course, room to improve. Further, the 2021 AmericasBarometer reveals that views on GBV and impunity have a distinctly gendered aspect: women in the LAC region are less confident that the rule of law is strictly adhered to in this domain.

## The Public Opinion Consequences of Weak Rule of Law

**E**arlier sections of this chapter have touched on the notion that the public view of the rule of law—with respect to corruption, crime, and justice—matters for the broader nature of public opinion regarding one's community and the political system. When perceptions of government corruption are high, and citizens are forced to pay bribes for services, politicians are unlikely to be held accountable and services become inaccessible for those who do not have the means to pay bribes.

Those who are victims of crime and perceive insecurity in their neighborhood lack access to justice. If citizens do not expect GBV victims to be treated seriously by police and fairly in courts, then GBV perpetrators are more likely to remain unaccountable, and governments fail to protect the civil and human rights of vulnerable sectors of society.

We consider that those who perceive widespread corruption and insecurity, are victims of corruption and crime, and have little faith in institutions of justice to punish GBV may be less likely to trust in others, have lower confidence in the government, and have less support for democracy over other forms of government. To investigate these relationships, we assess how our measures of the rule of law correlate with the following variables:<sup>43</sup>

**And speaking of the people from your community, would you say that people in your community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy, or untrustworthy?**

**How much do you trust the national government to do what is right?**  
**(1) A lot (2) Somewhat (3) A little (4) Not at all**

**Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Responses on a scale from 1, "Strongly disagree," to 7 "Strongly agree"**

Interpersonal trust is foundational for the functioning of society, but lack of justice, accountability and transparency can generate distrust between individuals.<sup>44</sup> We find that victims of crime and those who perceive high levels of corruption are somewhat less trusting of others in their community. Yet, neighborhood insecurity has quite a

strong relationship with interpersonal trust: there is a 21-percentage point gap between those who feel unsafe and those who feel safe in their neighborhood, as shown by **Figure 3.23**. Overall, these results suggest that a failure to provide security can be damaging to interpersonal trust in a community.



Failure to provide security can be damaging to interpersonal trust in a community

**Figure 3.23**

**Perceptions of neighborhood insecurity are associated with lower interpersonal trust**

● % people in the community are somewhat or very trustworthy



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

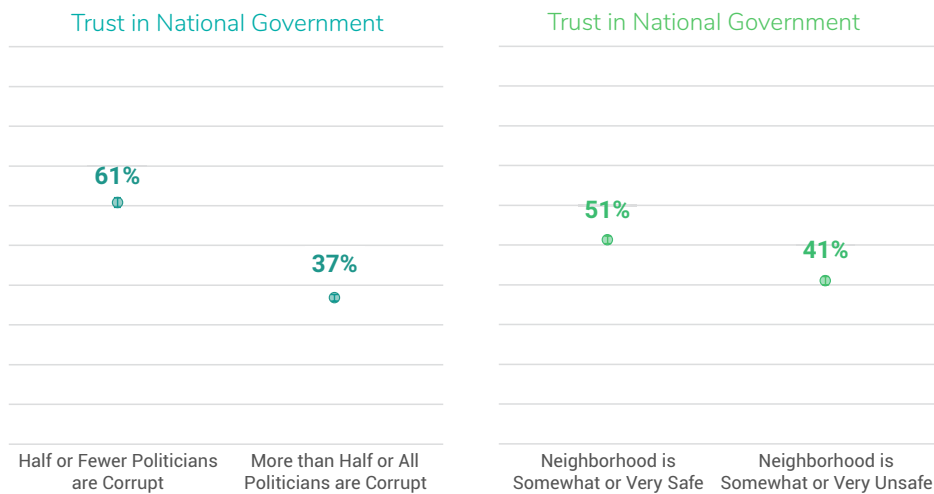


When accountability, transparency, and justice are absent from a society, citizens are less likely to trust the government. We find that victims of corruption and crime are less likely to trust the national government to do the right thing. We find an even stronger relationship for perceptions of corruption and neighborhood insecurity, as shown in **Figure 3.24**.

Those who perceive most politicians as corrupt are 24 percentage points less trusting in the national government compared to those with lower perceptions of corruption. Overall, the data suggest that a lack of implementation of the rule of law at not only at the national level, but also at the local level, can undermine trust in the national government.

**Figure 3.24**

**Perceptions of widespread corruption and insecurity undermine trust in government** • % trust in national government    +-----+ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

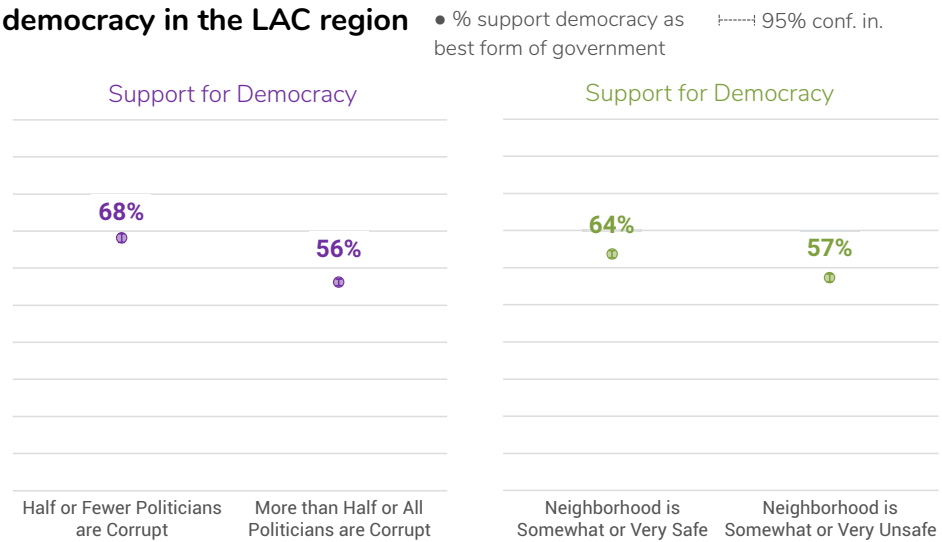


The final analysis shows the relationship between the rule of law and support for democracy in the abstract. **Figure 3.25** demonstrates how perceptions of corruption and insecurity may serve to significantly undermine support for democracy.

Those who perceive that most politicians are corrupt and those who feel their neighborhood is unsafe are about 12 and 7 percentage points, respectively, less likely to agree that democracy is better than any other form of government.

**Figure 3.25**

**Perceptions of corruption and insecurity reduce support for democracy in the LAC region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



We also probed how perceptions that a GBV report would be taken seriously by the police and punished by the judicial system are related to these three variables. We find that those who have less faith that the police take GBV seriously and that

the judicial system will punish GBV impunity have less confidence that the government will do the right thing, lower interpersonal trust, and lower support for democracy compared to their counterparts with contrasting views.



## Conclusions: Implications for Democratic Governance

**T**his chapter has offered a multi-dimensional assessment of the rule of law, from the viewpoint of the public in the LAC region. We focus on three dimensions that are a core part of the rule of law concept: corruption, crime, and justice. The assessment yields a mixed report with some positive and some concerning findings.

These results matter because the rule of law is integral to democracy. They also matter because, as we have shown, they have the potential to shape other attitudes that are important to the quality and durability of democracy: interpersonal trust, confidence in state institutions and the government, and—in some cases—support for democracy. Thus, reducing crime and corruption, as well as strengthening justice institutions, will shore up the rule of law, in addition to making democracies function in a more robust and enduring manner. It is worth noting, importantly, that fostering a healthy democracy via attitudes such as interpersonal and institutional trust may in turn be critical to maintaining a robust rule of law. Especially to the degree they likely are mutually reinforcing, it is

crucial to pay attention to the citizens' perspective on the rule of law and the broader set of attitudes that keep the pulse of democracy strong.

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## Notes

- 1 The index is based on expert and public opinion surveys and is made up of eight factors: constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice.
- 2 In the most recent WJP data, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Chile, three of the countries with the strongest democracies and human development indices, have the highest rule of law scores in the region and are 22nd, 25th, and 26th in the world rankings. At the other end of the spectrum are Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, three countries that have few constraints on government powers and high levels of political corruption.
- 3 Likewise, in the AmericasBarometer there was a big jump in the percentage of those who said their basic rights were protected between the 2018/2019 round and the 2021 round. El Salvador witnessed the biggest increase by far, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador also experienced a boost, but Guatemala did not have a statistically significant increase in those who said basic rights were protected between the two rounds.
- 4 Neuman 2020.
- 5 O'Boyle 2021; Porras 2021.
- 6 Cohen, Lupu, and Zechmeister 2017; Morris and Klesner 2010.
- 7 Papadovassilakis and Robbins 2021.
- 8 Most notably ex-president of Peru Martín Vizcarra and cabinet members both from his administration and that of then President Fernando Sagasti secured early access to vaccines and a Bolivian health minister was arrested for buying ventilators at inflated prices (Alonso and Gedan 2020). Argentina has been at the center of two major COVID-19 scandals: first with news emerging in February 2021 of elites using connections to get early access to COVID-19 vaccines (Heath 2021); and secondly, in August 2021 as photos of First Lady Fabiola Yañez's maskless birthday party attended by the President himself and others were leaked to media outlets, disobeying his own decree mandating strict lockdown and sheltering-at-home measures in July 2020 (Gillepsie 2021).
- 9 Warren 2004.
- 10 Lagunes, Yang and Castro 2019.
- 11 Mortera-Martínez 2021.
- 12 Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Chang and Chu 2006; Mishler and Rose 2001 Morris and Klesner 2010.
- 13 Seligson 2002, 2006.
- 14 Although Uruguay did experience a high-profile case of corruption with former vice president Raúl Sendic in 2017, Sendic resigned and his political career has not recovered. Compare this to Peru's Keiko Fujimori, who was nearly victorious in the 2021 presidential election despite having been jailed for her connection to the Odebrecht corruption scheme.
- 15 This does not appear to be driven by reported news consumption. Over half of all respondents claimed to follow the news daily, with about 58% of those with higher education compared to 53% of those with primary or less. Those who follow the news daily are *less* likely to say more than half or all politicians are corrupt compared to those who follow the news less often. Nevertheless, the substantive difference is quite small (63.5% versus 65.8%).
- 16 We performed a logistic regression where the dependent variable is coded as 1 if a respondent said more than half/all politicians are involved in corruption and 0 if the respondent said half or fewer are involved in corruption. We include sociodemographic controls—gender, age cohorts, education, and wealth—and country fixed effects. All else equal, both wealth and education remain consistent and statistically significant predictors of corruption perceptions.
- 17 The question about police bribe solicitation was not asked in Costa Rica in 2021.
- 18 Transparency International Corruptions Perceptions Index 2020.
- 19 We performed a logistic regression where the dependent variable is coded as 1 if a respondent was a victim of bribe solicitation and 0 if she was not. We include demographic controls—gender, age cohorts, education, and wealth—and country fixed effects. All else equal, gender, age and education remain significantly associated with corruption victimization.
- 20 Here and in all analyses in this report, the "women" category is more precisely "women/non-binary/other". The 2021 AmericasBarometer included the option for individuals to select non-binary/other in response to the gender question; because there are too few observations to analyze independently, we group those who identify as non-binary/other with women, and our analyses compare that group to men.
- 21 Singer et al. 2020.
- 22 E.g., Müller 2018.
- 23 Soares and Naritomi 2010, p. 23.

- 24 Moncada and Franco 2021; Muggah and Dudley 2021.
- 25 Semple and Azam 2020.
- 26 Muggah and Dudle 2021.
- 27 Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) have grown stronger in various ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, these criminal groups have provided governance in areas abandoned by the state. In Central America, gangs enforced the government lockdowns and distributed food supplies in their communities. In Mexico, some criminal groups have handed out food to communities under their control. In Brazil, "gangs in various favelas in Rio de Janeiro imposed curfews and social distancing on residents" (Cruz and Fonseca 2021).
- 28 A logit regression with country fixed effects indicates significant associations between age, gender, wealth, and education with crime victimization, all else equal.
- 29 A logit regression with country fixed effects indicates significant associations for gender and wealth with perceptions of neighborhood insecurity, all else equal. Age and education are not significantly related to neighborhood insecurity.
- 30 Results from an OLS regression suggest that crime and feeling insecure in the neighborhood are statistically significant, controlling for sociodemographic factors, such as age, gender, education, and wealth.
- 31 See, for example, Menjivar and Walsh 2017; Rondón 2003.
- 32 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>
- 33 O'Brien and Walsh 2020.
- 34 Choup 2016; Frías 2013; Htun et al. 2019; Roggeband 2016.
- 35 The GBV impunity questions were asked only in 8 of the countries. For the analysis, both have been recoded as 100 (1-2 on the 1-4 scale) and 0 (3-4 on the 1-4 scale).
- 36 See *Informe sobre Estado y Situación de la Violencia contra las Mujeres en El Salvador 2020*, available at <https://www.transparencia.gob.sv/institutions/instituto-salvadoreno-para-el-desarrollo-de-la-mujer/documents/402464/download>
- 37 See <https://presidencia.gob.do/noticias/presidente-abinader-pone-en-funcionamiento-doce-casas-de-acogida-para-victimas-de>
- 38 See <https://www.elpais.com.uy/informacion/sociedad/violencia-genero-crean-juzgados-tobilleras-fiscalias-especializadas.html>
- 39 Agüero 2021; Wiener 2021.
- 40 See <https://www.gob.mx/sesnsp/articulos/informacion-sobre-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-incidencia-delictiva-y-llamadas-de-emergencia-9-1-1-febrero-2019>
- 41 We performed OLS regressions where both dependent variables were recoded to range from 0 (very unlikely) to 100 (very likely). We include demographic controls—gender, age cohorts, education, and wealth—and country fixed effects. All else equal, gender remains a consistent and statistically significant predictor of perceptions of fair and serious treatment for the GBV victim.
- 42 The minimum voting age in the LAC countries surveyed with these questions is 18 years. There is a less notable but still significant gap between people aged 36-45 and those aged 56+.
- 43 We ran logistic regressions to uncover the relationship between the rule of law measures and these three variables. The main independent variables are perceptions of corruption, police corruption victimization, perceptions of neighborhood insecurity, and crime victimization. We recoded the three dependent variables into binary variables. For interpersonal trust, 1 equals somewhat/very trustworthy and 0 equals not very trustworthy/untrustworthy. For trustworthiness of the national government, 1 equals a lot/somewhat and 0 equals a little/not at all. Support for democracy is recoded as 1 agree (5-7 on the 1-7 agree-disagree scale), and 0 neutral/disagree (1-4 on the 1-7 scale). All main independent variables are rescaled to binary variables, where 0 represents no victimization or a lower value (i.e., half or fewer politicians are involved in corruption, and the neighborhood is safe) and 1 represents a higher value (i.e., more than half/all politicians are involved in corruption and the neighborhood is unsafe). The regressions also control for gender, age, education, wealth, and country fixed effects.
- 44 Montinola 2004.



Chapter 4

# Democracy in Haiti

François Gélineau

Protester raises their  
fist during a recent  
political demonstration

**A**fter three decades of violent dictatorship, Haitians embarked on a long journey into democratic rule, beginning in March of 1987. Pushed away by popular revolts, the exile of the Duvalier family opened the way to a new era. Hopes were high for democracy.

It took almost three years to complete the first electoral cycle, which brought the very popular former priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power, but less than six months for a violent military coup to interrupt the new presidency. Over the following 35 years, electoral affairs in Haiti have not been simple. Although the military stopped being an active formal or informal political actor after its initial disbandment in 1995, electoral contests continued to prove extremely tense. As illustrated in the introduction of this report, to this day, Haitian elections have continued to generate major unrest.

Hopes that democracy would flourish, along with economic revival, have been omnipresent in the minds of Haitians. Unfortunately, both have remained mainly hopes. The seeds of democracy have failed to grow roots. The economic situation has continued to deteriorate.

Since 2006, the Economist Intelligence Unit has been ranking countries of the world along characteristics of their political system -- electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture, and civil liberties.<sup>1</sup> Since the inception of its Democracy Index, the EIU has consistently ranked Haiti among the four worst democratic performers of the hemisphere, ranking only above Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela.

In strong democratic regimes people tend to display certain attitudes such as support for institutions, interpersonal trust, and tolerance for dissidence. Democracies seem to flourish in tandem with these attitudes. The AmericasBarometer has been following some of these attitudes in the Americas, including in Haiti.

This chapter further explores the items presented in Chapter 1, but with a focus on Haiti in 2021 and over time.

## Main Findings

---

- **Support for democracy as the best form of government has steadily declined in Haiti since 2006**
- **Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Haiti has followed a similar pattern, reaching a historical low point in 2021**
- **Haitians are more tolerant of military coups than citizens of other countries of the region**
- **Tolerance for military coups has increased in Haiti over the past decade**
- **Citizens in Haiti might be willing to sacrifice elections for a political system that guarantees economic security, but they are not willing to sacrifice freedom of expression**

## Support for democracy in steady decline since 2012

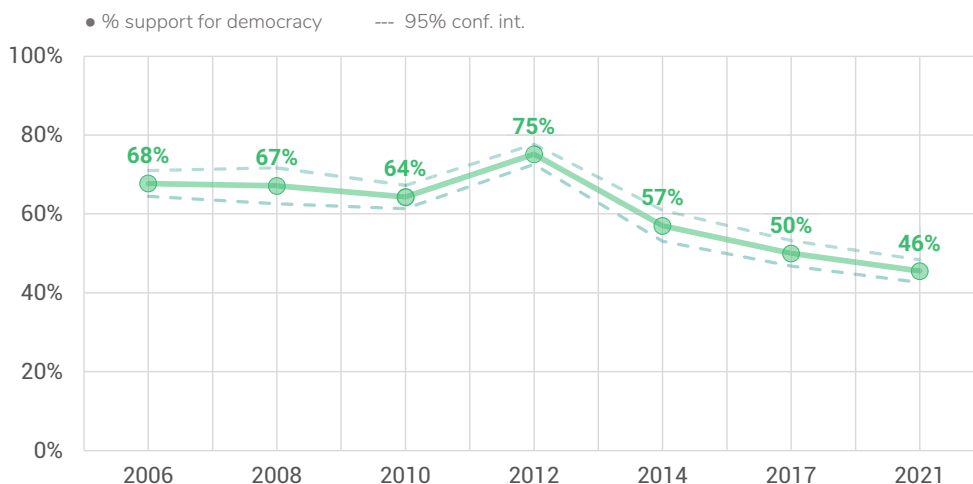
In Chapter 1, we saw that support for democracy, at least when compared to other forms of government, remains above 50% in most countries of the region. Over time, this support has remained relatively steady. When observing the political instability that afflicted Haiti over the last decades, one wonders how the country compares to the region. How has support for democracy evolved over time? Do Haitians still believe that democracy is preferable to any other forms of government? How do they react to the possibility of military or executive coups? Do Haitians prefer freedom of expression or fair elections over basic income and service guarantees?

When presented with the statement "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government," in 2021, less than 50% of Haitians express support for democracy. As illustrated by **Figure 4.1**, after reaching a peak at around 75% in 2012,

the level of support for democracy has steadily declined to an historical low of 46%. This is to say that more than half of Haitians express doubts about democracy as the best form of government.

**Figure 4.1**

### Support for democracy continues to decrease in Haiti



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021

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## Political support for democracy is fragile in Haiti

**S**upport for democracy is normally associated with certain attitudes towards institutions. Citizens who show respect for political institutions, who believe their basic rights are protected by the political system, who are proud of their political institutions, who support the country's institutions, and who trust elections should be more supportive of democracy.<sup>2</sup> Citizens who display high levels of trust for each other should also be more supportive of democracy.<sup>3</sup> A healthy democracy relies on this type of support.

More specifically, what Easton (1965) has called political support can be conceived as a three-dimensional concept that refers to different objects. Hence, political support can refer to the political community, the regime principles, and the regime performance (the authorities). Norris (1999) argues for a five-dimension scale ranging from more diffuse to more specific objects of support: political community, regime principles, regime performance, regimes institutions, and political actors.

The AmericasBarometer includes a first block of questions allowing us to measure more diffuse forms of institutional support. All the responses to these questions have been rescaled into a dichotomous variable in which the value "1" indicates trust or support, and the value "0" the lack of trust or support.<sup>4</sup>

**To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of Haiti? Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot'**

**And speaking of the people from your community, would you say that people in your community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy?**

**To what extent do you respect the political institutions of Haiti? Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot'**

**To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of Haiti? Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot'**

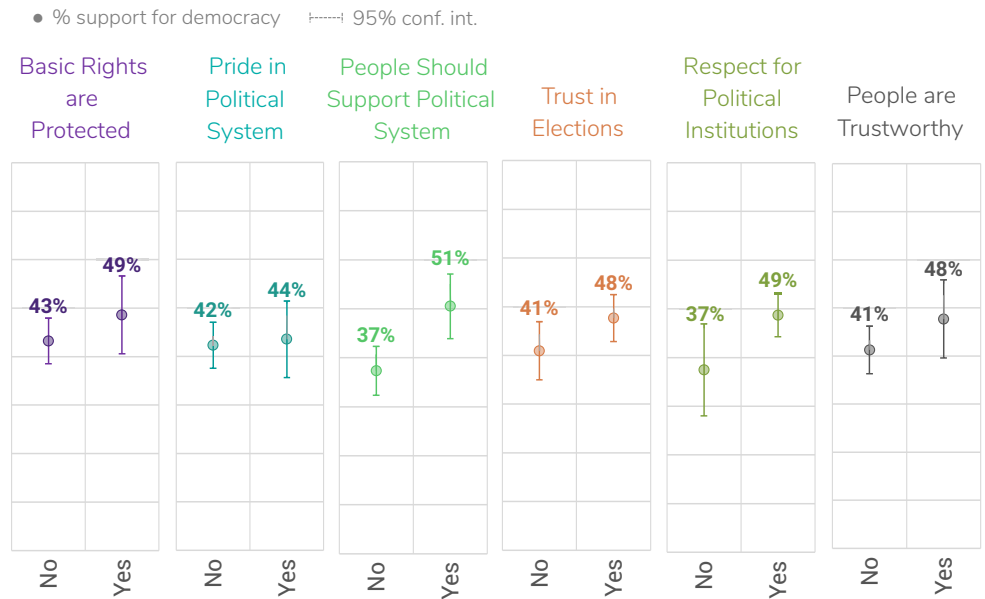
**To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of Haiti? Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot'**

**To what extent do you trust elections in this country? Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot'**



**Figure 4.2**

**Those who have trust in institutions have higher support for democracy**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021



**Figure 4.2** shows the percentage of respondents who support democracy by the different forms of institutional support and interpersonal trust. As one can see, every graph indicates that Haitians who support institutions and interpersonal trust are more likely to support democracy than those who do not.<sup>5</sup> Haitians who respect the political institutions are 12 percentage points more likely to support democracy (49%) compared to those who don't (37%). Those who think that basic rights are well protected are 6 percentage

points more likely to support democracy (49%) than those who don't (43%). Being proud of living under the political system of Haiti only marginally increases support for democracy (44% versus 42%) but points in the right direction. Belief that one should support the political system increases support for democracy by 13 points (51% versus 37%). Lastly, trust in elections and interpersonal trust increase support for democracy by 7 percentage points (both 48% versus 41%).

If support for democracy comes from the citizens' propensity to trust the institutions in an abstract or diffuse way, support for democracy can also be associated with more specific forms of support for governments or even for political leaders. This is not entirely desirable, since democracy is a system of institutions designed at regulating the selection of public officers and their actions. Over the long run, if citizens become disillusioned with the performance of their elected governments, their general appreciation of democracy (diffuse support) might suffer (Norris 1999). Ideally, then, support for specific political actors or governments should not be correlated with support for democracy in a systematic way. In order to measure these aspects of politicians/political support, the AmericasBarometer includes the following items. Again, all the responses were recoded into a dichotomous variable indicating support or not.<sup>6</sup>

**Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President Jovenel Moïse? [Read alternatives] (1) Very good (2) Good (3) Neither good nor bad (fair) (4) Bad (5) Very bad**

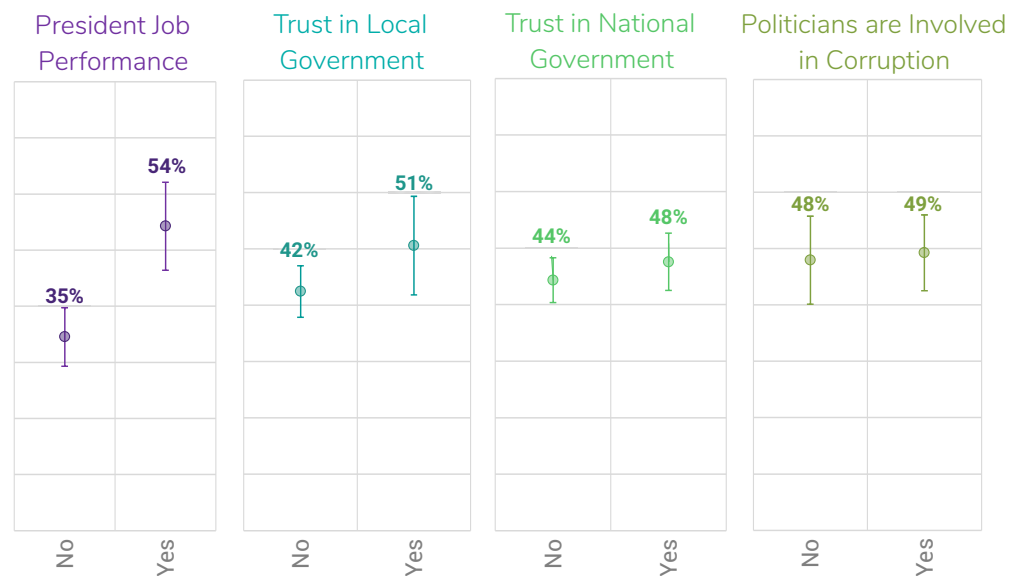
**To what extent do you trust the local or municipal government? Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot'**

**How much do you trust the national government to do what is right? [Read alternatives] (1) A lot (2) Somewhat (3) A little (4) Not at all**

**Thinking of the politicians of Haiti... how many of them do you believe are involved in corruption? [Read alternatives] (1) None (2) Less than half of them (3) Half of them (4) More than half of them (5) All**

**Figure 4.3**

**Haitians who have higher trust in government tend to have higher support for democracy** ● % support for democracy ┆ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021



**Figure 4.3** presents the level of support for democracy by level of support for the President's job performance, the level of support for the local or municipal government, whether respondents trust the national government to do what is right, and whether they believe most politicians are corrupt. The results presented in **Figure 4.3** first suggest that Haitians who see the president's job as positive or neutral (54%) are more likely to support democracy than those who see it as negative (35%). However, results also suggest that support for the local or municipal government (51% versus 42%), trust in the national government to do the right thing (48% versus 44%) and believing politicians to be corrupt (49% versus 48%) do not correlate with support in democracy, at least in a statistically significant way.

the way citizens view democracy. Do citizens who suffer from insecurity or deteriorating economic conditions evaluate democracy negatively for their difficulty? Do they blame the institutions rather than the decision-makers themselves? The AmericasBarometer includes a few questions that can help assess this possibility.

**Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe?**

**Do you think that your current economic situation is better, the same or worse than it was twelve months ago? (1) Better (2) Same (3) Worse**

If we take the analysis one step further, we can ask whether government policy output affects

**Figure 4.4**

**Feeling unsafe and experiencing a worsening personal economic situation are not detrimental to support for democracy in Haiti**

● % support for democracy    ┆ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021



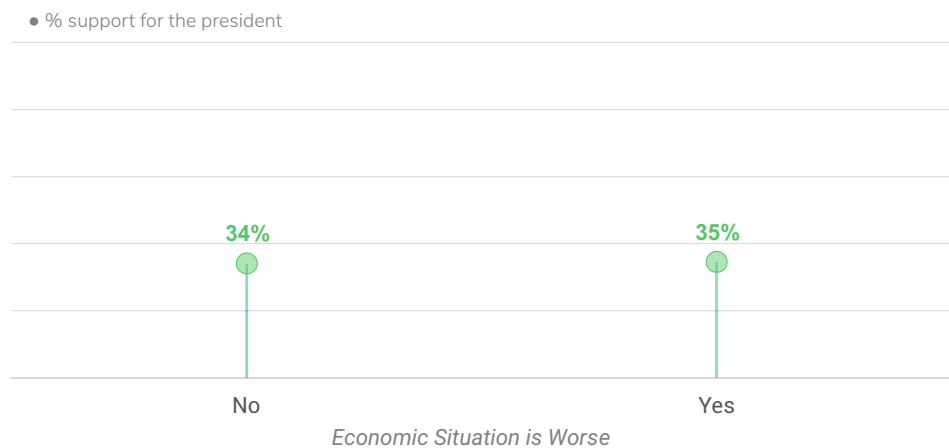
**Figure 4.4** shows the level of support for democracy by different measures of perceived policy outputs. Under a democratic system, disappointment with policy outputs can have a negative impact on the citizens propensity to support a government.<sup>7</sup> However, we should not necessarily expect that citizen blame democracy altogether for bad policy performance. The results presented in **Figure 4.4** indicate that Haitians who feel unsafe in their neighborhood (46% versus 48%) and those whose economic

conditions have deteriorated over the past year (45% versus 45%) are not systematically less likely to support democracy.

As stated above, if citizens behave as retrospective voters (Fiorina 1981), we would expect them to blame the government for policy choices that have a negative impact on them. Using two variables already used in the preceding figures, we can assess that possibility.

**Figure 4.5**

**Those whose economic situation worsened in the last year see the president's job performance similarly to those who didn't experience a worse economic situation**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021

LAPOP

**Figure 4.5** shows that Haitians who saw their economic conditions worsen are not more likely to evaluate negatively the president's job performance, relative to those whose economy did not deteriorate. However, the difference is far from reaching

the satisfactory level of statistical significance, thus leaving the issue unresolved. In Haiti, perceptions of policy outputs are not correlated with support for democracy, nor with presidential approval.

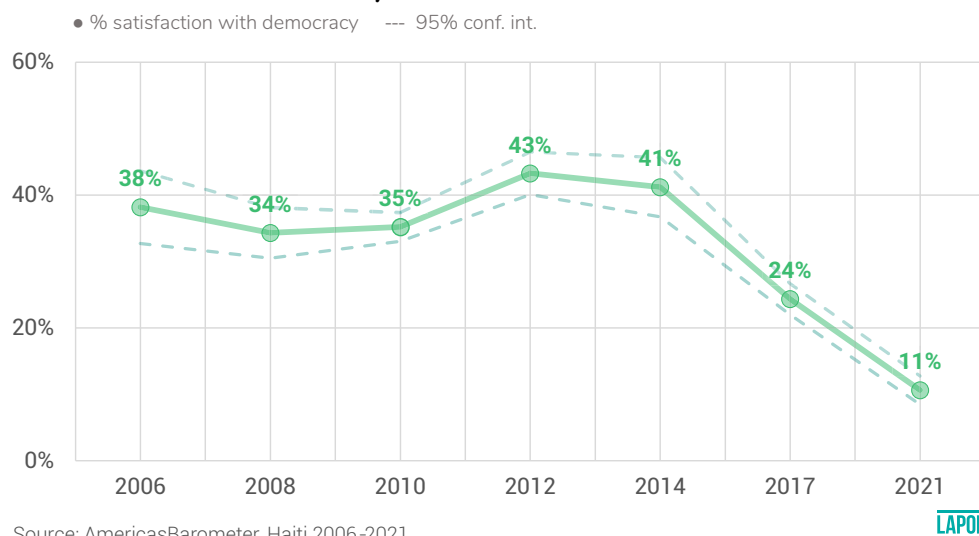
## The stability of democracy is threatened in Haiti

**A**nother way of measuring support for democracy is obtained by asking respondents whether they are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. The AmericasBarometer has been consistently asking the following question in Haiti since 2006:

**In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Haiti? (1) Very satisfied, (2) satisfied, (3) dissatisfied, or (4) very dissatisfied.**

**Figure 4.6**

### Satisfaction with democracy in Haiti reaches an historic low



**Figure 4.6** shows that satisfaction with democracy has hovered around 35-45% between 2006 and 2014, after which it has dropped significantly. In Haiti, satisfaction with democracy reached 24% in 2017 and only 11% in 2021.

In an attempt to get a more precise grasp of how citizens support democracy, the AmericasBarometer asks respondents about specific

conditions under which democracy could be threatened by an interruption of its normal course. The question, whose full text is shown in Chapter 1, asks respondents if a military coup would be justified where there is a lot of corruption. The analysis presented in Chapter 1 established that even under high levels of corruption, citizens of the Americas have a low level of tolerance for military coups,

with a regional average ranging from 37% in 2018/19 to 52% in 2004. Haiti follows the regional pattern, as 45% of respondents indicated support for a military coup under these conditions in 2021.

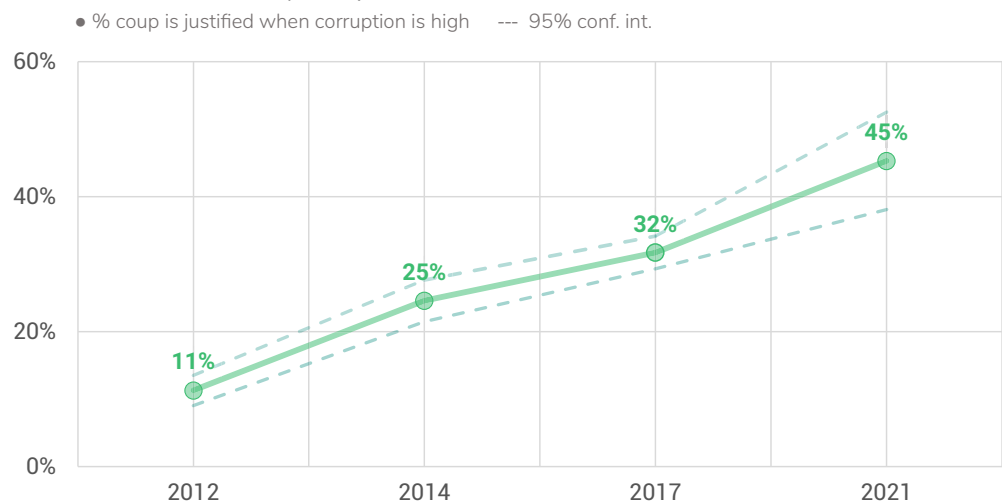
Beyond this broad support for democracy, the AmericasBarometer also includes questions measuring tolerance for non-democratic behavior of the elected leaders. More specifically, these two questions were asked repeatedly since 2010.

**Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the Police Nationale d’Haïti to take power by a coup d’état (military coup). In your opinion, would a police coup be justified... when there is a lot of corruption? (1) Yes, it is justified (2) No, it is not justified**

**Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Parliament and govern without Parliament? (1) Yes, it is justified (2) No, it is not justified**

**Figure 4.7**

**Tolerance for military coups in Haiti continues to increase**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2012-2021



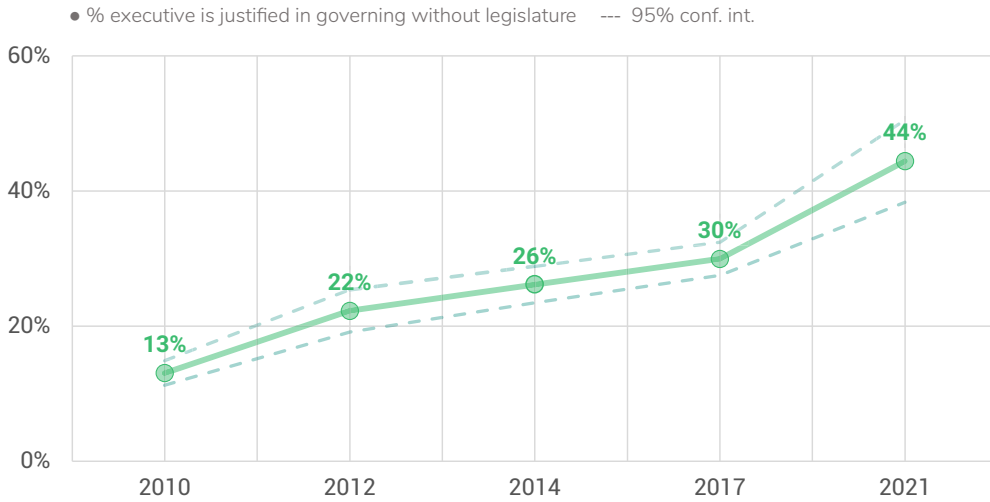
The first question is about the possibility of coup d’état under some circumstances. According to **Figure 4.7**, support for this non-democratic response to high levels of corruption has increased significantly over time, going from a low point of 11% in 2012 to 45% in 2021.

As an alternative to military coups under conditions of high corruption, AmericasBarometer also asks Haitians

whether it is justifiable for the president to close Parliament and govern without it when the country is facing very difficult times. The analyses presented in Chapter 1 showed that tolerance for such executive coups has been slowly rising in the region, from 14% in 2010 to a record high of 30% in 2021. It also showed that Haiti (44%) was among the three countries with levels of tolerance above 40% in 2021.

**Figure 4.8**

**Tolerance for executive coups increased sharply in 2021**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2010-2021



In Haiti, the trend has followed the regional upward tendency, but with a sharper ascension. In 2010, the

Haitian level of tolerance was at 13% but moved to 22% in 2012, 26% in 2014, 30% in 2017, and 44% in 2021.

## Haitians are divided on the fundamentals of democracy

**B**eyond these measures of broad support for democracy and tolerance to democratic interruption, in 2021, the AmericasBarometer also measured how respondents are willing to sacrifice elections and freedom of expression in exchange for a system that guarantees their material wellbeing. Chapter 1 showed that citizens of the Americas, on average, are more willing to sacrifice elections than freedom of expression.

**Which political system seems best for Haiti: a system that guarantees access to a basic income and services for all citizens, even if they cannot express their political opinions without fear or censorship, or a system in which everybody can express their political opinions without fear or censorship, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services?** [Read alternatives]

- (1) Guaranteed basic income and services, even if there is no freedom to express political opinions without fear or censorship, or
- (2) Freedom to express political opinions, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services

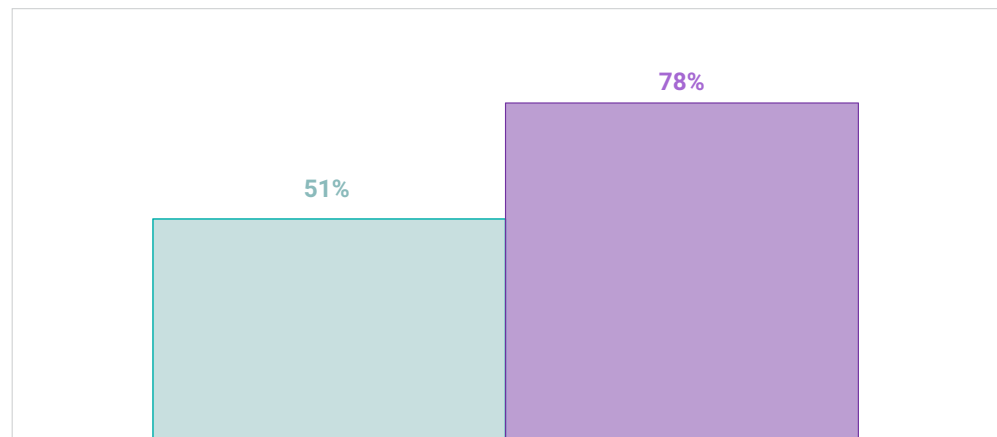
**Which political system seems best for Haiti: a system that guarantees access to a basic income and services for all citizens, even if the authorities cannot be elected, or to be able to vote to elect the authorities, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services?** [Read alternatives]

- (1) Guaranteed basic income and services, even if there are no elections, or
- (2) Elections, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services

**Figure 4.9**

**Haitians prefer free expression over basic services, but only a slight majority prefer elections over these services**

■ % elections even if no guaranteed basic income and services    ■ % freedom of expression even if no guaranteed basic income and services



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021

LAPOP

On the first dimension of democratic support, Haitians are no different than the average citizens of the region. On the one hand, 78% of Haitians prefer their freedom of expression over the guarantee of basic income and services. On the other hand, however, only 51% of them prefer elections over

the guarantee of basic income and services (49%).<sup>8</sup> While Haitians clearly prefer free expression over basic income, it is not clear that they value elections over freedom of expression. These results are depicted in **Figure 4.9**.



## Conclusions: Most Recent Data points to the Fragility of Democracy in Haiti

Just like in the rest of the region, results from the 2021 AmericasBarometer are not the most encouraging for democracy in Haiti. Broad indicators of democratic support are on the decline. Although Haitians do not seem to systematically blame democracy for the performance of their government, which is a good thing, they unfortunately do not seem to blame the elected leaders for their policy performance. On the more positive side, Haitians seem to value freedom of expression and elections. Considering the recent events in the country, especially the confusion around the political leadership and the line of succession following the assassination of the president in July of 2021, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the upcoming electoral process, the prospect for democracy in Haiti is weak.

### Notes

- 1 <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/02/09/a-new-low-for-global-democracy>. Page last consulted on March 28th, 2022.
- 2 Norris 1999.
- 3 Almond and Verba 1963.
- 4 The variables originally scaled from 1 to 7, were dichotomized by recoding values 5 to 7 into "1", and otherwise "0". The variable measuring interpersonal trust was dichotomized by recoding "very trustworthy" and "somewhat trustworthy" into "1", and otherwise "0".
- 5 Not all the differences are statistically significant. However, they all point in the expected direction.
- 6 Approval for the late president of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, was dichotomized by recoding (1), (2), and (3) into "1", and otherwise "0". Trust in the local or municipal government was dichotomized by recoding values 5 to 7 into "1", and otherwise "0". Trust in the national government was dichotomized by recoding (1) and (2) into "1", and otherwise "0". Politicians' involvement in corruption was dichotomized by recoding (4) and (5) into "1", and otherwise "0".
- 7 For example, see the vast literature on economic voting. For a recent review, see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2019).
- 8 Note that the difference does not reach standard levels of statistical significance.

## Chapter 5

# Trust in institutions in Haiti

François Gélinau

Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, May 2021 A man from Haiti crossed the Rio Grande natural border between Mexico and the United States to request political asylum.



In their simplest form, democracies consist of a set of rules designed at selecting freely those that will govern. Yet, for these rules to work, citizens need to have faith that the rules are fair. When citizens do not abide by the rules of the game, the system fails. Democratic legitimacy resides in its ability to convey confidence. When citizens perceive institutions and political actors as being trustworthy, they are more inclined to respect laws, they display higher levels of interests in politics, and they are more active democratic participants.<sup>1</sup>

Recent data reported by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs<sup>2</sup> has shown that political trust has been steadily declining, at least in Africa and in Latin America. In the scientific literature, variations in political trust have been explained by the system's ability to provide citizens with the political and economic environment expected in a democratic setting.<sup>3</sup> Yet, others have argued that declining trust could be caused by the ever-increasing number of educated and informed citizens, making them more critical of the system.<sup>4</sup>

Either way, this has implications for Haiti. The recurring difficulty of the institutions to deliver public goods in the country, combined with the various episodes of natural disasters, and the constant state of economic, political, and social crisis in which the country finds itself, all suggest that political trust in Haiti is a real challenge. With Haitians having much easier access to information through significant technological advances over the course of the past decades (cell phone coverage, satellite tv, internet access, etc.), the path is set for the rise of critical citizens.

In the previous chapter we saw that trust in institutions are associated with support for democracy. The current chapter looks at political trust as a dependent variable. In this chapter, the emphasis is to describe the multiple facets of political trust in the Haitian context.

The AmericasBarometer has been asking respondents about trust in institutions and government throughout the Latin America and Caribbean region for the past two decades. This chapter explores trust in institutions and government in Haiti in 2021 and over time using data from this survey.

## Main Findings

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- **Trust in democratic institutions in Haiti is generally lower than in other countries of the region**
- **Older, female, and less fortunate Haitian citizens are more trusting of elections. Uneducated Haitians are less trusting of elections**
- **Trust in elections is higher among Haitians who do not believe the US has a lot of influence**
- **Interpersonal trust is higher among older citizens, uneducated Haitians, and males**
- **Compared to other countries in the region, Haitians are among the least trustful of national and local governments**
- **Haitians have low expectation toward the local or municipal government**
- **Corruption continues to be a significant issue in Haiti**
- **Haitians who perceive high levels of corruption are less trusting of the national government**

# Trust in institutions is fragile, at best

In order to measure the different dimensions of trust in institutions, the AmericasBarometer questionnaire asked these questions:

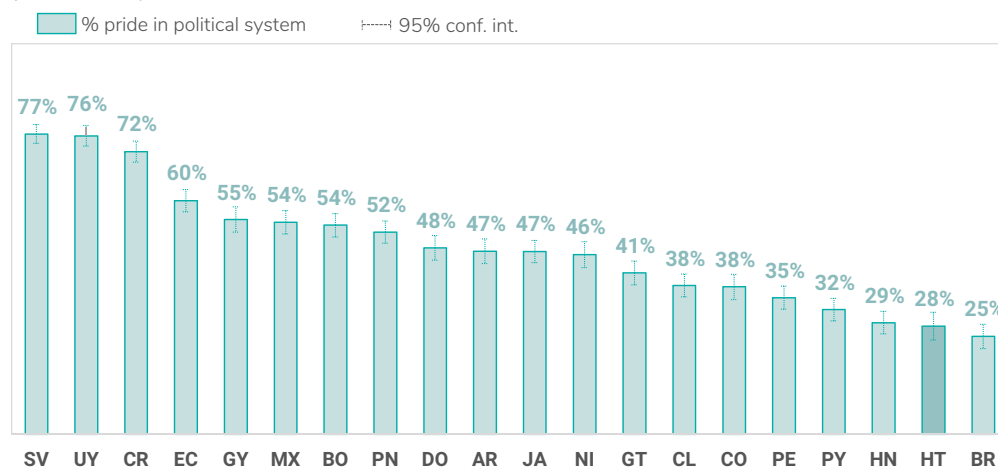
Using any number on the scale from 1, “not at all” to 7, “a lot”  
**To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of Haiti?**

**To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of Haiti?**

**To what extent do you trust elections in this country?**

**Figure 5.1**

**Across the LAC region, Haiti has the second-lowest level of pride in their political system**

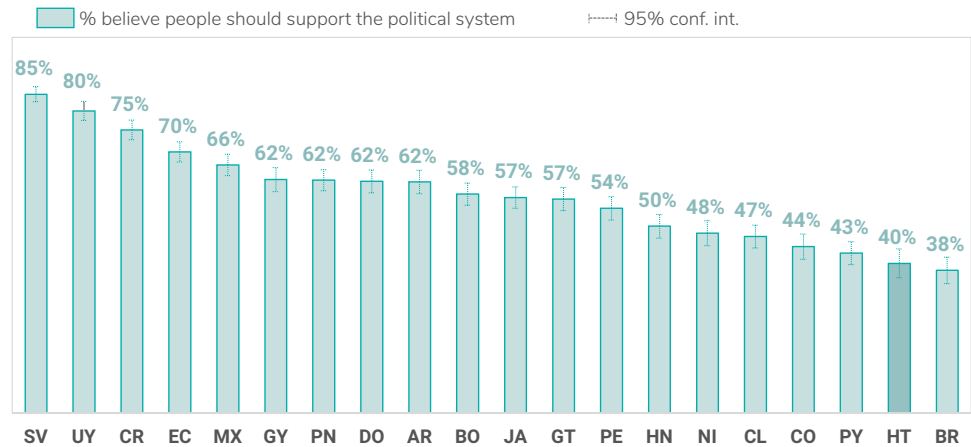


Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



**Figure 5.2**

**Haiti also has the second -lowest belief that people should support the political system of the country**

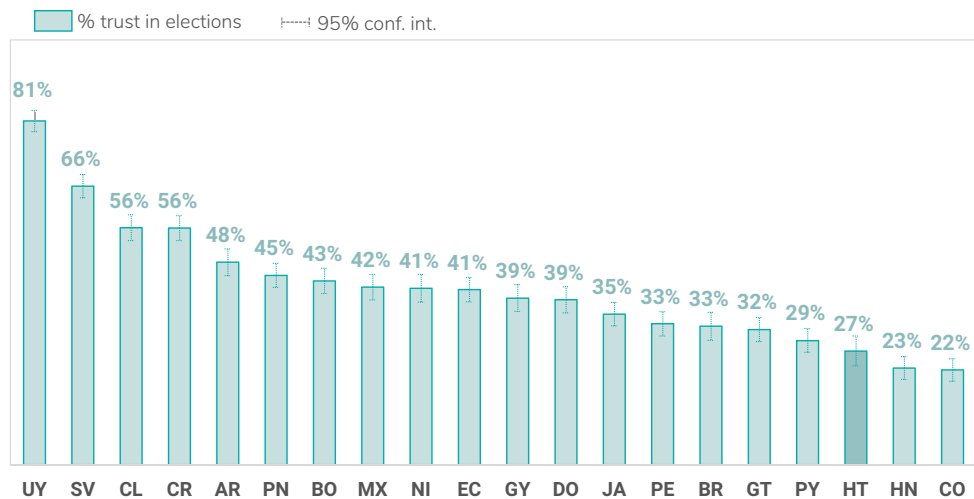


Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



**Figure 5.3**

**Haitians also have low levels of trust in elections**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



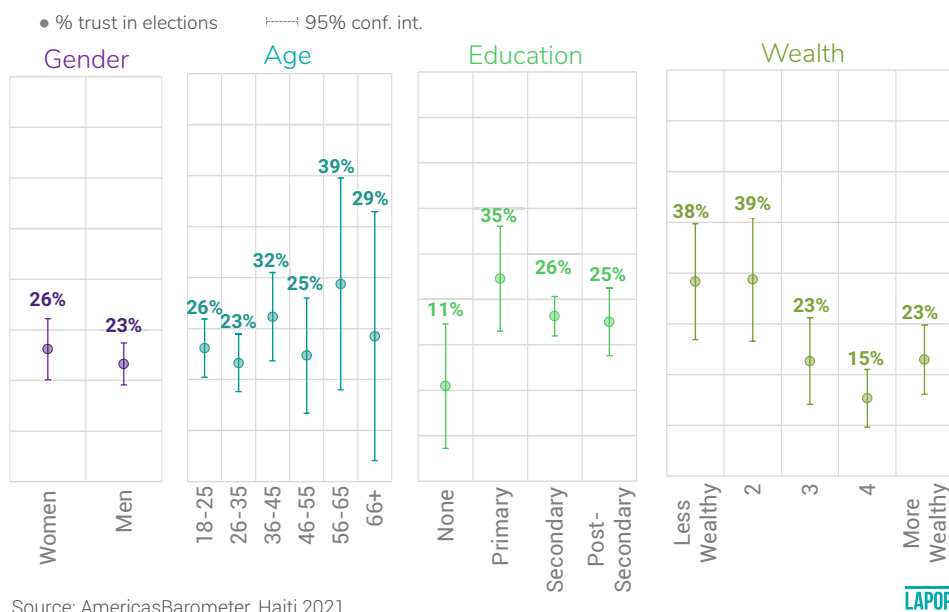
**Figure 5.1** shows that Haitians are among the least trusting citizens of the Americas toward their political institutions. With only 28% claiming to be proud of living under the political system of their country, Haitians come next to last in the region, just ahead of Brazil (25%). The regional average is 44%. Also, as seen in **Figure 5.2**, 40% of Haitians support their political system, again standing next to last ahead of Brazil (38%). The regional average level of support for the country's political system is at 52%. As illustrated in Chapter 2, and in **Figure 5.3**, Haitians are among those in the Americas with the lowest level of trust in elections. In 2021, only two

countries displayed a lower score on the variable. With a level of trust in elections at 27%, Haitians compare favorably only to Honduras (23%) and Colombia (22%). The regional average level is 41%.

Just as in the rest of the region, trust in elections in Haiti follows an age pattern in which younger citizens are less trusting than their older counterparts. Although we need to be careful with this finding given the small number of observations in the dataset, by running the same analysis using the full 2006-2021 dataset, the age pattern holds very clearly: those age 56 years and over are more trustful of elections.

**Figure 5.4**

**Women, those age 56-65, those with primary education, and the less wealthy have higher levels of trust in elections**



Beyond age, other sociodemographic variables seem to be associated with trust in elections. **Figure 5.4** also suggests that women are slightly more trusting in elections than male citizens. Those with no schooling, for their part, appear to be less trusting in elections than those with any level of education, completed or not. Finally, Haitians in the lower two categories of wealth are more trusting than wealthier citizens. When controlling for the different sociodemographic variables in a single regression analysis, the only effect that remains statistically significant is wealth.

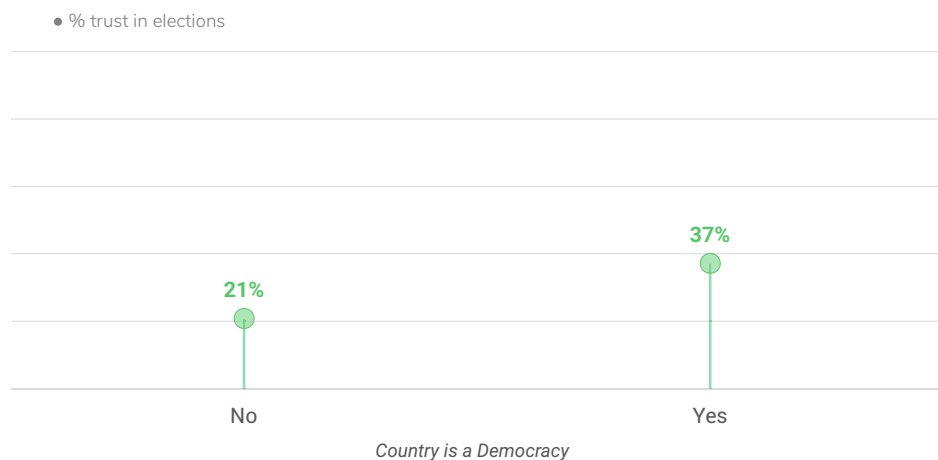
Free and fair elections are at the heart of democracies. They provide the opportunity for citizens to choose those who will form their government. They also serve as a check on government power. For elections to work, citizens need

to have trust in the processes by which they operate. As discussed in the previous chapter, electoral processes and politics have been a great source of instability since the adoption of the 1987 Constitution in Haiti. Haitians' confidence in the political institutions of their country has been repeatedly put to a test.

In Chapter 4, we saw that most Haitians do not believe their country to be a democracy. If we cross this variable with trust in elections, we find that those who believe their country to be a democracy are more trusting of elections. **Figure 5.5** shows that those who believe Haiti is a democracy trust elections at 37%. Trust in elections drops to 21% among those who do not believe Haiti to be democracy. This relationship holds when controlling for sociodemographic variables in a regression model.

**Figure 5.5**

**Those who believe Haiti is a democracy have higher trust in elections**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021





## Trust in institutions and perceptions of the United States go hand in hand

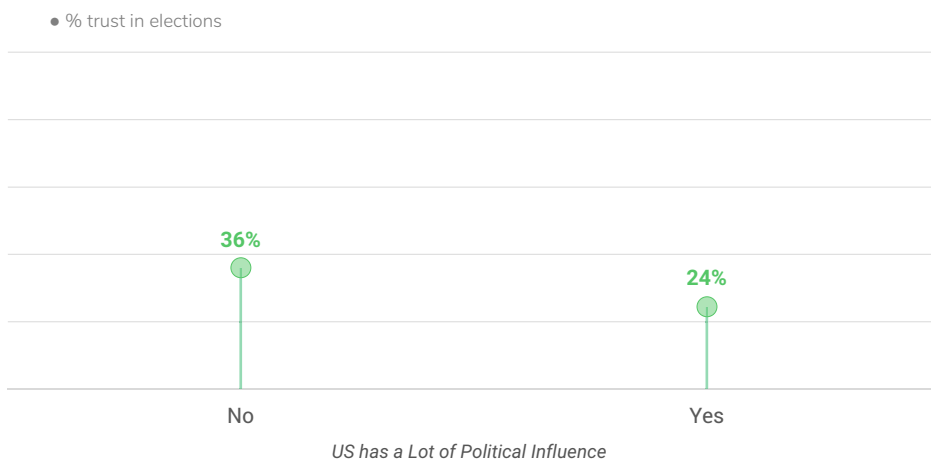
Ever since Haiti's emancipation from France in 1803, the country has maintained very close ties to the United States. The country's proximity to the United States has facilitated both commercial and cultural exchanges. Although the relationship has provided many opportunities for Haiti's development, the US presence on the island has also been a source of tension.<sup>5</sup> The role played by the United States in the country has always been a source of discussion among Haitians, especially around the electoral processes. The 2021 AmericasBarometer included the following question on this topic:

**How much influence would you say the United States has on the politics of Haiti? (1) A lot, (2) some, (3) little, or (4) none.**

Responses to this question were heavily skewed toward "a lot." The variable was recoded so that respondents would fall into one of two groups based on whether they think the US has influence on the politics of Haiti: "yes" (a lot) or "no" (some / little / none).

**Figure 5.6**

**Those who think the US has a lot of influence in Haiti have lower trust in elections**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021

LAPOP

**Figure 5.6** suggest that trust in elections is higher among Haitians who do not consider the US to have a lot of influence over politics in their country. The level of trust in elections is at 36% among those who do not believe the US has a lot of influence. Inversely, trust in elections drops to 24% among Haitians who think that the US has a lot of influence. Although the difference lies within the margin of error in **Figure 5.6**, the relationship reaches satisfactory levels of statistical significance when

controlling for sociodemographic variables in a multivariate regression analysis.<sup>6</sup>

The 2021 AmericasBarometer also asked whether the US influence on Haitian politics was positive or negative:

**And thinking about the United States and the influence it has on the politics of Haiti. Do you think that influence is... (1) positive, (2) neither positive nor negative, or (3) negative.**

### Figure 5.7

**Those who think the US influence on Haiti is neither positive nor negative have the highest trust in elections** ● % trust in elections



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021

L.A.P.O.P.

**Figure 5.7** shows the level of trust in elections for Haitians who believe the US influence is (1) positive, (2) neither positive or negative, or (3) negative. Interestingly, it is not so much whether Haitians believe the US influence over politics is positive (25%) or negative (23%) that affects their trust in elections. It is those that believe the influence is neither positive nor negative that

display the highest level of trust (39%). Again, the bivariate analysis suggests that the difference is not statistically different. However, when controlling for sociodemographic variables in a multivariate regression analysis,<sup>7</sup> the effect holds. Haitians that believe the US influence is neither positive nor negative are more likely to trust elections.

# Low levels of interpersonal trust persist among Haitians

Beyond trust in institutions, in well-functioning democracies, we generally find that people are trusting of each other.<sup>8</sup> For Robert Putnam (1993, 2000), interpersonal trust is an essential ingredient of social capital, which lays at the foundation of a healthy democracy. The process is simple, by trusting each other, citizens engage in all sorts of interactions through social, civic, associational, or political activities, all of which are needed for a democracy to function. On the contrary, if citizens do not trust each other, the social fabric of democracy is difficult to weave. The AmericasBarometer includes a measure of interpersonal trust:

**And speaking of the people from your community, would you say that people in your community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy? (1) Very trustworthy, (2) somewhat trustworthy, (3) not very trustworthy, or (4) untrustworthy.**

**Figure 5.8**

**Over half of Haitians express interpersonal trust**

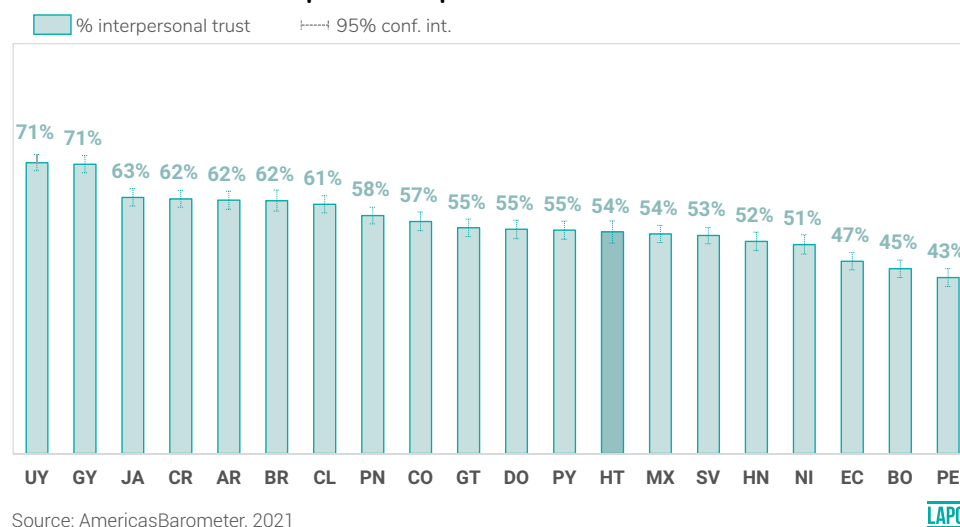
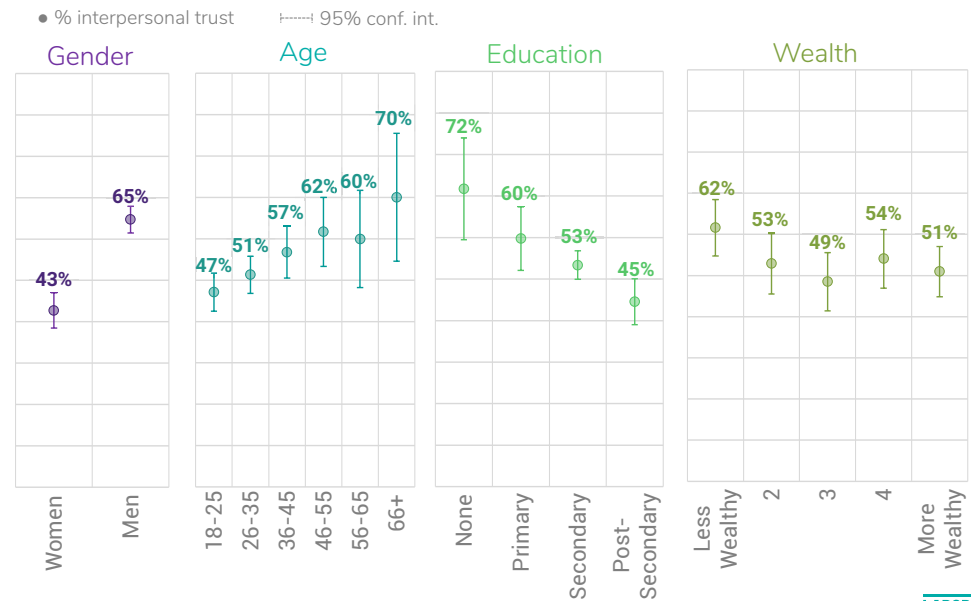


Figure 5.8 show that average level of interpersonal trust in countries of the Americas. The regional average stands at 64%. With 54% of

Haitians claiming that people of their community are somewhat or very trustworthy, they are in the lower half of the region.

**Figure 5.9**

**Men, older individuals, those with less education, and those with less wealth have higher levels of interpersonal trust**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021

LAPOP

**Figure 5.9** shows different demographic patterns in interpersonal trust. Age has a steady effect on trust, with older citizens being more trusting. Education also seems to play a role in interpersonal trust, with the less educated displaying higher levels of trust. Men (65%) are more trusting than

their women (43%) counterparts. Finally, the level of wealth may also have an effect, especially among the poorest group in which interpersonal trust is slightly higher. All these relationships hold when assessing their correlation in a multivariate regression analysis.<sup>9</sup>

# Haitians rally behind their presidents, especially at the beginning of their mandates

**B**eyond broad measure of trust, the extent to which citizens evaluate their elected leaders provide insight in the way they relate to the political system, and ultimately to democracy. As stated in the previous chapter, presidential job performance is a measure of system support that falls in the “specific” spectrum. In emerging democracies, it has been shown that civilian discontent with the government has often provided the legitimacy for coup plotters to act (Fitch 1977). Hence, in fragile democracies such as Haiti, one should be concerned by consistently low presidential job performance.

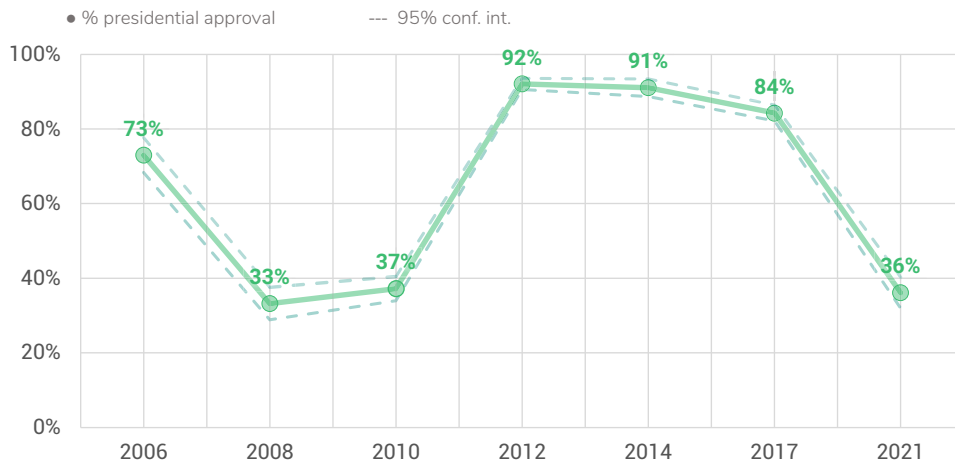
In previous AmericasBarometer reports, we have shown that Haitians tend to rally behind the president. However, the pattern follows a certain cycle, with presidents tending to start their mandate with high levels of popular support but face eroding support over the course of their mandate. The AmericasBarometer survey has been asking respondents the following question since 2006:

**Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President [name here]? (1) Very good, (2) good, (3) neither good or bad, (4) bad, or (5) very bad.**

For the sake of the analysis, the variable was transformed into a dichotomous variable to isolate respondents who believe the president is doing neither good nor bad, good or very good of a job compared to all others.

**Figure 5.10**

## Opinion of presidential job performance decreased substantially in 2021



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021



**Figure 5.10** shows the evaluation of presidential job performance for the 2006-2021 period. The in-mandate declining pattern described earlier applies to President Preval (2006-2011) and President Moïse (2017-2021) but not to President Martelly (2011-2016). Two surveys were administered during Martelly's tenure. The first survey was administered in January-February 2012 and the results showed a rate of neutral or positive evaluation of 92%. The second survey was administered in February/March 2014 and showed that 91% of

Haitians rated Martelly neutrally or positively. The first survey of Michel Martelly's presidency was administered during a particularly tensed political period, marked by accusations of corruption and by the recent resignation of the prime minister.<sup>10</sup> The very steep decline in President Moïse job approval between the surveys administered in April-May 2017 and May-June 2021 may be explained by the very tense political climate that marked the country during the first months of that year.<sup>11</sup>

## Haitians have low level of trust for the governments

**T**he 2021 AmericasBarometer included questions that ask respondents whether they were confident that the national government is doing what is right and whether they trusted the local or municipal government. These are other measures of confidence in institutions. The exact wording of these questions is:

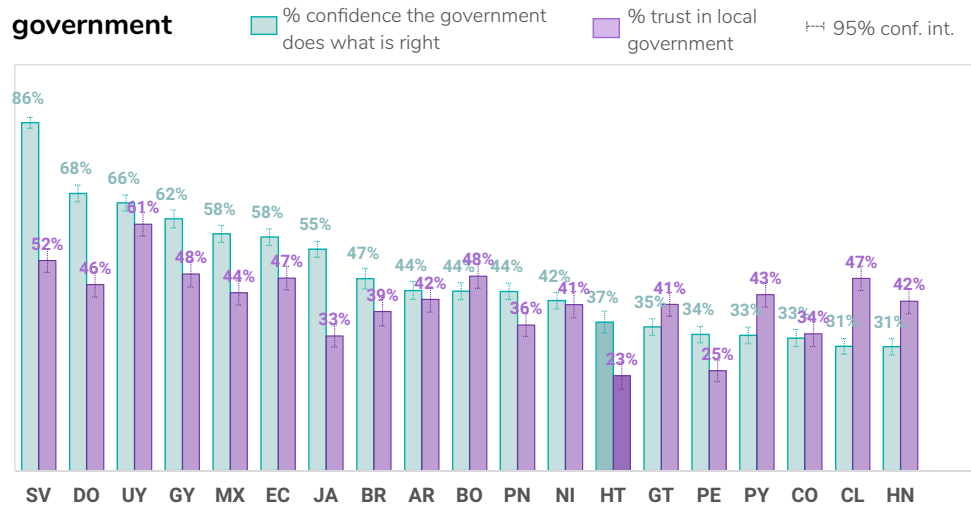
**How much do you trust the national government to do what is right? (1) A lot, (2) somewhat, (3) a little, or (4) not at all.**

**Using any number on the scale from 1, 'not at all' to 7, 'a lot', To what extent do you trust the local or municipal government?**

We recoded these variables into dichotomous measures of trust.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 5.11**

**Haitians have low levels of confidence in the national and local government**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



**Figure 5.11** shows that Haitians are among the least trustful in the region when asked whether they believe the national government is doing the right thing or whether they trust the local or municipal government. The level of trust in

the national government in Haiti is 37%. The regional average is 48%. As for trust in local or municipal government, Haiti comes last with a level of trust of 23%. The regional average level of trust in local governments is 41%.

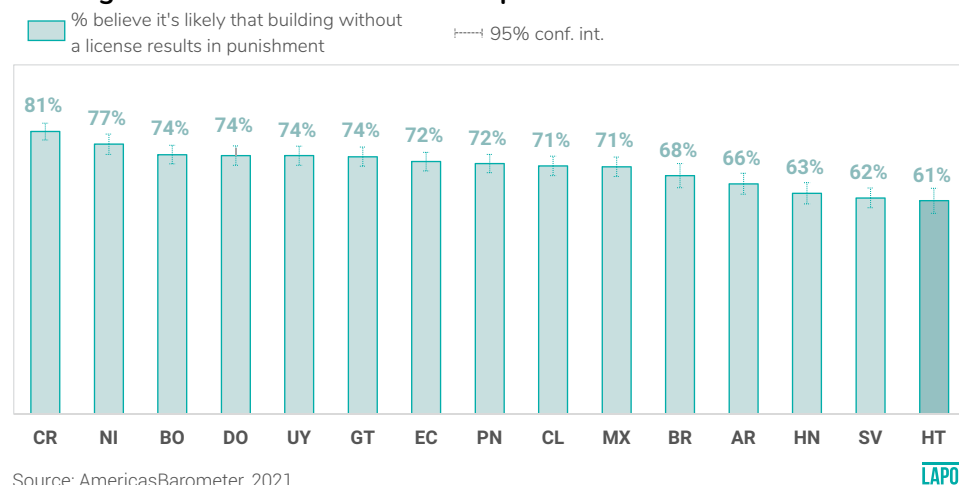
## Haitians have low expectations for their local governments

If Haitians display low levels of trust for their local government, one would expect that expectations towards them follow the same pattern. In order to obtain building permits, Haitians have to seek authorization from the governmental authorities. The 2021 AmericasBarometer included a question asking whether respondents believed the obligation to obtain a building permit was enforced.

**How likely is it that people in your neighborhood would be punished by authorities for building or renovating/remodeling a house without a license or permit? (1) Not likely, (2) a little likely, (3) somewhat likely, or (4) very likely.<sup>13</sup>**

**Figure 5.12**

**Haitians have the lowest belief in the region, but still over half believe that building without a license will result in punishment**



As illustrated by **Figure 5.12**, 61% of Haitians believe that people are either a little, somewhat or very likely to be punished by the authorities for renovating a house without a permit.

Compared to the other countries of the region, Haiti comes last. The regional average is 72%. Yet, only 13% of Haitians believe that the likelihood of getting punished is very likely.

## Corruption remains a significant issue in Haiti

**C**orruption is a common problem in many countries of the Americas. Corruption is also often associated with trust. Morris and Klesner (2010) demonstrated a clear relationship between trust in political institutions and perceptions of corruption. The following section will document corruption and trust in the Haitian context.

Corruption is a complex phenomenon in Haiti. Previous waves of the AmericasBarometer have shown that, while the perception of corruption is relatively low, the extent to which citizens are asked to pay bribes is much higher.

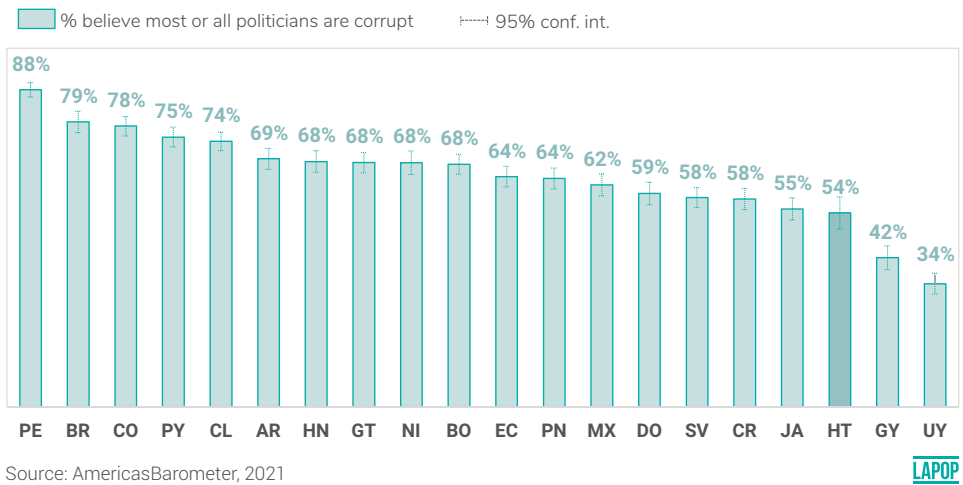
**Thinking of the politicians of Haiti... how many of them do you believe are involved in corruption? (1) None, (2) less than half of them, (3) half of them, (4) more than half of them, or (5) all.**

In order to measure perceptions of corruption, the AmericasBarometer asked the following question:



**Figure 5.13**

**While over half of Haitians believe most or all politicians are corrupt, this is actually a comparatively low level in the region**



In order to analyze the data, respondents who answered that half of politicians, more than half of them, or all of them were involved in corruption were assigned the value 1, while all other categories were assigned the value 0. **Figure 5.13** indicates that 54% of Haitians believe that at least half of the politicians are corrupted. Only two countries of the region scored lower than Haiti on that variable: Guyana (42%), and Uruguay (34%). The regional average is 61%.

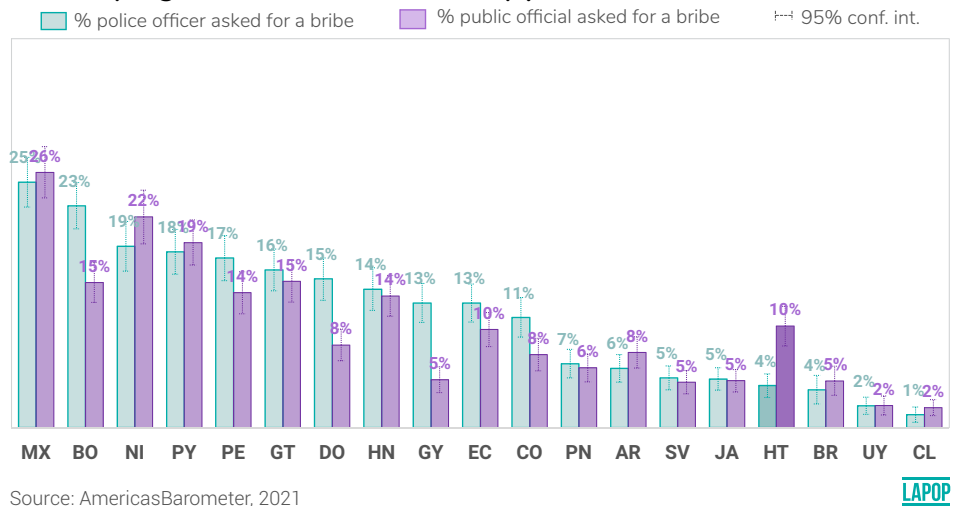
Beyond the broad perception of corruption, the AmericasBarometer also measures the extent to which respondents are personally exposed to corruption by asking these questions:

**Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last twelve months? (0) No (1) Yes**

**In the last twelve months, did any government employee asked you for a bribe? (0) No (1) Yes**

**Figure 5.14**

**Haiti reports low levels of corruption victimization by police, but relatively high levels of victimization by public officials**



**Figure 5.14** illustrates the comparative results for these two questions across countries of the Americas. It first shows that Haitians are comparatively not very exposed to bribe requests from police officers. In 2021, only 4% of Haitians reported being asked for a bribe by the police. The regional average is 10% and 15 countries

report higher scores than Haiti. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find Mexico, where police bribes are reported by 1 person out of every 4. **Figure 5.14** also shows that 10% of Haitians report being asked to pay a bribe by a government employee. The regional average is 6% and only 7 countries report higher scores.

**Figure 5.15**

**Corruption victimization by a public official increased, but police victimization has decreased**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021



**Figure 5.15** indicates that both types of bribery reached a peak in the country in 2012, but have been on the decline since then, except for reported government bribes, on the rise between 2017 and 2021.

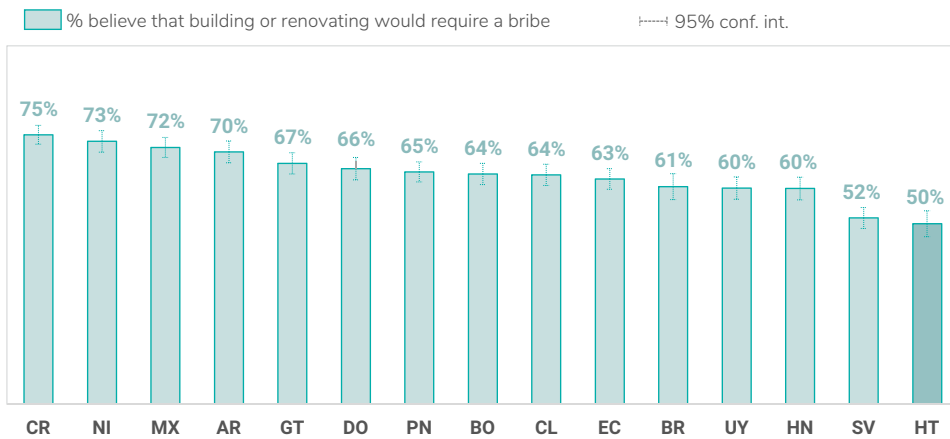
Yet another way to measure the respondents' perception of corruption is by asking them how likely they think they would be asked

to pay a bribe for a specific service such as obtaining a building permit.

**And if someone in your neighborhood were to build or renovate/remodel a house, how likely do you think it is that they would be asked to pay a bribe?**  
**(1) Not likely, (2) a little likely, (3) somewhat likely, or (4) very likely.**

**Figure 5.16**

**Half of Haitians believe that building would require a bribe, but again this is relatively low for the region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

LAPOP

For the analysis, we recoded the responses into a dichotomous variable isolating those who think it is likely (a little, somewhat or very) that a citizen would be asked to pay a bribe to obtain a building permit. As with other forms of perception of corruption, **Figure 5.16** shows that Haitians are relatively less inclined than most citizens of the Americas

to believe that they will be asked to pay a bribe. Only 50% of them thought so, compared to a regional average of 61%. When breaking down the variable into its original categories, we see that only 7% of Haitians think they are very likely to be asked to pay a bribe to renovate their house.

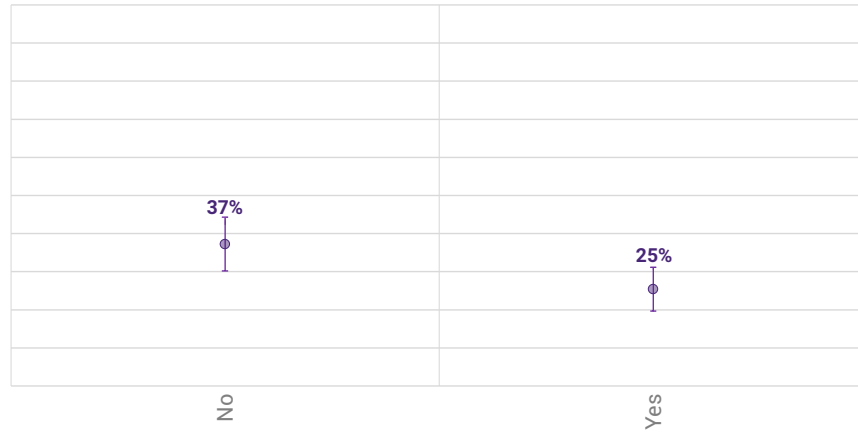
## Haitians who perceive high levels of corruption are less trusting of the national government

**D**espite being among those who least perceive corruption in the Americas, it is possible that in Haiti corruption be associated with different measures of political trust. Haitians who perceive high levels of corruption may be less trusting of the national government. They may also be less trusting of each other. To assess whether perceptions of corruption and political trust are correlated, the following figure illustrates the association between perceived corruption (**Figure 5.13**), trust in the national government (**Figure 5.11**), and interpersonal trust (**5.8**).<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 5.17**

**Haitians who perceive high levels of corruption among politicians have less trust in the national government**

● % confidence the government does what is right      ┆ 95% conf. int.  
Believe most or all politicians are corrupt



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021



As shown in **Figure 5.17**, Haitians who perceived high levels of corruption are less trusting of the national government (25% versus 37%). This relationship holds when assessing the correlation using a multivariate regression analysis and controlling for sociodemographic

variables.<sup>15</sup> However, the level of interpersonal trust is the same among all Haitians, whether they perceive high levels of corruption or not. Hence, Haitians seem to associate perceived corruption with trust for the national government, but not with interpersonal trust.

## Conclusions

**G**iven the current political instability of the country, the results of the current chapter offer little encouragement for the immediate future. By means of any indicator, Haitians display comparatively low levels of political trust that have worsened over time. Whether we measure trust through diffuse or specific concepts, all point to the same direction.

The current chapter emphasized the need for Haiti to improve popular perceptions of the country's elections. They also point to the delicate issue of US assistance during the administration of electoral processes. For both these issues the coming months will be crucial.

On more specific measures of trust, the results indicate that Haitians have little confidence in the government's ability to do what is right for the

country. Political leaders should be attentive to this and work at restoring public confidence in the government's ability to deliver public goods.

Lastly, the chapter points to the importance to address the issue of corruption in the country. Not only is it an issue in itself, but the chapter also demonstrated that it is associated with low levels of trust, thus feeding the proverbial vicious circle linking trust and corruption.

## Notes

- 1 Putnam 1993.
- 2 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2021/07/trust-public-institutions/>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 3 Zmerli 2014.
- 4 Dalton 2004, Inglehart 1997.
- 5 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8460185.stm>. Last consulted on May 29th, 2022.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/19/us/politics/us-haiti-intervention.html>. Last consulted on May 29th, 2022.
- 6 Using a one-tail statistical test.
- 7 Using a one-tail statistical test.
- 8 Almond and Verba 1963, Inglehart 1990.
- 9 With the exception of wealth, that only reaches acceptable levels statistical significance when using a one-tail test.
- 10 <https://americasquarterly.org/article/haitis-president-one-year-later/>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 11 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/haiti>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 12 Trust in the national government was dichotomized by recoding (1) and (2) into 1, and otherwise 0. Trust in the local or municipal government was dichotomized by recoding values 5 to 7 into 1, and otherwise 0.
- 13 For the analysis, the variable was recoded into a dichotomous variables in which the responses 2, 3, and 4 were grouped together.
- 14 Trust in the national government and interpersonal trust are the only two dimensions of political trust that could be correlated with perceived corruption because of data availability. Some questions were only administered to a subgroup of the survey respondents.
- 15 Using a one-tail test.



Chapter 6

# Human security in Haiti

François Gélineau

**B**eyond the political turmoil associated with rocky electoral cycles, Haitians have been struggling with high levels of economic insecurity and high levels of crime. In its 2020 report, the United Nations Development Program ranked Haiti 170th out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index.<sup>1</sup> In the Americas, Haiti comes last, far behind Honduras at rank 132. Although in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake promises of foreign assistance to rebuild the country provided hopes for many, the reality is that, even 11 years after the trauma, the economic struggle continues. In March of 2022, a UN press release reported that over 4.5 million Haitians were still experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity.<sup>2</sup>

In its 2021 report, Human Rights Watch reported that Haiti was possibly facing its worst outbreaks of violence since 1986.<sup>3</sup> The authorities' incapacity to control crime on its territory has led to a recent increase in violence, with entire sectors of Port-au-Prince in which the police force has no effective control. Drug trafficking is also to blame for the high level of insecurity in the country.<sup>4</sup>

Using the survey data collected by the AmericasBarometer, this chapter explores how different dimensions of human security play out in Haiti. The chapter begins by looking at how Haitians perceive their personal financial well-being. It then continues by exploring their perceptions of insecurity. The last section of the chapter asks whether Haitians consider migration as a way of resolving these issues of human security.

## Main Findings

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- Economic hardship and insecurity alternate as the two most important problems reported by Haitians
- The Covid-19 crisis itself has not surpassed economic hardship and insecurity as the most important problem facing the country
- The number of Haitians claiming that their economic conditions have worsened over the past year has been steadily rising for the past 10 years. In 2021, Haitians report the worst economic conditions in the region
- Haitians are consistently twice as more likely to suffer from food shortage than citizens of other countries of the region
- Haitians are more likely than any citizens of the Americas to feel unsafe
- Perception of crime has steadily increased since the earthquake in 2010
- Respondents who reported some form of gang activity do not feel safe in their neighborhood
- In 2021, the number of Haitians hoping to live or work in another country reached its highest level since the AmericasBarometer first asked the question in 2006
- Haitians mainly intend to leave the country because insecurity or a lack of economic opportunities

## Economic hardship and insecurity are consistently the most important problems reported by Haitians over time

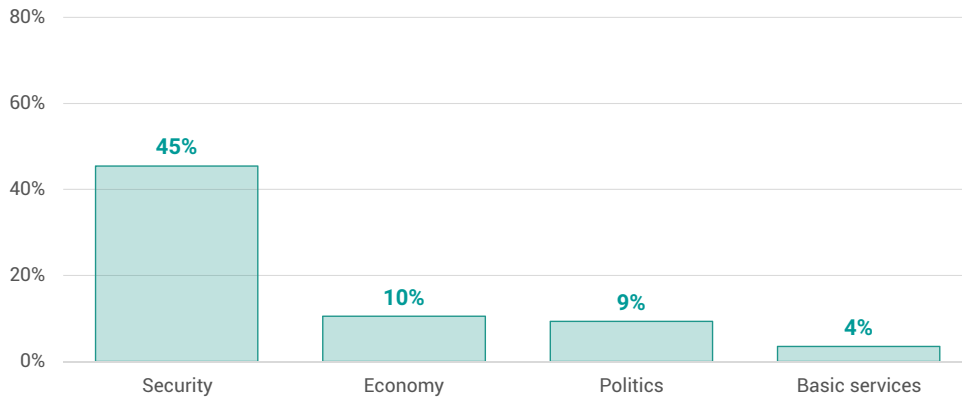
**O**ne way to assess what citizens perceive as the most pressing issue facing their country is to ask them directly, without offering them pre-identified categories. The AmericasBarometer has been persistently asking that question over time.

**In your opinion, what is the most serious problem faced by the country?**



**Figure 6.1**

**Over two in five Haitians cite security as the most important problem facing the country**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021



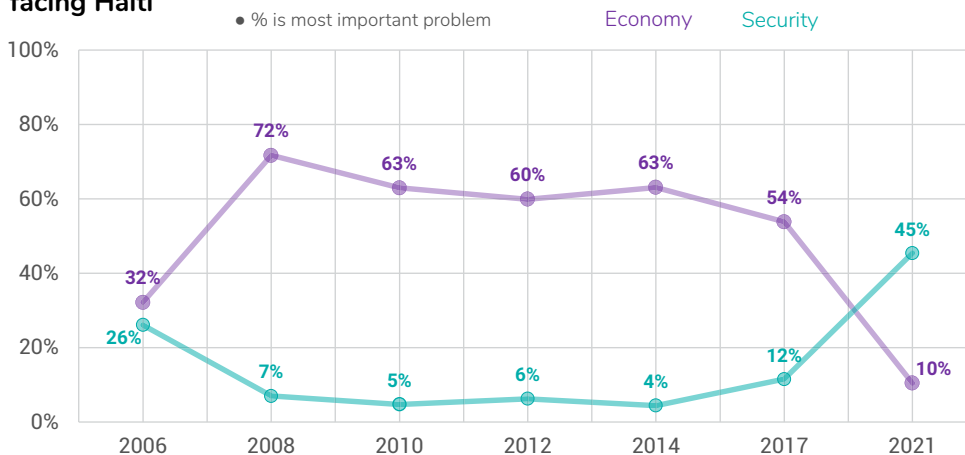
This question is open ended and requires recoding to extract some meaning out of the responses. A first way to do it is by classifying the answers into a small number of standard categories.<sup>5</sup> This is exactly what **Figure 6.1** does. In 2021, the first and foremost concern of Haitian citizens is the issue of security as 45% believe one of its dimensions

to be the most serious problem facing the country. Then follows the economy at 10%, politics (9%), and basic services (4%).

Another way of looking at the responses to the most important problems question is by plotting a single category of responses over time within the country.

**Figure 6.2**

**In 2021, security surpassed the economy as the most important problem facing Haiti**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021



Interestingly, when assessing the relative weight of economic and security issues over time, as shown in **Figure 6.2**, one can see that the two issues seem to be inversely related. In Haiti, the relative importance of these two issues seem to alternate over time. As we saw in the previous figure, in 2021, 45% of respondents are concerned with insecurity while only 10% with the economy. In contrast, in the previous wave of the AmericasBarometer, in 2017, 12% of respondents identified insecurity as

being the most important problem, while 54% believed the economy was the most pressing issue. This would be consistent with the harsh reality described in the introduction. The recent years have seen a massive increase in crime in various parts of the country. This could explain why insecurity has surpassed economic hardship. Of course, it does not imply that the economic situation has necessarily improved, which is not the case. This survey question simply reports individual perceptions of the relative importance of these issues.

## The Covid-19 pandemic is not among the most pressing issues for Haitians

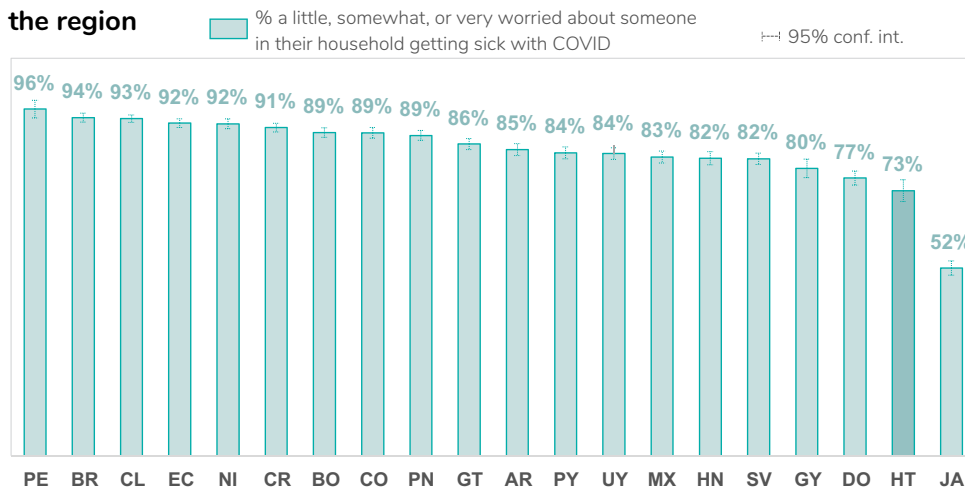
**W**hile only 4% of Haitians reported the coronavirus crisis as the most important problem facing the country, Covid-19 made it to the top of the list for 33% of respondents in the region as a whole.

Alternatively, the AmericasBarometer also contained a series of questions exploring different dimensions of the pandemic. One of these questions asked respondents whether they were worried about the possibility of getting sick from the coronavirus.

**How worried are you about the possibility that you or someone in your household will get sick from coronavirus in the next 3 months? (1) Very worried, (2) somewhat worried, (3) a little worried, or (4) not worried at all.**

**Figure 6.3**

**In 2021, Haiti reports the second-lowest levels of concern about COVID in the region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



**Figure 6.3** reports the percentage of citizens that are either a little, somewhat or very worried about that possibility. Haitians are among the least worried citizens in the region. Only Jamaican citizens report being

less worried than Haitians. At 73%, Haitians are 10 percentage points below the regional average (84%). But clearly, at 73%, Haitian are concerned with the pandemic.

## Haitians suffer from economic hardship

**A**s **Figure 6.2** suggested, the two most important problems reported by Haitians over time have been economic hardship and insecurity. The current section will explore economic hardship. The following section will look at insecurity.

In addition to coping with multiple natural disasters, the Haitian economy has long been struggling to recover. Over the past few decades, the country main economic indicators have been declining, mostly in response to a long series

of natural disasters. Year after year, the international financial institutions have been raising red flags. The November 2021 update from the World Bank offer a good example of the kind of reality the country has had to cope with.<sup>6</sup>

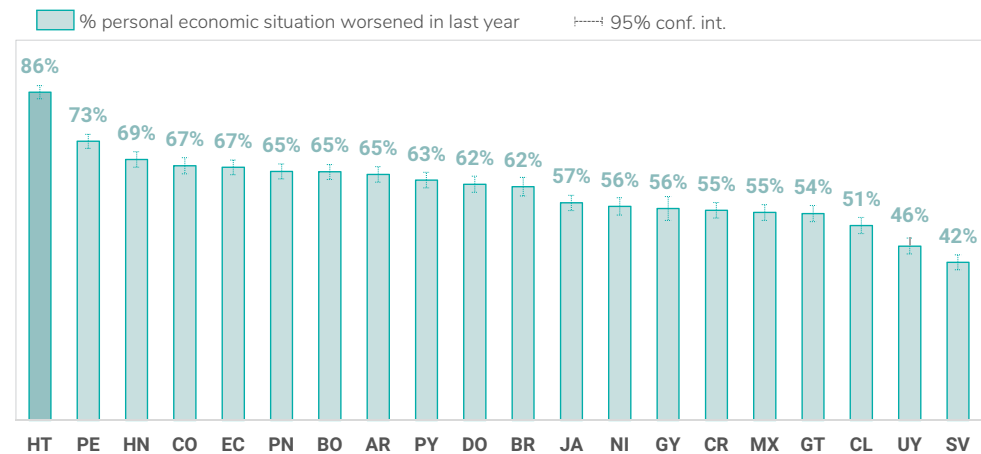
The economic slowdown that afflicted most of the economies on the planet during most of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 has not spared Haiti. The 2021 AmericasBarometer included a question about the respondents' personal finances.

**Do you think that your current economic situation is better, the same or worse than it was twelve months ago? (1) Better, (2) same, or (3) worse.**

We recoded the responses to isolate respondents who claim their finances have deteriorated over the past year.

**Figure 6.4**

**Haiti reports the highest level of worsening personal economic situations in the region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

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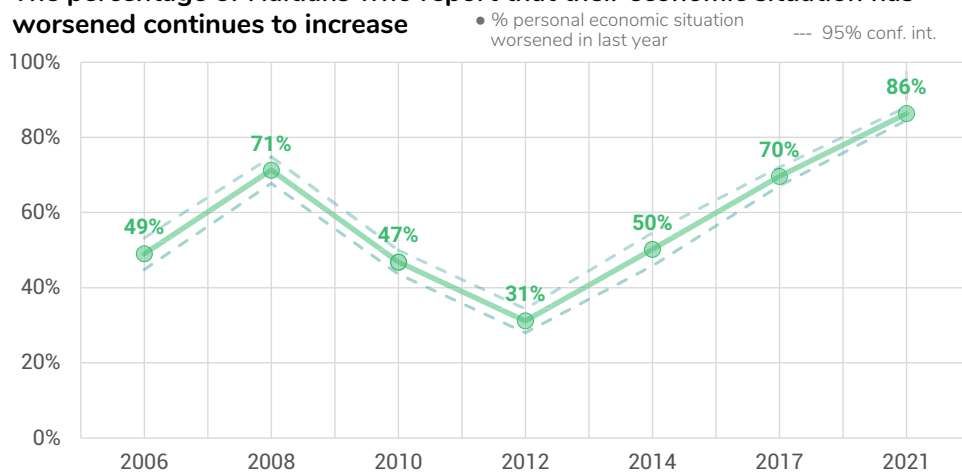
As **Figure 6.4** illustrates, 86% of Haitians claim that their economic situation has worsened over the course of the past year. This is nearly 30 points above the regional average, which stands at 61%.

The year 2021 is also the worst in Haiti since the start of the

AmericasBarometer. As **Figure 6.5** shows, the number of respondents claiming that their economic conditions have worsened over the past year has been steadily rising for the past 10 years. In 2012, 31% of Haitians were in that category. At that time, the regional average was 26%.

**Figure 6.5**

**The percentage of Haitians who report that their economic situation has worsened continues to increase**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021

LAPOP

The fact that 2021 is the worst year since the AmericasBarometer first asked Haitians about their economic conditions may be explained by the sum of tragedies over the past few decades. In addition to the earthquake of January 2010, the country has suffered through numerous devastating hurricanes and tropical storms, some of them causing major landslides. The pandemic is among the last trauma to have hit the island.<sup>7</sup> Even before the pandemic, many concluded that, despite billions of dollars having been spent in rebuilding the country, Haiti has not yet recovered from the massive destruction it experienced in January of 2010.<sup>8</sup>

But clearly, the worldwide economic slowdown that accompanied the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to exacerbate the financial difficulties reported by Haitians in the 2021 AmericasBarometer.

Another way to think about economic insecurity is to measure its impact on people's ability to feed themselves properly. The AmericasBarometer has been asking about exactly that using the following question:

**In the past three months, because of a lack of money or other resources, did your household ever run out of food?**

**Figure 6.6**

**Those who report food insecurity increased by nearly 50% in 9 years**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2012-2021

LAPOP

In Haiti in 2021, 62% of respondents report that they ran out of food during the previous quarter. As **Figure 6.6** illustrates, the situation

has worsened significantly since 2012, when 42% of Haitians claimed to have suffered from food shortage.

## Insecurity is a persistent issue in Haiti

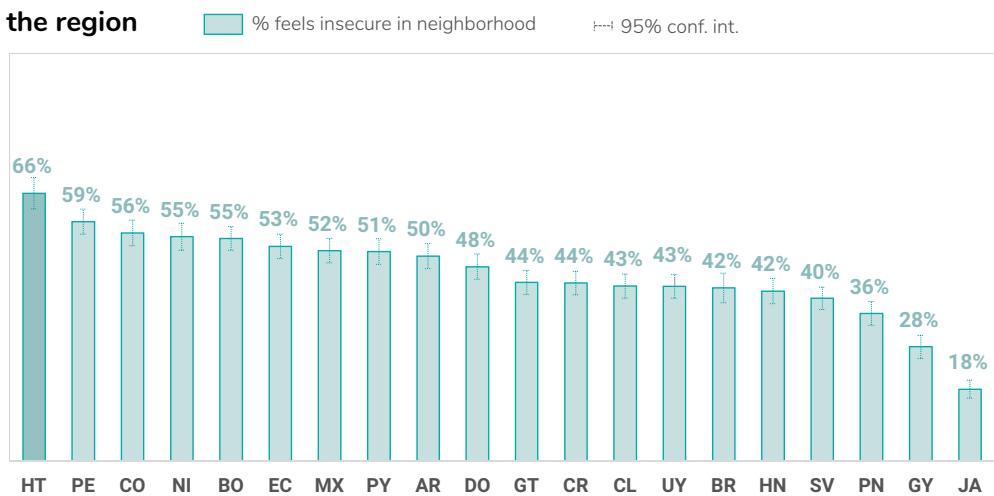
**A**s stated earlier, for nearly half of Haitians in 2021, the issue of insecurity is the most important issue facing the country. It is worthwhile to explore some of the attitudinal dimensions associated with this phenomenon. For example, Haitians could feel insecure in their neighborhood. To measure this, AmericasBarometer asked the following question:

**Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe,**

**somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe? (1) Very safe, (2) somewhat safe, (3) somewhat unsafe, or (4) very unsafe.**

**Figure 6.7**

**Two-thirds of Haitians feel insecure in their neighborhood-the highest in the region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



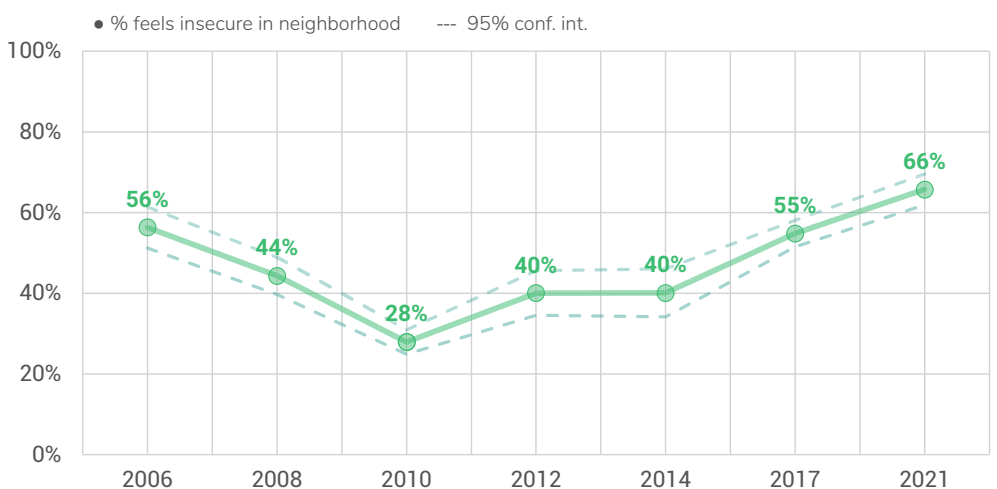
The responses to that question were recoded into a dichotomous variable, with feeling somewhat or very unsafe taking the value 1, and otherwise 0.

**Figure 6.7** shows that Haitians

are more likely than citizens of any other country to feel unsafe. Two-thirds (66%) of them report feeling somewhat or very unsafe. The regional average is 46%.

**Figure 6.8**

**Feelings of insecurity reached its highest ever level in 2021**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021



As illustrated by **Figure 6.8**, although feelings of insecurity had been declining in the years preceding the 2010 earthquake, it has been growing ever since. Interestingly, feelings of insecurity among Haitians have reached their highest level since the question was first asked in the AmericasBarometer. In that sense, the year 2021 is a landmark for insecurity in Haiti.

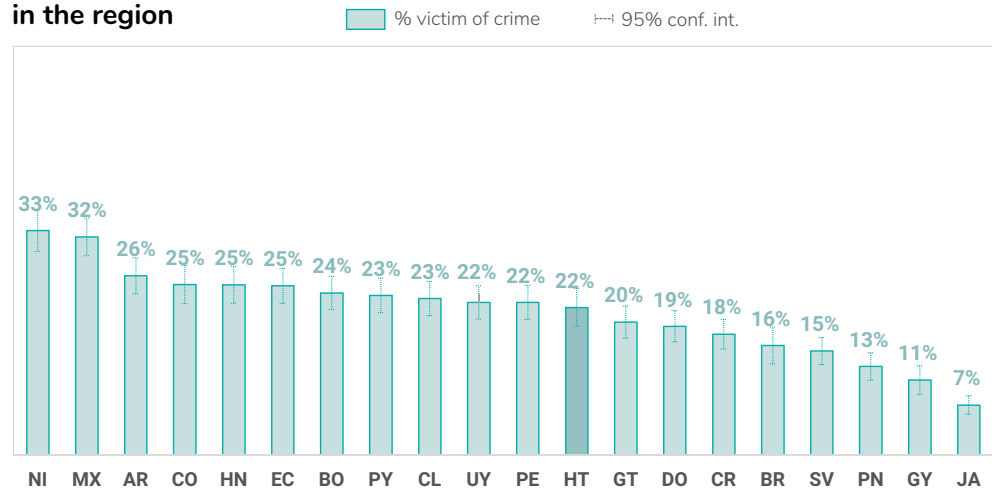
Another way of measuring how Haitians live with insecurity is by asking them whether they experienced it personally. Since

Haitians are seemingly very worried about security issues, it is worthwhile to measure the extent to which they experience crime on a personal level. The AmericasBarometer asked the following question:

**Now, changing the subject, have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threats, or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?**

**Figure 6.9**

**Over one in five report being the victim of a crime, a similar level to others in the region**



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



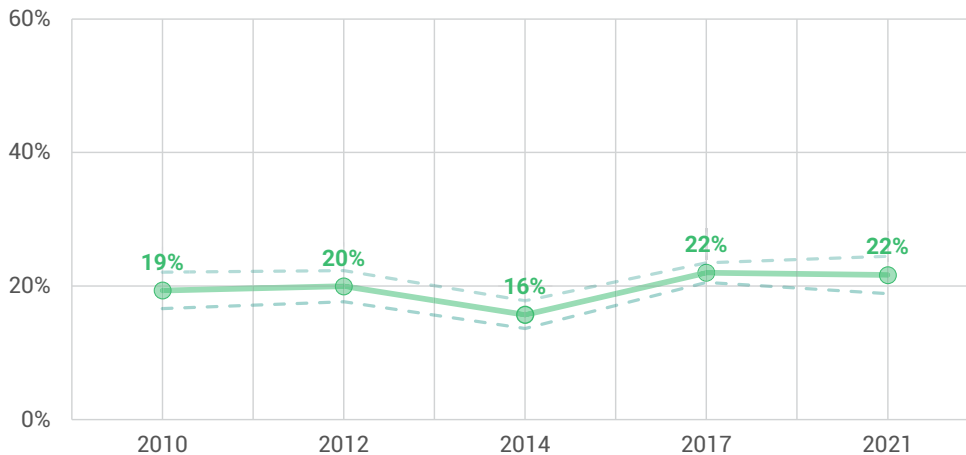
A little over one out of five (22%) Haitians reports being a victim of crime. Haiti sits near the regional average (21%). Hence, the perception of crime does not seem to match

the individual exposure to crime in Haiti. Haitians are the most worried of the region, but their personal experience with crime exposure is at the regional average.



**Figure 6.10**

**Crime victimization has increased since 2010, but remains stable in recent years** ● % victim of crime --- 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2010-2021

LAPOP

**Figure 6.10** plots the evolution of crime victimization and perception of crime over time in Haiti. While crime victimization has only slightly increased since reaching a low point in 2014, perception of crime has steadily increased since the earthquake in 2010. The results displayed in **Figure 6.10** might suggest that perception of crime and crime victimization are not directly related. In other words, perceptions of crime may be mainly driven by other factors, such as mediatization or the specific nature of crimes that are reported, for example.

Alternatively, the concerns expressed by Haitians about insecurity could also be associated with the perceived presence of gang activity in the neighborhood. The

AmericasBarometer included items measuring different dimensions of gang activity:

**Is there a criminal gang or gangs in your neighborhood?**

**Were there burglaries in the last 12 months in your neighborhood?**

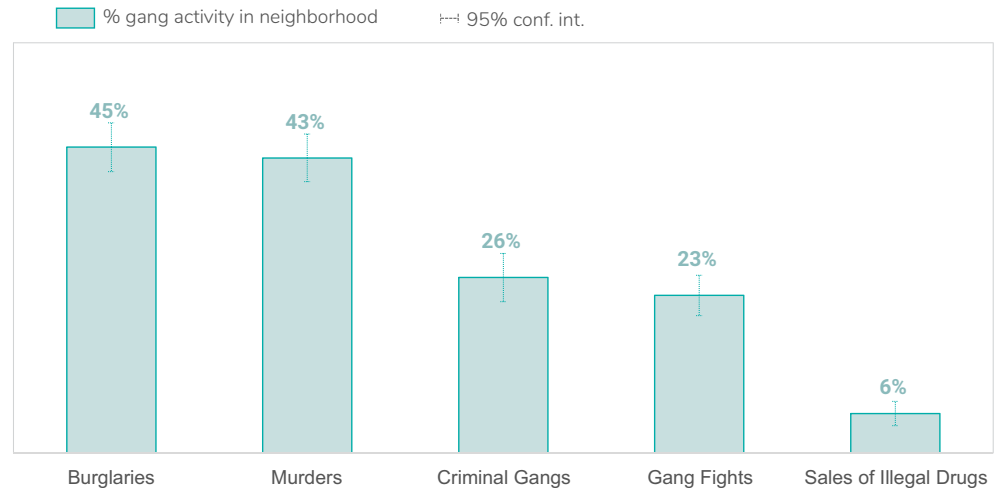
**Have there been sales of illegal drugs in the past 12 months in your neighborhood?**

**Have there been any murders in the last 12 months in your neighborhood?**

**Have there been any gang fights in the last 12 months in your neighborhood?**

**Figure 6.11**

**A plurality of Haitians report gang activity in their neighborhood**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021

LAPOP

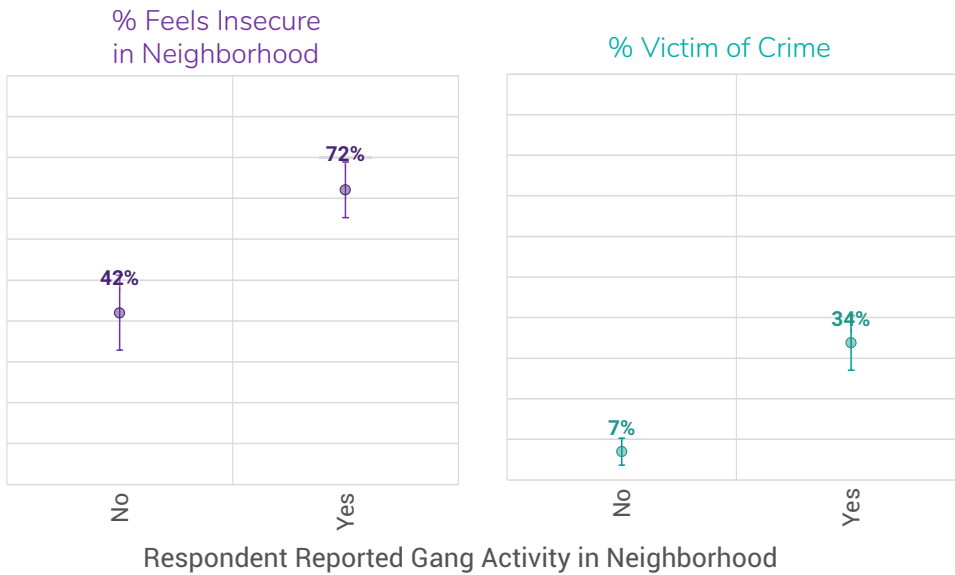
**Figure 6.11** indicates that 45% of respondents reported burglaries in their neighborhood over the past 12 months, 43% reported murders, 26% claimed there is a criminal gang, 23% said that there have been gang fights, and 6% that sales of illegal drugs took place in their neighborhood. The perception of gang activity is thus very real among Haitians.

To further assess the impact of neighborhood crime activity on the general perception of crime and crime victimization, we created a

new variable that takes the value 1 when a respondent answered positively to at least one of the five questions presented in **Figure 6.11**. This variable could be said to measure whether there has been some form of crime observed in the respondent's neighborhood. We then crossed that variable with the perception of crime (**Figure 6.8**) and crime victimization (**Figure 6.9**). The expectation is that individuals who reported that their neighborhood's crime has been observed will be more likely to feel unsafe or to be victim of a crime.

**Figure 6.12**

**Those who report gang activity in their neighborhood report higher levels of insecurity and crime victimization** 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2021



**Figure 6.12** confirms the expectations. Among respondents who reported some form of gang activity in their neighborhood, 72% of them do not feel safe. Among those who have not reported gang activity, only 42% feel unsafe. Hence, respondents who witness crime

are 1.7 times more likely to feel unsafe. Also, 34% of respondents who reported some form of gang activity in their neighborhood have been victim of a crime themselves, while only 7% of those who have not reported gang activity were a victim of a crime.

## Intent to emigrate is on the rise among Haitians

**H**aitians have been migrating out of the country for decades. In the 1960s, they fled the authoritarian Duvalier regime. Later, during the 1990s, they were seeking better economic opportunities. In 2010, the Haitian diaspora was estimated at about 2 million people, distributed around the world. The 2010 earthquake brought a new wave of Haitian migrants who lost everything in the disaster.<sup>10</sup>

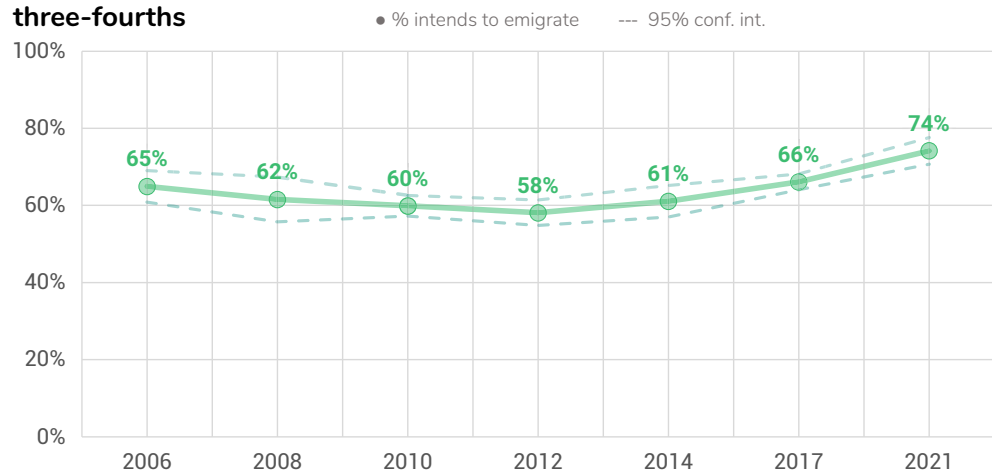
It is not all that clear that poor economic conditions<sup>11</sup> or high levels of insecurity directly lead citizens to seek a better life by leaving the country. Migration is more often the result of a complex combination of factors.<sup>12</sup> Yet, it might be the case that intentions to migrate be associated with economic hardship and feelings of insecurity. The following section explores intentions to migrate among Haitians.

The AmericasBarometer includes a question asking respondent if they intend to emigrate from their country. The exact wording of the question is:

**Do you have any intention of going to live or work in another country in the next three years?**

**Figure 6.13**

**The percentage of Haitians who intend to emigrate increased to almost three-fourths**



Source: AmericasBarometer, Haiti 2006-2021

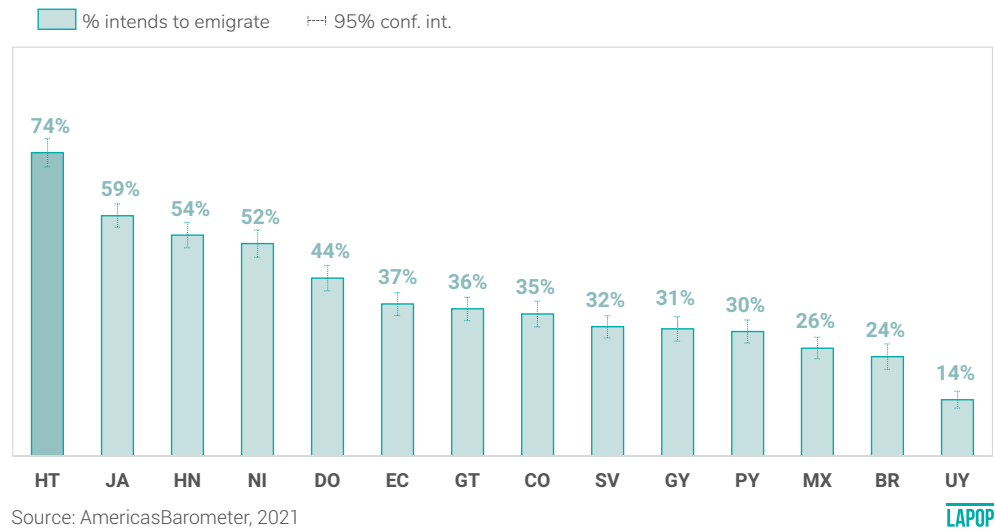


**Figure 6.13** clearly indicates that the number of Haitians hoping to live or work in another country reached its highest level since the AmericasBarometer first asked the question in 2006. Although

the indicator declined from 65% to 58% between 2006 and 2012, it has been on the rise since then. In 2021, almost three out of four Haitians (74%) aspires to leave the country.

**Figure 6.14**

**Haiti reports the highest intention to emigrate in the region**

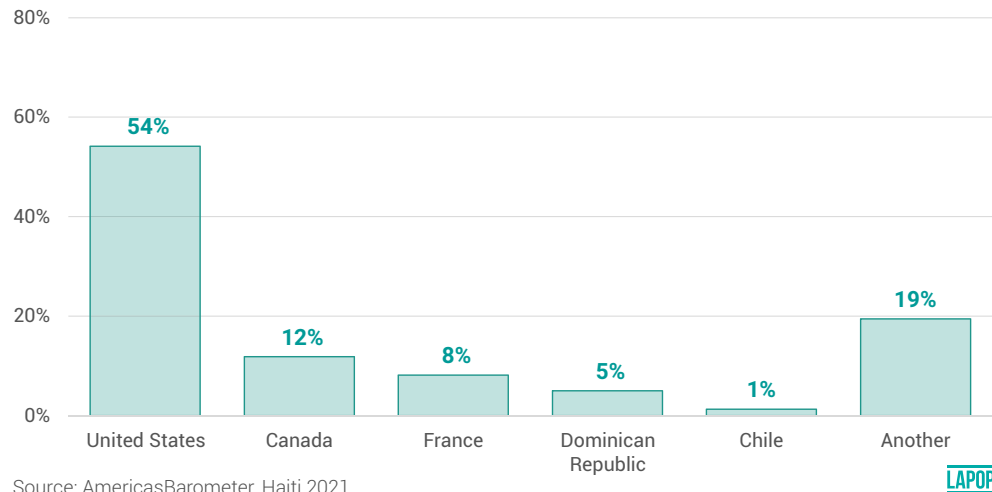


Compared to the other countries in the region, Haitians are the most eager to leave their country. **Figure 6.14** confirms that. At 74%, Haitians clearly stand at the top of the chart, followed by Jamaica (59%), Honduras (54%), and Nicaragua

(52%). All four countries are the only ones with more than half of the respondents indicating the desire to leave their country. In the region, on average, about two persons out of five (39%) say they intend to leave their country.

**Figure 6.15**

**Over half of those who intend to emigrate cite the United States as their destination**



As **Figure 6.15** indicates, a little over half of Haitians who said they want to migrate say they intend to migrate to the United States of America, followed by Canada (12%), France (8%) and the Dominican Republic (5%).

Finally, the AmericasBarometer asked Haitians why they considered to migrate abroad.

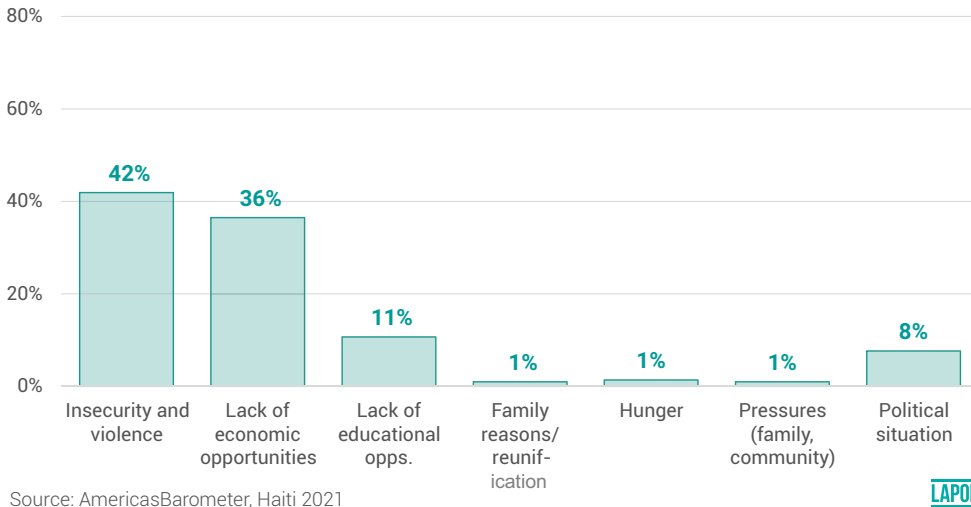
**And, what is the most important reason that you have thought of migrating?**

**[Do NOT read alternatives. Mark only ONE answer]**

- (1) **Insecurity or violence, including due to gangs**
- (2) **Lack of economic opportunities**
- (3) **Look for better/Lack of educational opportunities, schooling problems (for respondent or family)**
- (4) **Family reunification**
- (5) **Hunger**
- (6) **Drought**
- (7) **Natural disaster**
- (8) **Corruption**
- (9) **Discrimination**
- (10) **Family or community pressures**
- (11) **Extortion**
- (12) **Pandemic / coronavirus**
- (13) **The political situation**
- (77) **Other response**

**Figure 6.16**

**Two in five cite insecurity and violence as their reason for migrating**



In order to simplify interpretation, we omitted the category “Other response” from the analysis. As a result, **Figure 6.16** shows that 42% of Haitians who intend to migrate want to leave the country because of issues of insecurity or violence. Lack of economic opportunities follows with 36%. Issues related to

education comes third with 11% of respondents. The political situation (8%), hunger (1%), family reasons (1%), and pressures (1%) follow. These results are consistent with the analysis presented in this chapter. Insecurity and economic hardship are highly salient issues for Haitians.

## Conclusion

**T**he current social crisis afflicting Haiti is a major source of concerns for its citizens. Never before this wave of the AmericasBarometer have the indicators of economic hardship and perceived insecurity been that alarming. In 2021, 86% of Haitians claim that their economic situation has worsened over the course of the past year. Nearly two-thirds (66%) of them report feeling somewhat or very unsafe in their neighborhood. Although we cannot establish causality, in 2021, almost three out of four Haitians (74%) aspires to leave the country. And for those, they intend to migrate mainly to find a safer environment and better economic opportunities.

The current chapters started by illustrating the difficulties experienced by the country on the economic and security fronts. Many organizations have documented Haiti's hardship using objective measure. The analysis of the AmericasBarometer data provided the people's perspective of the same crisis.

The past few decades have demonstrated how resilient Haitians can be. Yet, the results of our analysis suggest that citizens of the country have reached levels of hardship never measured before. Haitians are in need of some hopeful perspective for the future.

## Notes

- 1 <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>. Last consulted on March 30th, 2022.
- 2 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114422>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 3 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/haiti>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 4 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/world/americas/jovenel-moise-haiti-president-drug-traffickers.html>. Last consulted on March 30th, 2022.
- 5 Note that many responses were categorized as "other" by the interviewer (n=725), hence inflating the category "other" in the graph. It is not clear what that means.
- 6 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview#1>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 7 The August 14th 2021 earthquake occurred after the survey administration was completed.
- 8 <https://theconversation.com/a-decade-after-the-earthquake-haiti-still-struggles-to-recover-129670>. Last consulted on May 28th, 2022.
- 9 <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/460252/diaspora>. Last consulted on May 29th, 2022.
- 10 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-migration-through-americas>. Last consulted on May 29th, 2022.
- 11 Clemens 2014.
- 12 Castelli 2018.





Photo by Victoria Herring,  
Vanderbilt University CLACX Latin  
American Images Photography  
Competition 2017

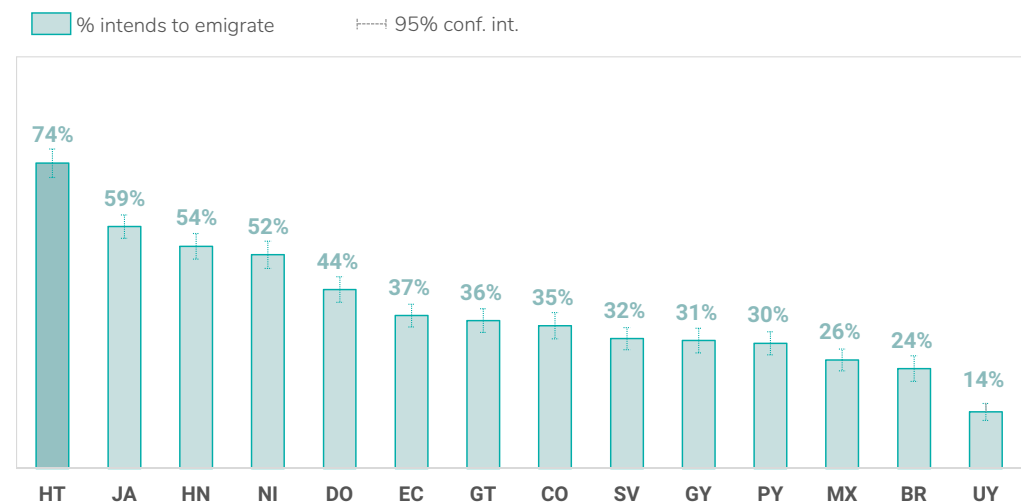


# Spotlight on Intentions to Emigrate in Haiti

By Isabella Randle<sup>1</sup>

In the 2021 AmericasBarometer, Haiti stands out with—by far—the highest rates of emigration intentions reported of any country in which a question on this topic was asked. About three-quarters of Haitians express having intentions to live or work abroad in the next three years.

## Haitians report the highest rates of intentions to emigrate in 2021



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



Haiti, the poorest country in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, has been challenged by weak governance, insufficient infrastructure and public services, natural disasters, and widespread violence. An ongoing political crisis has been defined by frequent protests over high-level corruption, controversy in the failure to conduct elections, and, most recently, the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in his home in Port-au-Prince on July 7, 2021. Just over a month later, on August 14, a magnitude

7.2 earthquake struck the nation, killing more than 2,200 and injuring thousands more.<sup>2</sup>

LAPOP collected data for the 2021 AmericasBarometer in Haiti in May of 2021, just before Moïse's assassination and the earthquake motivated additional migration to the United States. Yet, even before these events, Haiti's political instability created uncertainty about the country's path forward amid a persistent set of development challenges.

In the face of that uncertainty, and amid the many challenges facing the Haitian people, data from the AmericasBarometer records the largest percentage of Haitians with intentions to emigrate in the history of the survey.

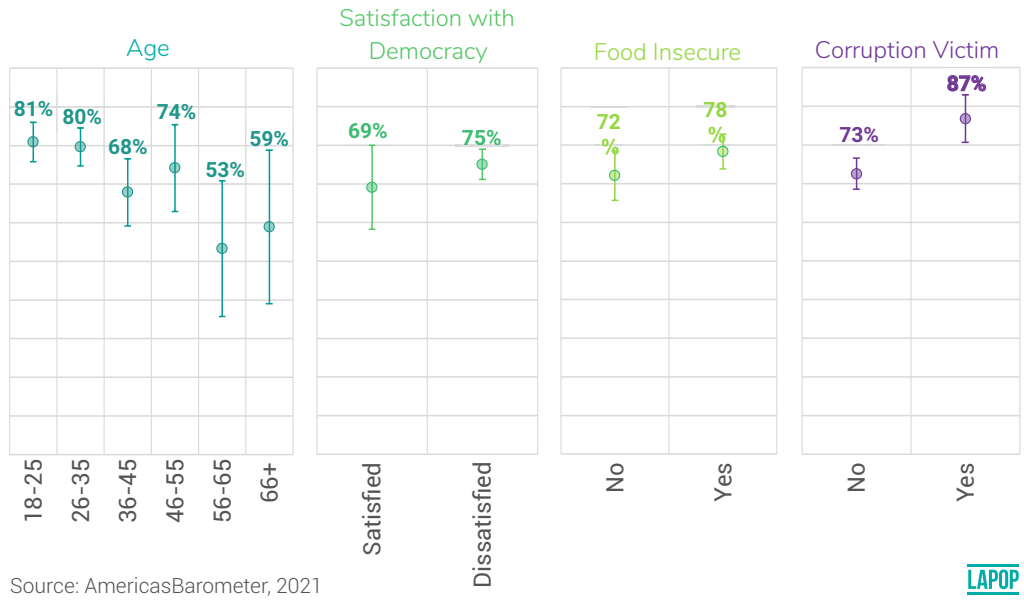
Who is more likely to want to emigrate and why? One answer has been offered by Haiti’s Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, who has made connections between emigration from Haiti and poverty. In a video speech presented to the United Nations in September, Henry said that “Migration will continue as long as the planet has

wealthy areas, whilst most of the world’s population lives in poverty, even extreme poverty, without any prospects of a better life.”<sup>3</sup>

Analysis of AmericasBarometer data shows that Haitians who are young, dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the country, experiencing food insecurity, and victims of corruption by a public official are most likely to intend to leave to live or work abroad.<sup>4</sup> In brief, as Prime Minister Henry surmised, extreme poverty—captured here by food insecurity—matters, though experiences with poor governance matter as well.

**Haitians who are young, dissatisfied with democracy, food insecure, and victims of corruption are more likely to intend to emigrate**

● % intends to emigrate    ┆ 95% conf. int.



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021

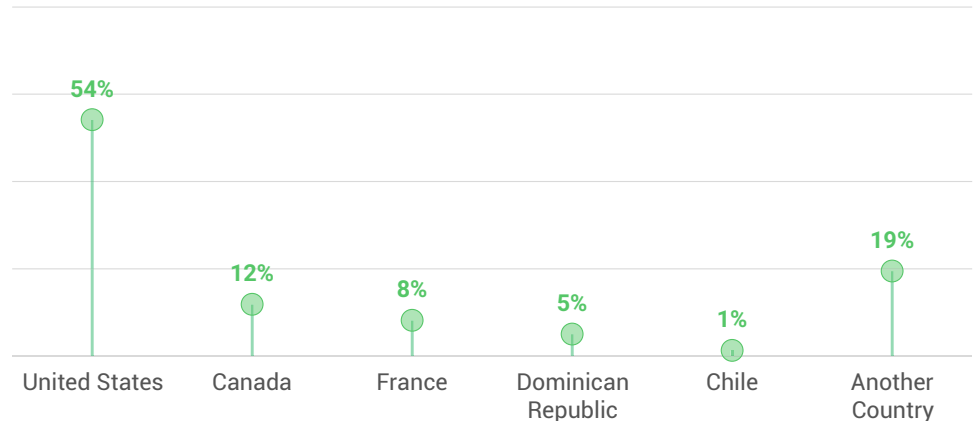


Among Haitians with intentions to emigrate, the United States is the preferred destination. More than half (54%) of those who have intentions to leave say they intend to emigrate to the United States. Other popular destinations for Haitians are Canada (12%), France (8%), and the Dominican Republic (5%). Elevated intentions to migrate to the U.S. are creating humanitarian and political challenges. In recent months, controversy has erupted over the treatment of Haitian migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border. Upon arriving at the Southern border

of the United States, several groups of Haitian migrants were met with U.S. Border Patrol Agents on horseback blocking their arrival onto U.S. soil—an incident that caused widespread indignation, among officials and the public. More than 15,000 migrants were forcibly deported to Haiti before they were able to request asylum in the United States. U.S. Special Envoy to Haiti Daniel Foote resigned over the treatment of the migrants, which he called “inhumane” and “counterproductive.”<sup>5</sup>

### More than half of Haitians with intentions to emigrate say the United States is their preferred destination

● % with intentions to emigrate who say country is preferred destination



Source: AmericasBarometer, 2021



1 Isabella Randle is a senior at Vanderbilt University, and a LAPOP Lab fellow and research assistant.

2 See <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/27921/file/UNICEF%20Response%20Haiti%20Earthquake.pdf>

3 Peltz, Jennifer. September 25, 2021. Haiti's leader: Migration won't end unless inequality does. The Associated Press, online.

4 Findings are statistically significant when controlling for gender, education, wealth, and experience with natural disasters.

5 Goodman, Joshua, Matthew Lee, Danica Coto and Elliot Spagat. September 24, 2021. US special envoy to Haiti resigns over migrant expulsions. The Associated Press, online.

The situation in Haiti continues to be dire. The record-high level of Haitians with intentions to emigrate reflects dissatisfaction with the economic and political situation of the country: Haitians who are unable to meet basic needs and who are experiencing poor

governance are more likely to want to leave. Understanding these opinion dynamics, and their consequences for migration outflows, is an important step in addressing the larger problems of poverty, violence, and weak governance in Haiti.

LAPOP team photo from pretesting in El Salvador during the 2018/19 round of the AmericasBarometer



# AmericasBarometer Data and Reports at a Glance

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## Data



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. Data files are free and publicly available for download [here](#).

Users can also access AmericasBarometer data through our

[Data Playground](#). This data analysis tool is free and interactive. It is particularly useful for those individuals unfamiliar with advanced statistical software programs. Users can analyze AmericasBarometer data through tabulations of a single variable, cross-country comparisons on a map, and cross-tabulations of two variables.

## Reports



LAPOP produces numerous reports on the AmericasBarometer and other projects. Our goal is to provide analysis and evidence for scholars and practitioners on public opinion and democratic governance.

[Insights](#) reports are short briefs produced by students, network affiliates, our researchers, and our faculty. The series is used by journalists, policymakers, and scholars.

Standard *Insights* engage social science research and AmericasBarometer data to develop and assess theories regarding links between public opinion and democracy.

*Topical Insights* use project data to provide evidence and context on a current event.

*Methodological Insights* offer windows into our cutting-edge approaches, report on our innovations, and engage scholars who work at the survey research frontier.

*Global Insights* introduce findings from LAPOP-affiliated research outside the Americas.

*Spotlights* present quick snapshots of AmericasBarometer questions across countries, time, and subgroups.

Subscribe to receive *Insights* reports for free by emailing [insight@mail.americasbarometer.org](mailto:insight@mail.americasbarometer.org).

Country reports are book length, contain more extensive analyses, and are organized thematically to address findings relevant to democratic governance, strengthening, and stability. They include a focus on topics that stakeholders, especially USAID Missions, identify as important in the local context.

The following AmericasBarometer datasets (■) and reports\* (●) are available for free download on our website ([www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop)):

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016/17	2018/19	2021
Regional	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mexico	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guatemala	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
El Salvador	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Honduras	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nicaragua	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Costa Rica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Panama	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Colombia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ecuador	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bolivia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Peru		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Paraguay		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chile		●	●	●	●	●			
Uruguay			●	●	●				
Brazil				●					
Venezuela		●	●						
Argentina				●	●				
Dominican Republic	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Haiti		●	●	●	●	●			
Jamaica		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guyana		●	●						
Trinidad & Tobago				●					
Belize									
Suriname					●				
Bahamas									
Barbados									
Grenada									
St. Lucia									
Dominica									
Antigua and Barbuda									
St. Vincent and the Grenadines									
St. Kitts and Nevis									
United States									
Canada									

\*2021 AmericasBarometer country reports will be available in early 2022

# Survey Methodology for the 2021 AmericasBarometer

**T**he AmericasBarometer is a multinational, multiregional, and multicultural (3MC) survey of voting-age citizens or permanent residents in North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. The project uses a standardized core questionnaire to interview respondents selected through nationally representative probability samples. Traditionally, surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC region) have been 45-minute face-to-face (FtF) interviews with a minimum of 1,500 individuals selected through area probability sampling. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LAPOP Lab switched the data collection mode in the LAC region from FtF to computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI).

**Sampling.** The sampling frame for the 2021 LAC-region surveys consists of mobile phone numbers. This decision was reached following an analysis of household coverage of mobile phones (~90% in the average LAC country, according to the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer), percent of landline only households (~28% on average), and a cost/benefit analysis of calling both. Mobile phone numbers were called using a random-digit dialing (RDD) approach to generate nationally representative samples. In cases of unanswered calls, each number selected into the sample was called at least five times to minimize nonresponse errors.

**Weights.** The weighting scheme includes four stages. First, we compute base weights to compensate for unequal selection probabilities (e.g., some voting-age individuals have access to multiple

mobile phones). Second, we compute weights to adjust for non-sampling errors from differential nonresponse rates gleaned from disposition code records that follow AAPOR's response rate guidelines. Third, we align the sample estimates with population benchmarks; to maximize the validity of cross-time comparisons and overcome challenges due to out-of-date or unavailable census data, we use the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer to generate these benchmarks. Fourth, we merge all weights together into a final raked weight.

**Questionnaire Design.** To avoid high rates of interview break-offs, phone surveys require instruments that are comparatively shorter than FtF surveys. The AmericasBarometer 2021 questionnaire consists of a split-sample questionnaire design with an overall length of about 25 minutes. The lab calls this a





“trunk-and-branch” approach: the trunk contains 3,000 interviews that are randomly assigned to one of two branches (n=1,500). A limitation of this approach is that certain variables cannot be correlated, because they belong to two different branches; the advantage is the ability to collect data on a greater number of outcomes of interest.

**Pretesting via Cognitive Interviews.**

LAPOP uses a three-stage iterative cognitive interviewing strategy. First, cognitive interviewers carry out a handful of tests of new modules and generate revisions. Second, the team conducts cognitive interview tests of the full questionnaire in a selected set of countries. Third, a similar process is carried out in each country with each country-customized questionnaire. For the 2021 AmericasBarometer, some cognitive interviewees were offered a small incentive and all cognitive interviews were conducted using video or phone calls.

**Interviewer Training.** All interview and supervising teams are trained according to the same standardized protocols. For the 2021 AmericasBarometer, training sessions consisted of videos and remote sessions using Zoom. Training sessions typically last two full days and all trainings conclude

with a learning assessment that team members have to pass (>80% correct answers) in order to be certified to work on the project.

**Auditor Training.** Each country's fieldwork team designated a set of auditors who were trained via remote workshop sessions. Auditors receive detailed training on how to identify low-quality interviews and how to flag and report these interviews in the CATI software.

**Quality Control.** The 2021 AmericasBarometer was implemented using a version of LAPOP's Fieldwork Algorithm for LAPOP Control over survey Operations and Norms (FALCON). FALCON was adapted to CATI and permits collection of multiple types of paradata, including voice recordings, question and questionnaire timing, and interviewer performance indicators. These paradata indicators are monitored daily during data collection so that any corrections or cancellations resulting from a failure to meet quality control standards are made while fieldwork is in progress. Final datasets include high-quality interviews only. Each technical report for an AmericasBarometer survey summarizes the results of this process.

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The AmericasBarometer emerges from collaborations among hundreds of individuals involved in its design and implementation. Those involved in the 2021 AmericasBarometer took on a special set of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included a transition from face-to-face surveys in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region to phone surveys – a process that required significant learning and flexibility on the part of the LAPOP Lab team and our partners across the region.

We thank all the members of the public who generously shared their beliefs and experiences with our survey teams. We are also grateful to our dedicated partner survey organizations and fieldwork teams.

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One way LAPOP achieves its mission of knowledge transfer and capacity building is by involving students in all aspects of the AmericasBarometer. While they gain experience with cutting-edge survey methodologies, they also contribute to the project's success. At the graduate level, the project benefited from input from Giovanni Bastiani, Kaitlen Cassell, Claire Evans, Margaret Frost, SangEun Kim, Carlos López, Daniela Osorio, Preeti Nambiar, Mariana Ramírez, Facundo Salles Kobilanski, Laura Sellers, Alec Tripp, and Adam Wolsky. The round also benefited from the involvement of undergraduate students, including Rosana Alfaro, Eric Asen, Ehab Alhosaini, Nikka Aminmadani, Samantha Chavez-Salinas, Cameron Deal, Brannen Dickson, Alyssa Dunsizer, Michael Gallego, Henry Green, Mark Grujic, Julia Iorio, Abhinav Krishnan, Maria Loaiza, Chase Mandell, Paul McDougald, Adin McGurk, Ria Mehrotra, Anabelle Mirhashemi, Jasmin Norford, Joshua Peng, Isabella Randle, Abrianna Rhodes, Adriana Rosario Surillo, Alexandra Rounds, Kathir Venkat, Aileen Wu, Yuehao Yang, and Amy Zhang.

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Noam Lupu  
Liz Zechmeister

Nashville, Tennessee  
October 2021

Photo by Kaitlen Cassell,  
Vanderbilt University CLACX Latin  
American Images Photography  
Competition 2018

# The AmericasBarometer

The AmericasBarometer is a regional survey carried out by LAPOP Lab, a center for excellence in international survey research based at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. LAPOP has deep connections to the Latin America and Caribbean region, established during more than five decades of public opinion research. The AmericasBarometer is possible due to the activities and support of a consortium of institutions located across the Americas. To complete each round of the study, LAPOP partners with individuals, survey firms, universities, development organizations, and others in up to 34 countries within the Western Hemisphere. Project efforts are informed by the four core components of LAPOP's mission: to produce objective, non-partisan, and scientifically sound studies of public opinion; to innovate improvements in survey research; to disseminate project findings; and, to build capacity. The AmericasBarometer project receives generous support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Vanderbilt University. Other institutions that have contributed recently to multiple rounds of the project include Environics Institute, Florida International University, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the Universidad de los Andes, and the World Bank. Over the years, the project has benefited from grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development in Brazil (CNPq), the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, and numerous academic institutions across the Americas. The 2021 AmericasBarometer was carried out via phone interviews in 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries, and via the internet in Canada and the U.S. All samples are designed to be nationally representative of voting-age adults. In all, more than 64,362 individuals were interviewed in this latest round of the survey. The complete 2004-2021 AmericasBarometer dataset contains responses from over 350,000 people across the region. Common core modules, standardized techniques, and rigorous quality control procedures permit valid comparisons across individuals, certain subnational areas, countries, regions, and time. AmericasBarometer data and reports are available for free download from the project website: [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop). Individuals can also use that website to access and query the data via LAPOP's interactive *data playground*. Datasets from the project also can be accessed via "data repositories" and subscribing institutions across the Americas. Through such open access practices and an extensive network of collaborators, LAPOP works to contribute to the pursuit of excellence in public opinion research and ongoing discussions over how programs and policies related to democratic governance can improve the quality of life for individuals in the Americas and beyond.



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