

Insights Series #134

Across Most of the Americas, National Pride Is High and Stable, While It Has Plummeted in the U.S.

Emily Euiyoung Noh

Vanderbilt University

eui.young.noh@vanderbilt.edu

August 8, 2018

Key Findings:

- Across the Americas, national pride is high in every country in 2016/17, while the United States ranks the lowest.
- Across time, mean levels of national pride in the region have been relatively stable. Exceptions are big rises in Panama and Nicaragua and big drops in Canada and the United States.
- Older individuals and those with negative experiences with governance in economic and security issues have lower national pride.



Gallup's 2018 poll reports that the United States has a record-low proportion of citizens very proud to be American.¹ Is declining national pride a region-wide trend?² How does national pride vary across countries, years, and individuals, in the Americas? This *Insights* report shows that national pride is high in most countries in the region, and the United States ranks the lowest. This is surprising given its advantages in terms of wealth, size, and development, arguably sources of national pride. Across time, mean levels of national pride in the Americas have been relatively stable, but there are noteworthy deviations from this regional pattern, with big rises in some countries (Panama and Nicaragua) and big drops in others (Canada and the United States).³

Analyzing the predictors of individual national pride in the 2016/17 AmericasBarometer corroborates LAPOP's previously reported finding that older citizens are more proud of their nationality. More interestingly, negative experiences with governance take a toll on feelings of pride. This finding suggests that countries that improve citizens' experiences with governance may enhance the public's pride in the country.

National Pride in 2016/17 Across Countries

National pride is measured with the following AmericasBarometer survey question:

B43. To what extent are you proud of being [nationality]?

Figure 1 shows the proportion of citizens who indicate that they have “a lot” of national pride in 2016/17.⁴ Survey respondents could indicate a number between 1 and 7, with the lower value indicating “not at all” and the higher value indicating “a lot.” Because responses on average tilt toward the positive side of the scale, the figure shows only those who report the maximum level of national pride – those who are very proud to be Panamanian, Haitian, or whatever is their nationality.⁵

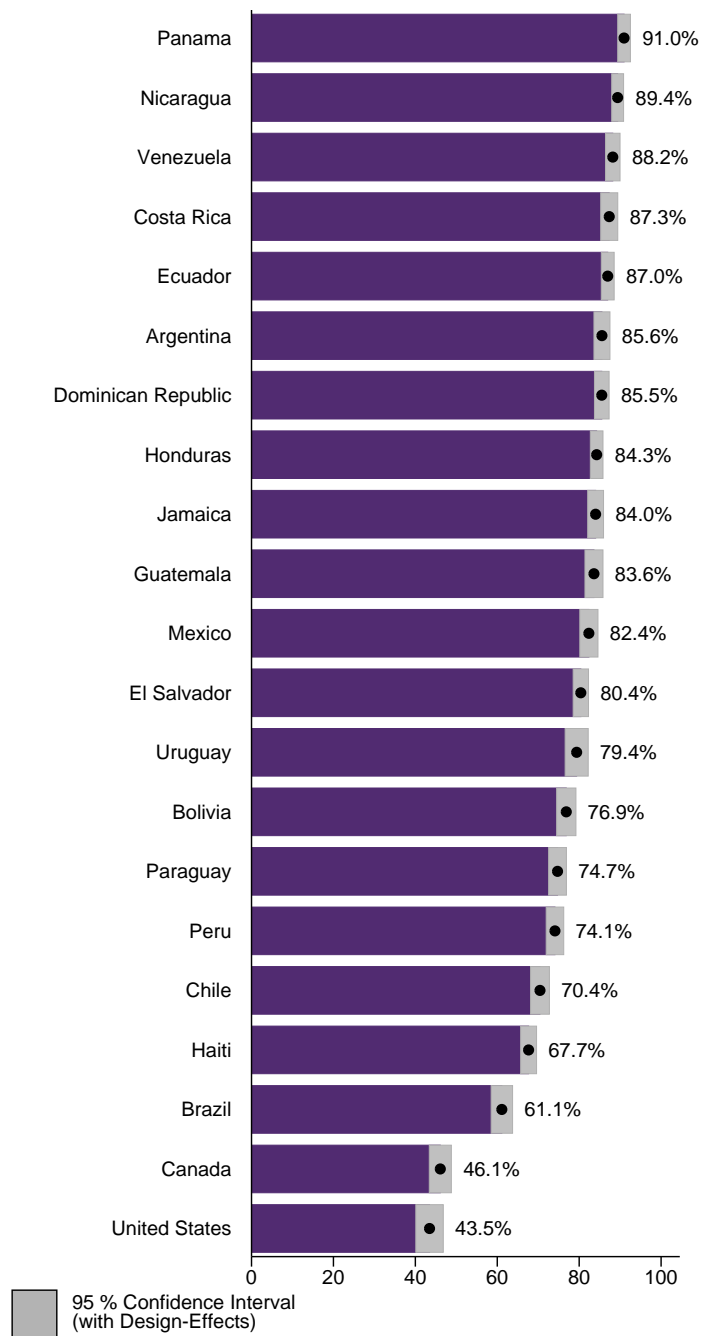


Figure 1: Proportion of Individuals with "A Lot" of National Pride, by Country in 2016/17

National pride is high (averaging above the midpoint) in every country in the Americas, though there is variation across countries. The proudest country is Panama, with over 9 in 10 of its citizens very proud to be Panamanian. Most citizens in most countries in the region express a lot of pride in their nationality. Yet, national pride is comparatively low in Canada and the United States, where less than half of citizens report the maximum amount of pride. Chile, Haiti, and Brazil are also comparatively lower than the rest of the region.

National Pride in the Americas Over Time

How does national pride in the Americas in 2016/17 compare with previous years?⁶ Figure 2 shows the region-average proportion of citizens high in national pride for each survey round in which the question was asked. The average level of national pride in the Americas has been relatively stable over time.⁷ The regional average proportion of citizens with a lot of national pride was 76% in 2006, and for each subsequent wave, there have been no changes greater than 8 percentage points.

However, when we examine cross-time trends for each country, several countries deviate in noteworthy ways from this regional pattern of stability.⁸

First, Panama has climbed from having the fourth lowest proportion of citizens highly proud of their nationality in 2006 (64%) to having the highest level of pride in 2016/17, when 9 in 10 of its citizens reported the highest degree of pride in being Panamanian. Nicaragua also saw a big jump in national pride, from 7 in 10 of its citizens being highly proud to be Nicaraguan in 2006 to 9 in 10 expressing a lot of pride in being Nicaraguan in 2016/17.

The United States and Canada show the opposite trend. 76% of Canadians reported a lot of pride in being Canadian in 2006. At 46%, Canada now has one of the lowest proportions of citizens with high national pride in

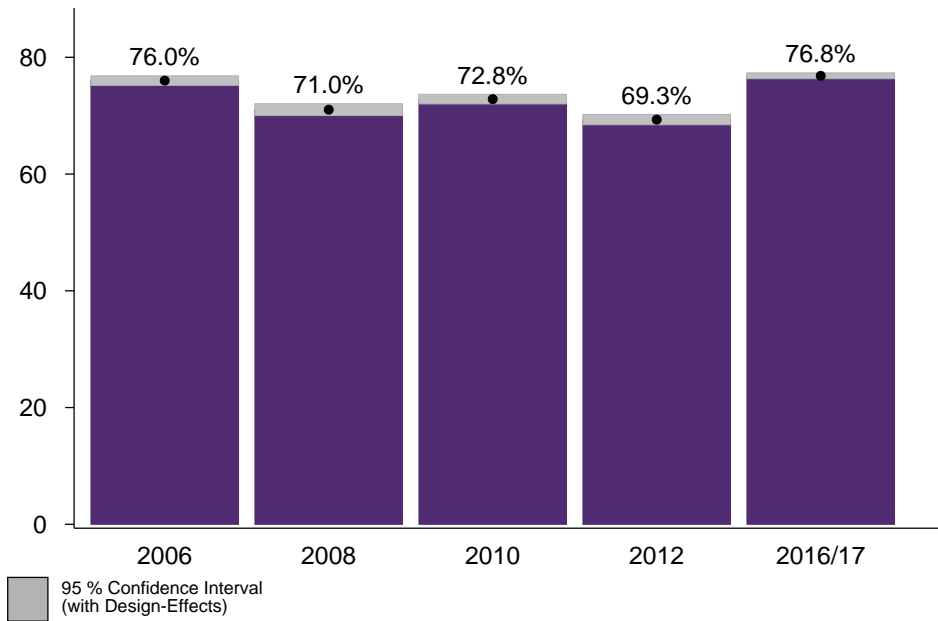


Figure 2: Regional Average for “A Lot” of National Pride, 2006-2016/17

the region. The U.S. has seen an even steeper decline in national pride. In 2006, nearly 8 in 10 Americans were highly proud to be American. Now at 44%, this proportion has nearly halved, and the U.S. has a noticeably low level of national pride compared to the rest of the Americas. The fall from 79% to 44% is the largest fall in the proportion of citizens with high national pride for any country across all years in the AmericasBarometer.⁹

How Do Experiences Shape National Pride?

Confining the focus to the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer, who has lower, or higher, levels of national pride? This section examines which individual-level determinants predict pride in one's nationality. Due to the availability of comparable indicators, the analysis in this section is restricted to countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region.¹⁰ To begin, I examine the relationship between national pride and basic

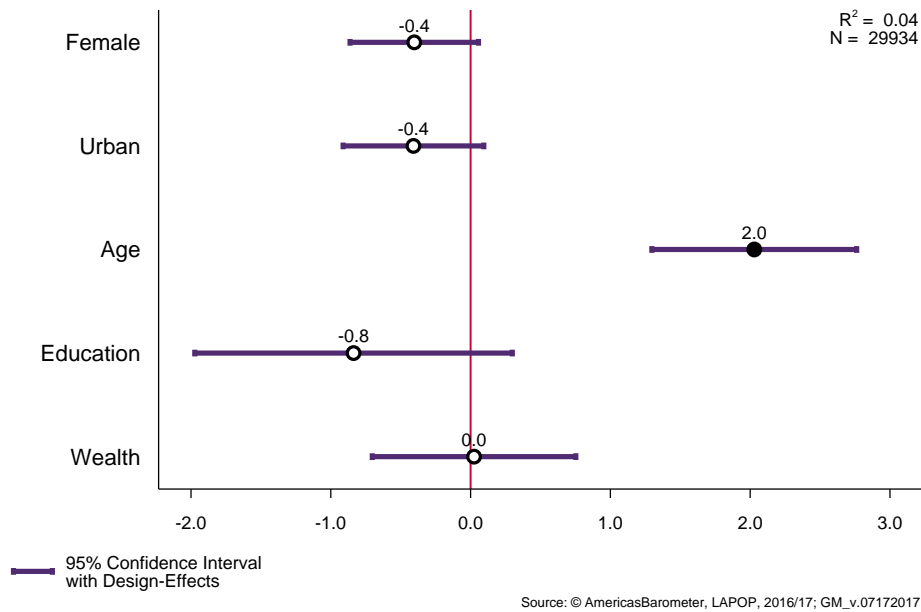


Figure 3: Demographic and Socioeconomic Predictors of National Pride

demographic and socioeconomic factors (Figure 3), and then I document the relationship between economic and security factors and national pride (Figure 4).¹¹

The demographic and socioeconomic factors I examine are place of residence (urban vs. rural), gender (female vs. male), age, education, and wealth. Age is a categorical variable of age cohorts where higher values indicate older age cohorts, education is a categorical variable of education levels, and wealth is a categorical variable for quintiles of wealth measured by possession of household goods.¹²

Figure 3 shows the results of an OLS analysis that regresses national pride levels on these demographic and socioeconomic factors. Results indicate that, on average across the Latin America and Caribbean region in 2016/17, older individuals have higher levels of national pride, while gender, place of residence, education, and wealth are not predictors of national pride.

The positive relationship between age and national pride is consistent with previous research. Older age cohorts are theorized to be more proud of their national identity than younger individuals because younger generations have come of age in an era of globalization, and thus have weaker attachments toward the nation (Evans and Kelley 2002; Smith and Jarkko 1998; Smith and Kim 2006). While these previous findings have focused mostly on developed contexts, previous time periods, and regions outside the Americas, Figure 3 shows that age is a predictor of higher levels of national pride in the Latin America and Caribbean region as well.

Next, to assess the extent to which economic and security factors predict national pride, I control for the demographic and socioeconomic factors in Figure 3 and examine whether respondents' assessments of personal and national economic situations, unemployment status, crime victimization experience, corruption victimization experience, and perception of neighborhood insecurity predict national pride. To measure personal economic situation, I code whether respondents perceive their personal economic situation to be worse than it was twelve months ago or not. To measure national economic situation, I code whether respondents perceive their national economic situation to be worse than it was twelve months ago or not.¹³ For employment status, I code whether the respondent is actively looking for a job or not, and for crime and corruption victimization experience, I code whether the respondent experienced crime or bribe solicitation in the year before the survey.¹⁴ Lastly, to measure perception of neighborhood security, I code whether the individual perceived their neighborhood as either "Very Unsafe" or "Unsafe" as opposed to "Safe" or "Very Safe."¹⁵

Figure 4 shows the results of an OLS analysis that regresses national pride levels on these economic and security factors.¹⁶ Results indicate that, on average across the Latin America and Caribbean region in 2016/17, those who assess that the economic situation is worse, those who have experienced crime and corruption, and those who perceive their neighborhood to be insecure tend to have lower levels of pride.¹⁷ The same analysis for each country shows that economic perceptions and security

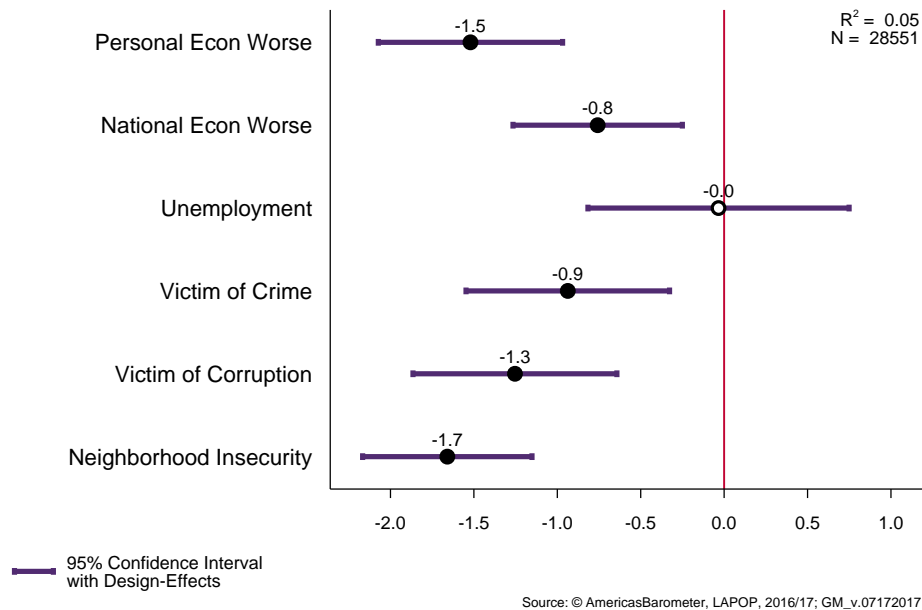


Figure 4: Other Individual-level Predictors of National Pride

concerns can predict national pride at the individual country level as well. In Honduras, Costa Rica, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela, and Haiti, those who perceive either personal or national economic situations to be worse show lower levels of national pride. In Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Brazil, Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru, and Jamaica, those who have security concerns (those with crime or corruption experience or those who perceive their neighborhood as insecure) show lower levels of national pride.¹⁸

Results in Figure 4 point to how individual perceptions and experiences in particular governance domains such as economic management, crime, corruption, and security can shape the level of pride citizens feel toward their nationality. Previous research has found that individuals transfer their feelings about sports events, fellow citizens, and individual experiences to their feelings about their country (Pawlowski, Downward, and Rasciute 2014; Smith and Jarkko 1998). The results presented here are consistent with attitude transfer from individual experiences with crime,

problems of the economy, insecurity, and corruption. These issues are considered some of the most serious national problems by citizens across the Americas and consequently, are salient in the minds of individuals as domains connected to the nation.¹⁹ It may be that perceptions or experiences with issues considered to be the most important for the country are most frequently those that are consequential for individual feelings of national pride.

Conclusion

Continent-wide levels of national pride are high but not invariable. In some countries in the Americas, levels of pride have increased (e.g., Panama) or decreased (e.g., the U.S.) in recent times. Further, within countries, some individuals express higher degrees of pride than others. In the Latin America and Caribbean region in 2016/17, individual experiences matter for the pride citizens feel in their nationality. Among basic demographic factors such as gender, urban residence, age, education, and wealth, age is the only significant predictor of national pride level. Among factors related to individual experiences, perceptions of neighborhood security, experience with corruption and crime, and perception of economic situations are all predictors of national pride. These findings point to the relevance of better governance in security and economic issues as a factor that may boost feelings of national pride.

Notes

1. Gallup reports that for the first time in their 18-year history of asking the question on pride in nationality, fewer than a majority are “extremely proud.” Compared to 70% in 2003, Gallup’s poll in June this year showed only 47% of citizens to be extremely proud to be American (Jones 2018).
2. While pride in nationality and national pride can be distinct concepts, following convention in the literature, ‘national pride’ is used hereafter to encompass both concepts.

3. It is worth noting that the survey in Nicaragua was conducted well before the protests and political violence that have emerged in 2018, events which may lower national pride, while in the U.S., the survey was taken just after the 2016 presidential election, a civic event that one might assume typically boosts pride.
4. The question was asked in 21 countries included in the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer. The study was conducted in 2016 in 9 countries (Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, Venezuela, and Dominican Republic) and in 2017 in the remaining 12.
5. Figure 1 presents a cross-country comparison where the cut-off for high national pride is 7 (rather than 5 or 6) on the 1 to 7 scale because responses for the national pride question are highly skewed, and this cut-off better illustrates variation across countries in national pride. Employing different cut-offs for “high” national pride does not drastically change country rankings. Comparing the proportion of citizens who chose either a 6 or 7 across countries, no country moves more than 3 ranks from Figure 1. Comparing the proportion of citizens who chose either a 5, 6, or 7 on the national pride question, no country except for Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Bolivia moves more than 4 ranks from Figure 1.
6. Argentina and Colombia are excluded from cross-time analyses because the question was not asked in 2006 for Argentina, and in 2016/17 for Colombia. Countries are weighted equally in the calculation of a regional mean.
7. The question on national pride was also asked in 2004 and 2014. However, only a subgroup of countries in the Americas was asked the question in these two years. To compare national pride in a fixed set of countries across time, cross-time analyses in this report do not include the 2004 and 2014 rounds.
8. See Figures 5 and 6 in the Appendix for cross-time trends in the proportion of citizens with high national pride.
9. There were two big drops in national pride in the U.S. between 2006 and 2016/17. The first was from 78.7% to 55.3% between 2006 and 2008. Levels of national pride in 2008, 2010, and 2012 were stable and are not statistically different from one another. Between 2012 and 2016/17, there was a second drop from 50.7% to 43.5%. It is worth noting that the U.S. survey for AmericasBarometer 2016/17 was conducted shortly after President Trump’s inauguration. Given the highly polarizing nature of the 2016 presidential campaign, such timing of survey fieldwork may have contributed to lower levels of national pride for some Americans.

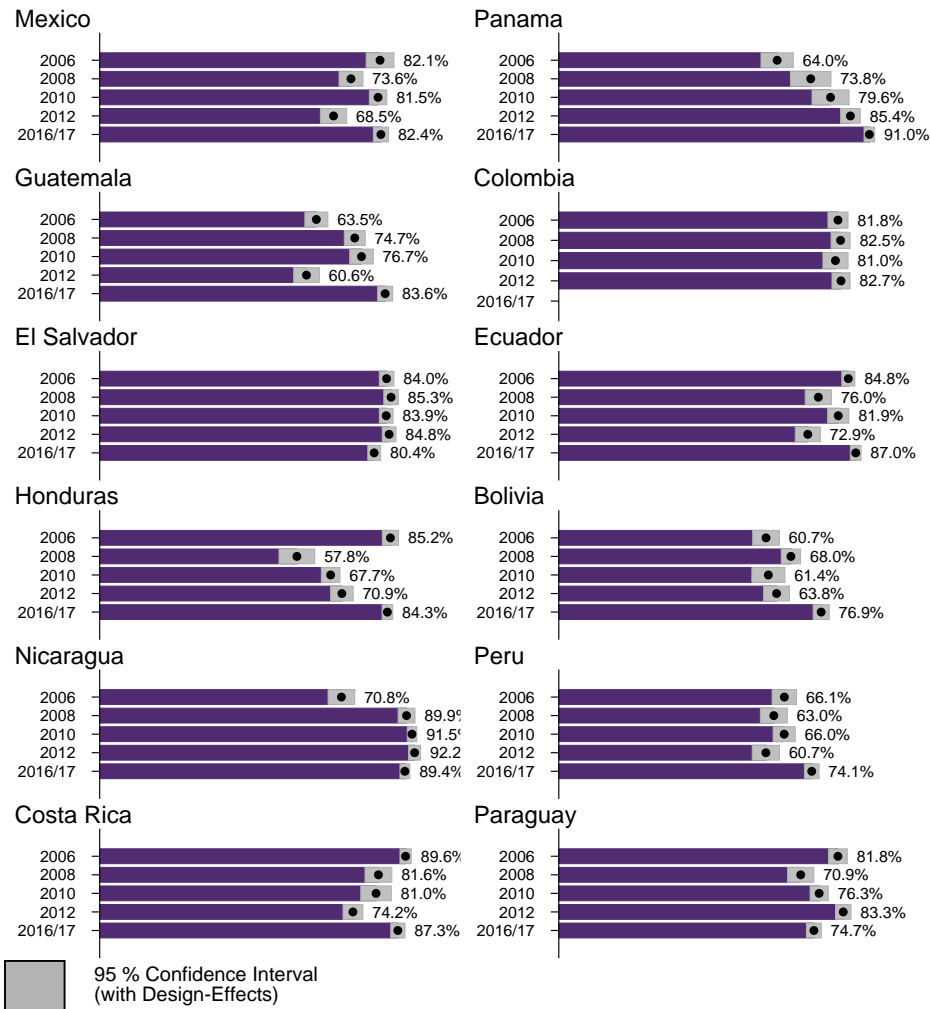
10. Individuals in Canada and the United States were not asked about urban residence, wealth, unemployment, or experience of corruption.
11. For these analyses, the measure for national pride retains its original ordinal scale of 1 to 7, rather than being recoded to a binary variable as in Figure 1 and Figure 2. To conserve space, country fixed effects are included in the analysis but omitted from Figure 3 and Figure 4. Figure 4 also controls for but omits basic demographic factors shown in Figure 3.
12. 'Urban' is recoded from the variable **ur**, 'Female' is recoded from **mujer**, 'Age' is a rescaled (0 to 1) version of **edad**, 'Education' is a rescaled (0 to 1) version of **edr**, and 'Wealth' is a rescaled (0 to 1) version of **quintall**.
13. 'Personal econ worse' is recoded from **idio2** (Whether one's perception of personal economic situation is better, the same, or worse). It takes the value 1 if the respondent answered "worse" and 0 if the respondent answered either "same" or "better." 'National econ worse' is recoded from **soct2** (Whether one's perception of national economic situation is better, the same or worse), in the same way that **idio2** was recoded for 'Personal econ worse'.
14. 'Unemployment' is recoded from **ocup4a** so that those actively looking for a job are coded as 1 while all others are coded as 0. 'Victim of Crime' is recoded from **viclxt**, and 'Victim of Corruption' a rescaled (0 to 1) version of LAPOP's **corvic** measure, which captures whether the individual reports having been asked for at least one bribe.
15. 'Neighborhood Insecurity' is recoded from **aoj11**.
16. When residence is measured by residence in the capital area (recoded from **tamano**) rather than residence in urban areas, residence is a statistically significant predictor of lower national pride. The size of impact on national pride is slightly larger than that of crime victimization and slightly smaller than that of corruption victimization (Available from the author). It may be that individuals living in the capital are more exposed to international markets and influences so that capital residents form less attachment to the nation.
17. Some of these results run counter to findings in a previous *Insights* report, where crime victimization and age are not found to be predictors of national pride in the Americas (Amoedo and Queirolo 2013). It may be that the relevance of some factors varies across time. A consistent finding is that positive perceptions of personal economic situations predict higher national pride.

18. See Table 1 in the Appendix for country by country analysis. + indicates a positive correlation, – indicates a negative correlation, and * indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.
19. The open-ended question **a4** asks, “In your opinion, what is the most serious problem faced by the country?” The five most frequent responses in 2016/17 for the countries examined here were, in descending order of rank, “Crime,” “Problems with the Economy,” “Unemployment,” “Corruption,” and “Insecurity.”

References

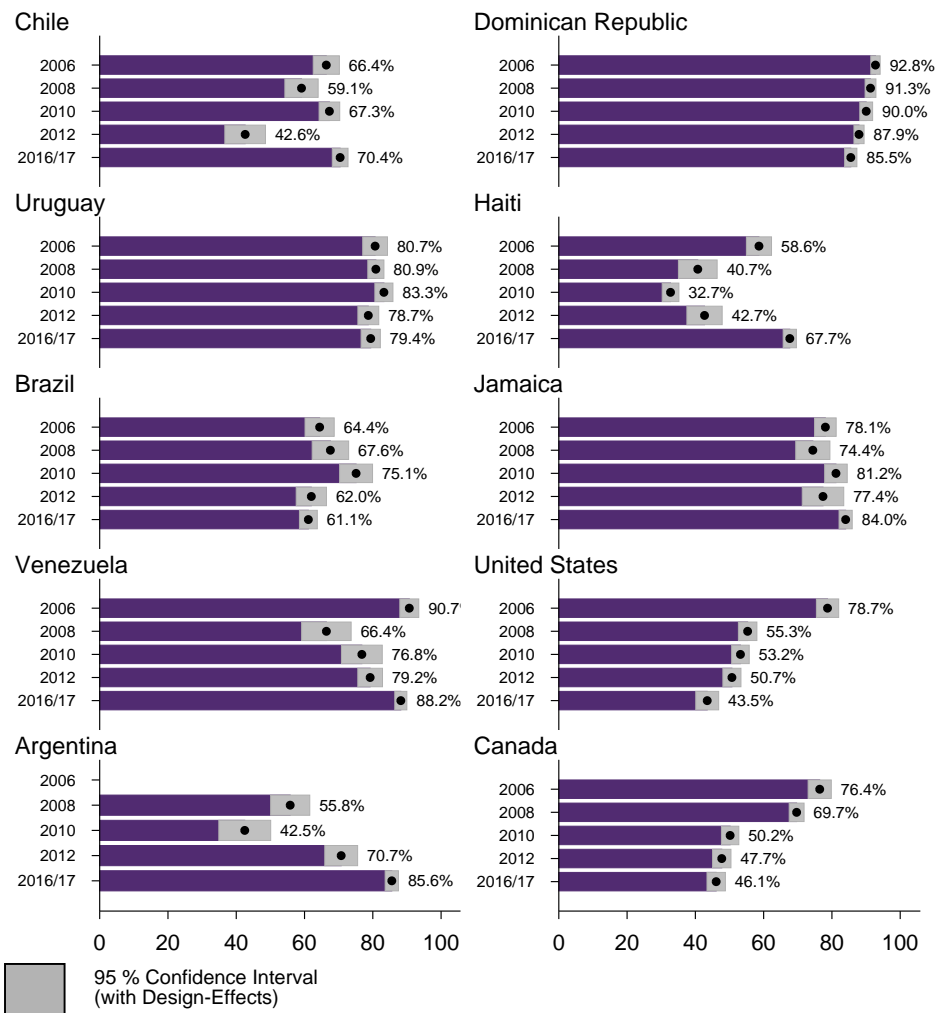
- Amoedo, Patricia, and Rosario Queirolo. 2013. “National Pride in the Americas.” *Insights Series*, no. 99: 1–6.
- Evans, M. D. R., and Jonathan Kelley. 2002. “National Pride in the Developed World: Survey Data from 24 Nations.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 14 (3): 303–338.
- Jones, Jeffrey M. 2018. “In U.S., Record-Low 47% Extremely Proud to Be Americans,” July 2. Accessed July 2, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/236420/record-low-extremely-proud-americans.aspx>.
- Pawlowski, Tim, Paul Downward, and Simona Rasciute. 2014. “Does national pride from international sporting success contribute to well-being? An international investigation.” *Sport Management Review* 17 (2): 121–132.
- Smith, Tom W., and Lars Jarkko. 1998. *National Pride: A Cross-national Analysis*. GSS Cross-national Report No.19. National Opinion Research Center/University of Chicago.
- Smith, Tom W., and Seokho Kim. 2006. “National Pride in Comparative Perspective: 1995/96 and 2003/04.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18 (1): 127–136.

Appendix



Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2004-2016/17; GM_v.07172017

Figure 5: Cross-time Trend in the Proportion of Citizens with High National Pride for Each Country



Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2004-2016/17; GM_v.07172017

Figure 6: Cross-time Trend in the Proportion of Citizens with High National Pride for Each Country, continued

Table 1: By Country, Direction and Significance of Each Individual-level Predictor for National Pride in 2016/17

	Personal Economy Worse	National Economy Worse	Unemployment	Crime Victim	Corruption Victim	Neighborhood Insecurity
Mexico	—	—	+	+	—	—
Guatemala	—	—	+	—	—	—
El Salvador	+	+	+	—	+	—*
Honduras	—	—*	+	—	—	—
Nicaragua	+	+	—	—	+	—*
Costa Rica	—*	+	—	—	—	—
Panama	—	—	—	+	—	—
Ecuador	+	—	—	—	—*	—
Bolivia	—	—	+	—	—*	+
Peru	+	—	—	+	—	—*
Paraguay	—	+	—	+	—*	—
Chile	+	—*	+	—*	—	—
Uruguay	—	—*	+	—	—	—
Brazil	—*	—	+	—	—*	—
Venezuela	—*	+	+	+	—	—
Dominican Republic	—	—	—	—	+	—
Haiti	—*	—	—	—*	—	—
Jamaica	—	+	—	—	—	—*

* indicates $p \leq .05$.



Emily Euiyoung Noh is entering her second year as a Ph.D. student in Political Science at Vanderbilt University and is an affiliate of LAPOP.

This report was edited by Dr. Mollie J. Cohen, Dr. Noam Lupu, Dr. Mitchell A. Seligson, and Dr. Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. Auditing for this report was done by Adam D. Wolsky. This report was translated by Rubí Arana and Dr. Juan Camilo Plata. Formatting, production, copy editing, graphics, and report distribution were handled by Rubí Arana, Laura Sellers, Emma Tatem, and Zach Warner. Our data and reports are available for free download on the project website. Please follow us on Twitter or Facebook to stay in touch.

As a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative, LAPOP is committed to routine disclosure of our data collection and reporting processes. More information about the AmericasBarometer sample designs can be found at vanderbilt.edu/lapop/core-surveys.

The contents of this *Insights* report are the sole responsibility of its author and LAPOP and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other supporting organization. LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys are supported predominantly by USAID and Vanderbilt University. The 2016/17 round also had support from the IADB, the UNDP, the Open Society Foundations, and academic partners and researchers across the Americas.

vanderbilt.edu/lapop
@lapop_barometro
@LatinAmericanPublicOpinionProject
lapop@vanderbilt.edu
+1-615-322-4033



230 Appleton Place, PMB 505, Suite 304, Nashville, TN 37203, USA