

Topical Brief #034

Disapproval of Same-Sex Marriage in Ecuador: A Clash of Generations?

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Key Findings:

- In 2019, disapproval of same-sex marriage in Ecuador is widespread. In the population as a whole, 51.3% tends to disapprove of it. At the extreme, 36.8% of Ecuadorians strongly disapprove of it. Only 23% manifests some degree of approval.
- In Ecuador, there is a clash of ideas among different generations. While 68.5% of individuals in the Silent Generation and 62.5% of Baby Boomers firmly reject same-sex marriage, 42.0% of Millennials and 16.7% of young people in Generation Z share that rejection. Just over half of the individuals in Generation X (54.1%) strongly disapprove of the right of same-sex couples to marry.
- Among evangelicals, 60.6% strongly disapprove of same-sex marriage, as compared with 31.9% of Catholics.
- The likelihood of supporting same-sex marriage grows as income increases.
- Approval of same-sex marriage by a majority of Ecuadorians could be matter of time.

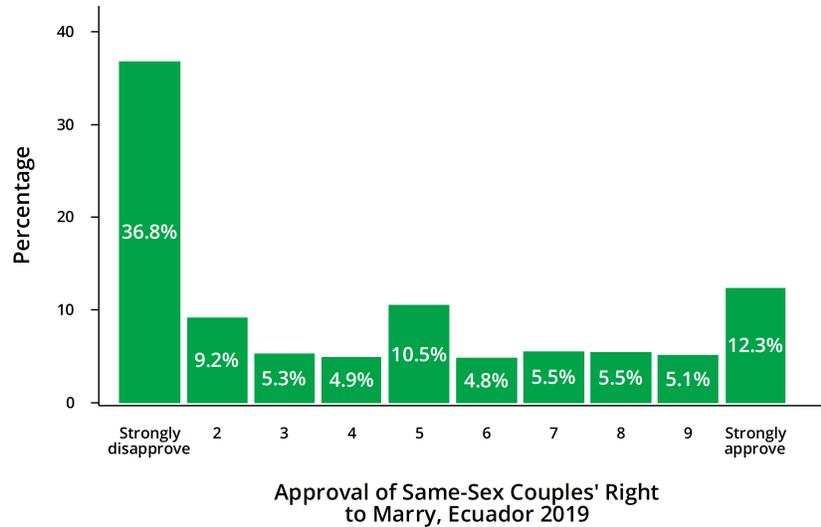


On June 12, 2019, the Constitutional Court of Ecuador (CC) ruled in favor of same-sex marriage. In a historic sentence, the CC established that there is no legal contradiction between the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador and the recognition of same-sex marriage, a finding that is in line with the ruling of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights. In light of this ruling, Ecuador becomes the seventh country in the Americas to legalize civil marriage between same-sex couples at the national level, joining Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the United States, and Uruguay.¹

Even though this ruling can be interpreted as a human rights triumph, an important segment of the population questions the CC's verdict. This claim is evident in the increasing number of protests against the right of civil same-sex marriage around the city of Guayaquil.² Do these protests reflect the sentiments of all Ecuadorians? More broadly, what do Ecuadorians think about same-sex marriage? The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) has researched this issue since 2010, using the following question:

D6: How strongly do you approve or disapprove of same-sex couples having the right to marry?³

Figure 1 reveals that in 2019, 36.8% of Ecuadorians *strongly disapproved* of same-sex marriage, representing the lowest end of the 10-point scale.⁴ The rest of the population is distributed relatively evenly throughout the scale, with percentages that vary between 5.3% and 12.3%. To facilitate our understanding of the results, the scale can be clustered into 3 categories: the first group includes individuals who *disapprove* of marriage equality (those who place themselves between 1 and 3 on the scale). The second group includes individuals who *neither disapprove nor approve* of same-sex marriage (those who place themselves between 4 and 7 on the scale). Finally, the last group includes those who *approve* of marriage equality (those who place themselves between 8 and 10 on the scale). Using this reduced scale, 51.3% of the population *disapprove* of same-sex marriage, 25.8% *neither approve nor disapprove*, and just 22.9% *approve* of it.



Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2019; v.M 20190412

Figure 1: Opinion about Same-Sex Marriage in Ecuador in 2019

What characteristics do the individuals who *strongly disapprove* of same-sex marriage share? Due to the considerably high number of people who responded “1” to the question about the right to marry of same-sex couples, this *Topical Brief* report of the AmericasBarometer focuses on comparing the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of those people with individuals who expressed more tolerance, or even approval.^{5,6} Through a binomial regression, the factors found to be most strongly associated with approval/disapproval of same-sex marriage are age, religion, and income.

The most important finding of this report is, without a doubt, the magnitude of the association between age and the strong disapproval of same-sex marriage. The model for 2019 indicates that the probability of rejecting marriage between same-sex couples increases with age. However, this same association decreases in intensity compared to previous

rounds of the AmericasBarometer. These findings suggest that strong disapproval of marriage equality could have a generational explanation, with older generations reflecting more disapproving attitudes.

To verify this hypothesis, I create a variable to categorize Ecuadorians according to the generation they belong to, and then study the percentage of individuals against same-sex marriage in each generation. To classify individuals according to their generation, I employ the categorization of the Pew Research Center.⁷ Table 1 below details the cutoff of birth years by generation.

Table 1: Generational Composition

Generation	Year of Birth between
Silent	1928 - 1945
Baby Boomers	1946 - 1964
Generation X	1965 - 1980
Millennials	1981 - 1996
Generation Z	1997 - 2012

Source : PewResearchCenter2019

Next, I check the percentage of Ecuadorians in each generation who responded “1” (strongly disapprove) in the question about same-sex marriage (Figure 2). It is worth noting that this figure includes all respondents since this questions was asked for the first time in in 2010,⁸ for a total N=9,050. This over-time analysis is justifiable, given that one’s generation does not vary over time. The difference is striking: the majority of the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers are strongly against marriage equality (68.5% and 62.5%, respectively). The individuals of Generation X appear to be somewhat more ambivalent, with almost half (54.1%) strongly disapproving of marriage equality. On the contrary, 42% of Millennials, and only 16.7% of the youngest generation, Generation Z, share the same opinion.

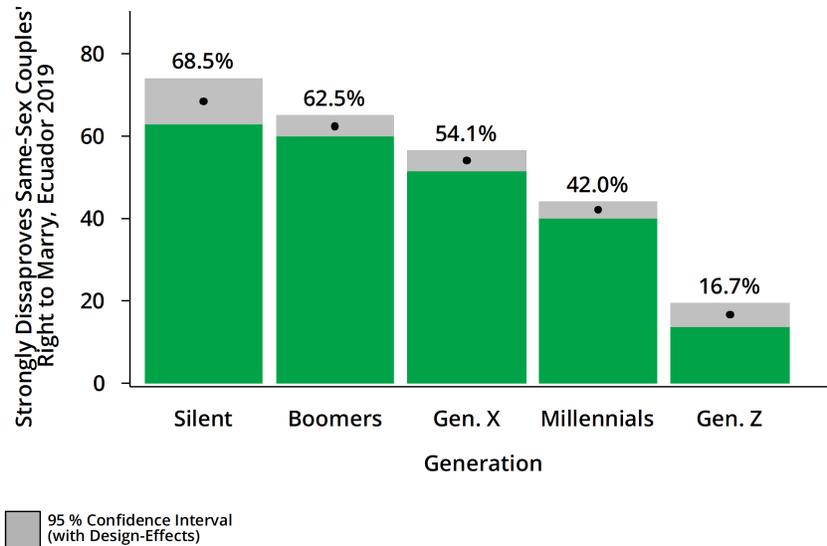
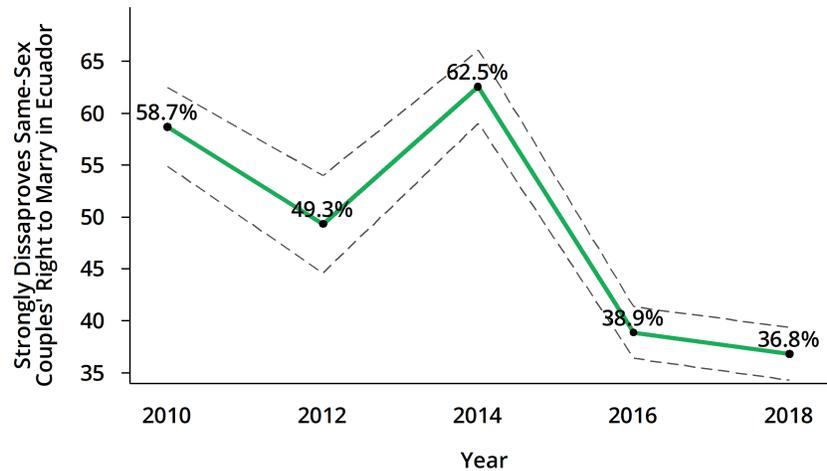


Figure 2: Generations and Marriage Equality in Ecuador, 2010-2019

If strong disapproval is similar between Millennials and Generation Z, does this translate into approval for marriage equality? Clearly, in this sample, the answer is “yes.” However, neither generation exceeds 50% for the combined *approval* category. While 41.4% of the individuals of Generation Z approve of marriage equality (those who selected between 7 and 10 on the original 10-point scale), only 17.8% of Millennials share this opinion. The percentage that approves of marriage equality in the rest of the generations varies between a meager 6.5% and 11.3%.

These findings coincide with similar studies carried out by the Pew Research Center with U.S. citizens, who conclude that half of Millennials and individuals of Generation Z think that marriage between same-sex couples is good for society.⁹ Meanwhile, this idea is less favorable among the rest of the generations. From the analysis in the previous section,

one can infer that a more generalized approval by Ecuadorians of same-sex marriage is only a matter of time: we should expect that the strong disapproval will diminish over time.



--- 95 % Confidence Interval
(with Design-Effects)

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2010-2019; v.M 20190412

Figure 3: Decline of Total Disapproval of Same-Sex Marriage in Ecuador

Figure 3 confirms this hypothesis. The total percentage of individuals who strongly disapprove of marriage equality has been dropping over the years, with the clear exception of 2014. In that year, disapproval peaked to its highest level, reaching 62.5% of the population. The cause of that increase remains a question to be resolved in future studies. However, the overall decline is noticeable, leading to the expectation of a continued decline in disapproval and consequently an increase in approval of marriage between same-sex couples in the coming years.

While there is a clear association between age and support for marriage equality, I also analyze the impact of religion and level of income.¹⁰ With respect to religion, while 60.6% of those who self-identify as “evangelical-

cal” strongly disapprove of marriage equality, only 31.9% of those who self-identify as Catholic share the same opinion. Likewise, disapproval increases as religion becomes more important to individuals. These findings coincide with the protests of June 18, 2019, in the city of Guayaquil,¹¹ where hundreds of representatives of the evangelical Church turned to the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control to demand the annulment of the ruling of the CC.¹²

Individuals’ level of income, measured through the possession of assets in the household, also is relevant when forming an opinion about marriage between same-sex couples.¹³ While 44.7% of those in the poorest income quintile are strongly against, only 27.9% of those in the richest income quintile share 44.7% of those in the poorest income quintile are strongly against, only 27.9% of those in the richest income quintile share the same opinion. Other socioeconomic and demographic variables, such as the survey respondent’s gender, their level of education, and their area of residence (urban or rural) do not result in any statistical association with strong disapproval of same-sex marriage. In other words, those factors are not relevant when explaining whom firmly disapproves of the right of same-sex couple to marry in Ecuador in 2019.

To conclude this *Topical Brief*, I summarize the main findings of this study. Through national level, face-to-face survey research with adults in Ecuador, I find that the disapproval of same-sex marriage is currently widespread, with 51.3% of the population expressing *disapproval*. At the extreme, 36.8% of Ecuadorians *strongly disapprove* of it. Only 23% express *strong approval*. Unsurprisingly, socioeconomic and demographic factors were especially impactful in predicting one’s attitude towards marriage equality: religion and income level are important, but age turned out to be the strongest predictor of these attitudes. While 68.5% of individuals of the Silent Generation, 62.5% of Baby Boomers, and 54.1% of Generation X firmly reject same-sex marriage. Meanwhile, only 16.7% of the youngest, Generation Z, share this rejection. These findings suggest that in Ecuador in 2019 there is a generational clash regarding the CC ruling. The implications of these findings suggest that higher levels of support for marriage equality could simply be a matter of time in Ecuador.

Notes

1. For more information, see: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/same-sex-marriage-global-comparisons>
2. For more information, see: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/marcha-derecho-matrimonio-civil-igualitario.html>
3. Before reading the question, the interviewer handed to the survey respondent a card in which a scale went from 1 to 10, where 1 meant “strongly disapprove”, and 10 “strongly approve”. Then they asked how strongly they would approve or would disapprove that people of the same sex have the right to marry.
4. The finding is revealing given the fact that Ecuadorians seem to have a clear opinion about the issue. Contrary to other questions in which respondents have a tendency to pick middle values in the answer scale, the question about the approval of same-sex marriage suggests that the majority of Ecuadorians are comparatively against this right. The relatively high rate of response to this question (approximately 99%) suggests that Ecuadorians have strong opinions about this issue.
5. Due to space considerations, I did not include the figure of regression results in this report; nevertheless, the results of the statistical models could be shared by contacting the author.
6. Even though the statistical model includes only those who responded “1” compared to the rest of respondents, in a separate analysis I include those who responded 2 and 3, only to find similar results.
7. More information at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>
8. The distribution of survey respondents in the 2010–2019 period is as follows: Silent Generation: 473 people; Baby Boomers: 1,983; Generation X: 2,768; Millennials: 3,287; and Generation Z: 539 people.
9. More information at: <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/01/17/generation-z-looks-a-lot-like-millennials-on-key-social-and-political-issues/>

10. Due to space constraints, I do not include results of the association between religion and the level of income of before 2019.
11. The dates show that, in Guayaquil, 59.9% of respondents *strongly disapprove* of marriage equality (values 1-3 on the 10-point scale), while in Quito, the percentage of disapproval only reached 40.3%.
12. More information at: <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2019/06/18/nota/7383285/cientos-manifestantes-protestan-guayaquil-contra-matrimonio-parejas>
13. Generally, many people prefer to avoid answering questions related to income, or simply provide ambiguous information. To resolve this potential problem, the AmericasBarometer not only asks “How much do you earn?” but also “What is your expenditure.” In this sense, LAPOP develops an index of household assets, through the method of principal component analysis, and later distributes the values in wealth quintiles. For more information, see: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/10806en.pdf>



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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.

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