

As Maduro Calls for Venezuela's Withdrawal from the OAS, the Majority of Citizens Report the Organization is Trustworthy

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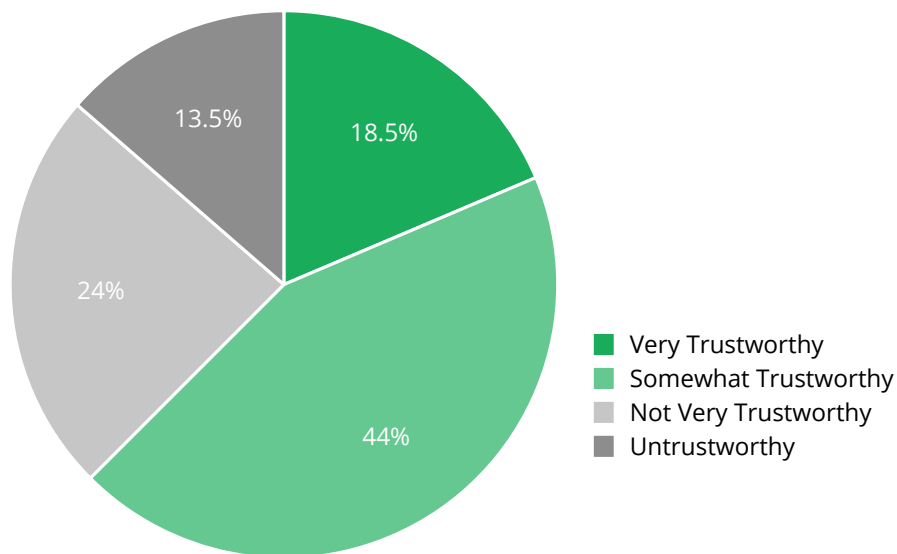
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Tensions have mounted between the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Venezuelan government in recent weeks. Recent survey data collected as part of LAPOP's AmericasBarometer point to a significant gap between President Maduro's combative posture against the OAS and the moderately positive evaluations of the OAS among the Venezuelan people.

As reported by various news outlets, the OAS directorship and member states have levied criticism against President Maduro's administration for Venezuela's growing humanitarian crisis, its growing roster of political prisoners, and repressive responses to recent protests (Gallón, Pozzebon, and McKirdy 2017; Wilkinson 2017; Zuñiga and Miroff 2017).¹ This criticism resulted in an OAS resolution passed on April 26, convening an emergency meeting among high-level diplomats to discuss whether



Trustworthiness of the OAS

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Figure 1: Trustworthiness of the OAS, Venezuela 2016/17

Venezuela is in violation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. That Charter requires member states to uphold basic democratic principles and processes.² In response, Venezuela’s foreign minister announced a call by President Maduro for the country’s withdrawal from the OAS, citing the OAS’ actions as “intrusive, arbitrary, illicit, misdirected and rude”, and accusing the OAS of encroaching on Venezuela’s national sovereignty (Zuñiga and Miroff 2017).

Data from LAPOP’s latest AmericasBarometer survey in Venezuela reveal a more positive orientation toward the OAS among citizens of the country. In a national survey conducted between October 2016 and January 2017, 1,558 individuals were asked about their level of trust in the OAS. The majority of Venezuelans, 63%, report some degree of trust in the Organization. As Figure 1 shows, 44% think the OAS is “somewhat trustworthy” and 19% say the OAS is “very trustworthy.” In short, Venezuelans appear at odds with President Maduro’s stance against the OAS and any

related move to pull out of the Organization.

Compared to other countries for which LAPOP has finalized data collection as part of the 2016/17 AmericasBarometer,³ trust in the OAS in Venezuela falls somewhere in the middle of the range of orientations found across the Americas. In countries such as Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Paraguay, there is high trust in the OAS: in each of these countries, nearly three-quarters of the public reports that the Organization is somewhat or very trustworthy. Conversely, approximately half of respondents in Mexico and Ecuador view the OAS as somewhat or very trustworthy.

These data on Venezuelans' views of the OAS provide further evidence of an important gap between Venezuelan public opinion and the Maduro administration. As discussed in a recent *Topical Brief* by LAPOP, the vast majority of Venezuelans also oppose closing the National Assembly, a move attempted by the country's highest court on March 30 to allow the President to govern without a legislative check on executive power (Rodríguez and Zechmeister 2017). In short, President Maduro's administration is out of sync with the pulse of public opinion in the country on a number of issues.

Notes

1. As Venezuelan security forces have attempted to quell the stream of protests, confrontations between protesters and members of the National Guard and National Police have turned increasingly violent, resulting in at least 39 deaths and more than 200 injured to date. See Cawthorne and Rawlins (2017) and Cawthorne and Ulmer (2017).
2. See, in particular, OAS Section IV, Articles 17-22. <https://goo.gl/0c3GF8>.
3. Fieldwork for the 2016/17 round of the AmericasBarometer is still ongoing.

References

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