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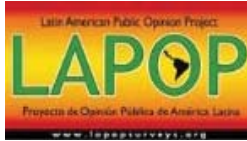
# AmericasBarometer **INSIGHTS SERIES**

Volume II • 2010–2011



VANDERBILT  
UNIVERSITY





# LAPOP- AMERICASBAROMETER

## Insights Series

## Compilation

## Volume II

## Insights Reports 31-69

2010-2011

Funding for significant portions of the AmericasBarometer project has come from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support for the AmericasBarometer also include the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Tinker Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, and Vanderbilt University. Insights reports are solely produced by LAPOP and the opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the point of view of USAID or any other funding institution.

## Foreword

The LAPOP *Insights* series was developed in 2008 as a means to disseminate short reports on key findings from the AmericasBarometer to audiences across the Americas and beyond.

The series publishes original research by LAPOP team members and affiliates on various topics such as crime, corruption, civic engagement, gender violence, and tolerance.

The series also serves as a capacity-building platform: while working with LAPOP faculty and senior staff through the report production process, contributors hone skills related to the application of rigorous approaches to the analysis of survey data and to writing reports that are accessible to non-experts in the methods used or subjects covered.

The *Insights* series contains two main types of reports: “standard” reports (2008-present), which act as policy and/or issue briefs on a particular topic, and “topical” reports (2013-present), which are short analyses that dialogue with a current event or development in the region. Each report is published in Spanish and English, and when appropriate, Portuguese.

LAPOP distributes e-versions of the *Insights* reports via Twitter, Facebook, its website, and an opt-in subscriber email listserv. The opt-in *Insights* listserv distribution list consists of over 2,000 individuals; LAPOP’s Twitter account is followed by over 3,000 individuals, and LAPOP’s *Insights* webpages are viewed approximately 10,000 times per year. The reports are frequently cited in the news and are used as a resource by scholars, analysts, practitioners, and policymakers throughout the hemisphere.

In this volume we offer a compilation of the LAPOP *Insights* reports that were published from 2010 to 2011.

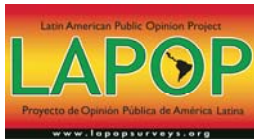
Liz Zechmeister, Ph.D.  
Director of LAPOP  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN  
March, 2016.

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*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No. 31)\**

# Who Should Manage Public Funds in Latin America?<sup>1</sup>

By Daniel Montalvo  
d.montalvo@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

Academics debate the mixed effects, both normative and behavioral, of fiscal decentralization. Widely known as *the devolution of taxing and spending authority*, fiscal decentralization is expected to economically and politically empower intermediate and local levels of government. Indeed, advocates argue that fiscal decentralization increases economic and political efficiency as a result of the improved match between specific local needs and government outputs (Tiebout 1956, Weingast 1995, Oates 1999). However, detractors warn that fiscal decentralization can lead to inefficiently high tax and regulation burdens as well as increased demands for intergovernmental transfers of scarce resources (Keen 1998, Treisman 2006).

But who does the average citizen believe should administer public monies? Public opinion on fiscal decentralization has been largely absent in the scholarly literature on federalism and

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insights Series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

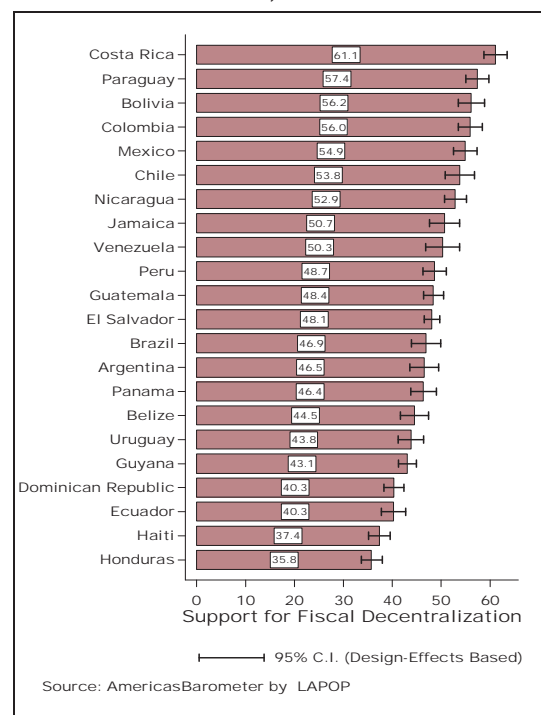
\* The Insights Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

decentralization (Montero and Samuels 2004). This new paper in the *AmericasBarometer Insight Series* attempts to add citizens' views of this state reform to the fiscal decentralization puzzle.

For this purpose, we query the 2008 database provided by the AmericasBarometer survey carried out by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) in 24 nations in the Western hemisphere.<sup>2</sup> In this survey 33,529 respondents answered the following question:<sup>3</sup>

**SGL1.** And taking into account the available economic resources in the country, who should manage more money? [Read options]: (1) Much more the central government; (2) Somewhat more the central government; (3) The same amount the central government and the municipality; (4) Somewhat more the municipality; or (5) Much more the municipality.

**Figure 1.**  
Average Support for Fiscal Decentralization in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> The non-response rate for this question was 9.47 percent.

Figure 1 shows national averages for 22 countries in the sample.<sup>4</sup> The measure of the degree of support for fiscal decentralization was recoded onto a new scale, where “0” means much more to the central government (recentralization) and “100” means much more to the municipality (decentralization). The position of Latin American citizens in the recentralization - decentralization continuum averages 48.37 points on this scale, indicating support for a quasi-egalitarian distribution of economic resources between central governments and municipalities. Figure 1 also shows, however, significant variation among countries. At one extreme, citizens of Costa Rica, Paraguay and Bolivia manifest the highest degree of support for fiscal decentralization, with levels of 61.1, 57.4 and 56.2 points respectively. At the other extreme, citizens of Ecuador, Haiti and Honduras express the highest degree of support for recentralization, with levels of 40.3, 37.4 and 35.8 points respectively.

## Predicting Support for Fiscal Decentralization

What explains variation in citizen support for fiscal decentralization? Historical/contextual factors at the country-level may cause some of the variation across nations. However, we find that only 3.87 percent of total variation can be explained at the country-level, implying that most of the total variation (the remaining 96.13 percent) is to be explained at the individual-level. Hence, in this paper we concentrate on the variance that is explained by individual-level (level-I) factors.<sup>5</sup>

Among the level-I factors, we consider socio-economic and demographic characteristics included in the AmericasBarometer survey: education, gender, age, wealth and the area of residence. To assess the influence of these factors on citizen support for fiscal decentralization, we fit a multivariate statistical model estimated through ordinary-least-squares

regression.<sup>6</sup> Figure 2 displays the results of this analysis.

**Figure 2.**  
Socio-economic and Demographic Determinants of Support for Fiscal Decentralization in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008

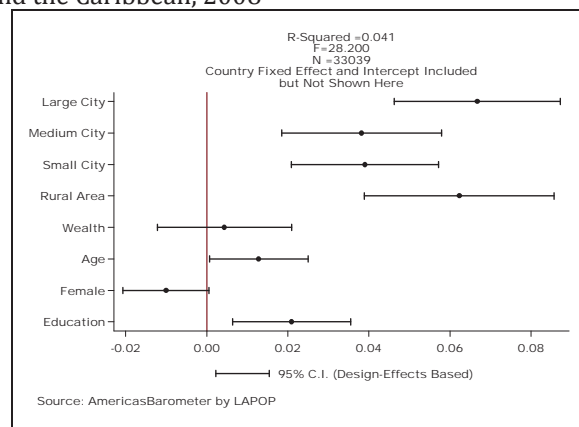


Figure 2 shows the effects of socio-economic and demographic characteristics on the degree of citizen support for fiscal decentralization in the region. Sex and wealth are not statistically relevant in the model. Statistical significance is graphically represented by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical “0” line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical “0” line, it implies a positive relationship, whereas if it falls to the left, it indicates a negative contribution.

In this model, the individual’s years of completed education, age, and the geographic area of residence are statistically significant contributors. Holding constant all other variables, more educated individuals in Latin America and the Caribbean show a higher level of support for fiscal decentralization. Additionally, as citizens grow older, support for fiscal decentralization increases. People living in rural areas, small, medium and large cities show higher support for fiscal decentralization than individuals residing in metropolitan areas.

The relationships between education level, age, and geographical area of residence on one hand, and

<sup>4</sup> This question was not asked either in Canada or the U.S.

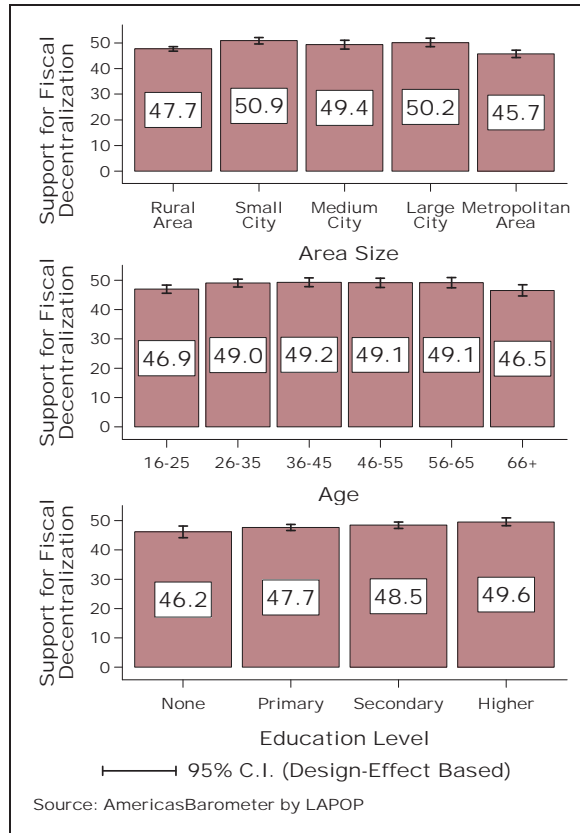
<sup>5</sup> Moreover, we found no statistically significant relationship between a series of level-2 variables, such as level of fiscal decentralization, per capita GDP, the Human Development Index, GINI coefficient, level of Democracy, etc.; and citizen support for fiscal decentralization.

<sup>6</sup> All statistical analyses in this paper were conducted using STATA v10 and are adjusted to consider the effects of the complex sample design.

citizen support for fiscal decentralization on the other are shown in Figure 3, which shows average values for the sample.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 3.**

Education, Age, and Area Size, and Support for Fiscal Decentralization in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



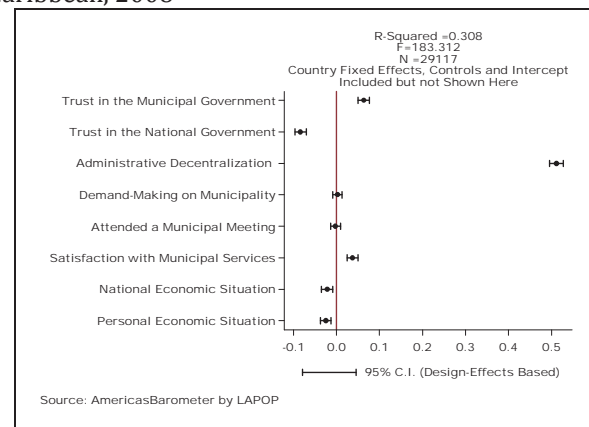
The impact of some socio-economic and demographic variables on citizen support for fiscal decentralization is statistically significant and substantively robust, as shown in both Figures 2 and 3. Theoretically, however, there ought to be several other factors that drive individuals to support either decentralization or recentralization of the available public funds. In particular, we should expect that evaluations of and attitudes toward municipal and federal government affect opinions on decentralization.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that the variables “Age” and “Education Level” are grouped into categories for the purpose of illustration. These variables were inserted as continuous in the multivariate regression.

In order to assess some of these factors, we added several public opinion variables to our analysis. Results from this new model are depicted in Figure 4. Note that even though we included all the socio-economic and demographic variables and controlled for fixed effects, we display only the political evaluation variables in the Figure below (see the Appendix for the complete set of statistics).

**Figure 4.**

An Analysis of the Determinants of Average Support for Fiscal Decentralization in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



The results above indicate that there are numerous individual attitudinal and other factors (in addition to socio-economic and demographic variables) that affect citizen support for fiscal decentralization. First, as perception of their personal economic situations improves, individuals seem to express higher support for fiscal recentralization. The same can be said about perception of the national economic situation. In general terms, individuals who see their micro and macroeconomic situation in a better light tend to believe that the national government should manage available public funds instead of the municipality, *ceteris paribus*. This is not case for individuals who are satisfied with the services provided by their municipalities. As satisfaction with municipal services increases, support for fiscal decentralization increases as well.

The strongest and most substantive relationship we find is the link between fiscal and administrative decentralization. Results from the multivariate model show that citizens who support administrative decentralization very much agree with the fact that municipalities should manage more public funds



than national governments. This finding suggests that citizens who favor a decentralizing policy also lean toward integrating the fiscal and administrative components of this state reform.

Two other factors that show opposing effects on support for fiscal decentralization are trust in the national government and trust in the municipal government. While the former negatively correlates with support for fiscal decentralization, the latter shows a positive effect. This finding suggests that trust may be a crucial factor when politicians seek support for devolution policies. But how can trust be increased? This question will be studied in a future *Insight Series*, in which we investigate the levels of trust in municipal governments.

## Policy Implications

The empirical evidence presented in this paper suggests that in general terms, Latin American citizens believe that authority over public funds should be almost equally distributed between national governments and municipalities.<sup>8</sup> However, a disaggregation of citizen preferences in demographic groups shows that individuals residing in rural areas and smaller cities favor fiscal decentralization more so than their metropolitan counterparts. This also seems to be the case for more educated and for older individuals, who think that municipalities should receive more money than the national government.

Among citizens who favor fiscal decentralization, there is also a strong feeling that municipal governments should be given more administrative responsibilities as well. This important message to policy makers seems to indicate that administrative decentralization without the provision of fiscal funds (or vice versa), may not only be linked to inefficient public administration but also goes against the public will. Of course, in this short study we are unable to untangle how this public will is formed. In other words, we are unsure if this is a situation in which the public will "leads" government or if the public links fiscal and administrative decentralization

because they have been packaged by political elites. Thus, a new research question arises for future studies: Does the average citizen really know the difference between fiscal and administrative decentralization or does the average citizen just believe that they "go together"?

Finally, support for fiscal decentralization seems to be greater in contexts of poor evaluations of national and personal economic situations. Individuals who perceive that their own economic situation or the national economic situation is in good shape tend to favor recentralization of public funds. This may suggest an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality, where good economic performance in particular at the national level leads individuals to prefer that the national government control funds.

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<sup>8</sup> After drawing a histogram of the frequency distribution, we find that the data does cluster in the middle of a normal curve; hence, it is unlikely that the mean value at the mean point is the result of polarization.

**Appendix:****Results from the multivariate model<sup>9</sup>****Dependent Variable: Support for Fiscal Decentralization**

	<b>Model I</b>		<b>Model II</b>	
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>(t)</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>(t)</b>
Perception of Personal Economic Situation			-0.025*	(-3.90)
Perception of National Economic Situation			-0.022*	(-3.28)
Satisfaction with Local Government Services			0.037*	(5.88)
Attended a Municipal Meeting			-0.002	(-0.34)
Demand-Making on Municipal Government			0.002	(0.40)
Administrative Decentralization			0.511*	(62.70)
Trust in the National Government			-0.084*	(-12.44)
Trust in the Municipal Government			0.064*	(9.54)
Education	0.021*	(2.83)	0.006	(0.87)
Female	-0.010	(-1.86)	-0.002	(-0.31)
Age	0.013*	(2.08)	0.003	(0.50)
Wealth	0.004	(0.52)	0.001	(0.07)
Rural Area	0.062*	(5.22)	0.049*	(5.03)
Small City	0.039*	(4.22)	0.029*	(3.78)
Medium City	0.038*	(3.80)	0.034*	(4.22)
Large City	0.067*	(6.39)	0.045*	(5.44)
Constant	-0.017*	(-1.97)	-0.010	(-1.41)
R-Squared	0.041		0.308	
Number of Obs.	33039		29117	

\* p&lt;0.05

<sup>9</sup> Fixed effects (country dummies) included but not shown here



*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No. 32)\**

# Crime and Support for Coups in Latin America<sup>1</sup>

Orlando J. Pérez  
Central Michigan University  
perez1oj@cmich.edu

In a seminal work on the breakdown of democratic regimes, Juan Linz defines legitimacy as "the belief that in spite of shortcomings and failures, the existing political institutions are better than any others that might be established" (Linz 1978: 16). To the extent that individuals view the job performed by democratic governments as effective, they will be less inclined to support extra-constitutional measures. However, when legitimacy declines, citizens may be receptive to new political alternatives, even those that would undermine democracy.<sup>2</sup>

Crime and insecurity have emerged as critical issues in Latin America and the rest of the

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<sup>2</sup> For an extensive analysis of the impact of legitimacy on democratic values, see Booth and Seligson 2009.

developing world. Studies have shown that citizens view crime as one of the most pressing problems facing their nation (Quann and Kwing 2002)

Table 1 presents data from the World Health Organization's Report on Violence and Health that shows that Latin America has the dubious distinction of having the highest rates of crime and violence in the world. Moreover, according to Alejandro Gaviria and Carmen Pagés, the homicide rates are not only consistently higher in Latin America, but also the differences with the rest of the world are growing larger (Gaviria and Pagés 1999).

**Table 1.**  
Comparison of Homicide Rates around the World

Region	No. of Homicides per 100,000 persons (2000)
Latin America and Caribbean	27.5
United States	6.9
Africa	22.2
Europe*	1.0
Southeast Asia	5.8
Western Pacific	3.4
<b>World</b>	<b>8.8</b>
*Includes only Western European countries Source: World Report on Violence and Health (statistical annex), World Health Organization (WHO), 2002.	

Coinciding with the recent wave of crime in Latin America, the last two decades have seen the rise of a new form of repressive policing called *mano dura*, or "strong hand," as well as relative high levels of support for authoritarian measures. As Orlando J. Pérez (2003) explains:

*Crime undermines support for democratic regimes. As crime rates increase, pressure mounts for "strong" government action which in many instances results in highly repressive and undemocratic measures (638).*

This paper explores the link between crime and support for military coups.<sup>3</sup> Military intervention is the most extreme case of democratic breakdown. If crime, therefore, induces a majority of citizens to support military take-over of power it would indeed represent a very serious threat to democracy. While successful military coups may be rare occurrences, the fact that substantial numbers of citizens could support such action may represent a clear indication of the fragility of democracy in some parts of the region.

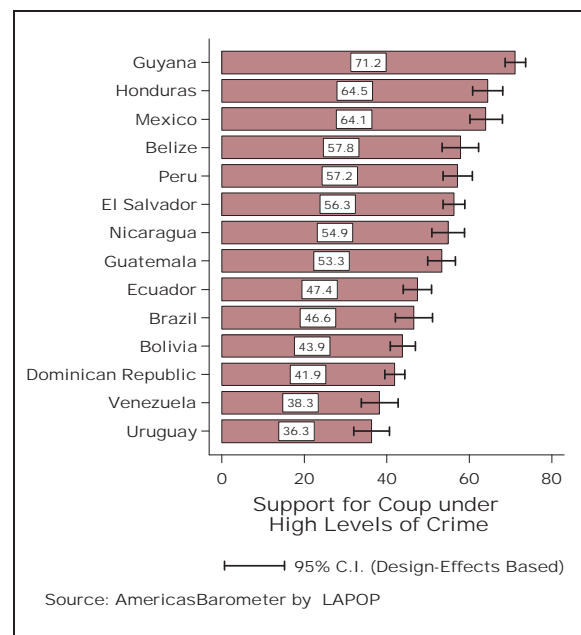
## Support for Coups under High Levels of Crime

The 2008 AmericasBarometer<sup>4</sup> survey asked a series of questions measuring the circumstances under which respondents are willing to justify a military coup (see Appendix, Table 1).

This paper focuses on high levels of crime as justification for a military coup. Figure 1 shows the levels of support for a coup under high levels of crime.<sup>5</sup> The results are expressed as the mean on a scale of 0 to 100.

**Figure 1.**

Support for Military Coup under Conditions of High Levels of Crime



With the exception of Uruguay, Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, citizens in the rest of the countries analyzed here express support that averages above 50 on the 0-100 scale for military coups under conditions of high levels of crime. Guyana exhibits the highest level with a mean of 71 on the 0-100 scale, with Honduras and Mexico expressing the next highest support. The support for military coups in Honduras is revealing given the ouster of President Zelaya by the country's military on June 28, 2009. The high proportion of Hondurans who are willing to express support for a coup reflects the volatile and weak state of democratic values in that Central American nation. Moreover, a study by Mitchell A. Seligson and John Booth found that Honduras was "the single case in Latin America with the highest level of triply dissatisfied citizens, with relatively low support for democracy and with high support for coups, confrontational political methods, and rebellion" (Seligson and Booth 2009: 4). Of course, these findings do not mean that those citizens *prefer* military-led governments or would

<sup>3</sup> The data used in this study come from the AmericasBarometer series, involving face-to face interviews conducted in over 20 nations of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean in 2008.

<sup>4</sup>Funding for the AmericasBarometer project is mainly provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other important sources of support are the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the questions about coup support were not asked in countries without armies.

automatically support a coup. But the fact that such significant numbers could find justifications for a military take-over should concern everyone who is interested in promoting democratic governance in the region. More to the point, the results indicate a large majority of citizens whose concern over crime is so weighty that they are willing to support an alternative political system.

What are the factors that explain support for military coups under conditions of high levels of crime? For that analysis I turn to logistic regression.<sup>6</sup> Here, our dependent variable is the measure of support for military coup under high levels of crime. First we examine the impact of the traditional socio-demographic variables.<sup>7</sup> Figure 2 shows graphically the results of the regression analysis.<sup>8</sup> We find that individuals living in large cities, with lower levels of wealth, less than university education and women are more supportive of military coups. These results parallel those found by José Miguel Cruz (2009) reported in an earlier *Insights* series, for perceptions of insecurity. The conclusion to be drawn is that individuals most affected by levels of insecurity also are most prone to support extreme measures, such as a coup, to combat crime.

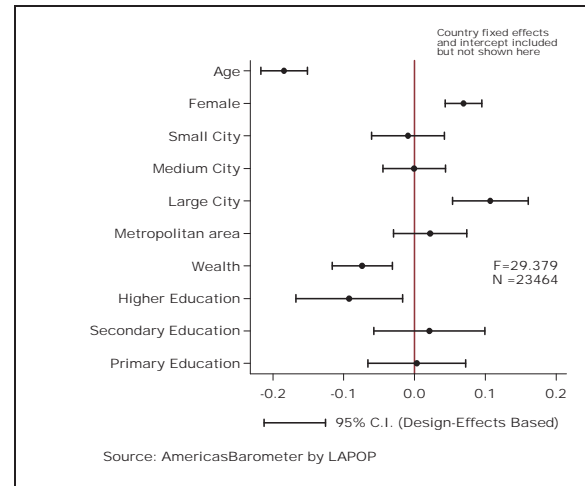
<sup>6</sup> All statistical analyses reported in this article were conducted using STATA v10, and they are adjusted to consider the effects of complex sample design. The coup support question format provided for a dichotomous response (justify or not justify a coup), and therefore logistic regression, rather than OLS regression is required.

<sup>7</sup> The analysis includes a series of dummy variables accounting for the fixed effects of each country. For each respondent a variable is created measured as “1” if the person is from that country or “0” if they are not. By including the country dummy variables we account for the impact that is “fixed” for each respondent. When using this technique we must assign one set of dummy variables as reference, in this case it is Guyana.

<sup>8</sup> Statistical significance is graphically represented by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical “0” line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical “0” line it implies a positive relationship whereas if it falls to the left it indicates a negative contribution. The appendix shows the regression coefficients.

**Figure 2.**

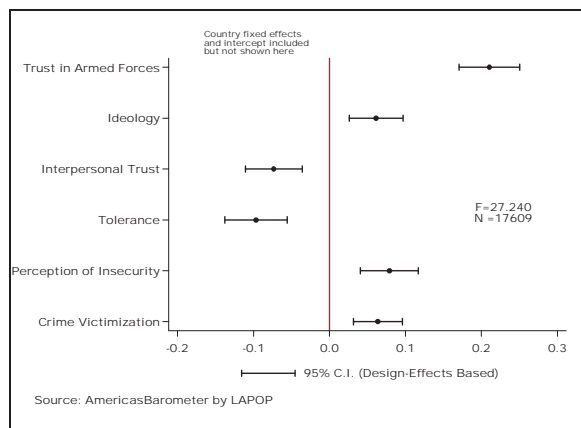
Demographic and Socioeconomic Determinants of Support for Military Coup under Conditions of High Levels of Crime



We expect that both crime victimization and perception of personal insecurity would increase support for military coups. Individuals directly affected by crime or most fearful of becoming a victim of crime should exhibit the highest levels of support for extreme measures. The evidence suggests that concern about violent crime in Latin America appears to be so severe that citizens are “willing to sacrifice certain liberties in order to feel more secure” (Tulchin and Ruthenburg 2006:5). Additionally, we expect certain attitudinal variables to also have a significant impact on support for coups under high levels of crime. First, we expect individuals who exhibit greater confidence in the armed forces to be more willing to support military coups. Second, respondents who are ideologically on the right might be expected to express higher support for military coups. Third, lower levels of interpersonal trust and political tolerance should increase support for military interventions. Figure 3 shows that crime and perception of insecurity are significant factors in determining support for military coups. As expected, individuals who have experienced crime directly or who are most insecure in their neighborhoods express greater support for military coups.



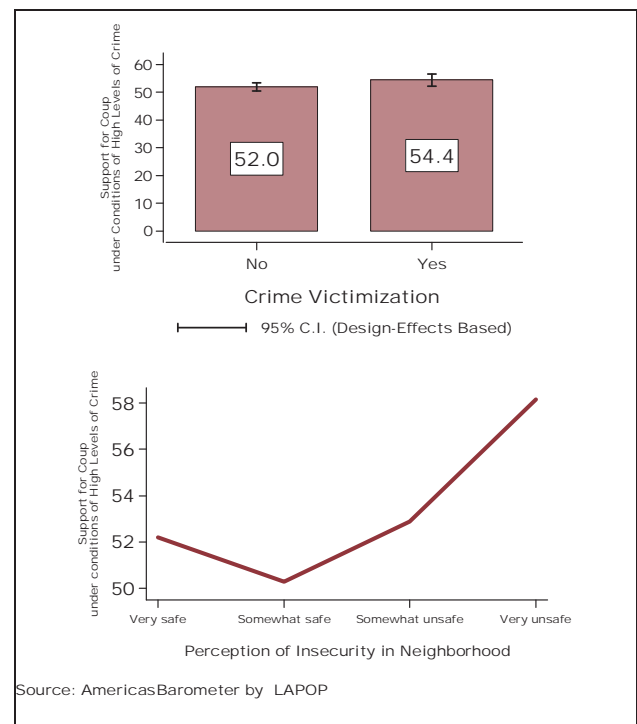
**Figure 3.**  
Determinants of Support for Military Coups under Conditions of High Levels of Crime



Trust in the armed forces also has a significant effect on support for coups. Individuals that express higher confidence in the military exhibit greater support for the armed forces to intervene when levels of crime increase. Ideology also is an important factor, with respondents on the right expressing greater support for military coups. Finally, political tolerance and interpersonal trust also are significant factors. Citizens who exhibit lower levels of interpersonal trust and political tolerance are more likely to support military interventions when high levels of crime affect the nation.

Figure 4 shows that individuals who feel unsafe in their neighborhood and who have been victims of crime are more likely to support interventions by the armed forces.

**Figure 4.**  
Support for Military Coup under Conditions of High Crime according to Perceptions of Insecurity and Crime Victimization



## Trust in the Armed Forces

Levels of trust in the armed forces seems to be an important factor in determining support for military coups when there are high levels of crime. As noted earlier, using the military for crime prevention is an integral part of “*mano dura*” policies. It therefore seems worth taking a closer look at this variable. Figure 5 illustrates the difference in trust levels between the police and the armed forces. In all the countries, with the notable exceptions of Chile and Uruguay,<sup>9</sup> trust in the military is significantly higher than for the police. In the case of Mexico, for example, trust in the armed forces is 27 points higher.<sup>10</sup>

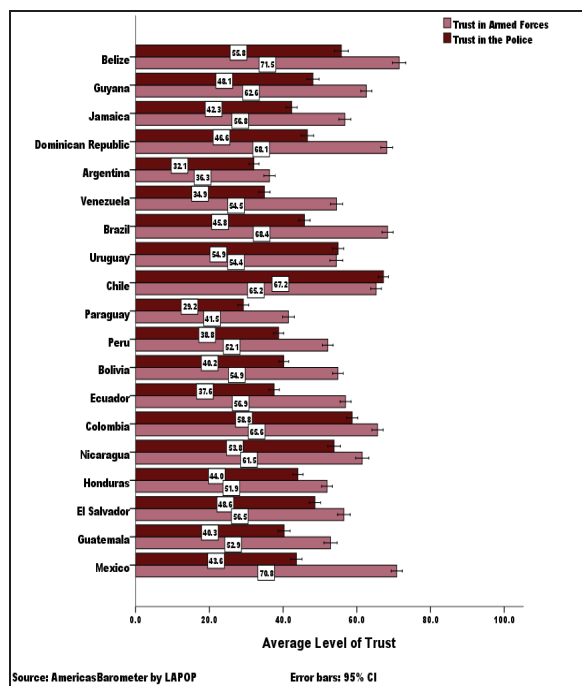
<sup>9</sup> Note that Belize, Chile and Colombia were not included in the regression analysis because in those countries the coup question was not asked. I have included them here to provide greater comparability.

<sup>10</sup> The recent focus on drug cartel violence in the North of Mexico has highlighted the apparently ineffectual, and

No doubt public opinion of this nature emboldens the military and may increase the likelihood governments will use them to supplement (or in some cases supplant) the police.

## Figures.

Trust in the Armed Forces and the Police



## Policy Implications

Given the growing problems of violence and criminal activity that plague Latin American societies, understanding how these concerns affect citizens' willingness to support authoritarian measures is an important element in promoting stable democratic governance. Increasingly the armed forces are being utilized to combat drug trafficking, gangs, and other criminal activities. Whether or not these actions ameliorate the problem of crime is debatable;

corrupt police forces in that country, and has led to an increase in use of the military (See, The Washington Post, accessed June 23, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/interactives/mexico-at-war/>).

what is clear is that in many countries citizens are supportive of using the armed forces to combat crime, and are willing to support authoritarian measures, in the hope of stemming the tide of violence.

In the last 25 years Latin America has witnessed a remarkable transformation, from military dictatorship and revolution, to institutional democracy, competitive party systems, and more open societies. However, while there is much to be hopeful about, the specter of the military still lingers. To the extent that elected civilian governments are unable to deal effectively with the myriad of social problems facing their countries--crime principally among them--the legitimacy of democracy vis-à-vis authoritarianism will diminish. On the one hand, the loss of legitimacy may lead to public clamoring for the "strong" leadership of the military. A deeper concern is that the militaries of some countries may take public discontent with their current governments' effectiveness in fighting crime as a green light to expand their reach into more areas of domestic politics.

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## Appendix

**Table 1.**

Questions Measuring the Circumstances under Which Respondents are willing to justify a Military Coup

Now, changing the subject. 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? <b>[Read the options after each question]:</b>					
JC1. When there is high unemployment.	(1) A military take-over would be justified	(2) A military take-over would not be justified	(88) DK	(98) DA	
JC4. When there are a lot of social protests.	(1) A military take-over would be justified	(2) A military take-over would not be justified	(88) DK	(98) DA	
JC10. When there is a lot of crime.	(1) A military take-over would be justified	(2) A military take-over would not be justified	(88) DK	(98) DA	
JC12. When there is high inflation, with excessive prices increases.	(1) A military take-over would be justified	(2) A military take-over would not be justified	(88) DK	(98) DA	
JC13. When there is a lot of corruption.	(1) A military take-over would be justified	(2) A military take-over would not be justified	(88) DK	(98) DA	

**Table 2.**  
Determinants of Support for Military Coups under High Levels of Crime

	(1)		(2)	
	Coefficients	(t)	Coefficients	(t)
Crime Victimization			0.064*	(3.87)
Perception of Insecurity			0.079*	(4.06)
Tolerance			-0.097*	(-4.60)
Interpersonal Trust			-0.073*	(-3.86)
Ideology			0.061*	(3.40)
Trust in Armed Forces			0.211*	(10.34)
Primary Education	0.003	(0.10)	-0.017	(-0.37)
Secondary Education	0.021	(0.53)	-0.013	(-0.26)
Higher Education	-0.092*	(-2.40)	-0.106*	(-2.19)
Wealth	-0.074*	(-3.42)	-0.090*	(-3.49)
Metropolitan area	0.022	(0.85)	-0.023	(-0.78)
Large City	0.107*	(3.94)	0.071*	(2.38)
Medium City	-0.000	(-0.02)	-0.039	(-1.61)
Small City	-0.009	(-0.35)	-0.019	(-0.67)
Female	0.069*	(5.26)	0.094*	(5.79)
Age	-0.184*	(-11.02)	-0.201*	(-10.32)
Mexico	-0.002	(-0.08)	-0.015	(-0.67)
Guatemala	-0.104*	(-5.92)	-0.116*	(-5.79)
El Salvador	-0.071*	(-4.69)	-0.084*	(-4.91)
Honduras	-0.018	(-0.84)	-0.016	(-0.67)
Nicaragua	-0.100*	(-5.22)	-0.124*	(-5.88)
Ecuador	-0.207*	(-8.63)	-0.226*	(-7.69)
Bolivia	-0.224*	(-9.60)	-0.239*	(-9.05)
Peru	-0.061*	(-3.33)	-0.079*	(-3.92)
Uruguay	-0.209*	(-10.46)	-0.220*	(-11.03)
Brazil	-0.143*	(-6.85)	-0.155*	(-6.96)
Venezuela	-0.214*	(-9.67)	-0.218*	(-8.67)
Dominican Republic	-0.177*	(-11.99)	-0.213*	(-11.84)
Constant	0.276*	(9.37)	0.348*	(10.26)
F	29.38		27.24	
Number of Obs.	23464		17609	
* p<0.05				





*AmericasBarometer Insights*<sup>\*</sup>: 2010 (No.33)

## Police Misconduct and Democracy in Latin America<sup>1</sup>

José Miguel Cruz  
jose.m.cruz@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

The police play a fundamental role in any political regime. Whether an authoritarian regime or a liberal democracy, the police are responsible for providing domestic security, ensuring public order, enforcing laws, and channeling claims for justice. Police actions are intertwined with regime performance, as they showcase the state's response to day-to-day issues. The police, not congressmen or even locally elected officials, are typically the first public officials whom people encounter or turn to when safety concerns surface (Marenin 1996). Citizens' perceptions of the police, therefore, are an important component of regime legitimacy, possibly contributing as much or more than trust in other key political institutions, such as Congress, political parties, or the Executive.

Police performance is vital in consolidated democracies (Bayley 2006), but even more so in

emerging democracies or consolidating democratic regimes where system legitimacy is not yet firmly established. Public security institutions in post-transition countries face the daunting task of providing security and enforcing the rule of law while overcoming entrenched public distrust caused by periods of repressive, dictatorial rule where the police served the arm of the state to terrorize citizens (Frühling 2003). Recent literature has pointed out the importance of reforming and strengthening police institutions in order to improve the prospects for democratic consolidation (Bayley 2006; Frühling, Tulchin, and Golding 2003). A limited number of comparative studies have concentrated on police legitimacy and public trust and how attitudes toward the police are related to regime characteristics.<sup>2</sup> For example, comparing Costa Rica, Mexico, and the United States, Walker and Waterman (2008) found that attitudes toward the police are affected by the degree of regime's consolidation.

In this *AmericasBarometer Insights* report, we empirically explore the impact of perceptions of police misconduct on public support for democracy. We use a selection of variables from the 2008 Americas Barometer survey that tap perceptions of police behavior and test their impact on attitudes related to support for a stable democracy.<sup>3</sup> We specifically test if perceptions that the police are involved in crime affect public support for democracy. In this assessment, we also include measures of

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<sup>\*</sup> The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/AmericasBarometerInsightsSeries>.

The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

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<sup>2</sup> Research in this general area has largely relied on case studies in Latin America (Bailey and Dammert 2007); post-communist Europe (Caparini and Marenin 2004); and other regions of the world (Hinton and Newburn 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Funding for the 2008 series mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas, and Vanderbilt University.

perceptions of police corruption and police abuse as proxies of police misbehavior.<sup>4</sup>

Police misconduct is considered a critical problem in Latin America. News about police involvement in power abuse, corruption, extrajudicial killings, and organized crime rings are frequent in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela. Moreover, the problem of police misconduct is not uncommon in other Latin American countries as well (Beltrán 2007).

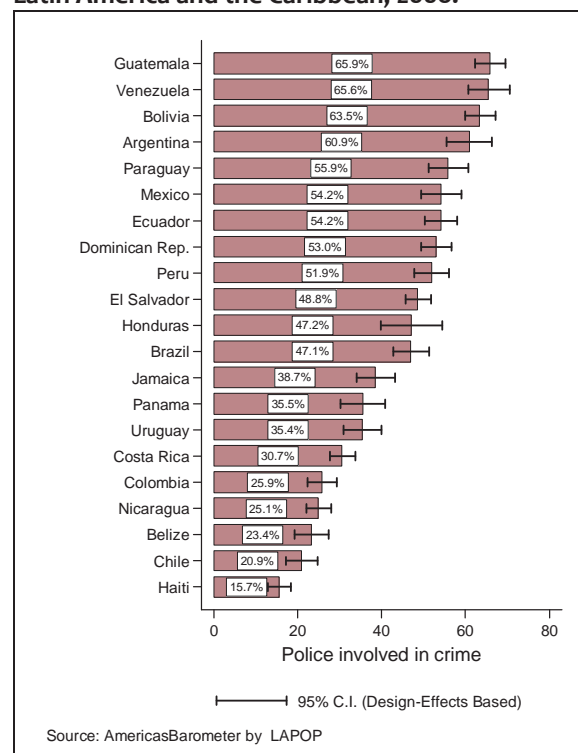
People's perceptions of police involvement in criminal activities can be a good way to measure police misconduct as it not only picks up perceptions of criminal activities perpetrated by police officers but, as Paul Chevigny (2003) argues, it can also reflect the degree of corruption and abuse that people face from their local police. The 2008 survey included a question that directly tapped into perceptions of police involvement in crime as opposed to their role protecting people from crime. The question read as follows: **AOJ18.** "Some people say that the police in this neighborhood (town, village) protect people from criminals, while others say that it is the police that are involved in crime. What do you think? (1) Police protect; (2) Police involved in crime."

This question was asked to 34,320 persons in twenty-one countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>5</sup> The initial results paint an alarming picture. Over 44 percent of respondents said that their local police were involved in crime, while only 38 percent said their local police protected citizens. The rest (18 percent) said the police did not protect people but neither were they involved in crime. We compared the percentage of people who said that the police were involved

in crime across countries and the results are shown in Figure 1.

In Guatemala, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Argentina, more than 60 percent of the surveyed populations think that their local police are involved in criminal activities. The outlook is not positive in many other countries either. In most nations, the proportion of people who view the police with concern is above 30 percent. Only in Colombia, Nicaragua, Belize, Chile, and Haiti, are negative views on the police below 30 percent.

**Figure 1.**  
**Perceptions of Police Involvement in Crime in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008.**



Do these views have an impact on support for democracy? When we consider countries that are struggling to consolidate democracy and the establishment of the rule of law, this question is even more pressing. In order to assess the relationship between these views and people's support for democracy, we conducted two regression analyses.

<sup>4</sup> See Chevigny (2003) for a detailed account on the relationship between police corruption, police abuse, and impunity.

<sup>5</sup> The question was not asked in Canada, Guyana, and the United States. The non-response rate for this question in the overall sample of twenty-one countries was 10.9%.

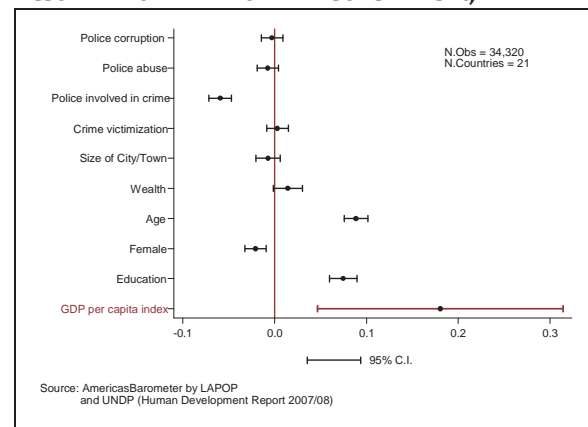
## The Impact of Police Misconduct on Support for Democracy

We use opinions concerning police involvement in crime as a proxy for police misconduct.<sup>6</sup> We test whether this variable, along with reports of police abuse and police corruption,<sup>7</sup> decreases support for democracy, measured in the Churchillian notion that democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government.<sup>8</sup> We included variables of gender, age, education, wealth, size of the city where the respondent lived as controls, and—acknowledging the possible impact of crime in the relationship between police performance and democracy—we added crime victimization in the equation as well. Because country wealth plays a fundamental role in democratic survival (Przeworski et al 2000), we also incorporated countries' GDP index per capita into the regression and ran a multilevel linear analysis.<sup>9</sup>

In Figure 2, we show graphically the standardized coefficient of each variable using a dot around the vertical “0” line (in red). If the dot falls to the right of the “0” line, it implies a positive impact, as in the cases of “age” and the “education.” If the dot falls into the left zone of the “0” axis, as in “female” and “police involved

in crime”, it means a negative impact on the dependent variable (support for democracy). The horizontal lines crossing each dot represent the confidence intervals: only when the confidence intervals do not overlap the “0” axis we can say the variable is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

**Figure 2.**  
**Determinants of Support for Democracy as the Best Form of Government, 2008**



Results in Figure 2 show that perceptions of police involvement in crime affect support for democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: the more people see the police as involved in crime, the less they think democracy is better than any other form of government. Other police variables showed no statistical significance in this regression, and neither did crime victimization. GDP per capita index turns out to be the most important single predictor for support for democratic government. Other important factors are the following: age (older people tend to show more support for democracy); gender (males appear more supportive of democracy); and education (as expected, well educated people tend to support more a democratic form of government). Even with these controls in the model, it is important to note that, as expected, our measure of police misconduct remains a significant factor.

We also test the impact of police misconduct on support for democracy using a more elaborate dependent variable. We made use of the

<sup>6</sup> Another option might be to use the commonly employed trust in police measure, but the item used here more directly taps perceptions of problematic behavior.

<sup>7</sup> Police abuse was measured using the following item: VIC27. “In the past 12 months has any police officer abused you verbally, physically or assaulted you?” Police corruption was measured with item EXC2: “Has a police official ask you for bribe during the past year?” For a detailed account of these items, see previous issues of the *AmericasBarometer Insight* series: Orcés (2008) and Cruz (2009).

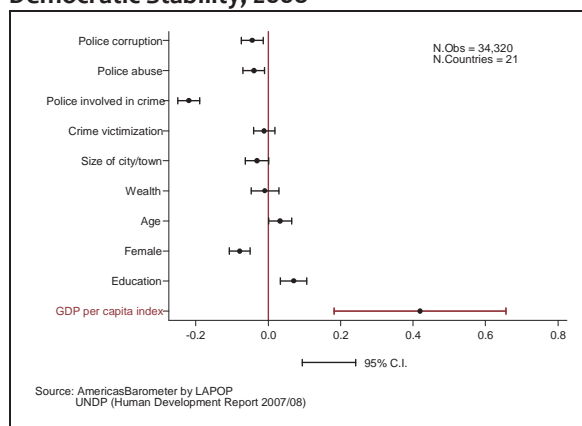
<sup>8</sup> The question was framed as follows: ING4. “Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?”

<sup>9</sup> All statistical analyses reported in this article were conducted using Stata v10, and they are adjusted to consider the effects of complex sample design.

measure of support for stable democracy developed by Seligson (2000). This variable is a composite index of measures of system support and political tolerance. The theory behind this variable maintains that those countries that combine high levels of system support and political tolerance among their populations have better prospects for stable democracy than those which combine low levels of each factor. Regarding the impact of police performance, we expect that police misconduct will negatively affect a political culture supportive of democratic stability.

Figure 3 shows the results of a multilevel logit regression analysis using democratic political culture as a dependent variable. We repeated the same model used in Figure 2 and found confirmation of our expectations. Again, police involvement in crime stands out as an important factor, one that is detrimental to democratic political culture in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, direct police abuse and corruption victimization by the police also affect negatively the prospects for democratic system support. In other words, where the police are perceived to be involved in crime, accept bribes, and abuse the population, the prospects for a supportive population toward democracy are significantly lower.

**Figure 3.**  
**Determinants of Political Attitudes that Support Democratic Stability, 2008**



In sum, these findings provide evidence concerning the importance of police performance to democratic consolidation. To be sure, a law-abiding police is not a sufficient condition for democratic consolidation; but a corrupted police is a significant hindrance for democratic governance. Police misconduct not only affects the rule of law and hinders the provision of order, security, and justice. It also undermines the basis of a regime's legitimacy in environments already troubled by poverty, inequality, and violence.

## Policy and Program Implications

The implications of these findings are clear. Police institutions are important for democratic consolidation. They not only enforce law and grant order. They also help to build legitimacy for the regime as they fulfill one of the main functions of the modern state, namely, that of providing security.

Thus, police reform emerges as a fundamental project for democratic consolidation, especially in those countries with a protracted legacy of authoritarianism and human rights abuses. However, the pressing need to tackle rising levels of crime and to placate subsequent popular outcry have not helped to strengthen police institutions in the region.

In some cases, as in Central America for instance, frequent arrests of high level police officers who have been involved in organized crime rings while themselves leading the all-out war against gangs suggest, for example, that the scope of police reforms have been hindered by the very efforts expended in carrying out draconian wars against gang-led crime. Ironically, the *mano dura* programs, based on a particular interpretation of zero tolerance policies originating in the United States, arguably have ended up strengthening corrupted and abusive elements within the police. These groups have undermined efforts at



developing professional and transparent institutions in many post-transition countries.

Hence, as we have argued in previous issues of the *AmericasBarometer Insights*, police reform not only should entail the strengthening of criminal investigation and the improvement of technical capabilities; it also must involve the development of transparent and accountable institutions. In that regard, international cooperation programs, such as the Plan Mérida,<sup>10</sup> should put democratic policing at the center of the strategy to combat crime, drugs, and gangs in the region.

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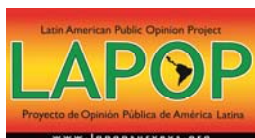
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<sup>10</sup> Also called the Mérida Initiative, this is a security cooperation program among the governments of the United States, México, and the Central American countries, focused on combating transnational organized crime.





*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.34)\**

## Popular Support for Suppression of Minority Rights<sup>1</sup>

By Diana Orces, Ph.D. candidate  
[diana.m.orces@Vanderbilt.edu](mailto:diana.m.orces@Vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

An apparently growing support for populist leaders and their policies in Latin America is one of the greatest concerns among democracy scholars (Conniff 1999; Seligson 2007). In order to have a comprehensive understanding of this support, the *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* has analyzed various features of citizens' support for the concentration of executive power. This paper is the fourth one (IO834) in this series and analyzes, specifically, popular support for the suppression of minority rights once "the people decide what is right." This question was included in the 2008 round of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey, which involved face-to-face interviews conducted in 22 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean (this question was not asked in

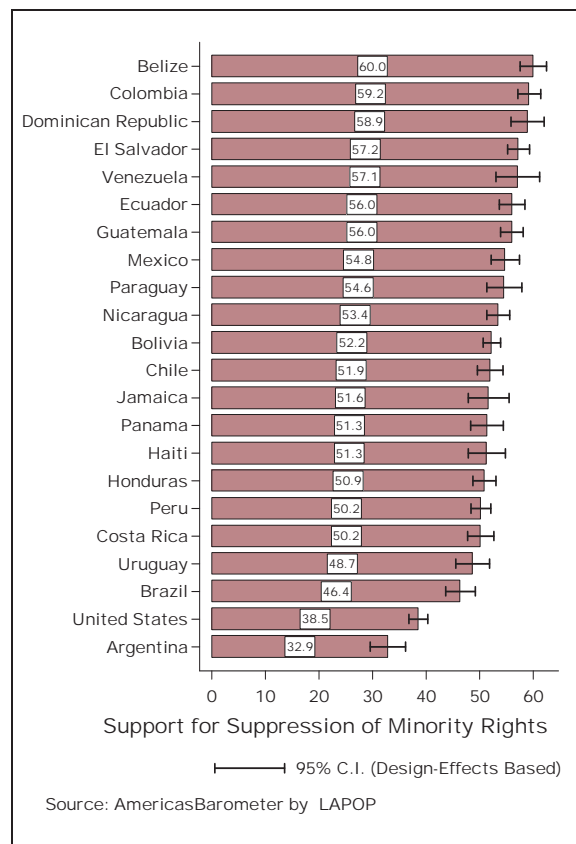
\* The Insights Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

Canada), and a web survey in the United States.<sup>2</sup> A total of 33,412 respondents were asked the following question:

**Figure 1.**

Average Support for Suppression of Minority Rights in the Americas, 2008



**POP110.** Once the people decide what is right, we must prevent opposition from a minority. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?

Responses were based on a 1-7 scale, where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 7 meant "strongly agree"; to simplify comparisons across

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

questions and survey waves, these responses were recoded on a 0-100 scale

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree			Doesn't know

Figure 1 demonstrates national averages for the 22 countries in the sample.<sup>3</sup> Belize is the country with the highest support for suppression of minority rights, with an average of 60 points on a 0-100 scale. There is little variation across countries in the Americas with the exception of the United States and Argentina, the only two countries that show statistically significant differences from the rest of the countries in the sample (United States, 38.5 and Argentina, 32.9). It is noteworthy that in Venezuela and in Ecuador, two countries where populist leadership has emerged, there is fairly high support for suppressing minority opposition with scores of 57.1 and 56 points, respectively. Perhaps these results mirror people's satisfaction with the performance of their current leaders (i.e., Presidents Hugo Chávez and Rafael Correa), who have carried out various political and economic reforms in favor of certain sectors of the population. Thus, citizens may prefer to impose limits on the opposition to avoid any threats to these popular (and populist) leaders. Following this logic, it is not surprising that Colombia and the Dominican Republic, which also had very popular presidents at the time of the survey, show high levels of support for suppressing the opposition. In the following section, we analyze the effects of socio-economic and demographic determinants as well as political attitudes and behaviors on the support for suppression of minority rights in the Americas.

## Predicting Support for Suppression of Minority Rights

<sup>3</sup> Non-response was 12% for the sample as a whole.

What explains the limited variation across countries in the Americas?<sup>4</sup> We first analyze the effect of the traditional socio-economic and demographic variables, such as levels of education, gender, wealth, and size of the city/town.

**Figure 2.**  
Socio-economic and Demographic Determinants of Average Support for Suppression of Minority Rights in the Americas, 2008

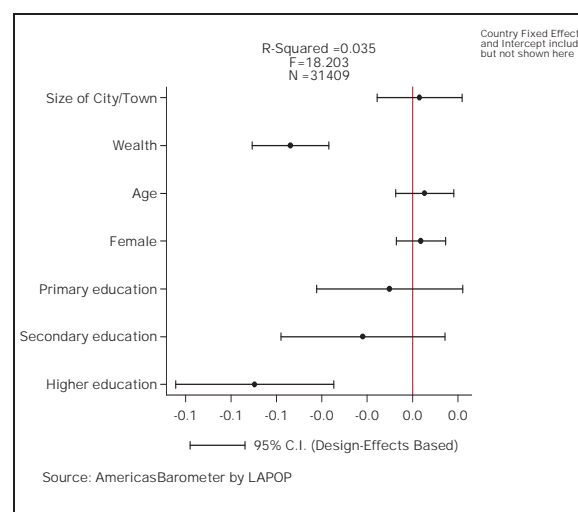


Figure 2 shows the significant role that socio-economic and demographic variables play in explaining support for popular support for the suppression of minority rights once “the people decide what is right.” Given that the average citizen in the United States scores very high on socio-economic characteristics compared to those in the rest of the countries in the sample, we excluded this case from the analysis. Each variable included in the analysis is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of those variables is shown graphically by a dot, which if located to the right of the vertical “0” line indicates a positive effect, and if to the left of the

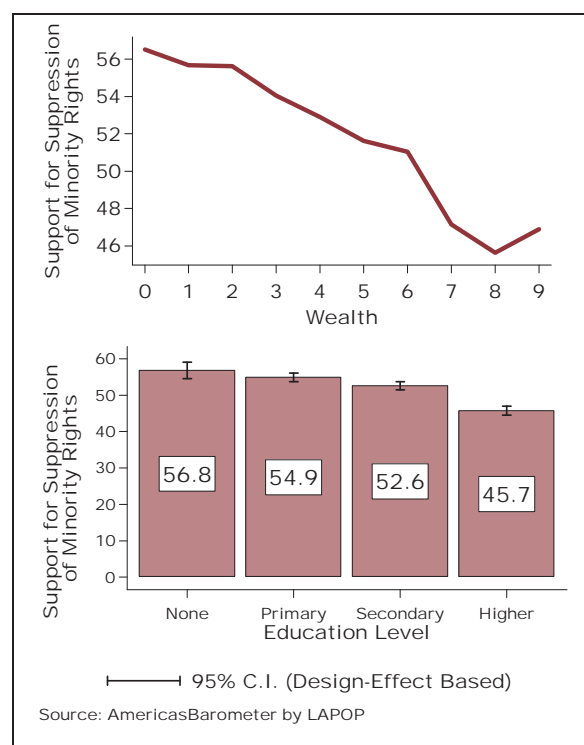
<sup>4</sup> We examined contextual factors that might explain some of the national-level variation we found. However, multilevel analyses predicting support for the prevention of opposition from a minority with the traditional national characteristics, such as GDP, economic growth, and level of democracy, did not yield significant results.

“0” line a negative effect. If the effects are statistically significant, they are shown by confidence interval lines stretching to the left and right of each dot that do not overlap the vertical “0” line (at .05 or better). If they overlap the vertical line, the effects are statistically insignificant.

We find in Figure 2 that wealthy citizens show significantly lower levels of support for the suppression of minority rights. This finding corroborates those of previous reports in this *Insight Series* where the wealthy report lower support for presidential limits on the voice and vote of opposition parties (I0809), lower support for the executive to govern without a legislature (I0825), and lower support for political monism or citizens’ worldview of a battle between good and evil (I0817).

**Figure 3.**

Wealth, Education, and Support for Suppression of Minority Rights in Latin America, 2008



Gender, age, and size of the city/town did not yield significant results among the key demographic variables. By far, the most important factors explaining opposition to this undemocratic view of limiting the opposition of a minority are education and wealth; the higher an individual’s education and wealth, the more strongly s/he would resist imposing limits on the minority. These effects are better illustrated in Figure 3, shown by its sample means.

To have a more in depth comprehension of what factors influence support for executive dominance, we also examine the impact of some political attitudes and behaviors that may play a role in explaining this support. Specifically, we expect that those who are especially satisfied with the performance of the incumbent president<sup>5</sup> and who express support for the government to rule with an “iron fist”<sup>6</sup> will express greater support for imposing limits to the voice of the minority who oppose the government. As we suggested earlier, citizens may be satisfied with existing political and economic reforms. Consequently, they may prefer to impose limits on the opposition to avoid any threats to the administration of the current president. Other variables included in this analysis are rightist ideology, political knowledge, and political interest.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 4 displays the impact of political attitudes on support for suppression of minority rights. Indeed, we find that those more satisfied with the performance of the incumbent

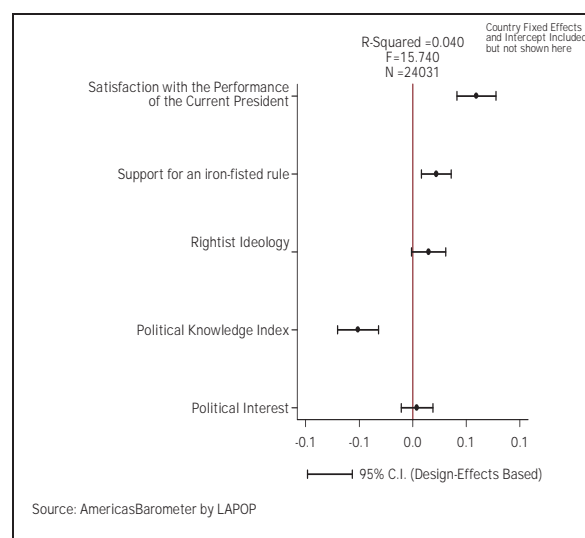
<sup>5</sup> Satisfaction with the job of the current president was measured by: speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President (...)? (1) Very good (2) Good (3) Neither good nor bad (fair) (4) Bad (5) Very bad. In order to simplify the interpretation of these responses, we recoded them on a 0-100 scale.

<sup>6</sup> This attitude was measured by: “Do you think that our country needs a government with an iron fist, or that problems can be resolved with everyone’s participation?” The item was recoded into (1) indicating support for a government with an iron fist and (0) indicating otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> This variable was measured by: how much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none?

president have higher support for the concentration of executive power when related to the limiting of the minority's voice. In other words, the more popular the president, the less support there is for a minority's opposition after controlling for socio-economic and attitudinal variables. Similarly, those who demonstrate more authoritarian attitudes, as measured by support for an "iron fisted" government are those who express a higher support for suppression of minority rights. Furthermore, in the same way as with the demographic and socio-economic characteristics analyzed so far in this short report, these results also parallel those of prior reports in this *Insight Series* when related to support for the concentration of executive power. Support for an iron-fisted rule and support for the incumbent president consistently have a positive effect on various aspects of populist attitudes, such as support for presidential limits on the voice and vote of opposition parties (I0809), support for the executive to govern without a legislature (I0825), and support for political monism or citizen's worldview of a battle between good and evil (I0817).

**Figure 4.**  
Determinants of Average Support for Suppression of Minority Rights in the Americas, 2008



A surprising finding, and in opposition to what we have seen so far in this series, is the insignificant effect of rightist ideology<sup>8</sup> in particular, given that this variable has consistently achieved statistical significance in all the various features of support for executive concentration of power previously analyzed. Here, ideology does not have any significant effect. Additionally, in contrast with our findings of a previous report related to support for political monism (I0817), political knowledge<sup>9</sup> yields statistically significant results, indicating the relevance of political knowledge as a factor capable of depressing undemocratic attitudes. It is worth mentioning that all these variables are statistically significant after controlling for the perception of personal and national economic well being, as well as country effects and the traditional socio-economic and demographic variables.<sup>10</sup>

## Program and Policy Implications

With the persistent and increasing support for populist leadership in Latin America, it is vital to understand the sources of this support. Why do citizens continue to support populist leaders who may hinder the prospects of democracy in the region? In this short paper, we specifically examined one feature of executive dominance support, measured by the suppression of

<sup>8</sup> Rightist ideology was measured by: L1. (Left-Right Scale) On this card there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale?

<sup>9</sup> The Political Knowledge Index is measured through the following questions: GI1. What is the name of the current president of the (country)? GI2. What is the name of the President of (Congress) in (country)? GI3. How many (provinces) does the (country) have? GI4. How long is the (presidential/prime ministerial) term of office in country? GI5. What is the name of the current president of Brazil?

It is worthy of note that the question related to Congress was not asked in Bolivia.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to the Appendix for a detailed display of those effects.

minority rights once “the people decide what is right.” We found that the wealthy and the highly educated are those who consistently demonstrate low support for this view, rendering further evidence for the significant role that wealth and education play to preserve a healthy democratic political culture. The AmericasBarometer data also suggest that the more citizens are satisfied with the incumbent government’s performance and the more they support a government that rules with an “iron fist,” the more they are willing to support limits on the voice of a minority. As previously mentioned, when people feel that their needs have been met, their interests may be threatened by the opposition, therefore, showing higher support for imposing restraints on those who oppose the government. What do these results mean for democracy in the region? If people continue to express high support for governments that in one form or another carry out undemocratic practices, as recently experienced in Venezuela where President Hugo Chávez won by a majority a referendum that will allow him to run again for office in 2012 and beyond without limits,<sup>11</sup> this is a clear example that democracy as a form of government may be at risk.

However, our findings also indicated that those who have higher political knowledge express lower levels of support for limiting the voice of a minority, suggesting that those who have a deeper understanding of the political world are more aware of the importance that the protection of the rights of minorities represents for the persistence of democracy as a form of government (Gibson 2005a; Gibson 2002; Gibson 2005b; Gibson 2006; McClosky 1983). For that reason, democratic governments should not only aim at increasing wealth and education but should emphasize the transmission of political knowledge, so that a strong political culture can be built, increasing the prospects for the

sustainability of democracy as a form of government. One way that such a program could be implemented in the region is by including in children’s educational agenda a section related to political awareness. By slowly increasing political knowledge among children, who represent the future of our countries, this may contribute to the reduction of intolerant attitudes, such as the attitude analyzed in here.

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<sup>11</sup> For more detailed information on this subject see [http://www.infolatam.com/entrada/venezuela\\_chavez\\_gano\\_su\\_referendum-12438.html](http://www.infolatam.com/entrada/venezuela_chavez_gano_su_referendum-12438.html)



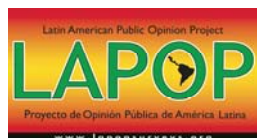
## Appendix

**Table 1. Socio-economic and Demographic Determinants of Average Support for Suppression of Minority Rights in the Americas, 2008**

	Coefficient.	T
Higher education	-0.070*	(-3.94)
Secondary education	-0.023	(-1.23)
Primary education	-0.010	(-0.64)
Female	0.004	(0.66)
Age	0.004	(0.61)
Wealth	-0.054*	(-6.23)
Size of City/Town	0.003	(0.34)
Mexico	0.036*	(3.03)
Guatemala	0.032*	(2.88)
El Salvador	0.046*	(4.32)
Honduras	0.002	(0.16)
Nicaragua	0.019	(1.68)
Costa Rica	0.013	(1.14)
Panama	0.015	(1.12)
Colombia	0.058*	(5.38)
Ecuador	0.059*	(3.76)
Bolivia	0.022	(1.57)
Peru	0.009	(0.82)
Paraguay	0.027*	(2.31)
Chile	0.024*	(2.08)
Brazil	-0.018	(-1.46)
Venezuela	0.053*	(3.48)
Argentina	-0.086*	(-6.55)
Dominican Republic	0.054*	(4.25)
Haiti	-0.006	(-0.41)
Jamaica	0.011	(0.80)
Belize	0.064*	(5.50)
Constant	0.009	(0.93)
R-Squared	0.035	
Number of Obs.	31409	
* p<0.05 Education level of Reference: None Country of Reference: Uruguay		

**Table 2. Determinants of Average Support for Suppression of Minority Rights in the Americas, 2008**

	Coefficient.	t
Political Interest	0.004	(0.53)
Political Knowledge Index	-0.051*	(-5.22)
Ideology Scale	0.015	(1.82)
Support for an iron-fisted rule	0.022*	(3.11)
Satisfaction with the Performance of the Current President	0.059*	(6.36)
Perception of National Economic Situation	-0.011	(-1.32)
Perception of Personal Economic Situation	-0.008	(-0.97)
Education	-0.039*	(-3.99)
Female	-0.010	(-1.42)
Age	-0.006	(-0.75)
Wealth	-0.040*	(-4.09)
Size of City/Town	0.012	(1.15)
Mexico	0.024*	(1.99)
Guatemala	0.018	(1.48)
El Salvador	0.039*	(3.49)
Honduras	-0.001	(-0.10)
Nicaragua	0.010	(0.80)
Costa Rica	0.018	(1.56)
Panama	0.017	(1.27)
Colombia	0.045*	(3.80)
Ecuador	0.056*	(3.24)
Bolivia	0.025	(1.71)
Peru	0.004	(0.39)
Paraguay	0.024	(1.78)
Chile	0.017	(1.48)
Brazil	-0.018	(-1.48)
Venezuela	0.041*	(2.47)
Argentina	-0.095*	(-6.64)
Dominican Republic	0.042*	(3.25)
Haiti	-0.003	(-0.25)
Jamaica	0.014	(0.98)
Belize	0.047*	(3.50)
Constant	0.020	(1.93)
R-Squared	0.040	
Number of Obs.	24031	
* p<0.05		
Country of Reference: Uruguay		



*AmericasBarometer Insights Series: 2010  
(No.35)\**

# Understanding Trust in Municipal Governments<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Montalvo  
d.montalvo@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

Social scientists have proposed at least three theories to understand political trust in democratic institutions (Newton and Norris 2000). First, the *socio-psychological* theory suggests that the inner quality of trust between individuals, by itself or together with life satisfaction, is associated with institutional trust. This type of trust is created in the first stages of human psychological development as a result of the mother-child feeding experience (Vetter and Smith 1971, Coser and Rosenberg 1976). Secondly, the *cultural-environmental* theory suggests that the degree of participation and socialization in communitarian activities affects levels of trust. This second type of trust is activated by social mechanisms of personal interaction (Putnam 1994, Inglehart 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *AmericasBarometer Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

\* The *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

Finally, the *institutional efficacy* theory argues that institutional performance is closely linked to political trust. This third type of trust is based upon the perception that people have of whether or not institutions are producing results consistent with their expectations (Hiskey and Seligson 2003, Hetherington 2005).

In this new *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* report, we carry out an empirical verification of these theories through the study of citizen trust in Latin America's municipal governments. For this purpose, we query the 2008 round of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) surveys.<sup>2</sup> In this survey, 38,535 respondents from 23 nations were asked the following question:<sup>3</sup>

**B32.** To what extent do you trust the Municipality?<sup>4</sup>

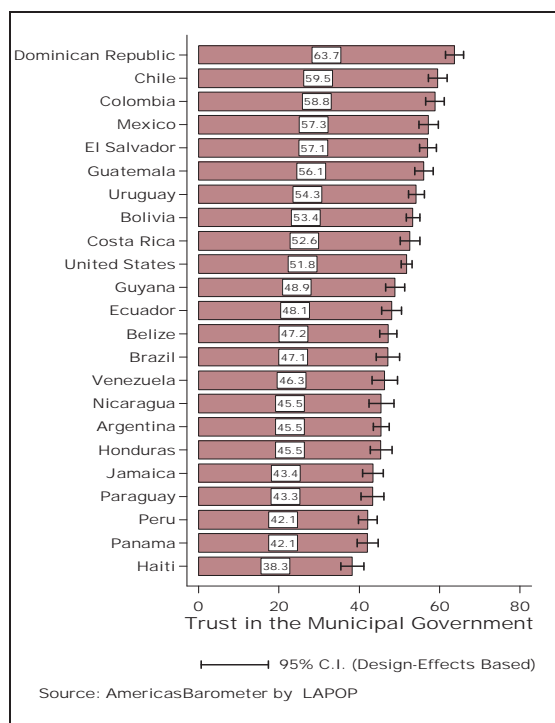
**Figure 1.**  
Average Trust in Municipal Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008

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<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Non-response for this question was 3.35%.

<sup>4</sup> The proper name of the Municipal Government was used in each country (i.e., Parish Council in Jamaica).



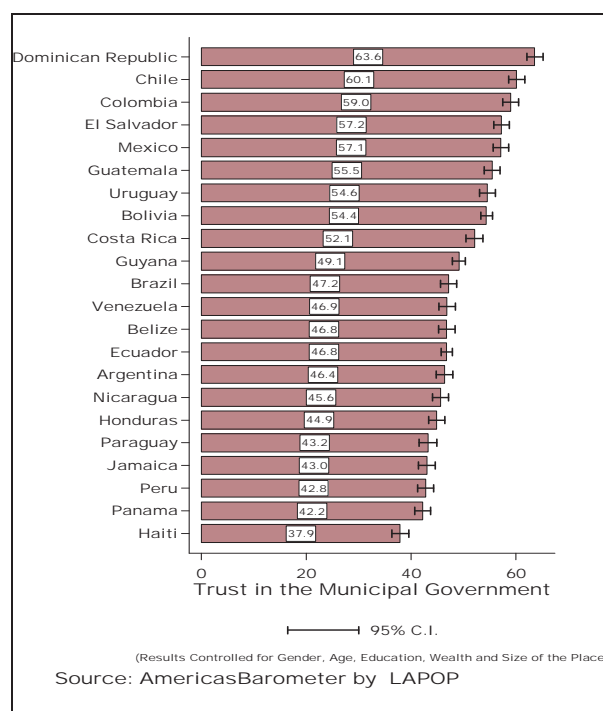
Respondents placed their degree of trust on a 1-7 scale, where 1 meant ‘not at all’ and 7 meant ‘a lot’. These responses were recalibrated on a 0-100 scale in order to make comparisons across questions and survey waves easier. Figure 1 shows national averages for the 23 countries in the sample.<sup>5</sup>

It is striking to note that the average trust in municipal governments in the region is only 49.9 out of 100 possible points. This corroborates previous *AmericasBarometer Insights* series findings of overall low levels of trust in democratic institutions in the hemisphere. However, there is significant variation of trust across nations. At one end, countries like the Dominican Republic, Chile and Colombia show the highest levels of trust with 63.7, 59.5 and 58.8 points, respectively. At the other end, countries like Peru, Panama and Haiti show the lowest levels of trust with 42.1, 42.1 and 38.3 points, respectively.

**Figure 2.**

<sup>5</sup> In a previous report (IO801) we examined trust in political parties.

### Average Trust in Municipal Governments after Taking into Account Individual Characteristics in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



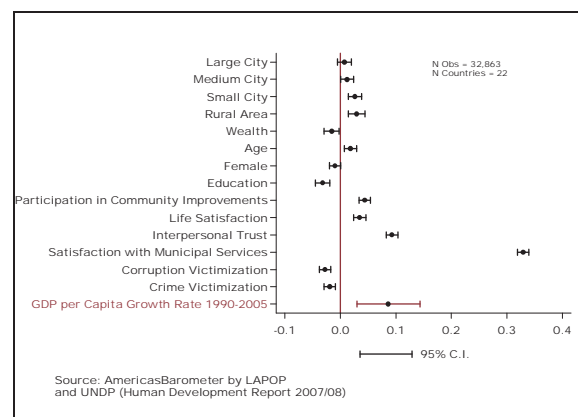
How great are the effects of the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the populations on trust in Latin America’s municipal governments? To respond to this question, we insert sex, age, education, wealth, and size of town as control variables, and we eliminate both the U.S. and Canada cases in part because these countries have such high levels of socio-economic development compared to the others that any statistical analysis would be affected by these “outliers,” and also in part because the LAPOP project’s predominant focus is on policy-relevant questions for the Latin American and Caribbean regions. When the data are controlled for the standard socio-economic and demographic characteristics, as they are in Figure 2, the ranking varies somewhat relative to the ranking displayed in Figure 1. In addition to the effects of individual characteristics on trust, we believe that there are other explanatory factors at the country-level of analysis.

### Do Contextual Factors matter?

A recurrent contextual factor explaining political trust in democratic institutions is *economic performance*. Consistent with the institutional efficacy theory is the finding in a previous *AmericasBarometer Insights* article of a positive, strong and substantive relationship between economic growth and institutional trust.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, we fit a multilevel model with the average GDP per capita growth rate between 1990 and 2005, as a contextual explanatory variable. Figure 3 depicts the effects of both the individual characteristics of respondents and the level of GDP per capita growth on trust in municipalities.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 3.**

A Multilevel Analysis of the Determinants of Trust in Municipal Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Impact of Growth, 2008



It can be observed in Figure 3 that all the theories of political trust mentioned at the outset of this study pass the empirical test. In other words, all the variables used to operationalize the concepts of the socio-psychological, cultural-environmental and institutional efficacy theories show a statistically significant relationship with trust in municipal governments. This significance is graphically represented by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical “0” line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical “0” line, it implies a positive relationship whereas if it falls to the left, it indicates a negative relationship. The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients (i.e., “beta weights”).

Which variables most appropriately capture the three theories of trust proposed in our analysis? In this study we focus our attention on the most recurrent variables used in the literature to measure political trust (Newton and Norris 2000).<sup>8</sup> First, we use “life satisfaction” and “interpersonal trust” to evaluate the socio-psychological theory. Holding other factors constant, we find that the levels of trust in municipal governments increase as a result of any increment in levels of life satisfaction or interpersonal trust. This finding corroborates the socio-psychological theory of trust described at the beginning of this report. It is worth noting in

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Trust in the Armed Forces.

<sup>7</sup> This analysis is carried out using multi-level regression techniques (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Raudenbush, et al. 2004), as implemented by LAPOP on STATA 10. The model simultaneously takes into account both individual and country-level (i.e., contextual) factors, and produces correct regression estimates that are impossible with standard OLS regression.

<sup>8</sup> In order to avoid “omitted variable bias” we tested several other variables to measure these concepts. In general terms, the results do not contradict our findings.



Figure 3, however, that the variable interpersonal trust displays a higher explanatory power than life satisfaction.

Second, we employ the variable “participation in community improvements” to measure the concepts of the cultural-environmental theory. We find that individuals who participate more often in community improvement activities tend to manifest higher degrees of trust in their municipalities. Third, we use both individual and country-level factors to measure the concepts of institutional efficacy. At the individual level, we find that the most powerful explanation of trust is the degree of satisfaction with municipal services. Citizens who are satisfied with the services provided by their municipalities tend to express higher trust than those who are dissatisfied. Accordingly, those individuals who have been victimized by corruption or crime tend to rely less on their municipalities than those who have not been victimized.

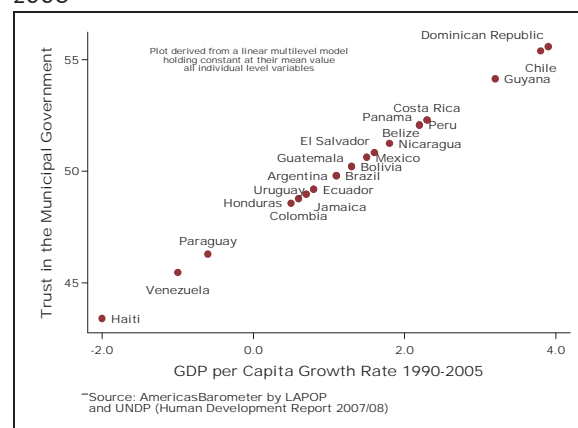
In terms of the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of individuals, we find that citizens with more years of completed education express less trust in municipal governments than those with less formal education. On the other hand, as people grow older, the degree of trust tends to increase relative to younger individuals. The most revealing demographic factor is, perhaps, the size of the geographic area of residence. Citizens who live in rural areas and small cities express more trust in their municipalities compared to those residing in medium and large cities and national capitals.

At the country-level, we employ the variable “GDP per capita Growth Rate” to measure institutional efficacy. Consistent with the results of previous *AmericasBarometer Insights* series, we find that citizens of countries with higher growth rates tend to show higher levels of trust in their municipal governments.<sup>9</sup> In this paper,

<sup>9</sup> The question, then, becomes: is there a direct effect of municipal performance on economic growth? The scholarly literature suggests that citizen trust in democratic institutions increases with positive economic performance,

we show the specific effects of economic growth on trust in municipalities in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.**  
Economic Growth and Trust in Municipal Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



For example, if a Haitian citizen with a given set of socio-economic and demographic characteristics were to migrate from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, all other things being equal, and none of her individual characteristics such as education, household wealth, age, etc. were to change, that person’s trust in the municipal government would increase, on average, by nearly 15 points on a 0-100 scale.

Note, however, that the predicted line above fits the countries that would have been outliers in a regular scatter plot. This is the reason why the placement of Venezuela and Guyana, for example, appear to be inconsistent with the rankings presented in Figures 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the placement of most countries (the non-outliers) is consistent with what we observed in the national averages depicted earlier, stressing the robustness of our findings.

## Policy Implications

but we think that more research is needed to answer this question.

Since we believe that there is a direct impact of trust on support for democracy (see previous *Insights* series), it is natural to ask how trust in the municipal government can be improved. The most evident policy recommendation is to increase institutional efficacy based upon citizen needs. As we have shown, citizen evaluations of municipal performance demonstrate the strongest effect on trust in this particular institution; therefore, these evaluations may be used as input for local policy-making. Another important policy implication is the encouragement of participation in community and municipal activities. Enabling “participatory budget” mechanisms that bring citizens together to find solutions to common problems has proved to be one of the most effective mechanisms to connect the citizenry with the local government. Our analysis shows that this element of social capital activates certain social mechanisms necessary to increase the levels of trust required in a healthy democracy.

An additional finding suggesting the need for further research is the fact that citizens living in rural areas and small towns are more trusting of their municipalities than individuals residing in larger cities. Does this mean that when the government is closer to the people, they tend to trust their governments more? The answer to this question will be explored in a future *AmericasBarometer Insight Series*.

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*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No. 36)\**

# Political Parties and Representation in Latin America

By Margarita Corral  
margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

Political parties perform functions essential to any democracy. Among these functions is their critical role as representatives of society's interests (Gunther and Diamond 2001; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). However, recent studies suggest that a crisis of representation is occurring, specifically in contexts like Latin America. As some authors point out, this crisis occurs when "citizens do not believe they are well represented" (Mainwaring et al. 2006: 15).

In order to better understand citizen dissatisfaction with the basic institutions of representation, this new paper in the *AmericasBarometer Insight Series* analyzes the extent to which people in the Americas consider that political parties represent their voters. This report is the second of the *Insight Series* studies to examine political parties<sup>1</sup>; a previous report addressed the lack of confidence in political parties in the region. This time, we again query the 2008 database provided by the

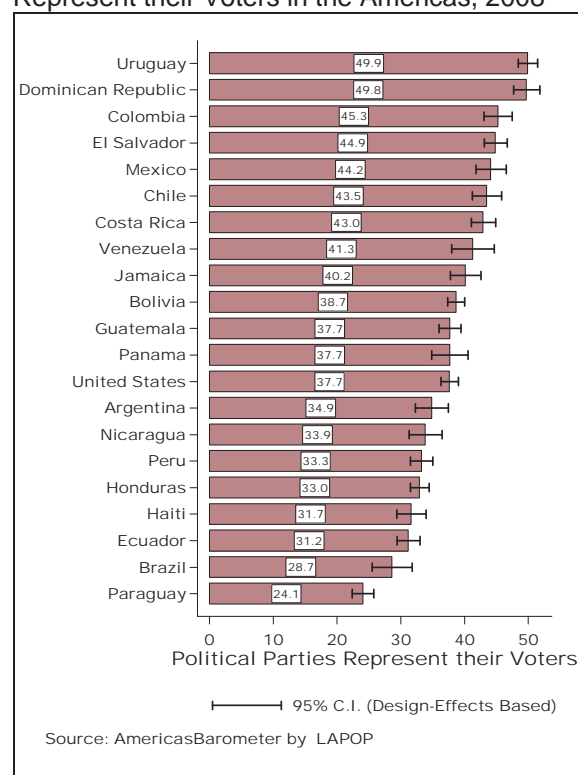
AmericasBarometer survey carried out by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) in 21 nations.<sup>2</sup> In this survey 34,469 respondents were asked the following question:

**EPP1.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that political parties represent their voters?

Respondents placed their opinion on a 1-7 scale, where 1 meant 'not at all' and 7 meant 'a lot'.

These responses were recalibrated on a 0-100 scale in order to make comparisons across questions and survey waves easier.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 shows national averages for the 21 countries in the sample.

**Figure 1.**  
Average Agreement that Political Parties Represent their Voters in the Americas, 2008



\* The Insights Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insight series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Non-response was 10.94% for the whole sample.

The relatively low levels of support for the belief that political parties represent their voters in the Americas is noteworthy. In *every* country, the average level falls below 50 points on the 0-100 scale. Uruguay and Dominican Republic are the countries with the highest levels of support for the belief that political parties represent their voters, close to the mid point, whereas at the other extreme we find Haiti, Ecuador, Brazil, and Paraguay, countries that display scores around 30 points. In general terms, we could say that citizens in the Americas do not consider that political parties are good representatives of their interests.

As noted, in a previous report (I0802) we examined levels of confidence in political parties. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there is a positive overall relationship between confidence in political parties and belief that parties represent voters' interests. However, the correlation is not exceptionally high (0.43). In what follows we examine the determinants of attitudes about political parties as vehicles for representation and, while this couldn't be foretold *a priori*, we find a story that is similar to that in our previous study.

## Explaining Belief that Parties Represent Their Voters

What explains variation in the belief that political parties represent their voters? We will focus on individual characteristics of the respondents in our surveys to answer this question.<sup>4</sup> As a first step we take into account the following socio-economic and demographic characteristics: education, gender, age, wealth, and city/town size. In order to assess their influence on our dependent variable, we employ a linear regression model.<sup>5</sup> Given that citizens in the United States have sharply higher levels

on these socio-economic characteristics, we exclude this country from the analysis.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 2.**  
Socio-economic and Demographic Determinants of Support for the Belief that Political Parties Represent their Voters in Latin America, 2008

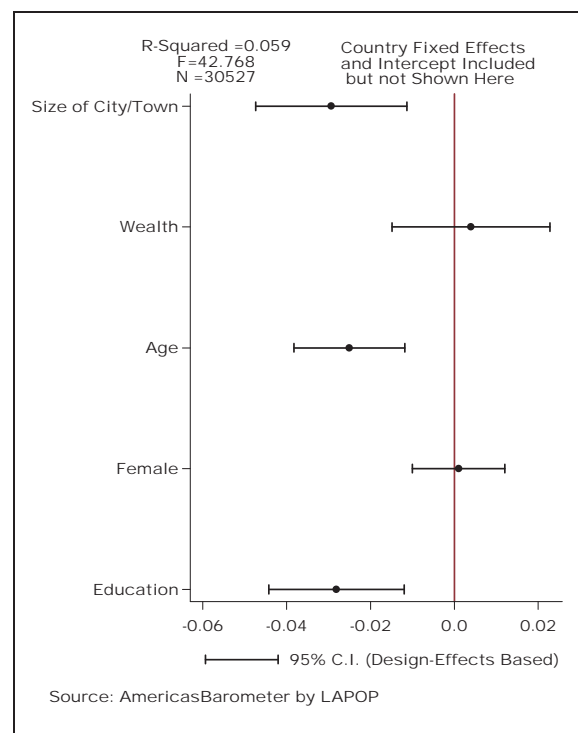


Figure 2 shows the influence of these individual-level socio-economic and demographic characteristics on the belief that political parties represent well voters in Latin America. Three out of the five variables considered are statistically significant, although the size of their effects is relatively small. This significance is graphically represented by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical "0" line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical "0" line it implies a positive relationship whereas when it falls to the left it indicates a negative contribution. In this model, size of the city, age, and education are statistically significant contributors. In this

<sup>4</sup> Multilevel analyses predicting to what extent people agree that political parties represent their voters with variables such as GDP, economic growth, and level of democracy, did not yield significant results. It is possible that the variation across countries displayed in Figure 1 is explained by some other national-level political factors, analysis that will be left for future research.

<sup>5</sup> All statistical analyses in this paper were conducted using STATA v10 and results were adjusted for the complex sample designs employed.

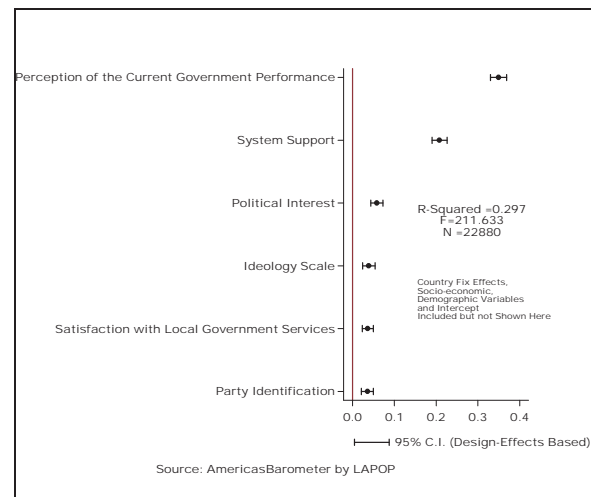
<sup>6</sup> To capture the variation across countries the model included dummy variables for each country, using Uruguay (the country with the higher score on the dependent variable) as the reference country.

sense, people living in rural areas or small towns tend to agree more that political parties represent their voters than people living in large cities, *ceteris paribus*. Older people express more positive evaluations of political parties in the same way, more than younger cohorts. Finally, also holding constant the rest of variables, people with higher levels of education are more skeptical than people with lower levels of education. Levels of wealth and gender do not make a difference.

In order to have a more reasonable and accurate idea of the determinants of support for the idea that parties represent their voters, we need to include in our model political evaluations and attitudes. In a previous *Insight Series* report, we assessed the expectation that citizens' trust in political parties is related to government performance. Drawing on this same basic argument, Figure 3 displays the results of a new model intended to explain citizens' evaluations of parties as good channels of representation in Latin America.<sup>7</sup>

The effects of these new variables in the model are particularly notable when contrasted with those we found for education, age, and city/town size. The effects of perception of government performance and system support in particular are larger than those found earlier for socio-economic and demographic variables.

**Figure 3.**  
An Analysis of the Determinants of Average Support for the Belief that Political Parties Represent their Voters in Latin America, 2008



As others have also pointed out (Mainwaring et al. 2006), citizens' perceptions about representatives depend on outputs, that is to say, on the way citizens consider that representatives perform their duties. This hypothesis is supported by this analysis: the higher the perception of current government performance<sup>8</sup>, the higher the support for the idea that parties are representing voters.

<sup>7</sup> This analysis was carried out using a linear regression that also included the socioeconomic and demographic variables and the country dummies employed earlier. Figure 3 displays only the political variables. All the regressions performed can be found in Table 1 in the appendix. It is worth noting that gender gains significance once attitudes are included, whereas size of town and wealth change the sign of their effect.

<sup>8</sup> The Perception of the Government Performance Index was constructed from five items that asked to what extent people thought the current administration fights poverty, combats government corruption, promotes and protects democratic principles, improves the security of citizens, and combats unemployment.



The results also indicate that “system support,” or a belief in the legitimacy of the system of government,<sup>9</sup> has a relatively strong effect on evaluations of parties as representatives. Again we find that belief in the legitimacy of the political system as a whole is related to views of political parties.

Apart from performance at the national level, satisfaction with outputs at local level is also found to be important, as Figure 3 shows. The higher the satisfaction with the services provided by local governments the higher the support for the idea that parties represent their voters, *ceteris paribus*. This impact is, however, not as strong as we found for national-level performance.

Political interest and party identification are also statistically significant predictors, though again with a smaller effect. People interested in politics and those who identify with parties tend to believe that parties perform well representing citizens. Although in the relationship with party identification in particular the causal arrow may go in both directions, we consider that this nonetheless noteworthy in light of low levels of party identification in the region.

Finally, we included as a predictor the role of ideology as expressed on the classic 1-10 scale of left-right self-identification. As Figure 3 shows, this factor is statistically significant (again though with a relatively small effect). The results show that people who self-identified with the right tend to support the idea that parties represent their voters more than those who identified with the left.

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<sup>9</sup> System Support Index is measured through the following questions: B1. To what extent do you believe the courts in (country) guarantee a fair trial? B.2 To what extent do you respect the political institutions in (country)? B3. To what degree do you believe that the citizen's basic rights are safeguarded by the political system in (country)? B4. To what degree do you feel proud of living in the political system in (country)? B6. To what degree do you think the political system in (country) should be supported)?

## Policy and Program Implications

Given the importance of the functions that political parties perform within the framework of liberal democracies, it is important to consider how to improve citizens' perceptions of the ability of parties to accomplish these tasks. In this case, we ask how might citizens' evaluations of parties' ability to represent citizens be improved?

As we saw when we analyzed confidence in political parties, the AmericasBarometer data suggest again that citizens are holding political parties responsible for the extent to which government does or does not satisfy their basic needs. In this sense, in order to increase support for the idea that parties accomplish their representative function, the belief that regimes fulfill their objectives and satisfy people's demands at the national level (in terms of general performance) and at the local level (in terms of service) needs to be increased.

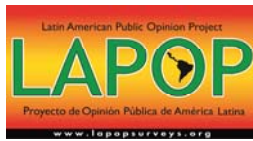
More efforts made to fight corruption, crime, and poverty, and promoting and protecting basic rights and the rule of law, should be among the principal priorities in any policy making agenda, according to our analysis. Achieving higher levels of political interest among citizens and stronger ties with political parties would be also useful. Given the positive relationship between perceptions of representation and that examined earlier, namely trust in political parties, we can be reasonably sure that such efforts will increase evaluations of political parties across several dimensions.

In conclusion, perceptions about the extent to which parties represent their voters are importantly explained by political attitudes and evaluations that are related to issues of system effectiveness and performance at both national and local levels. We suspect that efforts to improve government performance across a range of policy areas would, among other things, help to decrease the widespread general dissatisfaction with political parties in the Americas.

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Appendix: Determinants of the Belief that Parties Represent Their Voters					
	Regression I		Regression II		
	Coef.	Err. est.	Coef.	Err. est.	
Education	-0.028*	(0.008)	-0.038*	(0.008)	
Female	0.001	(0.006)	0.013*	(0.006)	
Age	-0.025*	(0.007)	-0.045*	(0.007)	
Wealth	0.003	(0.010)	-0.002	(0.009)	
Size of City/Town	-0.029	(0.009)	0.011	(0.008)	
System Support			0.208*	(0.009)	
Political Interest			0.039*	(0.008)	
Ideology Scale			0.058*	(0.008)	
Efficacy of the Current Government			0.349*	(0.010)	
Satisf. Local Services			0.037*	(0.007)	
Party Identification			0.036*	(0.007)	
Mexico	-0.048*	(0.011)	-0.015*	(0.008)	
Guatemala	-0.099*	(0.009)	-0.049*	(0.009)	
El Salvador	-0.0432	(0.009)	0.027*	(0.007)	
Honduras	-0.136*	(0.008)	-0.020*	(0.007)	
Nicaragua	-0.129*	(0.011)	-0.028*	(0.010)	
Costa Rica	-0.059*	(0.009)	-0.038*	(0.008)	
Panama	-0.095*	(0.012)	-0.008	(0.009)	
Colombia	-0.039*	(0.010)	-0.033*	(0.008)	
Ecuador	-0.192*	(0.012)	-0.095*	(0.012)	
Bolivia	-0.116*	(0.011)	-0.050*	(0.010)	
Peru	-0.122*	(0.009)	-0.017*	(0.008)	
Paraguay	-0.174*	(0.008)	-0.023*	(0.007)	
Chile	-0.045*	(0.011)	-0.006	(0.009)	
Brazil	-0.161*	(0.013)	-0.081*	(0.010)	
Venezuela	-0.065	(0.014)	0.009	(0.014)	
Argentina	-0.111*	(0.011)	-0.027*	(0.011)	
Dominican Republic	-0.006	(0.010)	0.000	(0.008)	
Haiti	-0.143*	(0.011)	-0.020*	(0.010)	
Jamaica	-0.0752*	(0.011)	-0.020*	(0.009)	
Constant	-0.002*	(0.009)	0.017*	(0.008)	
R-squared	0.059		0.296		
N	30527		22880		
* p<0.05					



## *AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No. 37)\**

# Trust in Elections

By Matthew L. Layton  
Matthew.l.layton@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

Elections are the keystone of representative democracy. While they may not be sufficient for democratic consolidation, electoral processes remain essential to democracy and democratic legitimacy (Diamond, 1999). Recently, the political crisis in Honduras has focused attention on presidential elections as a means to mend political divisions. A single public vote is unlikely to resolve deep societal and political problems; however, trust in the electoral *process* is integral to acceptance of the outcome as legitimate (Anderson et al., 2005). This *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* report looks at citizens' trust in elections.<sup>1</sup> To do so, I employ the 2008 round of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) surveys.<sup>2</sup> In this round 38,535 respondents from 23 nations<sup>3</sup> in North, Central, South America, and the Caribbean were asked the same question:

\* The Insights Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insight series can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

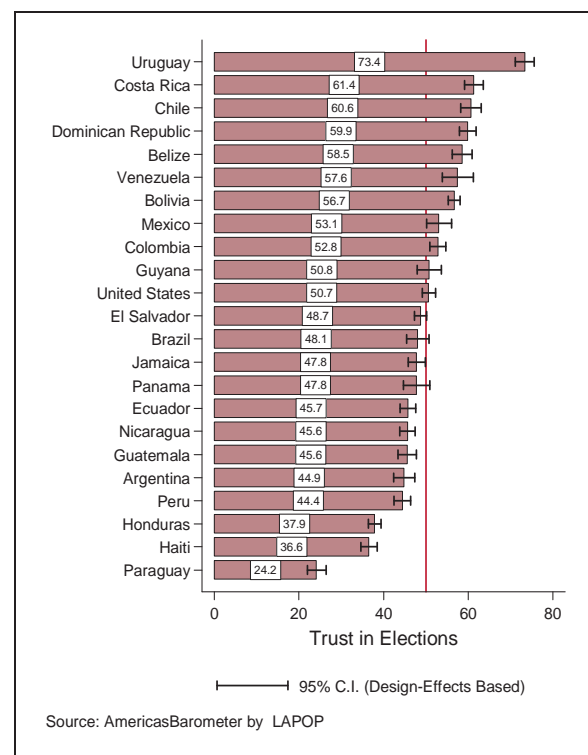
<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Interviewers did not ask the question in Canada.

## B47. To what extent do you trust elections?

Responses were given based on a 1-7 scale, where '1' indicates "not at all" and '7' indicates "a lot." These responses were then recalibrated on a 0-100 scale to conform to the LAPOP standard, which facilitates comparability across questions and survey waves.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 displays each nation's average score with its confidence interval. I find that there are three distinct groups of nations when measuring trust in elections in the Americas. One group – the top nine countries – is higher than the neutral point (50), another – the middle six – hovers around the neutral point, and a third group – the last eight – falls well below 50.

**Figure 1.**  
Average Trust in Elections in the Americas  
Compared to Neutral Line at 50 Points, 2008



Uruguay leads all countries at 73.4 points, followed at a distance by Costa Rica (61.4) and Chile (60.6). At the other extreme, we find Paraguay, Haiti, and Honduras, countries where

<sup>4</sup> Non-response was 3.80% for the sample excluding Canada. Four countries had non-response rates over 5%: Guatemala (8.65%); Honduras (5.98%); Dominican Republic (5.18%); and Belize (13.21%).

the average score falls below 38 points and at 24.2 for Paraguay. Notably, despite its long democratic history, U.S. citizens are ambivalent in their trust of elections (50.7 points).

How much of this variation across countries emerges from differences in individuals' socio-economic and demographic characteristics? In order to assess the effects of these characteristics, I control for education, gender, age, wealth, and city/town size. Given that the United States holds sharply higher levels on socioeconomic characteristics and given the focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, I exclude it from the analysis for a total sample size of 37,035.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2.**  
Average Trust in Elections after Taking into Account Individual Characteristics in Latin America and the Caribbean Compared to Neutral Line at 50 Points, 2008

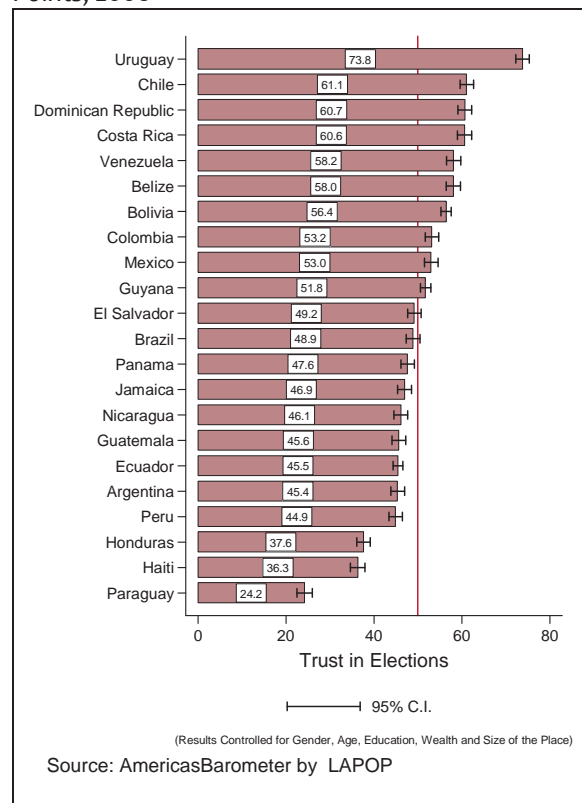


Figure 2 shows that the results remain remarkably consistent with Figure 1: the

<sup>5</sup> The non-response rate for the sample without the United States or Canada is 3.95%.

national averages remain almost the same.<sup>6</sup> In addition, similar cross-national rank-orderings remain evident. Still, there is a much smaller neutral group than previously: only El Salvador and Brazil cross the neutral reference line with their confidence intervals. This suggests that the survey question has tapped into attitudes with significant cross-national variance and some level of meaning for individuals. Therefore, we must search for other factors that might help to explain the variations in trust across countries.

## Do Contextual Factors Matter?

While controlling for citizens' socio-economic and demographic characteristics does not have much effect on the observed cross-national variation in trust in elections, individual political attitudes and behaviors and national characteristics may have more influence. The question is, which attitudes and behaviors and what characteristics?

Figures 1 and 2 presented some surprises in terms of national rankings with rich and poor nations included in both high and low trust groups. Moreover, highly democratic nations such as Uruguay and Costa Rica appear at the top of trust in elections as we might expect. However, the ambivalence of respondents in the US (see Figure 1) indicates that neither the level of economic development nor the level of democracy tell the whole story. Therefore, I construct a model that also includes individual attitudes as predictors of trust in elections.

The classic problem with elections is that they *de facto* divide the population into winners and losers. Work by Anderson et al. (2005) shows that voters whose preferred candidate loses in an election have less trust in government. Based on their results, I theorize that a similar relationship will hold for trust in elections. Therefore, it is necessary to control for those who reported voting for the winning candidate in the previous presidential election because their acceptance of election results and thus trust

<sup>6</sup> An analysis of variance model was employed, with the socio-economic and demographic variables used as covariates.



in elections should be statistically and substantively higher than that of electoral losers. Although there may be an over-reporting of having voted for the winning candidate in survey measures, merely *believing* that one chose the winner should have a positive impact on trust in elections.

The model also includes individual-level variables regarding generalized support for democracy (the Churchillian attitude). Moreover, I include measures of interpersonal trust, perceptions of corruption, political knowledge, identification with a political party, and standard socioeconomic and demographic controls.

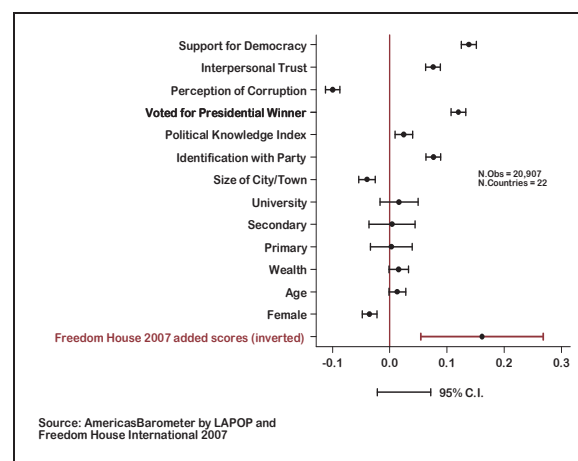
I expect that individuals who support democracy as the best form of government despite its flaws will exhibit a higher level of trust in elections. Similarly, I expect that individuals who have a higher level of generalized interpersonal trust will trust more in elections because of the inherently social aspects of this form of political participation. If most people can be trusted, then it is easier to believe that elections and the reported election results are legitimate. I further considered whether perceptions of corruption would have a negative effect on trust, because, in theory, corruption should undercut trust and the legitimacy of societal institutions such as elections for those that witness and perceive corrupt acts.

Additionally, in line with the literature on political support (see Almond and Verba, 1963; Ginsberg and Weisberg, 1978), I expect that those who are more involved in politics will exhibit more support for democratic institutions. Therefore, I expect to see that those who have more political knowledge or who identify with a political party will have higher levels of trust in elections as one of the key institutional processes of democratic governance.

In Figure 3, both the individual characteristics of respondents and the level of democracy of the nation, measured by inverted 2007 Freedom House scores, are analyzed. After accounting for individual-level variables, nations with a

more democratic context should have citizens that express more trust in elections.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 3.**  
A Multilevel Analysis of the Determinants of Average Trust in Elections, 2008



The impact of each variable is shown graphically by a dot, which if to the right of the vertical “0” line implies a positive contribution and if to the left of the “0” line a negative impact. Only when the confidence interval (the horizontal line) does not overlap the vertical “0” line is the variable statistically significant (at .05 or better). The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients (i.e., “beta weights”).

Figure 3 shows that, holding individual attitudes constant, national level of democracy has a statistically significant impact on individual trust in elections. The more democratic the country is, the greater the trust in elections.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This analysis is carried out using multi-level regression techniques (Raudenbush, et al. 2004), as implemented by LAPOP on STATA 10. The model simultaneously takes into account both individual and country-level (i.e., contextual) factors, and produces correct regression estimates that are impossible with standard OLS regression. Again, the United States is excluded from the analysis.

<sup>8</sup> The Freedom House Index is a measure of freedom that is widely used as a proxy for the level of democracy in the scholarly literature. Freedom House Index 2007 is a composite measure of a country’s level of democracy. It includes two measures of democracy: *political rights* and *civil liberties*. Both measures contain numerical ratings between 1 and 7 for each country with 1 indicating the “most free” and

Figure 3 also supports the expectations regarding the impact of individual attitudes and behaviors. Those who support democracy as the best form of government despite its flaws express more trust in elections.<sup>9</sup> In addition, interpersonal trust has a statistically significant positive association with trust in elections. Individuals who trust each other more also tend to trust elections more. We see in Figure 3 that the variable measuring perception of corruption<sup>10</sup> is also significant but negative, meaning that individuals who perceive corruption in their societies have significantly less trust in elections than individuals who do not.

The measures of political involvement are also statistically significant. Political knowledge<sup>11</sup> and identification with a party<sup>12</sup> both have positive effects on trust in elections, which means that feeling more of a sense of investment in the political process increases legitimacy.

Finally, as expected, the effect of reporting a vote for the winning candidate is very large and positive.<sup>13</sup> Those who reported a vote for the

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7 the “least free.” In this short report, both measures were inverted and combined into an index with lower values indicating “less free” and higher “more free”. This information was obtained at [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

<sup>9</sup> The variable is measured based on a question that asks, “Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?” Responses were given on a 1-7 scale, where ‘1’ indicates “strongly agree” and ‘7’ indicates “strongly disagree.” These responses were then recalibrated on a 0-100 scale.

<sup>10</sup> Both the trust measure and the perception of corruption measure used here are based on ordinal categorical response questions with four alternatives that were recalibrated on a 0 to 100 scale where 100 is high perception of corruption or high trust and 0 is low perception of corruption or low trust.

<sup>11</sup> This variable is measured on a scale from 0 to 5 based on the respondents’ number of correct answers to a series of objective and factual political knowledge questions.

<sup>12</sup> Measured as a dummy (0 or 1) variable, where ‘1’ indicates identification with a party.

<sup>13</sup> This is measured as a dummy (0 or 1) variable, where ‘1’ indicates that the respondent reported a vote for the winning candidate in the last presidential elections. Because many individuals did not report their vote choice, this variable caused a large increase in missing data. I reran the model with all missing values for the variable coded at the mean (.568). This increased the number of observations to 30,906. The results are largely the same with the exception that the

winner in the last presidential elections trust elections to a much larger degree than those whose candidate lost, all else equal.

Regarding socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, holding constant the rest of variables, level of education is insignificant. Moreover, neither the wealth nor the age of the respondent has a statistically significant effect. The size of the city/town of the respondent’s residence is significant and negatively associated with trust in elections, meaning that residents of larger cities and towns tend to have less trust in elections. Interestingly, the variable for gender shows a negative and significant relationship with trust in elections, signifying that women have lower levels of trust in elections than men, even after controlling for other socio-economic and demographic factors.

**Figure 4.**  
The Impact of Level of Democracy on Predicted Levels of Trust in Elections in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008

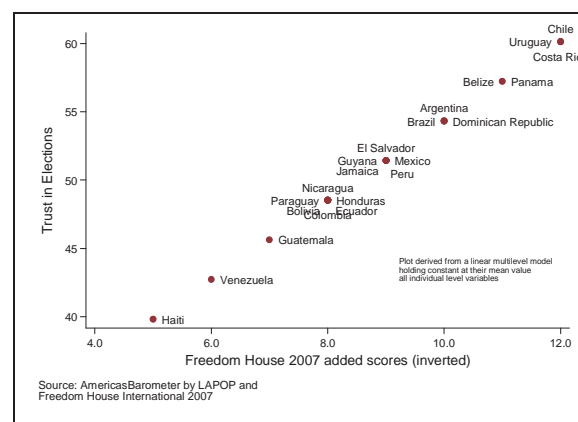


Figure 4 highlights the importance of national context. This figure shows the fitted line from the multi-level regression analysis with democracy scores as the national-level variable. The predicted line fits the countries’ expected trust in elections according to the level of democracy measured by inverted Freedom House scores holding all the individual level variables constant. Higher levels of democracy predict higher trust in elections, with some

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control variable for Age is significant in the positive direction.

variation around the neutral point (50). Substantively, if a citizen from Haiti (given Haiti's characteristics in 2008 prior to the earthquake in Port-au-Prince) with a given set of socio-economic characteristics were to move to Uruguay, Chile or Costa Rica, *ceteris paribus*, and none of his/her individual characteristics were to change, this person would demonstrate trust in elections that would be about 20 points higher on average than if this individual were to remain in Haiti.

It seems important to note that Argentina dramatically improves its position on trust in elections in Figure 4 compared to Figure 1. Given its level of democracy, Argentina's average trust in elections from Figure 1 falls well below its predicted value given in Figure 4. This suggests that Argentina is strongly influenced by some variable(s) not included in our model. This result may also reflect the impact of the "suitcase scandal" where a Venezuelan-American businessman was caught attempting to enter Argentina with nearly \$800,000 in cash after a stop in the United States. U.S. authorities linked the man with the Cristina Kirchner campaign, although Kirchner denied any connection to the cash or influence by Venezuela on the campaign. The AmericasBarometer survey occurred in January-February 2008, not long after the scandal emerged in media outlets.

## Policy and Program Implications

The findings of this report suggest that citizens in the Latin American and Caribbean region, on average, have neutral feelings toward elections, but that there is significant cross-national variation. Individual support for democracy conditions trust in elections. In addition, interpersonal trust, perceptions of corruption, vote for a winning candidate, political knowledge, identification with a political party, gender, and city/town size all have substantive effects. Trust in elections also depends on the contextual level of democracy.

The finding that women show lower trust in elections than men is one potentially interesting avenue for future inquiry. Given that other demographic variables such as wealth and

education that might indicate a "traditionalism" bias show no significance, it is not clear what would explain this finding. It may be, however, that women express lower trust in elections due to the systematic underrepresentation of women in politics.

Another question relates to the causal mechanisms at work in this model. Although this is a subject for a more in-depth analysis, it is possible to speculate about the strong correlation between support for democracy and trust in elections. The model posits that support for democracy helps increase trust in elections, but it may be that individuals cannot support democracy until there is some baseline level of trust in the elections that give life – for better or worse – to that system of government. This suggests a reciprocal relationship, perhaps with some cumulative effects over time.

To return to the political crisis in Honduras, one wonders what impact elections may have in that country in overcoming the underlying political and societal problems of the nation (see Booth and Seligson, 2009). Given the general correlation between democracy and economic performance, if citizens live in a context where the economy has reached a relatively high *level* of development, we expect they would tend to trust elections to a greater degree. The level of economic development in Honduras, however, is not high nor is it clear that there is a sufficient level of democratic support to solidify trust or establish legitimacy. The results of the model presented here suggest that further investment in anti-corruption initiatives, particularly in urban areas, may be helpful. Additionally, investments that target women to improve their political representation and involvement may reap greater trust in elections. As demonstrated here, elections may be central to democracy, but their success at engendering legitimacy depends on background attitudes, individual perceptions, and contextual factors.

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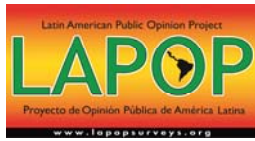
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## *AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.38)\**

# The Varying Economic Meaning of “Left” and “Right” in Latin America

By Elizabeth Zechmeister and Margarita Corral  
 liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu  
 margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu  
 Vanderbilt University

The terms “left” and “right” are widely used to describe politics around the world. But what do these terms mean to citizens in the Latin American region? On the one hand, there is widespread agreement that ideological labels can be useful tools (often called “cues”) with which individuals can make sense of and communicate about the complex world of politics (see Fuchs and Klingemann 1990). On the other hand, however, research in a number of countries (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976) including those in Latin America (Zechmeister 2003, 2006b and chapter 3 in Kitschelt et al. 2010) has shown that the significance of the terms “left” and “right” varies across individuals and across countries. The purpose of this new *AmericasBarometer Insight Series* report<sup>1</sup> is to examine the extent to which understandings of the left-right labels vary from country to country, and from person to person, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

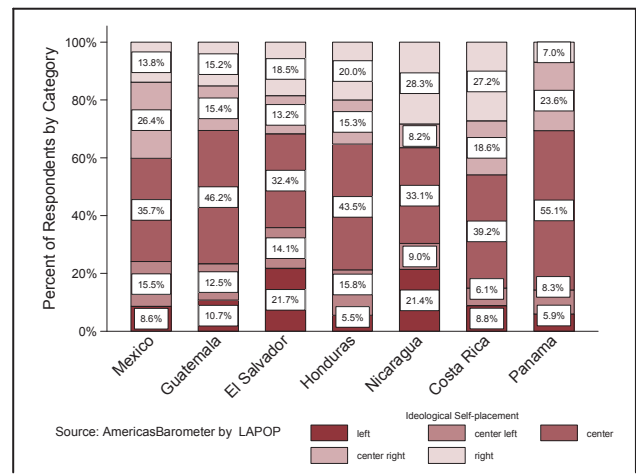
\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* Series can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

For reasons stated below, we limit our focus to assessing cross-national differences in the economic component of the left-right semantics. Given research suggesting that individual capacities for ideological thinking vary, we also explore variation within countries by level of political knowledge. The data we use are from the 2008 round of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) surveys.<sup>2</sup> In this survey 37,035 respondents from 22 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean were asked the same question:<sup>3</sup>

L1. Now, to change the subject.... On this card there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms “left” and “right” have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale?

**Figure 1. Left-right Distribution in Mexico and Central America, 2008**



<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

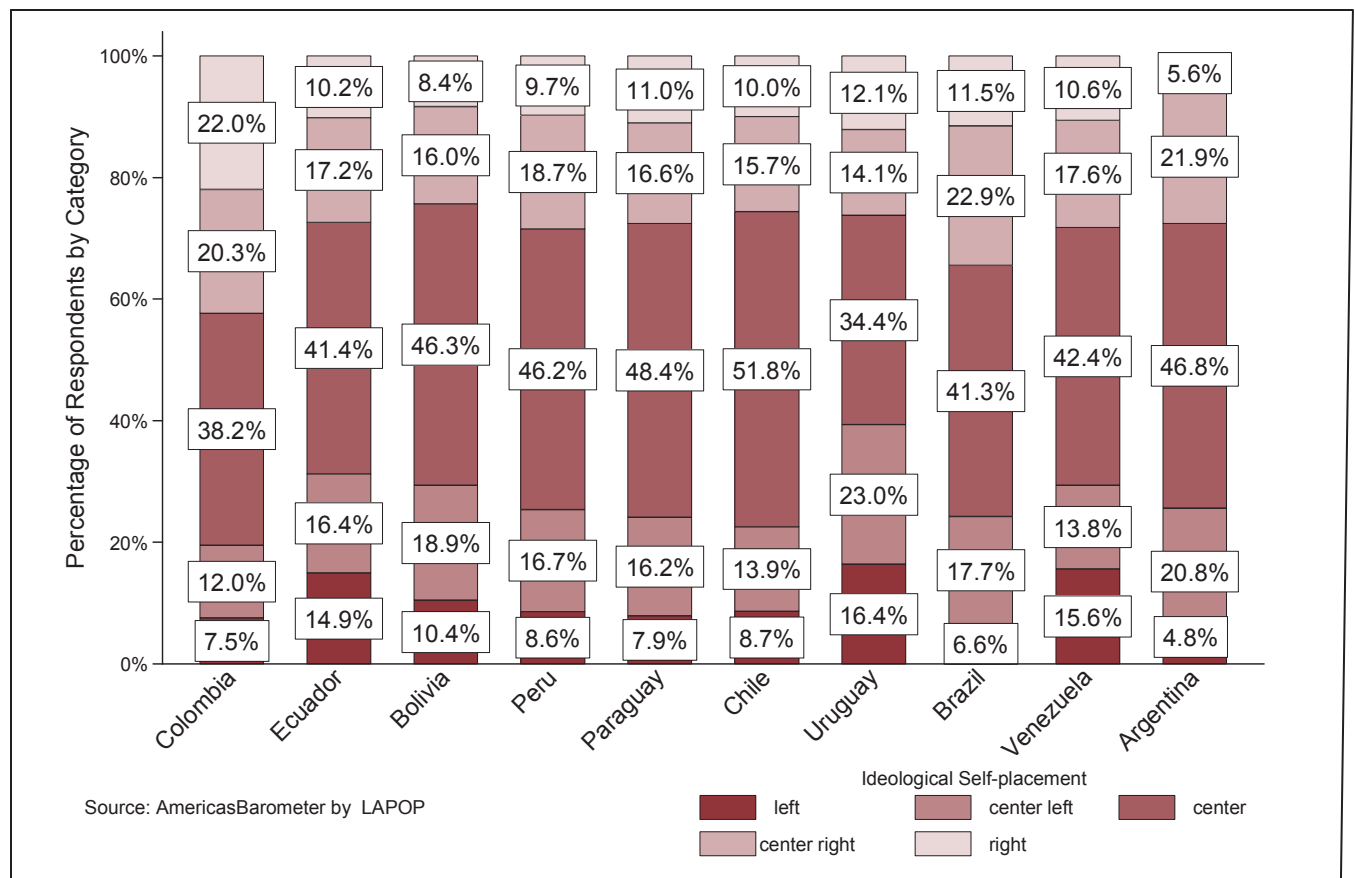
<sup>3</sup> Non-response was 21.25% for the sample as a whole.



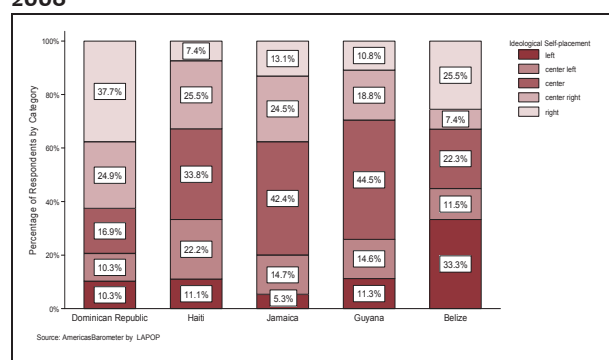
Across the 22 countries in the sample, citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean place themselves on average in centrist positions on the left-right scale. The mean in each country falls between 5 and 6 on the 1-10 scale except for the Dominican Republic where the national average falls to the right, at 7. Given that averages do not allow us to see differences in the distribution of responses, we created a new scale, compressing the original one into five categories: left (1-2), center-left (3-4), center (5-6), center-right (7-8), and right (9-10). Figures 1 to 3 show the distribution of responses on this

variable by regions and allow us to see differences among countries despite the fact that the mean is usually at the center. Considering Figures 1 and 2, countries with more people placed on the left (left+center left) include El Salvador and Nicaragua (see Figure 1) and Uruguay (see Figure 2). In contrast, in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Colombia, the tendency is to self-place on the right; in each of these three countries, around 40% of the population falls into the center right and right categories.

**Figure 2. Left-right Distribution in South America, 2008**



**Figure 3. Left-right Distribution in the Caribbean, 2008**



As Figure 3 depicts, the Caribbean shows even more heterogeneity in left-right distribution. On the one hand, the majority of people in Dominican Republic place themselves to the right. On the other hand, citizens in Haiti and Belize on average are more likely to lean left.

## Examining the Relationship between Left-right Self-Placement and Economic Policy Preferences

What do people have in mind when they place themselves on the left-right scale? To some people, the terms “left” and “right” refer to policy stances, while to others they signify something else such as political objectives (e.g., ending poverty), political parties, groups (e.g., rich and poor), or politicians.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Still others may have less clear political conceptions of the terms, or no understanding altogether. In fact, the high non-response rate for the question (see Footnote 3) suggests that as many as twenty percent of people in the region lack an understanding of the terms that is sufficient enough to facilitate their own placement on the scale (or are unwilling to disclose those views to the interviewer). Although this non-response level is high, it is worth noting that, according to data from the 2002 Eurobarometer, a similar percentage of European survey respondents does not answer the left-right question. There does, though, exist greater variation across countries in the Americas as compared to Europe; in the former, the lowest percentage of non-respondents is 8% for Uruguay and the highest is found in Belize (41%) (See Appendix 1). We thank Zeynep Somer-Topcu for this information on the Eurobarometer data. Regression analysis predicting non-response with socioeconomic variables

For two reasons, we consider here the degree to which economic policy preferences predict left-right stances. First, as Inglehart (1997) suggests, classic conceptions of the left-right semantics see the terms as distinguishing between those who prefer more (left) or less (right) state intervention in the economy. Second, Kitschelt et al. (2010) identify the economic-distributive divide as the strongest dimension of programmatic party competition at the turn of the century in Latin America. Thus, there is reason to suspect that left-right placements will and should be associated with economic policy preferences. However, given past research and recent shifts in the party systems and in salient issues, the debate is open regarding the economic significance of these labels in contemporary Latin America.

In order to assess the content that Latin Americans assign to left-right labels we consider preferences over the role of the state in the economy and, as well, preferences for/against free trade. We begin with the assumption that, to the degree to which the terms “left” and “right” are understood as indicators of an economic issue divide, people’s stances on economic policies should predict their left-right self-placement.

We first make use of three questions in the AmericasBarometer that measure preferences over the role of the State in the economy: whether the State, more than the private sector, should be responsible for ensuring the well-being of people (ROS2), creating jobs (ROS3), and implementing strict policies to reduce income inequality (ROS4).<sup>5</sup> We examined the

revealed that the less educated, women, the poorer, and people living in small cities or rural areas are more likely to not place themselves on the left-right scale.

<sup>5</sup> The questions were the following: ROS2. The (Country) government, more than individuals, is the most responsible for ensuring the well-being of the people. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?; ROS3. The (Country) government, more than the private sector, is the primarily responsible for creating jobs. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?; ROS4. The

scale reliability of these questions, which turned out to be reasonably high for most of the countries.<sup>6</sup> We then created a single variable scale (additive) from those three variables that we call *Support for an Active State*.<sup>7</sup> We recoded that variable so that higher values indicate pro-market positions. Furthermore, we also take into account positions regarding free trade (B48), that is to say the degree to which people think free trade agreements help the country's economy.<sup>8</sup>

The expectation is that pro-market preferences and pro-free trade attitudes are related to rightist positions. In order to assess this expectation, we regress left-right self-placement on the new variable *Support for an Active State* and the *Free Trade* variable.<sup>9</sup>

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(Country) government should implement firm policies to reduce inequality in income between the rich and the poor. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?. Responses were based on a 1-7 scale where 1 meant strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree. The survey also contains this question: ROS1. The (Country) government, instead of the private sector, should own the most important enterprises and industries of the country. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? Analyses revealed that the scale reliability coefficient decreased when we consider this fourth variable and therefore we do not include it here.

<sup>6</sup> For the sample as a whole the scale reliability coefficient was 0.79. The lowest value is 0.53 for the Dominican Republic whereas the highest value is 0.87 in Ecuador (See Appendix II).

<sup>7</sup> An alternative would be to factor analyze the set of variables for each country and create separate country-specific variables (see ch. 3 in Kitschelt et al., 2010).

<sup>8</sup> The wording for this question was the following: "To what extent do you believe that free trade agreement will help to improve the economy?" This question was not asked in Bolivia or Haiti.

<sup>9</sup> No control variables are included; see the next series of analyses for results by political knowledge.

**Table 1. Economic Content of the Left-Right Scale**

	Active State	Free Trade
Argentina	Y	Y
Belize	-	-
Bolivia	Y	NA
Brazil	-	-
Chile	Y	-
Colombia	-	Y
Costa Rica	-	Y
Dominican Republic	-	Y
Ecuador	Y	Y
El Salvador	Y	Y
Guatemala	-	Y
Guyana	-	Y(opposite)
Haiti	Y	NA
Honduras	Y(opposite)	Y
Jamaica	Y	Y(opposite)
Mexico	Y(opposite)	Y
Nicaragua	-	-
Panama	-	-
Paraguay	Y	Y
Peru	-	Y
Uruguay	Y	Y
Venezuela	-	-

Table 1 summarizes the regressions results for each country. It shows the variables that are statistically significant at a generous cut-off of  $p < 0.10$ , meaning that with a moderate level of confidence we can say that those variables noted with a "Y" predict ideological self placement. A note of "(opposite)" indicates results that are statistically meaningful but that, as we will describe next, run in an unexpected direction.

We see that in two countries (Honduras and Mexico) we obtain results that go in the opposite direction than the expectation. That is to say, in Honduras and Mexico people who have a pro-market orientation tend to locate themselves toward the left. Likewise, in Guyana and Jamaica, supporting free trade policies corresponds with leftist, rather than rightist, positions. In 9 countries the role of state predicts ideological self-placement in the expected

direction. In 12 countries attitudes toward free trade predict ideological self-placement. However, only in 5 countries are both variables significant in the expected direction. Appendix III shows the R-squared for all the countries. The largest R-squared is 0.11 for El Salvador.<sup>10</sup>

Zechmeister's previous work suggests that elite discourse (and the general political information environment) affects the content assigned to the left-right semantics, so that if politicians use the labels in ways that associate the terms with policies, then people will understand the left and right in those ways. The results here are consistent with this argument. For example, in Costa Rica we see that free trade is a significant predictor of ideological self-placement. The survey in this country was conducted some months after the referendum on CAFTA, which likely made salient this issue and influenced the content assigned to ideology.

But, elite discourse is not all that matters. The economic content of the left-right dimension likely also depends on some individual characteristics of the respondent, so that we expect differences not only across countries but also within countries across different types of individuals.

Classic studies have demonstrated that ideological understanding demands some degree of cognitive effort (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976) and that the use of abstract concepts such as ideology varies with levels of formal education, information and political involvement (Converse 1964). Following recent studies that consider citizens engaged in politics to have richer policy attitudes, (Adams and Ezrow 2009), we evaluate the influence of political knowledge on the economic meaning of left-right positions in Latin America and the

Caribbean.<sup>11</sup> Table 2 summarizes these results for those respondents with the lowest and those with the highest political knowledge.

**Table 2. Economic Content of the Left-Right Scale by Level of Political Knowledge**

	Lowest Level		Highest Level	
	Role of State	Free Trade	Role of State	Free Trade
Argentina	-	Y	Y	Y
Belize	-	-	-	Y
Bolivia	Y	NA	Y	NA
Brazil	-	Y	-	Y
Chile	-	-	Y	-
Colombia	-	-	-	Y
Costa Rica	-	-	-	Y
Dominican Republic	Y (opposite)	-	-	Y
Ecuador	Y	Y	Y	Y
El Salvador	-	-	Y	Y
Guatemala	Y (opposite)	-	-	Y
Guyana	-	-	-	-
Haiti	Y	NA	-	NA
Honduras	Y (opposite)	-	Y (opposite)	Y
Jamaica	-	-	Y	Y
Mexico	Y (opposite)	Y	-	Y
Nicaragua	-	-	-	-
Panama	-	-	-	-
Paraguay	-	-	Y	Y
Peru	Y	-	Y	Y
Uruguay	Y (opposite)	Y (opposite)	Y	Y
Venezuela	Y	-	-	-

When we assess the economic meaning of the left-right labels taking into account the level of political knowledge, we observe interesting differences. Among those with low levels of political knowledge, the role of the state predicts ideological placement in five countries in the expected direction (and five in the opposite direction). If we consider only those with higher political knowledge, the number of countries

<sup>10</sup> For comparative purposes, we ran the same analysis for the United States and results yield statistically significant results for *Active State* with a R-squared of 0.19 (the largest in the whole sample). Moreover, the coefficient on the variable is in the expected direction.

<sup>11</sup> This variable is measured on a scale from 0 to 5 based on the respondents' number of correct answers to a series of objective and factual questions. We consider those who score 0 or 1 to have the "lowest level" and those who score 4 or 5 to have the "highest level" of political knowledge.

grows to 9 (only one in the opposite direction). We also get improvements regarding free trade (15 countries versus 4). Furthermore, R-squared values are higher among those with higher political knowledge than among the less knowledgeable.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the economic meaning of the ideological scale is to some extent related to levels of political knowledge. In short, we find both differences across countries and within countries in the economic content of the left-right semantics in the Americas in 2008.

## Conclusion

This new *Insights Series* report has provided some evidence related to the different meanings that the left-right semantics hold for citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the basis of these results (and prior studies), we assert that it would be an error to assume shared economic content to left-right labels in all countries. We have seen that, contrary to the classic expectation, in some countries supporting an active state role in economic policy does not translate into a leftist position. Likewise, attitudes toward free trade policies do not always predict a rightist placement on the left-right continuum. In some countries, only one or neither of these factors is related to left-right placements and in some countries one of the variables predicts left-right positions in exactly the opposite way one would expect.

Further, we have demonstrated that levels of political knowledge have an impact on the economic meaning of left and right. Citizens with higher levels of political knowledge seem to attach a more robust economic content to their ideological self-identification, compared to citizens with lower levels of political knowledge. In other words, the classic expectations hold better, but still far from perfectly, among those more informed about politics.

While the results presented in this *Insights* report caution against assuming the terms “left” and “right” relate to economic policies in all countries, and among all individuals, we also caution against an interpretation that the terms lack meaning altogether. Rather, the fact that a majority of people can place themselves on the left-right scale indicates that the terms are generally meaningful. As other studies have demonstrated, left-right stances are consequential to Latin American public opinion, for example as predictors of party preference and democratic values (Seligson 2007). Understandings of the terms, though, vary. Some (in particular more sophisticated people and in some countries) understand the terms to refer to economic policy preferences. Others likely understand the terms to refer to other policies. Still others may understand the terms to reference different groups, parties, or peoples. And, finally, some may attach purely affective content to the terms “left” and “right”, considering one to be a positive referent and the other a pejorative label (see the discussions in, for example, Zechmeister 2003, 2006). An assessment of these different meanings goes beyond the scope of this short report but we plan to provide more evidence in further analyses.

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix IV for R-squared values.



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**Appendix I. Percentage of Non-Response (Ideological Self-placement)**

Argentina	13.79
Belize	41.82
Bolivia	23.04
Brazil	23.65
Chile	19.84
Colombia	16.77
Costa Rica	24.87
Dominican Republic	22.03
Ecuador	32.73
El Salvador	8.45
Guatemala	25.35
Guyana	19.89
Haiti	20.70
Honduras	17.41
Jamaica	16.68
Mexico	14.61
Nicaragua	29.87
Panama	15.62
Paraguay	25.90
Peru	10.27
Uruguay	8.27
Venezuela	24.4

**Appendix II. Scale Reliability Coefficients for ROS questions**

	Scale reliability coefficient
Argentina	0.7152
Belize	0.7100
Bolivia	0.8233
Brazil	0.6857
Chile	0.8162
Colombia	0.7769
Costa Rica	0.7123
Dominican Republic	0.5300
Ecuador	0.8709
El Salvador	0.6719
Guatemala	0.8693
Guyana	0.6467
Haiti	0.8003
Honduras	0.8519
Jamaica	0.7690
Mexico	0.8257
Nicaragua	0.7767
Panama	0.8030
Paraguay	0.8157
Peru	0.8404
Uruguay	0.6740
Venezuela	0.7054
Whole Sample	0.7935

### Appendix III. Economic Content of Left-Right Scale.

	Role of State	Free Trade	Adjusted R-squared
Argentina	Y	Y	0.018
Belize	-	-	0.000
Bolivia	Y	N.a	0.009
Brazil	-	-	0.000
Chile	Y	-	0.003
Colombia	-	Y	0.014
Costa Rica	-	Y	0.048
Dominican Republic	-	Y	0.010
Ecuador	Y	Y	0.029
El Salvador	Y	Y	0.11
Guatemala	-	Y	0.015
Guyana	-	Y(opposite)	0.001
Haiti	Y	N.a	0.010
Honduras	Y(opposite)	Y	0.074
Jamaica	Y	Y(opposite)	0.030
Mexico	Y(opposite)	Y	0.046
Nicaragua	-	-	0.000
Panama	-	-	0.000
Paraguay	Y	Y	0.016
Peru	-	Y	0.011
Uruguay	Y	Y	0.031
Venezuela	-	-	0.028

#### Appendix IV. Economic Content of Left-Right Scale by Levels of Political Knowledge

	Lowest Level			Highest Level		
	Role of State	Free Trade	Adjusted R-squared	Role of State	Free Trade	Adjusted R-squared
Argentina	-	Y	0.06	Y	Y	0.021
Belize	-	-	0.000	-	Y	0.193
Bolivia	Y	N.a	0.015	Y	N.a	0.10
Brazil	-	Y	0.06	-	Y	0.022
Chile	-	-	0.000	Y	-	0.014
Colombia	-	-	0.000	-	Y	0.2247
Costa Rica	-	-	0.000	-	Y	0.11
Dominican Republic	Y(opposite)	-	0.021	-	Y	0.055
Ecuador	Y	Y	0.014	Y	Y	0.056
El Salvador	-	-	0.000	Y	Y	0.28
Guatemala	-	-	0.014	-	Y	0.022
Guyana	-	-	0.000	-	-	0.000
Haiti	Y	N.a	0.006	-	N.a	0.000
Honduras	Y(opposite)	-	0.004	Y(opposite)	Y	0.10
Jamaica	-	-	0.000	Y	-	0.027
Mexico	Y(opposite)	Y	0.029	-	Y	0.182
Nicaragua	-	-	0.000	-	-	0.000
Panama	-	-	0.000	-	-	0.002
Paraguay	-	-	0.000	Y	Y	0.040
Peru	Y	-	0.007	Y	Y	0.033
Uruguay	Y(opposite)	Y(opposite)	0.100	Y	Y	0.08
Venezuela	-	Y(opposite)	0.01	-	-	0.000



## *AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.39)\**

# Explaining Support for Vigilante Justice in Mexico<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Zizumbo-Colunga  
Vanderbilt University  
daniel.zizumbo-colunga@vanderbilt.edu

Two fundamental responsibilities of states are the protection of citizens' security and the meting out of punishment against those who engage in criminal acts. To the extent that states fail in these roles, they lose legitimacy (Donnelly, 2006). Not surprisingly, states prefer that citizens use official law enforcement institutions to resolve differences, to seek protection, and to dole out retribution for crime (Donnelly, 2006). However, frustration with states' (in)effectiveness has, to varying degrees, led citizens of the Americas to choose to take justice into their own hands. Indeed, the AmericasBarometer<sup>2</sup> survey shows that, to varying degrees, many citizens of the Americas express support for such citizen-administered justice.

\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

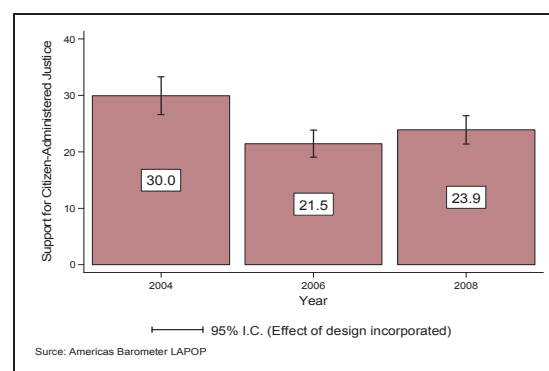
<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

This behavior, often referred to as vigilantism and/or lynching ("lynchamientos" is the anglicized term used often in the Americas), has been widespread in recent years in Guatemala, Bolivia (Goldstein, 2003; Handy, 2004), Peru (BBC Mundo, 2004a), and other countries.

In Mexico, from 1984 to 2001 there were at least 294 cases of actual or attempted lynching (Díaz-Fuentes, 2004).<sup>3</sup> For example, in 2004 two police officers were lynched for their alleged role in organized crime in Mexico City's Tlahuac neighborhood (BBC Mundo, 2004b). Support for citizen-administered justice among pockets of citizens is also seen in the case of the Mormon "LeBaron" community, whose members, after a number of murders, recently opted to arm themselves in self-defense (Milenio, 2009).

This *Insights* report examines the determinants of support for citizen-administered justice in Mexico. Specifically, I argue that this attitude can be fueled by the combination of low confidence in state law enforcement institutions and, surprisingly, high levels of interpersonal trust. This report thus shows what has been termed the "dark side" of social capital: high social cohesion combined with low perceptions of state effectiveness in ensuring citizens' security leads to more support for vigilante justice in Mexico

**Figure 1.** Mean Levels of Support for Citizen-Administered Justice Mexico, 2004-2008.



<sup>3</sup> Just over 35% of these lynchings resulted in the death of the victim.



Figure 1 shows survey respondents' mean level of support for citizen-led justice in Mexico in 2004, 2006, and 2008. The data are from the corresponding waves of the AmericasBarometer survey. The figure is based on the following question, to which respondents could answer using a one to ten scale that was rescaled from zero to 100 to follow the LAPOP standard:

E16. How much do you approve or disapprove of people taking the law into their own hands when the government does not punish criminals?

As Figure 1 indicates, mean support in Mexico for citizens taking the punishment of criminals into their own hands has fluctuated in recent years between 21.5 and 30 units. While these values are not overwhelmingly high, they are cause for concern. To look at this a different way, the 2008 AmericasBarometer survey in Mexico shows that roughly 20 percent of respondents openly express support for vigilante justice (that is, they fall on the approve side of the 50 unit mid-point, in a histogram of the data not shown here).

## The Joint Importance of Trust and Institutions in Explaining Support for Citizen-Administered Justice

Since the influential work of de Tocqueville (1835) first touched on the issue in his analysis of the burgeoning American political system, many authors have seen social capital as crucial to a well-functioning democracy (Fukuyama, 1996; Newton, 2001; Putnam & Feldstein, 2004; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994; among many others).

Social capital is believed to promote government accountability and responsiveness (Putnam et al., 1994). Additionally, social capital presumably allows individuals in a community to interact with each other without the need for external authorities policing relations and agreements (Newton, 2001; Putnam, 2001; Putnam & Feldstein, 2004; Putnam et al., 1994); social capital

facilitates interpersonal interactions by promoting people's belief that others will "act in their best interests" (Newton, 2001, p. 202).

While social capital has been empirically associated with beneficial outcomes for the democratic life of a country, scholars also recognize that "not all externalities of social capital are positive" (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004, p. 1437). Indeed, some academics suggest it is important to consider this "dark side" of social capital (Armony, 2004; Boggs, 2000, 2001; Tarrow, 1996, 1998).

Thus, researchers have theorized and found relationships between social capital and various phenomena that might be considered unhealthy from the perspective of democracy. These phenomena include outsider exclusion (Waldinger, 1995); corruption (Graeff, 2007; Schweitzer, 2005; Treisman, 2000); free-riding (Portes, 1998); social obstacles for individual success and conformism (Portes, 1998); rent seeking behavior (Olson, 1984); and even the manifestation and perpetuation of contentious social movements such as gangs and militias (Bourgois, 1996; Tarrow, 1998).

In line with these previous works, I also propose that social capital can produce attitudes that are inherently problematic for democracy. Specifically, I argue that high levels of interpersonal trust can lead to greater support for non-state sanctioned citizen-administered justice – *when* it appears alongside a lack of confidence in state law enforcement institutions.<sup>4</sup>

The first part of my argument is that distrust in state law-enforcement institutions increases levels of support for vigilante justice more strongly as levels of interpersonal trust increase. This expectation is based on the reasoning that

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<sup>4</sup> In previous reports in the *Insights* Series, social capital has been studied from the perspective of understanding the determinants of various types of civic engagement (Cruz, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c); these reports look at the determinants of civic participation, which is believed to be linked to, and foster, interpersonal trust.

citizens might be more willing to support the communal overriding of the official rule of law if they trust that their neighbors will act in their best interest. Additionally, it might be the case that high social capital increases support for vigilante justice by increasing the sympathy gap (see Black, 1997) between those who conform to the rules of the neighborhood and those who do not.

The second part of the argument is that the effect of interpersonal trust in support for vigilante justice is conditional on levels of confidence in state law enforcement. In Mexico, the salience and pervasiveness of economic and security problems (Consulta, 2010) send a signal to citizens that the state lacks control in at least certain domains, including security and justice. Some local communities have found themselves outside the protection of state authorities, subject either to little rule of law or, where sufficient social capital exists, developing forms of local control (Yashar, 1999). Where the state's ineffectiveness spreads to the realm of rule of law and it no longer has a monopoly over violence, communities may see collective violence as a "...moralistic response to deviant behavior" (Senechal de la Roche, 1996, p. 98).

In short, I argue that support for citizen-administered justice is most likely to occur when confidence in state institutions is low and levels of interpersonal trust are high, a situation that both motivates and facilitates collective action and may fuel less tolerance of behavior that deviates from the collective will.

This argument is consistent with that made by Senechal de la Roche (2001), who draws from Black's (1997) work to propose that, "Lynching is a joint function of strong partisanship (understood as sympathy) toward the alleged victim and weak partisanship toward the alleged offender" (2001, p. 126) and conversely, in the cases where sympathy towards the aggressor and the victim is equal, the occurrence of a lynching becomes less likely.

In summary, there are theoretical reasons to expect that citizen-administered justice will prevail when two conditions are jointly met: first, there exist high levels of interpersonal trust and, second, individuals perceive state institutions to be incompetent in the realm of providing security against private violence (see Donnelly, 2006).

Though it is beyond the scope of this study (as well as the data from the *AmericasBarometer*) to assess factors that account for participation in lynching episodes, this report can assess whether the factors highlighted here predict support for such behavior. Support for such behavior is important to examine because, first, it is likely more widespread than actual cases of lynching and, second, because high levels of support may create an environment that permits and even facilitates lynching.

## METHOD

To assess the factors that predict support for vigilante justice in Mexico, I make use of the 2008 *AmericasBarometer* survey for Mexico. The field work was conducted in February of 2008. The project used a national probability sample design of voting-age adults that was both stratified and clustered, with a total number of 1,560 face-to-face interviews.

The attitude I seek to explain (the dependent variable in the analyses) is measured using the question featured above in Figure 1, which asks about support for citizens taking matters of justice into their own hands. This and all variables were rescaled to a 0-100 scale for ease of comparability in interpretation.

To measure interpersonal trust, I use the *AmericasBarometer* question IT1, which asks respondents to indicate how trustworthy people in the community are (for analysis

related to the validity of this question see Armony & Schamis, 2005; Cordova, 2008).<sup>5</sup>

In order to measure citizen confidence in the law enforcement capability of their state institutions, I create an index based on three variables: trust in the judicial system (B10A)<sup>6</sup>, trust in police (B18)<sup>7</sup>, and trust in the PGR (*Procuraduría General de la República*) (B16).<sup>8</sup> The three indicators have good internal reliability (alpha: .80); I therefore combined them into a single additive index.

To assess my argument concerning the joint relevance of these variables, interpersonal trust and confidence in state law enforcement, I include an interaction term in the model. This term allows us to assess whether the effect of one predictor (interpersonal trust) is conditional on the level of another (confidence in law enforcement institutions), and vice versa (see Kam & Franzese, 2007).

In addition, I control for alternative explanations that have been proposed as predictors of support for community justice. First, wealth may matter. As Black (1976) states, "law varies directly with rank [e.g., income]. . . so that<sup>9</sup> people with less wealth have less law. They are less likely to call upon the law in dealing with one another" (1976, p. 17). Second, in line with the statistics and research on lynching in Mexico, I control whether the respondent lives in an urban or rural area and lives in the federal district or not.<sup>10</sup> I also control for other demographic factors: sex, age, and education.

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<sup>5</sup> IT1. Now, speaking of the people from here, would you say that people in this community are generally very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy?

<sup>6</sup> B10A. To what extent do you trust the justice system?

<sup>7</sup> B18. To what extent do you trust the police?

<sup>8</sup> B16. To what extent to you trust the PGR?

<sup>9</sup> Italics are mine.

<sup>10</sup> Díaz-Fuentes' (2004) research on lynching in Mexico shows most cases were concentrated in Mexico City and selected Central and Southern states; he further shows that while typically more prevalent in rural areas, lynching has been growing in the urban context.

Another potentially important factor is the degree to which individuals in the community feel that their investment in the community is at risk. I therefore include in the model the respondents' perception of insecurity and measures of the respondents' involvement in the community (frequency of participation in community improvement meetings).

In addition, it is also possible that support for taking criminal matters into one's own hands is an extreme expression of support for direct (people-led) government; therefore, I include this political variable as a control in the study.

## RESULTS

The full results of the multivariate regression analysis are presented in the Appendix.<sup>11</sup> The results show that the wealthier a person is, the less she will support people taking justice into their own hands; this is supportive of Black's (1976) hypothesis that wealth is negatively correlated with overriding the rule of law.

Additionally, *ceteris paribus*, an increase in the level of support for direct government is associated, as expected, with an increase in the support for vigilante justice. Likewise, the results show neighborhood insecurity is positively related to support for vigilante justice.

In line with the statistics presented by Díaz-Fuentes (2004) on the incidence of lynching in Mexico, on average, people in rural areas and in Mexico City (the D.F.) show greater agreement with the notion that people take justice into their own hands, compared to non-rural and non-Mexico city areas respectively. The results further show that age is negatively related to the dependent variable: older people are less supportive of vigilante justice.

With respect to the principal variables in the model – interpersonal trust and confidence in state law enforcement – the results show a

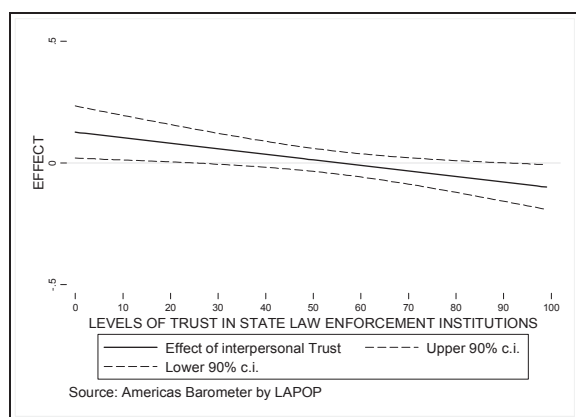
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<sup>11</sup> Analyses conducted with STATA v11.

significant interaction between trust in law enforcement institutions and interpersonal trust.

Interaction terms are notoriously difficult to interpret from regression output alone. Therefore, in order to interpret the meaning of this significant interaction (see Kam & Franzese, 2007), I have created Figure 2, which shows how different levels of trust in law enforcement institutions are associated with different effects of interpersonal trust on support for citizen-administered justice.

**Figure 2** Changes in the effect of interpersonal trust on support for Vigilante Justice at different levels of trust in law enforcement institutions.<sup>12</sup>



As confidence in law enforcement institutions decreases, the effect of interpersonal trust on support for vigilante justice becomes positive (that is, the effect shifts directions, turning positive at 50 units and distinct from zero at 25 units). This means that under conditions of low confidence in state law enforcement, as interpersonal trust increases people's support for taking matters in their own hands also increases.

To clarify this point, let us take two ideally identical<sup>13</sup> persons as an example (Table 1). The first (right side of Table 1) has extremely high levels of trust in law enforcement institutions (a

score of 100); in that case, as her interpersonal trust increases, her support for people taking justice in their own hands decreases. To see this effect in different terms, we can create the predicted level of support for vigilante justice for an individual having the maximum level of confidence in law enforcement institutions at both minimum and maximum levels of interpersonal trust. Holding all other variables constant at their means or modes (for dichotomous variables), the analysis predicts an individual holding the maximum level of confidence in the law enforcement institutions would be expected to express support for citizen-administered justice at a level of 23 units if she has the minimum level interpersonal trust as opposed to 13 units if she holds the maximum level of interpersonal trust.

Table 1	
EFFECTS OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST ON SUPPORT FOR VIGILANTE JUSTICE	
AT LOW LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE IN STATE LAW-ENFORCEMENT INSTITUTIONS (0)	AT HIGH LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE IN STATE LAW-ENFORCEMENT INSTITUTIONS (100)
.13* (.065)	-.10* (.057)

However, in a contrasting situation (left side of Table 1), in which a person has extremely low levels of trust in law enforcement institutions (a score of 0), interpersonal trust has the opposite effect: the higher one's sense of interpersonal trust, the more the person will support citizen-administered justice.<sup>14</sup> Again, considering predicted values on the dependent variable, a person with the lowest levels of confidence in both law enforcement institutions and interpersonal trust would be expected to express support for citizen-administered justice equal to

<sup>12</sup> 90% Confidence Interval calculated with robust standard errors.

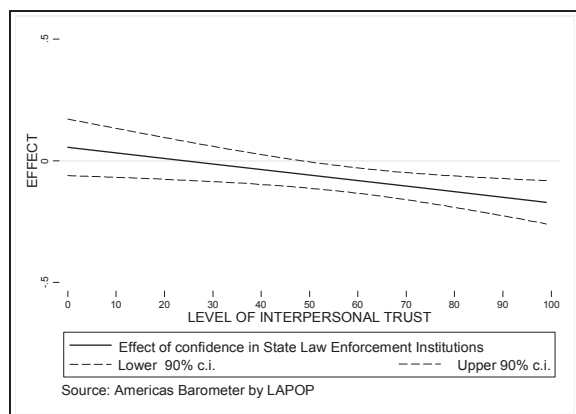
<sup>13</sup> All other relevant variables but interpersonal trust, confidence in the law enforcement institutions and their interaction are held constant.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to point out that nearly 20% of the Mexican sample scored under the level where trust in the law enforcement institutions causes interpersonal trust to have a positive effect on support for citizen-administered justice.

17.5 units (all other variables at their means or modes). For the equivalent person who instead holds the maximum level of interpersonal trust, that predicted value jumps to just over 30 units.

On the other hand, the interaction results also indicate a differential effect of confidence in law enforcement institutions on support for citizen-administered justice at different levels of interpersonal trust. As shown in Figure 3, as levels of interpersonal trust increase (over 50 units), the effect of confidence in state law enforcement becomes negative and statistically significant while it is not statistically differentiable from 0 at low levels of interpersonal trust when holding constant control variables and alternative explanations.

**Figure 3** Changes in the effect of confidence in law enforcement institutions on Vigilante Justice at different levels of interpersonal trust.<sup>15</sup>



As an example, when interpersonal trust is one standard deviation higher than its mean (86), a decrease of one standard deviation (25.73 units) of confidence in law enforcement institutions predicts an increase of 3.6 units in the support for people taking matters into their own hands.

In short, controlling for other important influences on support for citizen-administered justice, I find clear support for a conditional relationship between social capital

(interpersonal trust) and confidence in state law enforcement institutions in Mexico.

## Conclusion

In his celebrated “Democracy in America”, de Tocqueville highlighted the value of a vibrant civic life, fueled by close and frequent associations. In the same way, other scholars have argued that interpersonal trust (and social capital more generally) can indeed be considered beneficial for societal order, democratic values, and even economic progress.

However, this classic vision has important limits. In line with those who caution against an overly-positive vision of social capital, this work confirms the existence of a dark side of social capital. Not only that, it demonstrates one important factor conditioning which “side” of social capital shows its face.

Specifically, the present study indicates that the effect of interpersonal trust on support for vigilante justice is contingent on the confidence that citizens allocate to the institutions in charge of law and order. As the results suggest, at moderately high levels of distrust in state law enforcement institutions, social capital (in the form of interpersonal trust) coheres groups of citizens in support of each other and against deviant (criminal) behavior.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the evidence suggests that social capital itself can serve as a modifier of the effect of attitudes toward the state. As was shown, confidence in state law enforcement institutions only influences attitudes supporting citizen-administered justice for those with high levels of social capital.

Finally, it is worth noting that another significant predictor of support for taking justice into one’s own hands is the amount of insecurity perceived in the neighborhood. This, in conjunction with the results regarding trust in law enforcing institutions underscores the

<sup>15</sup> 90% Confidence Interval calculated with robust standard errors.



importance of building state justice institutions that are not only perceived as effective but indeed do reduce feelings of insecurity among citizens.

In conclusion, the results from this report suggest that democratic values among the mass citizenry, in this case lack of support for citizen-administered justice in Mexico, will be enhanced to the degree that reforms of law enforcement institutions (police, judiciary and the PGR) include: a) measures to increase and ensure strict respect for human rights; b) a strong battle against corruption within these institutions in order to increase accountability and confidence in them; c) program developments that make law enforcement institutions more effective at preventing and punishing crime. Such improvements will help increase confidence in state law enforcement and, in so doing, help keep one of the darker sides of social capital behind its mask.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.**  
Determinants of Support for Citizen-Administered Justice

	Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients
Confidence in State law enforcement	.055 (.065)	.123
Interpersonal Trust	<b>.126*</b> (.071)	.048
<b>Confidence in Law x Interpersonal Trust<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>-.0023 **</b> (.001)	<b>-.180</b>
Wealth	<b>-.112***</b> (.493)	-.076
Education	-.34 (.207)	-.053
Age	<b>-.236***</b> (.05)	-.051
Insecurity Perception	.069 (.028)	-.133
<b>Direct government</b>	<b>.126***</b> (.025)	.067
Communitarian improvement participation	-.006 (.032)	-.005
Rural	<b>3.309*</b> (1.84)	.052
DF	<b>7.632***</b> (2.62)	.077
Women	-2.348 (1.5)	-.04
Constant	31.629*** (5.85)	.
R-Squared	.066	
F	8.49***	
N	1,481	

Ordinary least squares Regression.

Robust Standard Errors in parentheses.

Significance thresholds noted as follows: \*p<.1, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01

<sup>16</sup> Because collinearity can be an issue when working with interactions, I conduct a collinearity test; none of the Variance Inflation Factors is higher than 10 which suggests that collinearity is not a severe issue in this case.

**Table A2**

Effects of Interpersonal trust on support for citizen-administered justice at different levels of confidence in law enforcement institutions

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT	Effect of Interpersonal trust
0	.126* (.065)
10	.103* (.056)
20	.081* (.047)
30	.058 (.039)
40	.0354 (.034)
50	.012 (.029)
60	-.010 (.029)
70	-.0329 (.033)
80	-.055 (.040)
90	-.078 (.048)
100	-.10* (.057)

Significance thresholds noted as follows: \*p<.1, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01

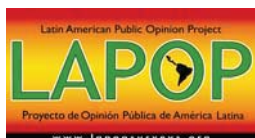


**Table A3**

Effects of confidence in law enforcement institutions on support for citizen-administered justice at different levels of interpersonal trust

LEVEL OF INTERPERSONAL TRUST	Effect of Confidence in law enforcement
0	.055 (.07071)
10	.032 (.0612)
20	.010 (.052)
30	-.013 (.044)
40	-.036 (.037)
50	-.058* (.033)
60	-.082*** (.032)
70	-.104*** (.034)
80	-.127*** (.039)
90	-.15*** (.046)
100	-.173*** (.055)

Significance thresholds noted as follows: \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$



*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.40) \**

# The Influence of Religion on Support for Free Trade in Latin America<sup>1</sup>

Alejandro Díaz-Domínguez  
Vanderbilt University  
alejandro.diaz-dominguez@vanderbilt.edu

Why do individuals in Latin America and the Caribbean support free trade policies? Some scholars have argued that such policies can produce negative consequences and economic insecurities (Goldberg and Pavcnik 2004; Merolla, Stephenson, Wilson and Zechmeister 2005). Yet, support for free trade exists among many in the region. In this *Insights* report, I discuss the importance of one particular influence on support for free trade policies: religious factors. Specifically, I argue that membership in religious communities provides mental and monetary support, which offsets the costs of, and therefore reduces resistance to, free trade policies.

\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

The 2008 AmericasBarometer surveys, carried out by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), involved interviews conducted in 24 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean with a total of 40,567 probabilistically selected respondents, interviewed face-to-face (with the exception of web surveys in the U.S. and Canada).<sup>2</sup> In the particular case of support for free trade, a total of 29,982 respondents from 19 countries were asked the following question, to which they could respond on a 7-point scale where 1 means not at all and 7 means a lot:

**B48.** To what extent do you believe that free trade agreements will help to improve the economy?

**Figure 1.**

Average Support for Free Trade in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008

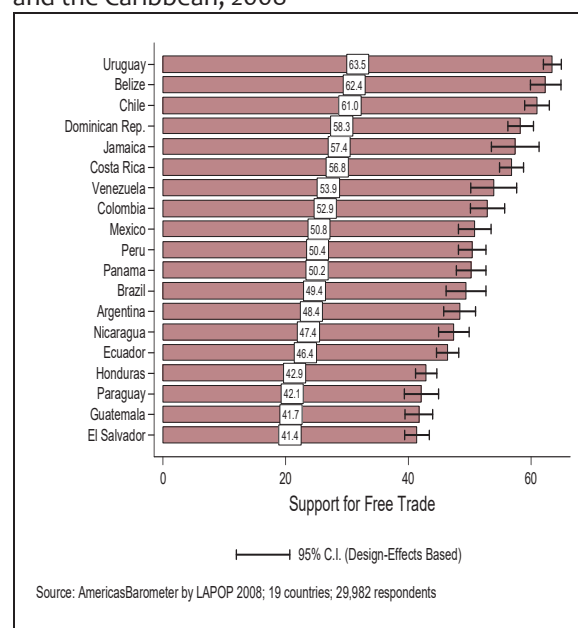


Figure 1 shows national averages for the 19 countries surveyed.<sup>3</sup> In order to facilitate comparisons, these responses were recoded on a

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2008 AmericasBarometer round was mainly provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other important sources of support were the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Across these countries an average of 13.5% of respondents did not answer the free trade question.

0-100 scale. Uruguay is the country with the highest support for free trade with an average of 63.5 points. A total of eleven countries exceed the 50 unit mid-point indicating average support, whereas only four nations have average support levels lower than 43 points. In sum, Figure 1 indicates that trade is supported by many in the region, despite the fact that popular benefits are debatable (Goldberg and Pavcnik 2004).

## Theoretical Perspectives

Prior scholarship suggests that there is a link between international economic integration associated with free trade and workers' insecurities due to the elasticity of labor demand, i.e. the ability of firms to easily substitute workers (Scheve and Slaughter 2004; Merolla, Stephenson, Wilson and Zechmeister 2005: 584). Thus, conventional theories explain support for free trade using variables that reflect individuals' positions in the economy, by factor (e.g., level of education) and/or sector (e.g., agriculture). At the same time, there is some evidence that the importance of those determinants is declining in comparison to the initial stage of trade reforms in Latin America (Baker 2003; 2009).<sup>4</sup>

Assuming there are nonetheless still some costs to free trade, I focus on a different theoretical perspective, which relates religious factors to support for free trade. My argument states that certain aspects of religion reduce psychological and monetary costs associated with free trade.

Put differently, assuming that free trade imposes, at a minimum, some psychological and, at a maximum, some economic costs as well, it is possible to import and adapt a theoretical perspective that suggests the existence of a religious coping effect. At the core of this perspective is the notion that religious

attendance and affiliations can provide a type of social insurance.

More specifically, the theory is that adverse life events such as unemployment, illness, or workplace accidents generate monetary costs, but also impose important psychological costs, such as stress and loss of self-esteem (Scheve and Stasavage 2006a: 137). Religious attendance and affiliations potentially reduce the psychological and financial costs of those adverse life events because Churches can offer comfort and support during difficult times (Mainwaring 1986; Scheve and Stasavage 2006a; 2006b; Daniels and von der Ruhr 2005; Hagopian 2008). Therefore, if religious affiliations do provide such "insurance", we should find all else equal that those who participate in religious life have higher levels of support for free trade than those who do not.<sup>5</sup>

## Modeling Support for Free Trade

In order to test the relationship between religious variables and support for free trade in the 19 countries surveyed, I use a survey linear model (a least squares regression for survey design). The dependent variable is respondents' level of support for free trade, measured using the variable described in Figure 1. The key independent variables are religious denominations and church attendance.

In addition, I control for a number of potential predictors of support for free trade. These include sociotropic and pocketbook evaluations of the economy (Seligson 1999; Merolla, Stephenson, Wilson and Zechmeister 2005); left and right in politics (Milner and Judkins 2004; Magaloni and Romero 2008); interpersonal trust as measure of potential social networks; interest in politics; and, both left-right placements and preferences over the role of the state with

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<sup>4</sup> I ran different models using factor and/or sector variables related to the Stolper Samuelson theorem (Rogowski 1989); the Heckscher-Ohlin model (Ohlin 1967); and the Ricardo-Viner theorem (Alt, Frieden, Gilligan, Rodrik and Rogowski 1996), but neither factor nor sector variables reached conventional levels of statistical significance, excepting levels of education.

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<sup>5</sup> The distribution of religious people in the 19 countries analyzed is 67.7% of Catholics (20,123 cases); 6.9% of Protestants (2,043 cases); 11.5% of Evangelicals (3,429 cases); 2.0% of LDS and Jehovah's Witness (596 cases); 2.1% of Eastern and Traditional religions (616 cases); and 9.9% of people who do not profess any faith (2,922 cases). The last category will be the reference category in the model.

respect to its social role<sup>6</sup> and its role as owner of critical industries (Baker 2003; Magaloni and Romero 2008; Zechmeister and Corral 2010).

Other control variables in the model are demographic and socio-economic measures: levels of education (Merolla, Stephenson, Wilson and Zechmeister 2005; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006), wealth measured by ownership of assets (Scheve and Slaughter 2001), size of residence, gender (Seligson 1999), age, and indigenous identity (Magaloni and Romero 2008).

In addition, some scholars argue that a relationship between religious factors and free trade would simply suggest that religious people tend to be more conservative (De la O and Rodden 2008: 439), and others suggest that Christian (in particular non-Catholic) affiliations tend to be more oriented toward internationalism, in particular toward the U.S. (Rodriguez 1982). Controlling for socially conservative attitudes and international ties allows me to assert with more confidence that the connection between religious factors and support for free trade is due to a coping effect, and not one of these other plausible explanations. I therefore include a proxy variable for moral traditionalism by means of opinions on homosexuals' rights to run for office, and a very rough proxy of international linkages by means of whether the respondent has contact with relatives in the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

## The Religious Coping Effect

The significance of the variables in the model is graphically represented in Figure 2 (fixed country effects are excluded from the graph, but available in the report appendix). Statistical significance is captured by a confidence interval

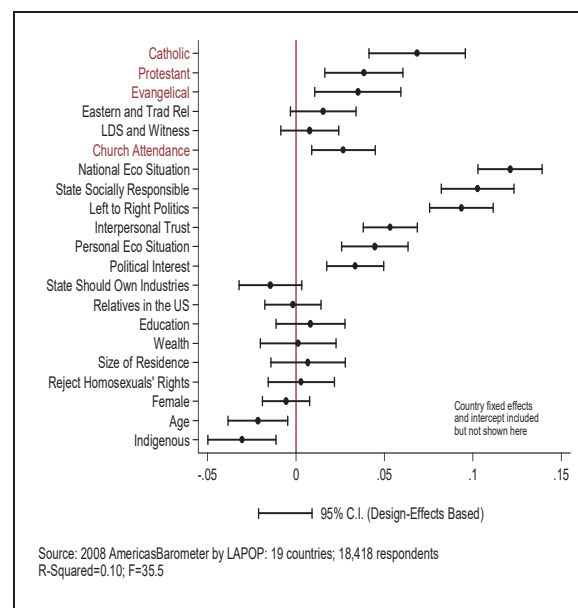
<sup>6</sup> State Socially Responsible is an index which includes citizens' perceptions about the state's responsibilities, such as promoting well-being of the people, creating jobs, and reducing economic inequalities, in which higher values represent state-oriented positions. For different uses of this index, see number 38 of this *Insights* Series (Zechmeister and Corral 2010: 4).

<sup>7</sup> In order to keep a manageable equation, I did not include factor/sector variables, excepting education. Across different specifications including additional factor/sector variables, religious affiliations and attendance remained statistically significant.

that does not overlap the vertical "0" line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical "0" line, it implies a positive relationship whereas when it falls to the left, it indicates a negative contribution.<sup>8</sup>

My expectations regarding the coping effect of religion on support for free trade are supported by the model. In particular, Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals tend to support free trade more in comparison to people who do not profess any religion, which is the reference category. In addition, Church attendance has a positive effect on support for free trade. In other words, as expected, those who attend Church more frequently hold more favorable opinions regarding free trade agreements.

**Figure 2.** Support for Free Trade in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



We also see that those who perceive their national and their personal economic situations

<sup>8</sup> I ran hierarchical models using the 2006 national Gini index by the WB, and the 2006 tariffs' index developed by the WSJ. The impact of the former on free trade was significant and negative (Goldberg and Pavcnik 2004), whereas the later was also significant but positive (Milner and Judkins 2004). In both specifications religious affiliations and attendance remained statistically significant. To keep the focus on religious variables, I show the more parsimonious and simpler model here.

in a more positive light are more supportive of free trade. Further, those who identify on the “right”, those with higher levels of interpersonal trust, and those with greater political interest support trade at higher levels. In contrast, senior citizens and the indigenous are less supportive of free trade. One interesting result is that the State Socially Responsible index is a strong, positive predictor of support for free trade; this is in accord with post-Washington Consensus doctrine, which emphasizes the combination of pro-market policies with the provision of social welfare safety nets.<sup>9</sup>

Even after controlling for the above-noted factors and, as well, social conservatism and links to the U.S., the religious factors are significant. In short, the results are consistent with the argument that religious attendance and affiliations provide individuals with the necessary reserves to support free trade at greater levels than those without such religious characteristics.

## Conclusions

The fact that religious affiliations have a positive relationship with support for free trade, and that this effect is felt across Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals, suggests a consensus among those religiously-minded in Latin America that free trade agreements can be beneficial to the economy (at least when compared to those who are not religious). This stands in contrast to some arguments that suggest religion can hinder progress toward modernization and other arguments that only specific religious affiliations are capable of advancing economic development (e.g., Weber [1905] 1958).

Overall, this initial evidence supports the argument that church participation and membership in a variety of religious communities provide psychological (and potentially monetary) support and comfort, reducing resistance to free trade policies. In addition, neither moral conservatism nor international influences explain support for free trade and the religious factors are significant

<sup>9</sup> In addition, there is a marginally significant negative effect for the role of the state as owner of critical industries.

even when these other variables are included in the model. Thus, the theorized coping effect is the most plausible explanation of the relationship between religious variables in the model and free trade support.<sup>10</sup>

The notion that religious attendance and affiliations may help individuals to cope with economic liberalization is consistent with the notion that in general, safety nets are useful mechanisms to put in place alongside market-oriented reforms. The more a society possesses means to cushion the negative effects of such reforms, the more accepting the public is likely to be of such restructuring. While much has been written on public policy safety nets (e.g., social investment funds), this report suggests that churches can also play, and arguably are playing, such a role in Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Although this evidence is supportive of the religious coping effect, a more extensive set of tests would include additional variables such as “do you find comfort from your Church?”; interaction terms between economic evaluations and religious variables; the ideological content of Churches’ pastoral messages; and/or clergy’s opinions on free trade and market-reforms, in order to allow explicit tests of the causal mechanism(s) underlying the positive relationship between religious factors and free trade support.

<sup>11</sup> I wish to thank Elizabeth Zechmeister, Mitchell A. Seligson, Diana Orcés, Mariana Medina, and Kendra DeColo for helpful comments and suggestions. However, all usual disclaimers apply.



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## Appendix. Support for Free Trade in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008

Independent Variables	Coef.	Std. Err.	t
Catholic	0.069	0.014	<b>4.97</b>
Protestant	0.037	0.011	<b>3.41</b>
Evangelical	0.036	0.013	<b>2.82</b>
Eastern and Traditional Religions	0.016	0.010	1.64
Later Day Saints / Jehovah Witnesses	0.008	0.008	0.94
Church attendance	0.027	0.009	<b>2.94</b>
National Economic Situation	0.121	0.009	<b>13.16</b>
State Socially Responsible	0.102	0.010	<b>9.79</b>
Left to Right Politics	0.095	0.009	<b>10.26</b>
Interpersonal trust	0.053	0.008	<b>6.82</b>
Personal Economic Situation	0.044	0.009	<b>4.66</b>
Political Interest	0.034	0.008	<b>4.10</b>
State Should Own Industries	-0.015	0.009	-1.60
Relatives in the US	-0.002	0.008	-0.21
Education	0.008	0.010	0.83
Wealth	0.001	0.011	0.12
Size of Residence	0.007	0.011	0.65
Reject Homosexuals' Rights	0.003	0.010	0.32
Female	-0.006	0.007	-0.82
Age	-0.022	0.009	<b>-2.50</b>
Indigenous	-0.029	0.009	<b>-3.09</b>
Mexico	-0.095	0.011	<b>-8.53</b>
Guatemala	-0.116	0.012	<b>-9.83</b>
El Salvador	-0.138	0.010	<b>-13.32</b>
Honduras	-0.114	0.010	<b>-11.64</b>
Nicaragua	-0.080	0.010	<b>-6.72</b>
Costa Rica	-0.054	0.012	<b>-5.43</b>
Panama	-0.080	0.010	<b>-7.01</b>
Colombia	-0.094	0.011	<b>-7.83</b>
Ecuador	-0.156	0.012	<b>-11.76</b>
Peru	-0.084	0.013	<b>-8.48</b>
Paraguay	-0.128	0.011	<b>-11.53</b>
Chile	-0.015	0.010	-1.55
Brazil	-0.087	0.013	<b>-6.55</b>
Venezuela	-0.061	0.015	<b>-4.16</b>
Argentina	-0.112	0.012	<b>-9.41</b>
Dominican Republic	-0.051	0.010	<b>-4.99</b>
Jamaica	-0.036	0.017	<b>-2.06</b>
Belize	0.019	0.014	1.29
Intercept	0.023	0.011	<b>2.17</b>

Source: 2008 Americas Barometer by LAPOP; 19 countries; 18,418 respondents

R-Squared = 0.096; F= 35.5; Country of reference: Uruguay.

Coefficients and standard errors were estimated based on variation between 104 primary sampling units via survey linear regression.



*AmericasBarometer Insights\*: 2010 (No.41)*

## Problems May Convert Believers into Non-Believers in Chávez's Venezuela<sup>1</sup>

Mariana Rodríguez  
mariana.rodriguez@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

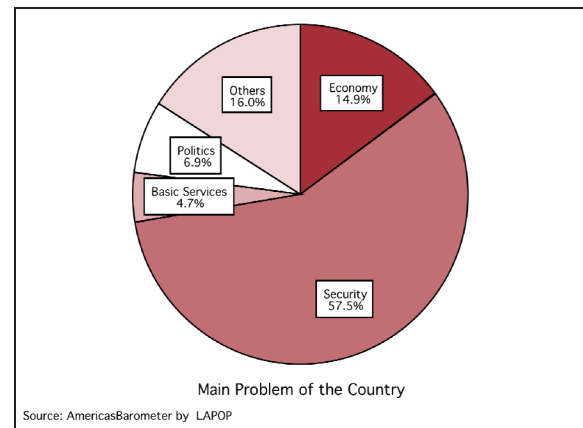
In 1999 Hugo Chávez became president of Venezuela, giving hope to many citizens by promising social, economic, and political improvements and embarking on an expansive implementation of socialist policies. Over ten years later, those policies have been met with mixed success, and the country is plagued by crime and economic problems, especially high inflation.<sup>2</sup> This *Insights* report shows that negative assessments of crime and the economy by Chávez supporters serve to reduce their approval of his performance as president.

Although Chávez has experienced impressive and enduring support from a large number of

Venezuelan citizens, as shown by repeated victories at the polls, in recent years he has experienced notable defeats, in particular in a December 2007 referendum and the November 2008 regional elections.<sup>3</sup> These events in particular have led many to question whether Chávez's popularity is waning, and if so, why.

One explanation offered by the media and supported by academic theory is that performance failures, in the form of Venezuela's alarming crime rates and economic struggles, are taking a toll on Chávez's support. To assess this explanation, this *Insights* report analyzes the relationships between perceptions of crime and economic well-being and approval of Chávez's performance as president, *among those who previously voted for Chávez*.<sup>4</sup> If poor assessments of Chávez's performance are negatively associated with job approval ratings among his supporters, we have a key to understanding his electoral vulnerability, and a possible explanation for recent defeats at the polls.

**Figure 1. Chávez supporters' perceptions of the most important problem in Venezuela, 2008**



\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

<sup>2</sup> See for example various articles in the [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) and [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

<sup>3</sup> In December 2007, voters rejected Chávez's proposed constitutional amendment, which included a provision to eliminate term limits. In November 2008, although pro-Chávez candidates won 17 out of the 22 governor elections, the opposition won some of the most important and populous regions of the country (Romero 2008). As noted in the conclusion of this report, however, those electoral defeats were reversed in a February 2009 referendum.

<sup>4</sup> In a larger project, I include non-supporters in the analysis.

The data for this report are from the 2008 AmericasBarometer survey conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) in Venezuela. The data first show that, in fact, Chávez supporters perceive crime and the economy as their most important concerns.<sup>5</sup>

The survey's 1,500 respondents were asked this question:

**A4.** To begin with, in your opinion, what is the most serious problem faced by the country?<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 displays the percentage of Chávez's supporters who indicated security (crime), the economy, basic services, politics, or other concerns as the most important problem.<sup>7</sup> As the figure shows, crime in particular and also the economy to a lesser extent are the two single most important concerns among Chávez supporters. In the next section, I draw on existing scholarship to argue that negative assessments of crime and the economy translate into lower approval of Chávez, even among those who helped elect him to office.

## Performance Assessments and Presidential Approval

Scholars have long argued and demonstrated that citizens will reward or punish an incumbent administration based on their perception of its performance (Downs 1957; Key 1966; Fiorina 1981). Concerning economic performance, specifically, a long line of scholarship posits

citizens' support for incumbents declines when economic conditions deteriorate (Lewis-Beck 1986; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Mueller 1973; Kernell 1978; Monroe 1978; Hibbs et al. 1982). Performance assessments affecting incumbent support are not limited to the economy; in fact, other studies have shown that other factors, such as scandals, wars, and overall satisfaction with the performance of democracy also affect voting and presidential approval (MacKuen 1983; Anderson et al. 2003; Brace and Hinckley 1991).

Recently, scholars have shown that salient issues have the greatest effects on incumbent support (Edwards et al. 1995; Fournier et al. 2003). Given the relative salience of security and economic concerns in Venezuela for Chávez supporters, as shown in Figure 1, we would expect to find a strong link between assessments of performance in these areas and Chávez's job approval ratings.

Scholarship documents a link between crime and the economy, on the one hand, and attitudes toward government and democracy in Venezuela. Specifically, Seligson and Boidi (2008) show how crime victimization and perceptions of insecurity reduce the legitimacy of government, interpersonal trust, and support for a stable democracy. Additionally, their research provides evidence that perceptions of how well the government handles economic problems also affect the legitimacy of democratic institutions. On a related note, Hawkins (2010) explains how widespread corruption and economic struggles facilitated the rise of Chávez's populism as a response to the failure of previous democratic regimes to deliver effective governance (Hawkins 2010).

Given that those most likely to suffer crime victimization (the poor) and those belonging to the lower socio-economic groups are thought to be key supporters of Chávez's protracted tenure in office (Canache 2004; Roberts 2003; Handelman 2000; Cannon 2008; Heath 2009; Hellinger 2003, 2005; but see Lupu 2010), it is not surprising, then, to find that security and

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<sup>5</sup> In this report, "Chávez supporters" are those 643 respondents of the AmericasBarometer 2008 Venezuelan survey who said they voted for Chávez. "Non-supporters" are those who said they voted for another candidate.

<sup>6</sup> Among Chávez supporters, non-response for this question was 0.9 percent.

<sup>7</sup> Funding for the 2008 AmericasBarometer round was mainly provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other important sources of support were the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

economic concerns top their lists of the country's most important problems. If classical theories and extant evidence are correct, we should, moreover, find that assessments of negative performance in these areas by Chávez voters are linked to lower levels of job approval for the president.

## Determinants of Supporters' Job Approval of President Chávez

Do negative perceptions of crime and economic well-being hurt supporters' job approval of Chávez? To examine this question, I make use of the following survey item measuring presidential job approval:

**M1.** Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President Hugo Chávez?

Respondents placed their opinion on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 means "very bad," 2 "bad," 3 "fair," 4 "good," and 5 "very good." These responses were recalibrated on a 0-100 scale in order to facilitate comparisons.<sup>8</sup>

To limit the analysis to Chávez supporters, I confine the analysis only to those who reported having voted for Chávez in the last presidential election.<sup>9</sup> On average, Chávez supporters gave the President a job approval rating of 69.5. A histogram in Appendix A shows this value in comparison to the 2007 and 2010 surveys; data reveal a modest but steady decrease in Chávez's approval among supporters over time.<sup>10</sup> As the

histogram in Appendix B shows, while only a small group of Chávez supporters give him the most negative evaluations, just over 30 percent give him a fair rating, neither bad nor good.

Two variables provide measures of crime performance: crime victimization and perceptions of insecurity. Likewise, two measures capture economic performance: perceptions of personal and economic conditions. Crime victimization is a dichotomous variable, while perceptions of economic conditions range from "very good" to "very bad," and perceptions of insecurity range from feeling "very safe" to "very unsafe."<sup>11</sup> Among Chávez supporters, nearly 22% viewed national economic conditions as poor or very poor, while 14% thought their own personal economic situation was bad or very bad. Only 15% of respondents said they felt very unsafe in their neighborhoods, but 24% said that they felt somewhat unsafe.

In light of the important number of Chávez supporters who have negative perceptions of crime and economic well-being in Venezuela, meaningful results could be obtained by studying if and how much these negative perceptions hurt supporters' job approval of Chávez. The following analysis also includes standard socio-economic and demographic variables as controls: age (in years), gender, years of education, and wealth.

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Chávez), Chávez received mean approval scores in 2007, 2008, and 2010 of 27.2, 24.3, and 24.9, respectively, suggesting that over these three years his approval among non-supporters remained low and fairly steady (due to the relatively small number of observations, the decrease from 2007 to 2008 is not statistically significant).

<sup>11</sup> These variables were also recalibrated from 0-100. The wording of the questions used is as follows: **VIC1.** *Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months?*; **AOJ11A.** *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?*; **SOCT1.** *How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?*; **IDIO1.** *How would you describe your overall economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?*

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<sup>8</sup> Non-response was 1.2 percent for Chávez supporters.

<sup>9</sup> **VB3.** *Who did you vote for in the last presidential election?*

<sup>10</sup> As Appendix A shows, the AmericasBarometer surveys from 2007, 2008, and 2010 reveal a steady decrease in approval of Chávez among his supporters. In 2007, supporters gave Chávez an average job approval rating of 71.5; while this number only dropped by two units, to 69.5, in 2008, that difference is statistically significant at the 0.10 level. Further, in 2010, supporters gave Chávez an average job approval rating of 65.8, in this case almost four units lower than 2008 (and statistically significant at the .05 level). In terms of non-supporters (those who voted but not for

**Figure 2. Determinants of Chávez's Job Approval, among Supporters, 2008**

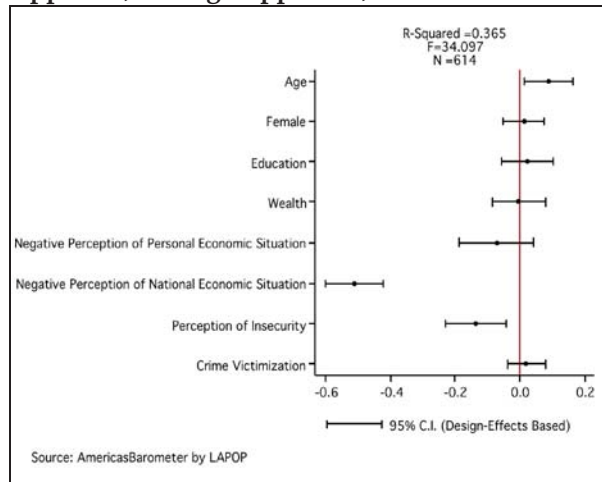


Figure 2 displays the results of the OLS multivariate analysis.<sup>12</sup> The figure displays regression coefficients with dots, which if to the left imply a negative relationship with the dependent variable and the reverse if to the right; statistical significance is indicated by horizontal bars that do not overlap the vertical line at 0. The analysis supports the argument that negative perceptions of crime and economic well-being hurt supporters' approval of Chávez's job as President. All other variables constant, an increase in negative perceptions of security is associated with a decrease in approval of Chávez among his supporters. The same is true for negative perceptions of the country's economic situation. Being a victim of a crime and an increase in negative perceptions of personal economic conditions both are not significant.<sup>13</sup> Wealth, education, and gender also do not have significant effects, while age has a positive and significant effect on presidential approval, meaning that among Chávez supporters, those who are older express higher

levels of approval of Chávez's performance than those who are younger.

Substantively, negative perceptions of the national economic situation have the largest effect on presidential approval for Chávez among his supporters, followed by perceptions of personal insecurity. This finding means that perceptions of national economic conditions are more important than perceptions of personal economic conditions for determining supporters' degree of approval for Chávez's job as president. This is an interesting finding in light of the fact that, while both are important, personal security concerns trump personal economic concerns among his supporters (see Figure 1). The results also demonstrate that feelings of insecurity rather than being an actual victim of crime have a greater influence on how supporters feel about Chávez. These results are consistent with evidence from both the economic voting and presidential literature, which show how sociotropic perceptions (those relating to the individual's community) matter more than egotropic perceptions (those relating to the individual) in determining incumbent support.

## Conclusions

The findings in this report indicate that, indeed, Venezuela's high crime rates and deteriorating economic conditions are taking a toll on Chávez's popularity among his supporters. Lack of effectiveness by the Chávez administration in the face of growing crime rates and worsening economic conditions are a threat to the President's popularity among his supporters.

So long as problems with crime and the economy continue to worsen, Chávez's support is likely to decay. In particular, this report shows that persistent or even increased personal insecurity and negative perceptions of the national economy among his supporters are likely to increase dissatisfaction with the

<sup>12</sup> All statistical analyses reported in this article were conducted using Stata v10, and they are adjusted to consider the effects of complex sample design.

<sup>13</sup> The correlation between crime victimization and feelings of insecurity is weak at 0.18. The correlation between perceptions of personal and national economic conditions is moderate at 0.56.



President's performance, and possibly translate into electoral defections.

These conclusions notwithstanding, at the time the data were collected for this study, despite the electoral setbacks mentioned at the start of this report, Chávez remained quite popular.<sup>14</sup> In early 2009 Chávez won a referendum that, among other constitutional reforms, eliminated presidential term limits. Consequently, it is clear that regardless of the negative effect that feelings of insecurity and economic hardship can have on his popularity, Chávez continues to retain strong support from his followers.

Nevertheless, the findings in this report reveal fragilities in Chávez's regime in the face of continued public insecurity and economic problems. Even for a unique and popular leader like Chávez, after years of governance and institutional reforms, the same mechanisms that have led voters time and time again to cast out "rascals" responsible for poor performance in established democracies appear capable of undermining Chávez's grip on government, by making non-believers out of once-believers.

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<sup>14</sup> On average respondents of the 2008 Venezuelan survey gave Chávez a job approval rating of 53.1. Supporters gave the President an average job rating of 69.5.



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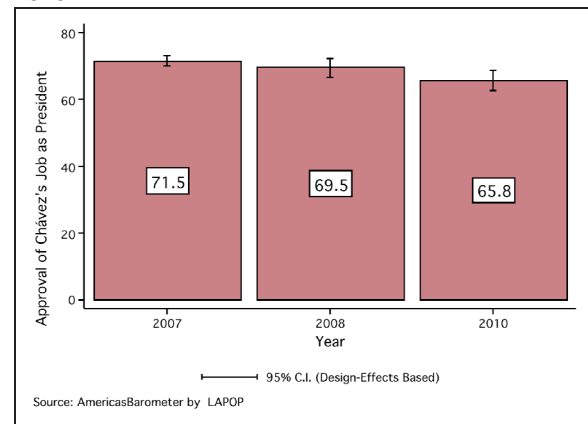
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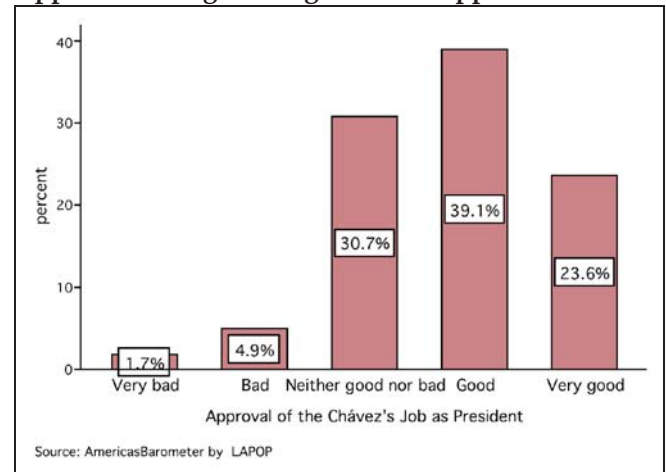
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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Average Presidential Approval Scores for Chávez among Supporters, 2007-2010



### Appendix B: Distribution of Presidential Approval Ratings among Chávez Supporters





*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.42) \**

# The Normalization of Protest in Latin America<sup>1</sup>

Mason Moseley  
Vanderbilt University  
[mason.moseley@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:mason.moseley@vanderbilt.edu)

Daniel Moreno  
Ciudadanía, Comunidad de Estudios Sociales y  
Acción Pública, Cochabamba, Bolivia  
[dmorenom@gmail.com](mailto:dmorenom@gmail.com)

Social movements and mass protests have been defining aspects of Latin American politics, even precipitating sharp political reactions and consequences in several recent cases. For example, mass protests played key roles in five of seven “acute” institutional crises since 2000 (González 2008). Protests contributed to the 2003 resignation of Bolivian president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and the 2001-2002 episodes of Argentine critical political instability, which included the deposal of two presidents in less than a month.

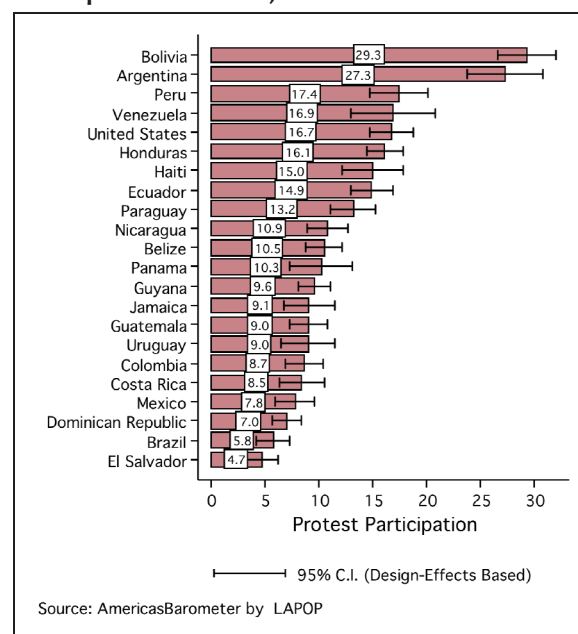
In short, protests matter in the Americas, and for that reason it is important to know *who* protests—that is, what are the characteristics of

those who participate in aggressive modes of political action? In this *Insights* report, we report on national average levels of self-reported protest participation in the region and then go on to present evidence regarding the most important determinants of protest participation in two cases, Argentina and Bolivia.<sup>2</sup> We argue that in these two countries mass protest is more conventional than radical; we discuss in our conclusion the implications this may have for the region more generally.

The data come from the 2008 *AmericasBarometer*.<sup>3</sup> In face-to-face interviews in twenty-one countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and a web survey in the United States, a total of 25,279 people responded to this question:

**PROT2.**<sup>4</sup> During the last year, did you participate in a public demonstration or protest?

**Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents who Participated in Protest, 2008**



<sup>2</sup> The content of this *Insights* report is drawn from a working paper (Moreno and Moseley 2010), which contains more extensive theory and empirical analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Funding for the 2008 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Center for the Americas (CFA), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>4</sup> Non-response was 11.17% for the entire sample. The question was not asked in Chile.

\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents for each country who indicated they “sometimes” or “almost never” participated in protest during the previous year (the remaining option provided was “never”). It is quite apparent that Argentina and Bolivia had the highest rates of protest participation in Latin America, as almost one-third of citizens in each nation participated at least to a limited extent in protest during the year prior to the survey.

In the remainder of this report, we consider in more detail the predictors of protest participation in these two countries, for two primary reasons. First, most empirical tests of dominant theories have focused on advanced industrialized democracies (e.g., Norris et al. 2005; Opp 1990; Schussman and Soule 2005). By focusing on Argentina and Bolivia, we extend extant research beyond its typically more limited geographic focus. Second, the two countries themselves are quite dissimilar on a number of key economic and sociopolitical variables.<sup>5</sup> The use of these two cases, then, approaches a “most different systems” design, allowing us to home in on commonalities across the cases, and simultaneously parse out ways in which certain explanations might account for protest in one country better than the other.

## Disaffected Radicalism versus Conventional Strategic Resources

Theories of why people protest are numerous and diverse. We focus on two theoretical perspectives – disaffected radicalism and conventional strategic resource – and test them against one another to determine which better explains protest in Argentina and Bolivia.

Popular during the 1960s and 1970s, the disaffected radicalism thesis holds that protest is

a response to abject economic and/or political conditions, and constitutes a rejection of the key representative institutions of the political system (Jenkins 1993, Dalton and van Sickle 2005). Following this line of thought, widespread political protest is a threat to the legitimacy of democracy, as citizens express discontent not with particular leaders or issues, but with the political system itself (Norris et al. 2005).

According to this view of contentious politics as disaffected extremism, protest substitutes for conventional participation (Muller 1979). That is, protestors generally come from destitute socioeconomic backgrounds, and do not take part in the political process through conventional channels like voting, party membership, and civic associations. Protestors might also be younger and less educated on average than non-protestors.

In stark contrast to the view of protest politics as seditious radicalism, an increasing number of scholars argue that protest has actually “normalized”, and is simply another form of conventional political participation in modern democracies. Adherents of this theoretical tradition claim that disaffected radicalism is an artifact of the time period during which it emerged, and that citizens in contemporary societies utilize protest as another strategic resource for political expression (Inglehart 1990, Norris 2002). Thus, the conventional strategic resource perspective of protest as a participatory outlet for active democrats would seem to indicate that demonstrators resemble those who participate through traditional channels—that is, middle-class and educated citizens who vote, are members of political parties, and take part in civic organizations. In fact, this notion that protestors resemble “conventional” participants has been corroborated by a number of empirical studies, many of which focus on protest participation in the developed world (e.g., Dalton and Van Sickle 2005; Norris et al. 2005).

If one of these two theories were capable of explaining protest participation in such divergent economic and political environments as those of Argentina and Bolivia, it would seem to lend unprecedented explanatory power to a theory that has to date only been systematically

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<sup>5</sup> For example, while Argentina is one of Latin America’s wealthiest countries, with GDP per capita of \$9,483, Bolivia ranks among the region’s poorest nations with GDP per capita of \$2,002 (International Monetary Fund 2009). Bolivia is also one of Latin America’s most unequal countries, while income distribution in Argentina is relatively egalitarian by Latin American standards (U.N. Human Development Report 2009).

tested in advanced industrialized democracies. Thus, we seek to ascertain if the disaffected radicalism or conventional strategic resource thesis better explains the dynamics of protest participation in Argentina and Bolivia.

To date, most of the literature on recent mass protests in Argentina and Bolivia has depicted protests more as a manifestation of specific grievances and economic deprivation than as a potentially normalized form of political voice. Indeed, these accounts have focused on Argentina's economic crisis in 2001-2002, and the specific objectives of the indigenous movement in Bolivia in recent years. However, we have some reason to believe these descriptions are misleading, as contentious politics has become more normalized in recent years in both countries (Moreno 2009). In the following section, we outline our strategy for testing these competing explanations of protest participation.

## Research Design and Data

We use logistic regression analysis to assess the probability that citizens participate in protests based on the socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors deemed relevant by the both disaffected radicalism (DR) and conventional strategic resources (CSR) theories. In implementing this strategy, we first are able to discover which individual-level characteristics have the most powerful substantive effects on protest participation. Second, this research design allows us to observe whether there are common factors predicting participation in protests across these two distinctive cases, and whether a single theory can be used to explain protests in both Argentina and Bolivia. Finally, this approach will help us develop specific explanations for each of the two nations, to the extent that a single theory fails to perfectly predict protest in both countries.

For our analyses, we examine data from the 2008 *AmericasBarometer* surveys of Argentina and Bolivia. For Argentina, the project used a national probability sample design of voting-age adults, with a total N of 1,486 people taking part in face-to-face interviews in Spanish. Data used

for Bolivia come from a probability sample of the adult population of the nine departments in the country; a total of 3,003 interviews were conducted in the Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara languages to guarantee representation of individuals who are monolingual in any of these languages.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the full logistic regression model, which is the same across both country cases, are presented in the appendix.<sup>6</sup> Here we describe the results and their significance.

In Argentina, five variables have significant effects on the likelihood that one participates in protest. In line with the CSR theory, interest in politics, community activity, and union membership have positive effects on the likelihood that citizens participate in protest marches or demonstrations. In particular, one's involvement in activities directed toward solving community problems has a strong effect on his/her likelihood of participating in protest – indeed, citizens who have taken part in these activities have almost ninety-percent higher odds of also participating in protest than those who have not. Additionally, Argentine protestors have negative evaluations of the current president (Cristina Fernández de Kirchner), and younger citizens, as is typically the case, are more likely to take part in protest demonstrations and marches.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The statistical analyses employ information from the sample design in order to produce accurate standard errors and confidence intervals. For a discussion on the relevance of using information from the sample design in calculating errors see Kish and Frankel 1974; Knott 1991; Skinner, Holt and Smith 1989.

<sup>7</sup> While we acknowledge the potential problems associated with predicting protest participation in the past with current evaluations, we argue that almost all of the variables in our model are relatively constant over time. Indeed, the only variable that could present a problem is the presidential evaluation question, considering the fact that Fernández de Kirchner took office *during* the time period under consideration (Morales was Bolivia's president throughout). However, given that many Argentines viewed her presidency as a continuation of her husband's (Néstor Kirchner), we do not think this presents a significant problem in our analyses.



In Bolivia, both interest in politics and community activism also have powerful positive effects on the chances that one participates in protest. Unlike Argentina, however, voting is also a strong predictor among Bolivians, as voters are much more likely to engage in contentious political behavior than nonvoters. Also, support for democracy seems to be positively associated with protest participation, as Bolivians who believe democracy is the best form of government are *more* likely to take part in protest marches and demonstrations. Unlike Argentina, and surprisingly, age and presidential approval are not significant predictors of protest participation.

Table 1 indicates our hypotheses regarding the empirical implications of each theoretical approach, and summarizes our findings for each hypothesis. As far as the two dominant theories are concerned, these results do not lend much support to the disaffected radicalism thesis. System support and support for democracy fail to achieve statistical significance in Argentina, while system support actually has a *positive* effect on the odds of participating in a protest march or demonstration in Bolivia, precisely the opposite of what the theory would predict. Socioeconomic indicators also fail to predict protest participation in either case, as neither wealth nor education has a significant effect. Finally, conventional political participation seems to have a powerful positive effect on the likelihood that citizens protest, undermining the DR claim that protestors are political outsiders who substitute contentious behavior for conventional participation.

On the other hand, the conventional strategic resource explanation fares relatively well in our models. As mentioned above, interest in politics is a potent explanatory variable in both Argentina and Bolivia, and the effects of socioeconomic variables suggest that protest has indeed “normalized” across income groups. In addition, several modes of conventional political participation turn out to be strong predictors of contentious political behavior, as voting, union membership, and activity in one’s local community have meaningful positive effects on protest participation in one or both of the cases under examination.

**Table 1. Hypotheses and Summary of Findings**

	Argentina	Bolivia
<b>Disaffected Radicalism:</b>		
H1.1: System Support	Mixed	False
H1.2: Socioeconomic conditions	False	False
H1.3: Conventional participation	False	False
<b>Conventional Strategic Resources:</b>		
H2.1: Interest in politics	True	True
H2.2: Socioeconomic conditions	True	True
H2.3: Conventional participation	Mixed	True

While it does seem that protest has become relatively “conventional” in both Argentina and Bolivia, there are several key differences between our results across the two countries. First, every indicator of conventional participation in the model has a positive effect on protest in Bolivia, leading one to conclude that protest participation has been absorbed almost completely into the conventional “repertoire” in Bolivia. In Argentina, the fact that age and presidential approval have significant negative effects indicates that protest has not completely normalized—that is, younger Argentines are more likely protestors, as are those who disapprove of the Kirchner administration. In this respect, Argentina does reflect the image presented by the disaffection thesis to some, but not comprehensive, extent.

## Conclusion

To conclude, our results strongly support the central claims of the conventional strategic resources theory that protest has become a “normalized” form of political voice. Both in

Argentina and in Bolivia, individuals who protest are generally more interested in politics and likely to engage in community-level activities, seemingly supplementing traditional forms of participation with protest. The case for conventional strategic resources theory is even stronger in Bolivia, where there is a significant, positive relationship between voting and support for democracy and participating in a protest march or demonstration. In Argentina, protests seem to have some elements linked to implications of the disaffected radicalism theory; the fact that youth and more anti-government positions are related to higher participation in protests suggest that disaffected radicalism could in part explain protests in Argentina. Nevertheless, the results do not support the disaffected radicalism view that protestors are political outsiders, disconnected from the traditional political arena and driven by extreme economic or political deprivation.

One potential reason for the differences we observe between Argentina and Bolivia—namely, that support for democracy and voting are significant predictors of protest participation in Bolivia but not Argentina—is the degree to which demonstrations are led by actors within government in Bolivia. Indeed, the governing political party, the MAS, has taken a central role in promoting “politics in the street” in Bolivia, whereas non-government actors in Argentina like the *piqueteros* and various trade unions have taken the lead in organizing protests and demonstrations. Thus, while protest in Argentina might not appear as normalized as it is in Bolivia as it relates to other forms of conventional participation, it has still taken a central role in the repertoire of contention for politically active citizens.

While this paper has focused only on two countries in Latin America, both of which have experienced particularly high levels of protest, we maintain the findings here are suggestive of a larger trend. In many Latin American countries, street protests and marches have come to play a crucial role in citizens’ efforts to influence government actions and policies, in conjunction with other more conventional forms of participation. Given the fact that this mode of political expression is capable of creating

instability, and occasionally can trigger a country’s descent into political disarray (e.g. Argentina in 2001-2002 or Bolivia in 2003), it would seem vital to explain why this type of participation has emerged in some economic and political contexts but not others. Efforts to illuminate the institutional determinants of protest are still in their nascent stages (see Machado, Scartascini, and Tomassi 2009), but represent a crucial avenue for future research if we are to expand our understanding of contentious political behavior in contemporary Latin America.

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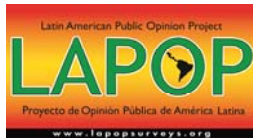


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## Appendix 1. Logistic Regression on Determinants of Protest Participation

	Argentina		Bolivia	
	Odds ratio	P>t	Odds ratio	P>t
<b>Voting</b>	.923	.737	<b>1.467</b>	<b>.009</b>
<b>Interest in politics</b>	<b>1.013</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>	<b>1.010</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
<b>System support</b>	1.002	.661	1.000	.940
<b>Wealth</b>	1.028	.577	.981	.653
<b>Education</b>	1.030	.194	1.028	.075
<b>Gender (female)</b>	1.207	.312	.933	.462
<b>Age</b>	<b>.977</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>	.996	.408
<b>Party affiliation</b>	.948	.737	1.208	.142
<b>Support for democracy</b>	1.003	.527	<b>1.005</b>	<b>.038</b>
<b>Community activity</b>	<b>1.875</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>	<b>1.329</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
<b>Vote for current president</b>	1.285	.277	.935	.629
<b>Presidential approval</b>	<b>.988</b>	<b>.004</b>	.003	.740
<b>Union membership</b>	<b>1.016</b>	<b>.006</b>	<b>1.013</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
<b>Ideology (Right)*</b>	<b>.816</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>	<b>1.093</b>	<b>&lt; .001</b>
N	1096		2526	

\* As the inclusion of ideology drastically reduces the number of available observations, results for this variable come from a different model fitted in each country with all other covariates included. However, in the model including ideology, results for all other variables remain similar.



*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.43)\**

# Social Capital and Economic Crisis in the United States<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Zizumbo-Colunga, Elizabeth J. Zechmeister,  
and Mitchell A. Seligson /// Vanderbilt University  
Contact: [daniel.zizumbo-colunga@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:daniel.zizumbo-colunga@vanderbilt.edu)

Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) noted vibrant social participation in the early U.S. and ever since social scientists have considered “social capital” an essential element to explain the early and continued success of democracy in the United States. The global implications of the importance of social capital have since been explored in Putnam’s iconic research on democracy in Italy, as well as the U.S. (2001; 2004; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994), and a veritable cascade of studies far too numerous to cite here. Researchers have found that, under certain conditions, some forms of social capital may pose challenges to democracy (Armony, 2004; Zizumbo-Colunga, 2010). There is nonetheless much agreement that, on average,

\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

networks of trusting individuals are important, if not critical, to a healthy democratic citizenry and politics.

If social capital is vital for democracy, and studies have emphasized the ways in which it can be built, are there also forces operating in nations that can erode it? One possible such force is economic crisis. Many consider the meltdown that began at the end of 2007, and worsened throughout 2008, to be one of the worst financial crises in the history of the United States. Serious financial threats have been linked to increased authoritarian attitudes and behaviors (see, e.g., Sales, 1972). And, according to Robert Putnam, as quoted in the *New York Times*, “Damage to this country’s social fabric from this economic crisis must have been huge, huge, huge (Gertner, 2010).”

**Figure 1. Quarterly Percent Change in U.S. GDP with Mean Interpersonal Trust Levels in Boxes.**



Yet, while conditions of crisis might threaten a country’s social fabric by increasing distrust (Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009), it is also possible that individual and collective efforts to resolve the crisis could stave off precipitous drops in social capital. The AmericasBarometer surveys of the United States, conducted in 2006, 2008, and 2010, allow the opportunity to examine the

dynamics of social capital in the face of the recent and severe economic recession.

Figure 1 shows the percent change, by quarter, in the growth of U.S. Gross Domestic Product as well as the mean level of interpersonal trust from each round of the AmericasBarometer U.S. survey: 2006, 2008, and 2010.<sup>2</sup> The interpersonal trust scores are based on the following question, and rescaled to run from 0 to 100:

IT1. [S]peaking of the people from around here, would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy, or untrustworthy?

The figure reveals two important findings. First, as the economy began to deteriorate, so too did social capital measured in terms of interpersonal trust. Even though the full weight of the crisis had not occurred by the time of the AmericasBarometer survey in early 2008, the economy was clearly in decline. As the figure demonstrates, average levels of interpersonal trust did drop 12.4 units between 2006 and 2008. Second, however, in marked contrast to the Putnam prediction, interpersonal trust levels were no lower in 2010 than they were in 2008. The “huge, huge, huge” impact is nowhere to be found. We do not have a measurement of interpersonal trust at the depths of the crisis in late 2008 and early 2009, which might show a lower value; regardless, by 2010 as the economy recovered, so did trust. In short, if the recession did indeed affect mean levels of interpersonal trust, it did so to an important, but not to a drastic degree, nor irrecoverable, degree.

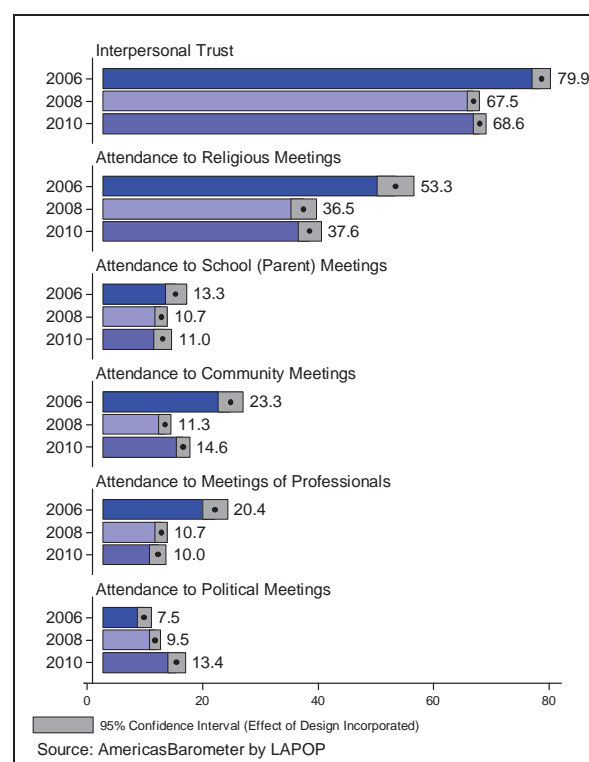
## U.S. Social Capital, 2006 – 2010

While interpersonal trust provides one measure of social capital, we can also examine other manifestations of social capital via self-reported levels of participation in various activities. The AmericasBarometer surveys include a series of

questions tapping participation in groups. Indeed, Putnam’s research on Italy and much of his subsequent work on the U.S. has focused on survey reports of participation in civic groups. Values for five of these are shown in Figure 2, alongside the already reported values for interpersonal trust.

The five additional measures reflect levels of participation in the following: religious meetings (CP6); school parent associations (CP7); community improvement or council meetings (CP8); professional meetings (CP9); and, political meetings (CP13) (see appendix Table A1 for question wordings).

**Figure 2. Mean Levels on Social Capital Variables, U.S., 2006-2010.**



All variables were initially coded from one to four, but then rescaled from 0 to 100, where 0 indicates never participating and 100 indicates participating at least once a week.

If the conjecture is correct that there is a direct and strong relationship between the economic

<sup>2</sup> The sample size for the AmericasBarometer U.S. national survey was 609 in 2006, and 1500 in both 2008 and 2010.

crisis and social capital, we would expect to find a pattern in which social capital levels plummet between 2006 and 2010.

As Figure 2 shows, the pattern for most of the social capital indicators follows that which we described for interpersonal trust: a decline between 2006 and 2008 followed by a leveling off between 2008 and 2010. While some of the 2006 to 2008 declines are unquestionably large (e.g., religious organizations), others are quite small (e.g., school meetings). Further, as an interesting exception, we see an increase in attending political organization meetings (no doubt at least in part a function of the 2008 presidential election, but also because of the Obama-based healthcare reform debate, and the resulting surge in grassroots politics on both the right and the left).

In short, we find some evidence in support of the notion that the crisis had a negative effect on social capital, but this effect is not evident across all indicators (namely, the increase in attendance for political meetings is an interesting outlier); is not uniformly “huge”; and, does not appear between 2008 and 2010.

## Predicting Interpersonal Trust with Individual-Level Economic Assessments and Experiences

Economic crisis was a principal theme of the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey, conducted in 25 (and, when completed in Haiti, 26) countries in the region. The survey therefore contains numerous questions with which to measure individual-level economic assessments and experiences. In this section we report on the relationship between some of these indicators and interpersonal trust (IT1).<sup>3</sup> Specifically, we used OLS regression analysis to predict interpersonal trust with a battery of variables

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<sup>3</sup> Interpersonal trust has been consistently shown to be a reliable individual level indicator of social capital (see, e.g., Armony, 2004; Córdova, 2008; Zizumbo-Colunga, 2010).

that measure individuals’ economic evaluations, perceptions of the crisis, and work experience (see full results in Table A2 of the appendix), for the case of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The 2010 wave of the AmericasBarometer contains a unique question, designed to assess whether an individual perceives a serious or moderate (compared to no) economic crisis in the country (CRISIS1). We first assessed the effect of the perception that there is a serious economic crisis on levels of interpersonal trust. In addition to this variable, our analysis included important demographic and ideological factors that might confound the effect such as gender, age, education, income level, region of the country, and position on the liberal-conservative ideology scale. As column 1 of appendix Table A2 shows, a clear effect of the perception of a severe crisis is evident. Compared to those who perceive only a moderate crisis (the comparison category), those who perceive the crisis as severe have significantly lower levels of interpersonal trust (controlling for those people who consider that there is no economic crisis at all; only just over 1 percent of respondents selected that option).

In order to assess in more detail what specific perceptions of a poor economic situation best predict lower levels of interpersonal trust, we next include additional economic factors in the model. Results for the key variables in this model are shown in Figure 3 (see column 2 of Table A2 for the full results including controls, which now also include crime victimization).

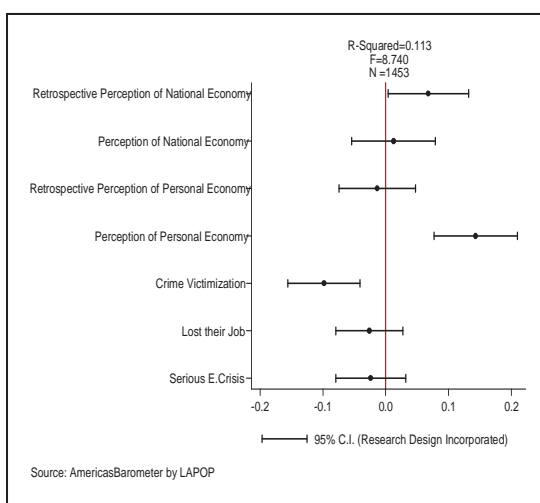
In this expanded model we include participants’ current and retrospective evaluations of their

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<sup>4</sup> Much of the funding for the 2010 AmericasBarometer round was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other important sources of support were the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University. Marc Hetherington also provided important support for the 2010 U.S. survey. The U.S. survey in 2008 and 2010 is a web-based survey of 1,500 respondents, conducted by YouGov/Polimetrix. All other countries, except Canada, are face-to-face interviews.

personal and the national economic situations (coded so that higher values mean more positive assessments). And, we include an indicator of respondent job loss (while controlling for those who lost and subsequently found a job and those who are not working by their own choice or have a disability). Figure 3 shows the effects for these variables, with a dot indicating the predicted effect (i.e., the standardized regression coefficient) and a horizontal line indicating the confidence interval; if the latter lies entirely to the left of the 0 line, the effect is considered negative and statistically significant and if it lies entirely to the right, the effect is considered positive and statistically significant.

**Figure 3. Economic Predictors of Interpersonal Trust, Key Variables**<sup>5</sup>



As expected, and as a result of the inclusion of these factors that are likely components of the perception that there is a severe economic crisis, the latter loses its statistical significance. The results show, however, a significant relationship between both perceptions of one's personal financial situation and one's retrospective evaluation of the country's economic situation,

<sup>5</sup> Effects shown in figure are standardized coefficients. Control variables included (see appendix Table 2A) but not shown in the figure are the following: gender, willingly unemployed or disabled, people who lost their job but found a new one, income, education, age, ideology, a dummy for those who perceive no crisis, and region dummy variables.

on the one hand, and interpersonal trust, on the other hand.

The results show that lower levels of personal economic assessments are associated with lower levels of interpersonal trust, such that a maximum decrease in personal economic assessment predicts a drop from 74.9 to 64.7 units of interpersonal trust, all else equal. Similarly, lower retrospective assessments of the country's economy predict lower levels of interpersonal trust, such that a maximum decrease predicts a drop from 70.1 to 66.2 units in interpersonal trust.

In creating this second model, we controlled for crime victimization due to our suspicion that crime might negatively affect social trust and could also be correlated with economic factors, thus supporting its inclusion as a control variable. As Figure 3 shows, crime victimization has the anticipated negative effect on interpersonal trust. People who were victimized have, on average, 6 points lower levels of interpersonal trust. Thus we see that negative economic situations and negative personal security situations both are negatively correlated with interpersonal trust.

## Discussion

Data from the AmericasBarometer surveys of the United States indeed reflect a decrease in social capital following the start of the recent financial crisis, much as Putnam's statement reported in the *New York Times* and referred to in our introduction suggested. However, rather than finding a triply "huge" effect, we find that, to the extent that social capital decreased, it was not by that much and, moreover, these effects were registered in the early stages of the crisis, with interpersonal trust leveling off between 2008 and 2010.

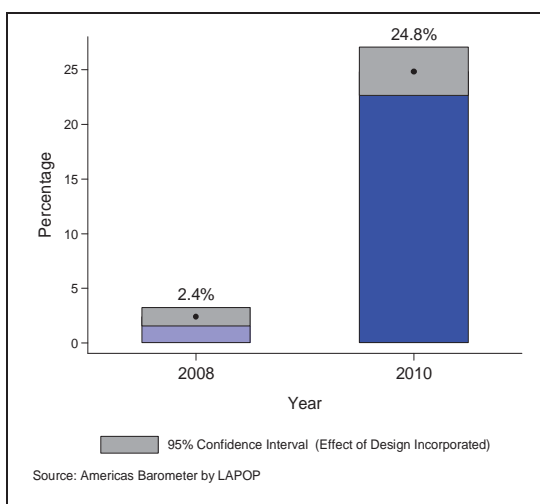
When we consider the individual level, focusing here on the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey of the United States and variables it contains to capture personal evaluations and experiences



with respect to the economic crisis, we find a relationship between economic variables and interpersonal trust. Specifically, we find that perceptions of one's personal economic situation and retrospective assessments of national economy help predict levels of interpersonal trust. The effects of these variables are not uniformly large in substantive terms, but they are nonetheless statistically significant.

How do we reconcile the fact that, by 2010, average levels of social capital appear to have leveled off in the United States (compared to 2008) and, at the same time, there still exists at the individual level a connection between economic factors and interpersonal trust? We believe the answer lies in two important factors, which collectively have prevented a catastrophic decline in social capital in this country.

**Figure 4. Percentage Reporting the Economy is Better Now vs. 12 Months Ago, U.S., 2008 & 2010.**



First, while we find that negative economic assessments in 2010 in the United States are related to lower levels of social capital, we also find – by comparing to the 2008 Americas-Barometer survey – that there is evidence of recovery in this country in 2010. For example, across the two years, we see a dramatic ten-fold increase in the number of people who think the economy is doing better now than the prior twelve months. Figure 4 displays this increase;

in 2008, the percentage of respondents who perceived the economy better than it had been a year before was only 2.4 percent; in 2010, this number increased to 24.8 percent.

Second, in another set of analyses not reported here in detail for the sake of brevity, we find that people who report having lost and then found a job show a higher tendency to join groups compared to those who report having lost but not yet found a job. Specifically, in assessing these relationships for the United States using the 2010 AmericasBarometer data, we find that having lost but found a job is positively, very strongly, and significantly related (at  $p \leq 0.05$ , two-tailed) to participation in three of the groups reported on earlier in this report: school-related parent associations (CP7); professional groups (CP9); and, political organizations (CP13). It is also similarly related to reported participation in attempts to solve problems in one's community (CP5) and, for women, participation in women's groups (CP20).<sup>6</sup> Thus, it appears that social capital could be part of a virtuous cycle by which some people cope with crisis: social connections facilitate job searches and, in turn, successful job searches increase social capital, as measured through participation in groups.

In sum, our study shows that rather than only considering the ways in which an economic crisis might negatively affect social capital, social scientists and policy makers should also consider the ways in which existing stocks of social capital might help individuals to cope with a severe crisis and how this process might over time even help replenish the country's social capital reserves.

<sup>6</sup> The analyses control for the socio-demographic and economic indicators included in our previous analysis in this paper and crime victimization. Interestingly, if we change the comparison group in the analyses to those who are employed, the results hold such that those who have lost a job and found one also report higher levels of participation than those who are employed, with respect to the groups reported in the text and, as well, participation in community meetings (CP8). Full results available from the authors.

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## Appendix

Table A1.

### Full Question Wording for AmericasBarometer Social Capital Questions Analyzed in this Report

IT1. Now, speaking of the people from around here, would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy...?
CP6. Please tell me how often you attend to meetings of any religious organization: At least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never.
CP7. Please tell me how often you attend to meetings of a parents' association at school: At least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never
CP8. Please tell me how often you attend to meetings of a community improvement committee or association: At least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never.
CP9. Please tell me how often you attend to meetings of an association of professionals, merchants, manufacturers or farmers: At least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never.
CP13. Please tell me how often you attend to meetings of a political party or political organization: At least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never.

**Table A2.**  
**Economic Predictors of Interpersonal trust in the United States (2010)**

	<b>Crisis</b>	<b>Specific Economic Factors</b>
	1	2
Perceive Severe Crisis	-4.17 (1.61)	-1.43 (1.72)
Perceive No Crisis	.585 (5.56)	-2.18 (5.17)
Income	.824** (.23)	.412** (.240)
Education	1.00** (.42)	.795** (.427)
Age	.239*** (.042)	.230 *** (.043)
Ideology	.060*** (.021)	.071*** (.024)
Personal Economic Situation	---	.141*** (.033)
Personal Retrospective Economic Assessment	---	-.008 (.021)
National Economic Situation	---	.014 (.039)
National Retrospective Economic Assessment	---	.039** (.019)
Lost job and Have Not Found Another**	---	-1.97 (2.05)
Not Working b/c Disabled	---	-2.07 (1.02)
Lost Job but Found Another	---	1.33 (2.67)
Crime Victim	---	-6.38*** (1.91)
Female	-3.58** (1.28)	-2.93** (1.27)
West	2.08 (1.56)	1.73 (1.54)
Midwest	4.88** (1.70)	4.10** (1.69)
Northeast	.84 (2.12)	-.22 (2.07)
Constant	50.44*** (3.18)	43.84*** (3.95)
<b>N</b>	1455	1453
<b>R-squared</b>	0.0709	0.1127

Statistical significance thresholds are indicated as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Note: OLS analyses based on data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer U.S. survey; analyses control for the complex survey design. In Model 1 (Crisis), those perceiving a moderate crisis constitute the baseline/comparison category. In Model 2 (Specific Economic Factors), those who report not having lost a job constitute the baseline/comparison category. Effects are expressed as un-standardized coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

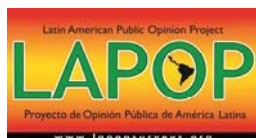
**Table A3.**  
**Unemployment and Social Capital**

	Relationship between (Un)Employment and Social Capital Indicators						
	Work to Solve Problems in One's Community (CP5)	Attend Religious Meetings (CP6)	Attend School Meetings (CP7)	Attend Community Meetings (CP8)	Attend Professional Meetings (CP9)	Attend Political Meetings (CP13)	Attend Women's Meetings (CP20)
Working	2.17 (3.36)	-.790 (3.24)	1.11 (2.69)	-4.91** (2.08)	-.058 (2.48)	-.172 (2.96)	1.38 (3.76)
<b>Lost and found Job</b>	<b>12.16** (5.50)</b>	<b>.171 (4.86)</b>	<b>10.57** (4.70)</b>	<b>2.76 (2.99)</b>	<b>11.54** (5.03)</b>	<b>8.78* (4.97)</b>	<b>17.95** (7.95)</b>
Not Working b/c Disabled	-1.47 (3.68)	-5.12 (3.72)	-1.99 (2.86)	-4.86** (2.31)	-4.09 (2.53)	-4.37 (3.30)	-.72 (4.02)
Constant	4.15 (5.08)	-1.28 (5.31)	9.06 (4.23)	-.52 (3.16)	-2.77 (3.74)	1.35 (4.09)	-4.93 (5.48)
N	724	1451	723	1450	721	722	394
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0673	0.132	0.0726	0.0691	0.0867	0.0679	0.0831

Statistical significance thresholds are indicated as follows: \* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Note: OLS analyses based on data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer U.S. survey; analyses control for the complex survey design. Comparison category is *unemployed*. Questions CP5, CP7, CP9, CP13, and CP20 were asked of only half the sample. CP20 was asked of only women. Controls included but not shown: Crime Victimization, Female, Ideology, Income, Age, Education and Region (Baseline: South). Effects are expressed as un-standardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.





*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.44)\**

# Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America<sup>1</sup>

Germán Lodola, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella,  
University of Pittsburgh

[glodola@utdt.edu](mailto:glodola@utdt.edu)

Margarita Corral, Vanderbilt University  
[margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu)

Gay marriage recently has been a subject of intense discussion in many countries in the Americas. Disputes over the issue are marked by sharply conflicting opinions among citizens, social organizations, religious groups, the highly influential Catholic Church, and policy makers. In Latin America, these debates have engendered outcomes that vary sharply from country-to-country. Same-sex marriage has been constitutionally banned in Honduras (2005), El Salvador (2009), and the Dominican Republic (2009). In Bolivia, the new Constitution (2009) limits legally recognized marriage to opposite-sex unions. In Costa Rica, the Supreme Court ruled against same-sex couples seeking the right to be legally married (2006), while a

\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

national referendum on the subject remains a possibility. Yet same-sex civil unions, which give homosexual couples some of the rights enjoyed by heterosexual ones (including social security inheritance and joint ownership of property, but excluding adoption rights), have been legalized in Uruguay (2008), Ecuador (2008), Colombia (2009), Brazil (since 2004), and in a few Mexican states.<sup>2</sup> Within this diverse regional context, and despite numerous protests organized by the Catholic Church, rightist organizations, and conservative legislators, this month Argentina became the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide, granting gays and lesbians more rights than civil unions, including the right to adopt children.<sup>3</sup>

This *AmericasBarometer Insights* report looks at citizens' opinions with respect to same-sex marriage. First, we examine levels of support for same-sex couples having the right to marry. Then, we assess both individual- and national-level determinants of variation in that level of support. To evaluate these issues, we query the 2010 round of the American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey.<sup>4</sup> In this survey, 42,238 respondents from 25 nations in North, Central,

<sup>2</sup> In Colombia, a same-sex couples bill was defeated by the Senate in 2007 but was later legalized by a Constitutional Court decision. In Mexico, same-sex civil unions are only legal in the state of Coahuila while in Mexico City the state assembly recently recognized same sex marriage with adoption rights.

<sup>3</sup> Same-sex marriage is also legal in the Netherlands (2001), Belgium (2003), Spain (2005), Canada (2005), South Africa (2006), Norway (2009), Sweden (2009), Iceland (2010), and Portugal (2010). Israel (2006), France (2008), and Japan (2009) legally recognize same-sex marriages performed in other countries. In the U.S., the federal government is banned from recognizing marriages of same-sex couples by the Defense of Marriage Act, although courts have recently ruled parts of the law as unconstitutional. Same-sex marriage is permitted in the states of Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and the District of Columbia.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the funding for the 2010 *AmericasBarometer* round was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other important sources of support were the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

South America and the Caribbean were asked this question<sup>5</sup>:

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

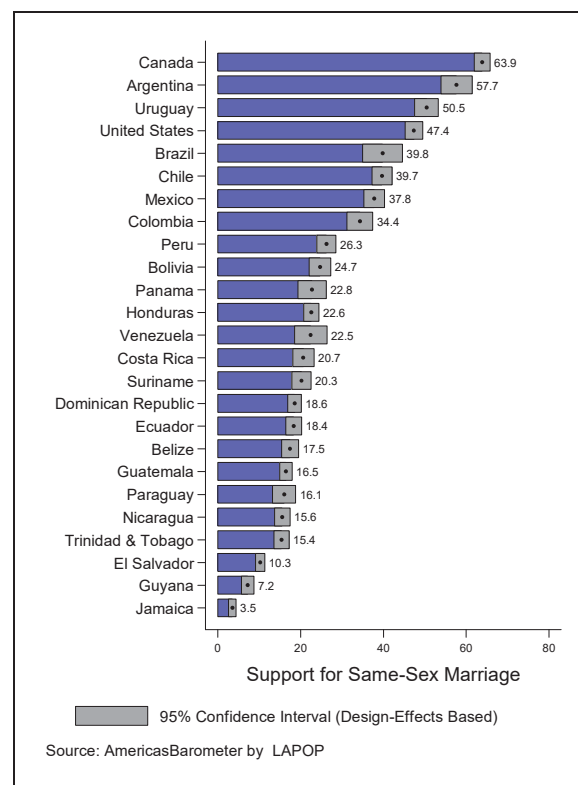
Responses were given based on a 1-10 scale, where '1' meant "strongly disapprove" and '10' meant "strongly approve." These responses were then recalibrated on a 0-100 basis to conform to the LAPOP standard, which facilitates comparability across questions and survey waves.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 displays each country's average score with its confidence interval. The average level of support for same-sex marriage in the Americas is only 26.8 points on a 0-100 scale. However, there is striking variation across countries. At the one extreme, citizens of Canada, Argentina, and Uruguay express relatively high levels of support and fall on the high end of the 0-100 continuum, with mean scores of 63.9, 57.7, and 50.5 points, respectively. At the other extreme, El Salvador, Guyana, and Jamaica (where sexual acts between men are punishable with jail) show the lowest levels of support: 10.3, 7.2, and 3.5 units, respectively. The remaining countries lie in between these extremes, with those nations in which same-sex civil union has been legalized (i.e., Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia) ranking in relatively high positions. Notably, despite the fact that the newly approved constitution grants full rights to homosexual civil unions, Ecuador is positioned well below the regional average with 18.4 points on the 0-100 scale.

<sup>5</sup>The final version of the 2010 wave will include 26 countries; at the time of this report, the survey is being implemented to a sample of 6,000 individuals in Haiti.

<sup>6</sup> Around 1,500 respondents were interviewed face-to-face in each country, except in Bolivia and Ecuador, where the samples were approximately 3,000. The Canada and the U.S. are web-based surveys. Non-response to this question was 3.23% for the sample as a whole.

**Figure 1.**  
Average Support for Same-Sex Marriage in the Americas, 2010



## Explaining Variation in Support for Same-Sex Marriage: Individual Level Factors

What factors explain variation in support for same-sex marriage? To assess this question, we first focus on the potential impact of individual-level factors by means of a linear regression model.<sup>7</sup> Following the publication of seminal research on political tolerance that examines the impact of religious values toward homosexuals (Gibson and Tedin 1988; Golebiowska 1995), we include two variables that are considered to be

<sup>7</sup> All statistical analyses in this paper were conducted using STATA v10 and results were adjusted for the complex sample designs employed. Given that levels of support for same-sex marriage vary across countries, dummy variables for each country were included. In all models, Argentina is considered as the base or reference country. Results for the whole model are presented in the Appendix, Table 1.

key: importance of religion and religious group participation. The former measures how important religion is in the respondent's life.<sup>8</sup> The latter measures the respondent's self-reported level of attendance at meetings of any religious organization.<sup>9</sup> Several scholars have found that disapproval of homosexual rights is highest among individuals with strong religious identities and who attend religious services frequently (Ellison and Musick 1993; Herek 1998; Herek and Capitanio 1995, 1996; Olsen, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Seltzer 1993; Wilcox and Wolport 2000). Therefore, we expect these variables to have a negative impact on support for same-sex marriage. Beliefs about homosexuality and support for gay rights have been found to vary substantially by religion. Therefore, we also included two dummy variables, Evangelical and Atheist, in order to capture the effect of religious affiliations. While Atheists are expected to express tolerance toward minorities' rights, membership in evangelical denominations has been found to be linked to intolerance of homosexuals in the U.S (Jelen, 1982). While this finding could be partly attributed to differences in demographic or political variables, or to general religiosity, Wilcox and Jelen (1990) demonstrated that intolerance among Evangelicals persists even after controlling for these considerations.

Also included in the regression is a variable that captures the respondent's political ideology. This variable is based on a 1-10 scale, where '1' means left or liberal and '10' means right or conservative. For obvious reasons, we expect more conservative respondents to be less prone to support same-sex marriage than liberal ones.

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<sup>8</sup> This variable is based on the following question: Q5B. Please, could you tell me how important is religion in your life? Very important; rather important; not very important; not at all important."

<sup>9</sup> This variable is based on the following question: CP6. Do you attend "Meetings of any religious organization? Do you attend them once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year or never."

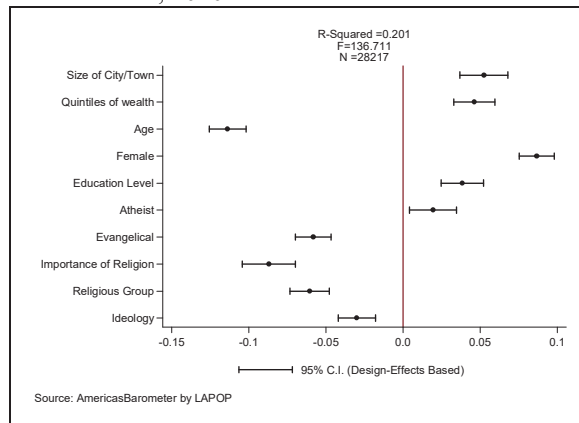
Finally, the regression model includes a number of variables measuring basic socio-economic and demographic characteristics that are thought to play a role in shaping public opinion towards homosexuality. We thus include education, age, gender, wealth, and city/town size.<sup>10</sup> We expect more educated individuals to have more liberal sexual attitudes and therefore express higher levels of support for same-sex marriage than less educated persons (Ellison and Musick 1993; Gibson and Tedin 1988; Herek and Capitanio 1996; Treas 2002). Similarly, we expect older people to be less tolerant toward gays/lesbians than younger people, due more to the eras in which the former were socialized than to the aging process itself (Davis 1992; Herek and Glunt 1993). As found in prior research, we also expect men to be more inclined to disapprove of homosexuality than women (Herek 2002; Kite 1984; Kite and Whitley 1996), and people with higher incomes to be more tolerant than people with lower incomes (Hodgess Persell, Green, and Gurevitch 2001). Following research by Stephan and McMullin (1982), we expect urbanism (in our model, individuals living in larger cities) to be positively associated with tolerance toward homosexuals and, thus, support for same-sex marriage.

The results of this regression analysis are shown in Figure 2. Each variable included in the model is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of those variables on support for same-sex marriage is shown graphically by a dot, which if falling to the right of the vertical "0" line implies a positive contribution and if to the left of the "0" line indicates a negative impact. Only when the confidence intervals (the horizontal lines) do not overlap the vertical "0" line is the variable statistically significant (at .05 or better). The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients (i.e., "beta weights").

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<sup>10</sup> Citizens in Canada and the United States hold sharply higher levels on many socio-economic characteristics; for this and because we select to focus this report on Latin America and the Caribbean, we excluded these cases from the analysis.

**Figure 2.**  
Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010



We find strong empirical evidence supporting our expectations. First, even when controlling for socio-economic and demographic factors and the impact of country of residence (the “country fixed effects”), both the importance of religion and attendance at religious meetings variables have a statistically significant negative impact on support for same-sex marriage. Specifically, the more important religion is to respondents’ lives and the more frequently they attend religious meetings, the lower the support they express for same-sex couples having the right to marry. Second, we find that Evangelicals, compared to individuals who profess other religions, are significantly less likely to support for same-sex marriage, while those who say that they are Atheists or agnostic about religion are more likely to support gay marriage. Third, holding all other variables constant, respondents’ ideological self-placement works as we expected. The statistically significant negative impact of the political ideology variable indicates that the more conservative respondents are, the lower the level of support for same-sex marriage they express.

We also find that all the socio-economic and demographic variables included in the model are statistically significant in the theorized directions. First, size of the geographic area of residence is positively linked to our dependent variable, indicating that residents of large cities

express higher levels of support than those living in rural areas and small cities. Second, citizens with more years of completed education express higher support than individuals with less formal education. Third, both wealthier and younger persons express more tolerance toward homosexual marriages than poorer and older people. Fourth, the positive effect of the gender (female) dummy variable indicates that women express higher levels of support than men.

## Predicting Support for Same-Sex Marriage: The Effect of Contextual Variables

In addition to the individual-level characteristics analyzed above, other factors at the country-level of analysis may help explain variation in the degree to which citizens in the Americas support same-sex marriage. Extensive research on political tolerance in democratic regimes has underscored the important effects of economic development and education on acceptance of diversity. To empirically test these propositions, we estimated separate multi-level regression models.<sup>11</sup> The models include the respondents’ individual characteristics alongside measures of each country’s level of economic development or education, depending on the model. These variables are measured by GDP per capita and a composite index of adult literacy and gross enrollment, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

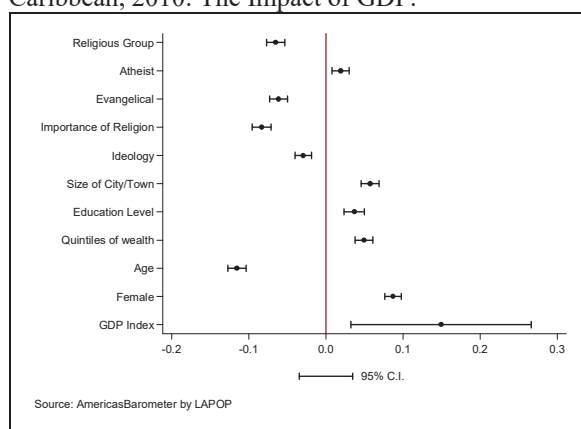
<sup>11</sup> This analysis was carried out using multi-level regression techniques (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Raudenbush, *et al.* 2004) as implemented by LAPOP on STATA 10. The model simultaneously takes into account both individual and country-level (i.e., contextual) factors, and produces correct regression estimates that are impossible with standard OLS regression. We estimated separate models because national economic development and education are correlated at a moderately high level in our sample ( $r = .6, p > .05$ ).

<sup>12</sup> To measure national wealth we rely on the UNDP’s GDP index. This index, which can take values between 0 and 1, is based on GDP per capita in purchasing power parity terms in US dollars. To measure national education we drew upon the UNDP’s Education index which is measured by the adult literacy rate (with two-thirds weighting) and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment ratio (with

The statistical results of the multi-level models are graphically shown in Figures 3 and 4. As they show, the impact of individual characteristics remains almost unchanged when compared to our previous results, while the contextual variables have the expected positive relationships to support for same-sex marriage. More concretely, citizens who live in richer and more educated countries express significantly higher levels of support compared to those who live in poorer and less educated nations.

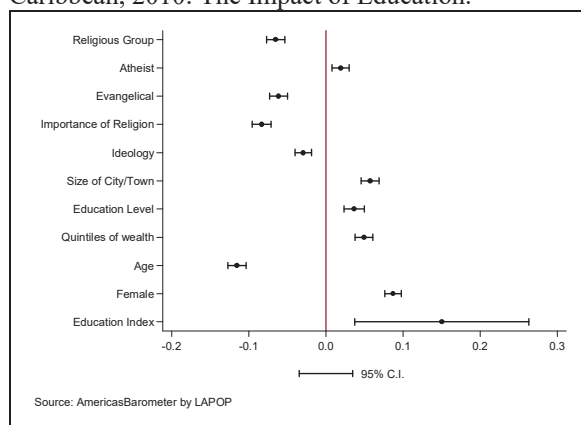
**Figure 3.**

A Multilevel Analysis of the Determinants of Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010: The Impact of GDP.



**Figure 4.**

A Multilevel Analysis of the Determinants of Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010: The Impact of Education.



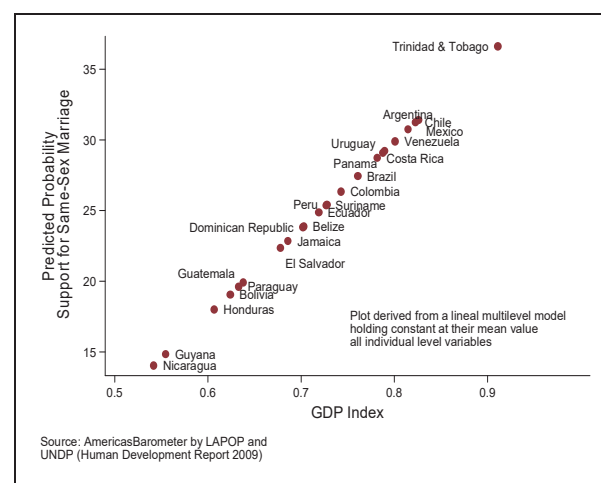
one-third weighting). For more details on how these indexes are constructed, see UNDP's 2009 Human Development Report.

The specific effects of economic development and education at the national-level on support for same-sex marriage are displayed in Figures 5 and 6 respectively. These figures show the fitted lines from the two multi-level regression models using national GDP per capita and the education index. Holding constant all the individual-level variables at their mean value, the models predict similar results compared to the ranking depicted in Figure 1. As a noteworthy exception, Trinidad and Tobago dramatically improves its position in Figure 5 compared to Figure 1. This suggests that the country is strongly influenced by other variables not included in our model.

Nonetheless, the results show that higher levels of economic development and education predict substantially higher levels of support for same-sex marriage. Substantively, if a citizen from Nicaragua with a given set of socio-economic characteristics were to move to Argentina, *ceteris paribus*, and none of her personal characteristics were to change, this person would demonstrate a level of support for same-sex marriage that would be about 20 points higher on average than if this individual were to remain in Nicaragua.

**Figure 5.**

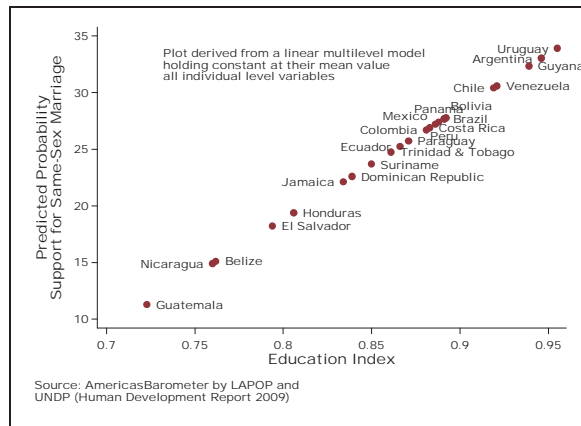
The Impact of Economic Development on Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010





**Figure 6.**

The Impact of Education on Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010



## Conclusion

We began this short report by pointing out that citizens in the Latin American and Caribbean region, on average, express relatively low levels of support for same-sex marriage. However, we have underscored that there is also significant cross-national variation. At the individual-level of analysis, our statistical analysis indicates that strong religious values and more conservative ideologies have a significant negative impact on individual support for homosexuals having the right to marry. In addition, we found that levels of support are higher among wealthier people, individuals living in larger cities, and women. In our analyses of national-level factors, we found strong empirical evidence supporting the classic claim that both economic development and education increase tolerance for homosexual rights.

These results are consistent with those for studies of tolerance over a broad range of minority rights issues, which collectively highlight the significance of education at both the individual and national level. To promote tolerance of minority rights, policy makers and politicians should consider the importance of expanding access to education among their citizens.

Although some have argued that tolerance of diversity might have no real consequences for democracy (Mueller 1988), others have found strong evidence of its positive effects on the construction of democratic policies (Gibson 1992). An important implication of this report is that the vision offered by liberal democratic theorists of a society that accepts diversity and protects minority rights is more likely to develop to the extent that policy makers pay close attention to improving citizens' well being and education. Higher economic development and education tend to be linked with greater tolerance because they stimulate individual value priorities that are conducive to greater openness to diversity.

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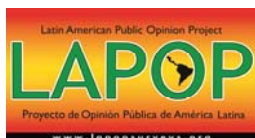
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## Appendix

### Determinants of Support for Same-Sex Marriage

	Coefficient.	t
Ideology	-0.030*	(-4.86)
Religious Group	-0.061*	(-9.28)
Importance of Religion	-0.087*	(-9.90)
Evangelical	-0.058*	(-9.91)
Atheist	0.020*	(2.50)
Education Level	0.038*	(5.46)
Female	0.087*	(15.02)
Age	-0.114*	(-18.85)
Quintiles of wealth	0.046*	(6.80)
Size of City/Town	0.052*	(6.61)
Mexico	-0.088*	(-7.92)
Guatemala	-0.166*	(-16.27)
El Salvador	-0.213*	(-22.19)
Honduras	-0.148*	(-13.75)
Nicaragua	-0.189*	(-16.24)
Costa Rica	-0.161*	(-13.31)
Panama	-0.146*	(-10.49)
Colombia	-0.106*	(-9.38)
Ecuador	-0.253*	(-18.01)
Bolivia	-0.217*	(-13.18)
Peru	-0.148*	(-13.52)
Paraguay	-0.192*	(-16.57)
Chile	-0.104*	(-8.21)
Uruguay	-0.044*	(-4.08)
Brazil	-0.104*	(-5.50)
Venezuela	-0.172*	(-12.87)
Dominican Republic	-0.164*	(-15.67)
Jamaica	-0.238*	(-24.71)
Guyana	-0.220*	(-20.31)
Trinidad & Tobago	-0.196*	(-19.15)
Belize	-0.175*	(-14.36)
Suriname	-0.172*	(-12.53)
Constant	0.025*	(2.69)
R-Squared	0.201	
Number of Obs.	28,217	
* p<0.05		
Country of Reference: Argentina		



*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.45)\**

# The Honduran “Catharsis”<sup>1</sup>

Orlando J. Pérez, Central Michigan University; John A. Booth, University of North Texas; and Mitchell A. Seligson, Vanderbilt University  
Contact: [m.seligson@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:m.seligson@vanderbilt.edu)

In this *Insights* Series report, we use data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer to assess public opinion among Honduran citizens toward the June 2009 removal and exile of the sitting president, Manuel Zelaya, by the Honduran military. We do so by placing public reactions in the context of a recent study of political legitimacy in Latin America, using the 2004 AmericasBarometer data, by John Booth and Mitchell Seligson, which detected serious warning signs of political instability in Honduras (Booth and Seligson 2009).<sup>2</sup> They

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\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup>The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt. The opinions expressed in this study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsoring organizations.

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the AmericasBarometer has mainly come from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of additional support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

found that political legitimacy in Honduras was very low compared to legitimacy levels in its neighbors in Central America. The authors examined the proportions of citizens who were “triply dissatisfied” as a percent of all voting aged citizens versus those who were “triply satisfied.” The “triply satisfied” were the citizens who fell *above* the scale midpoint (i.e. “satisfied”) on each of three key dimensions of political legitimacy, namely 1) support for democracy, 2) support for national institutions, and 3) evaluation of the incumbent government’s economic performance. The “triply dissatisfied” group consisted of those citizens who fell *below* the legitimacy scale midpoints on those same three key dimensions. Booth and Seligson then compared the proportions of triply dissatisfied versus triply satisfied for each country, which they argued could demonstrate a proclivity toward political stability or unrest. Their theory did not assert that having dissatisfied citizens was in itself a problem for democracy, since disaffection can be healthy for democracy. Rather they argued that the *balance of dissatisfied to satisfied citizens* is what matters. When times are bad and critics of the system are numerous, a democratic political system also needs supporters who believe in democracy, support the nation’s institutions, and are not overly critical of government economic performance. Absent that key group of supporters, stability can be placed at risk.

Booth and Seligson found that in 2004 for every triply satisfied citizen Honduras had 1.57 triply dissatisfied citizens. In contrast, for every triply dissatisfied Costa Rican there were 12.5 triply satisfied ones.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in 2004 Honduras had almost 20 times more citizens with multiple low legitimacy attitudes than did Costa Rica at the time. They concluded that this strongly suggested that as early as 2004 Honduras demonstrated “greater risk for unrest, political turmoil, and support for antidemocratic regimes than [did] the other countries based on this

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<sup>3</sup> This is calculated by dividing 1.0 by the .08 ratio, which yields 12.5



indicator” (Booth and Seligson 2009 148). These findings proved to be consistent with others from the same survey. For example, they found that Hondurans justified a hypothetical military coup much more than citizens in any other country they studied. Indeed, 56.2% of the voting aged population would have justified a coup (186).

Seligson and Booth then revisited this issue in a prior *Insights* “Special Report” using the 2008 AmericasBarometer survey and found the situation of multiple dissatisfaction in Honduras much more extreme than in 2004. The proportion of triply dissatisfied Hondurans went from 12% in 2004 to over 31% of the voting-age population in 2008, and there were over six times more triply dissatisfied Hondurans than those who were triply satisfied. Seligson and Booth interpreted this imbalance between the very disgruntled and satisfied citizenries as a very clear warning that Honduras’ risk of political instability had risen sharply from 2004 to 2008.

These survey data from 2008 pointing to growing disaffection among Honduran citizens illuminated the context in which political conflict emerged and boiled over in 2009. As we know, Honduras’ political system experienced a severe political crisis that began as a showdown between the elected president, Manuel Zelaya, and the Honduran Army, courts, and Congress. On June 28, 2009 the military removed Zelaya from office and forcibly exiled him to Costa Rica. The crisis stemmed from a political clash over Zelaya’s attempt to survey Hondurans on support for a referendum on convening a constituent assembly to reform the national constitution. Defying a court order, Congress, the business community and elements in his own party in pursuit of his objectives, Zelaya tried to conduct the referendum. Allegedly acting under orders from the Supreme Court (of dubious constitutionality), the Army entered the president’s private residence on the morning of June 28 and detained him. Rather than bringing President Zelaya to court to stand charges,

however, the Army instead acted in violation of the Honduran Constitution, which explicitly prohibits expatriation, by exiling him to Costa Rica.<sup>4</sup> The National Congress then ratified Zelaya’s removal and installed Roberto Micheletti as interim President.

The events leading up to President Zelaya’s ouster, and those of June 28, 2009 have divided Honduran society and generated intense debate about the constitutionality of Zelaya’s policies and the actions taken by the military, Congress, and the courts. In this *Insights* paper we look at the Honduran public’s reaction to the June 28, 2009 events and their aftermath. The 2010 AmericasBarometer survey in Honduras<sup>5</sup> asked a series of questions related to the political crisis. In this second special *Insights* paper on the Honduran crisis we revisit the findings of Booth and Seligson from 2008 to explore how, and to what extent, the crisis has affected Hondurans’ attitudes toward their political system in 2010.

First, we explore responses to a series of questions that measure attitudes directly related to the political crisis: Did Hondurans in our survey conducted in early 2010 support the ouster of President Zelaya? Did they express support for the policies Zelaya wanted to implement? Did they believe that either president or the Army behaved unconstitutionally?

In response to our first question, we find that 58% of voting age Hondurans *opposed* the

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<sup>4</sup> President Zelaya returned to Honduras clandestinely on September 21, 2009 and stayed at the Brazilian embassy until an agreement and a general amnesty were brokered that led to Zelaya’s departure to the Dominican Republic in January 2010.

<sup>5</sup> The 2010 sample consists of 1,596 interviews selected using multi-stage stratified sampling design to represent nine different geographic regions of Honduras. Random selection proportional to size was used at all stages, except at the household level where quotas for age and gender were used to select the adults to be interviewed. The sample in each stratum closely approximates the underlying population distribution of Honduras. The margin of error for a sample of this size is  $\pm 2.5\%$  at the 95% confidence interval.

removal from office of President Zelaya.<sup>6</sup> We also wanted to know how Hondurans reacted to the Zelaya's exile, an action that is explicitly prohibited by the constitution.<sup>7</sup> Probing more deeply, we found that opposition to the exile was even greater, with 72% of voting aged respondents in the AmericasBarometer 2010 survey expressing *opposition*.

Opponents of President Zelaya and some constitutional scholars have argued that the actions of the military did not in fact constitute a *coup d'état*. President Zelaya's supporters and others say that this was a clear case of an unconstitutional and unjustifiable coup.

How did the average Honduran weigh these two positions? The results of the AmericasBarometer survey for 2010 reveal that a majority of Hondurans believe that Zelaya's removal was indeed a coup. Over 61% said the actions taken by the military on June 28 constituted a *coup d'état*.<sup>8</sup> They held to this position even though large majorities also expressed opposition to Zelaya's intended reforms. Indeed, more than 70% of Hondurans were opposed to his proposed constituent assembly (at least in early 2010) and over 75% were against the "consulta" that Zelaya had wished to carry out. President Zelaya repeatedly and forcefully denied that his reforms would have included presidential reelection.<sup>9</sup> However, the opposition claimed that reelection was the

key constitutional change sought by Zelaya and his supporters. This debate between Zelaya and those who supported his ouster notwithstanding, the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey reveals, however, that almost three quarters of Hondurans *opposed* changing the Honduran constitution to allow for presidential re-election.<sup>10</sup>

### **What happened to the triply dissatisfied citizens?**

The removal of President Zelaya, and the subsequent national elections that took place in November 2009 seem to have been cathartic for the Honduran population in terms of their levels of dissatisfaction with the legitimacy of their political system in the period before the coup. In order to assess the relative weight of the triply dissatisfied versus other citizens, Seligson and Booth (2009) constructed an index of triple dissatisfaction. It gave Hondurans below the scale mean on all three of the regime performance, support for institutions, and support for democratic regime principles legitimacy norms a score of 2, those above the scale mean on all three a score of zero, and those with mixed positions a score of 1. As an analytical tool, the index captured and weighted the proportions of triply dissatisfied, mixed values, and triply satisfied segments of the population. Figure 1 shows that by early 2010 the mean national Honduran score on the triple dissatisfaction index had declined substantially from the peak observed in 2008.<sup>11</sup> It had dropped from its high of 1.3 in 2008 to 1.0 in 2010. This level was still far higher than that found in neighboring Costa Rica, but among

<sup>6</sup> Respondents were asked: ¿Estuvo usted de acuerdo con la destitución del Presidente Zelaya?

(1) Sí (2) No (88) NS (98) NR, which in English means: "Were you in agreement with the removal from office of President Zelaya?"

<sup>7</sup> Respondents were asked: ¿Estuvo usted de acuerdo con el envío al exilio del Presidente Zelaya? (1) Sí (2) No (88) NS (98) NR, which in English means, "Were you in agreement with the sending into exile of President Zelaya?"

<sup>8</sup> The question asked was: ¿Considera usted que la destitución del Presidente Zelaya, en Junio del 2009, fue un golpe de estado? (1) Sí (2) No (88) NS (98) NR, which in English reads: "Do you think that the removal from office of President Zelaya, in June, 2009, was a coup d'état?"

<sup>9</sup> Note that the constitution itself absolutely prohibits changing the no-reelection provision, one of the "inviolable" clauses (*artículos pétreos*).

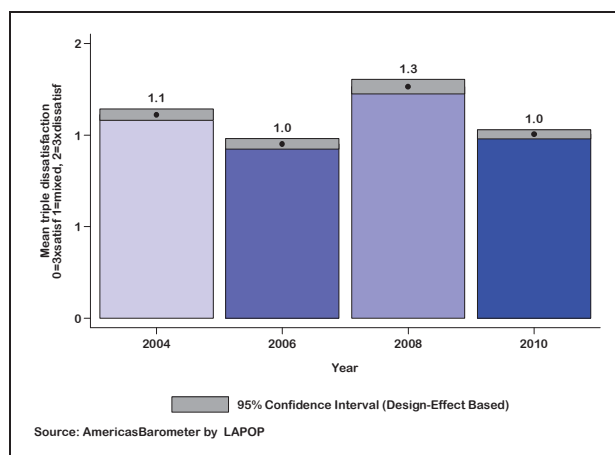
<sup>10</sup> The question read: ¿Está usted de acuerdo con reformar la Constitución para permitir la re-elección presidencial? (1) Sí (2) No (88) NS (98) NR, which in English means: "Are you in agreement to amend the constitution to permit presidential re-elections?"

<sup>11</sup> The survey was conducted in early 2010, seven months after Zelaya's ouster. Just a month before the survey took place was the inauguration of the new president, Porfirio Lobo, who had been chosen in the regularly scheduled presidential election of November 2009.

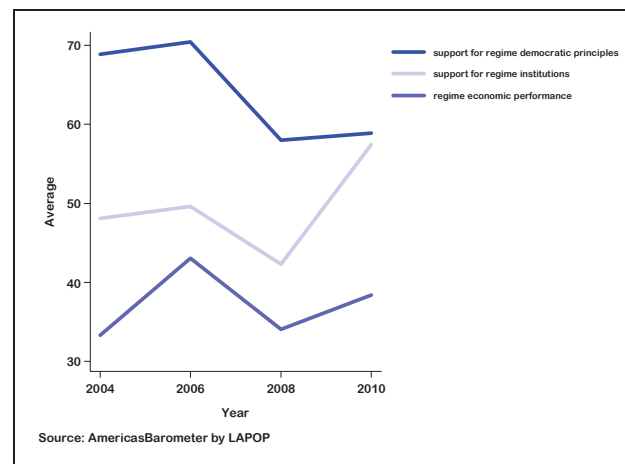
Hondurans it represented a sharp decline from 2008.

But what specifically had changed? Had Hondurans become on average more democratic, more institutionally supportive, or happier about the performance of their administration in handling the economy? Figure 2 breaks down the triple dissatisfaction index into its components and follows them over time. It reveals that discontent was quite widespread in 2008. That year levels of support for regime institutions, support for democratic principles, and evaluation of regime economic performance were at or near their lowest observed levels in this time series. Figure 2 also reveals a recovery of each of these components of regime legitimacy in 2010 after the coup. Support for democratic principles recovered slightly between 2008 and 2010. Support for economic performance, by far the lowest component of triple dissatisfaction, rose modestly from 2008 to 2010 but remained low (not surprisingly, given the global economic slowdown and the particular problems faced by Honduras as foreign assistance and some foreign investment were reduced after the coup). The evaluation that improved the most was support for institutions, which increased roughly 15 scale points from before to after the coup.

**Figure 1.**  
**Mean Levels of Triple Dissatisfaction**



**Figure 2.**  
**Components of the triple dissatisfaction index in Honduras, over time.**



What were the sources of citizen dissatisfaction with government in Honduras? OLS regression analysis indicates that demographics had an evolving impact on the levels of triply dissatisfied respondents over time (see Table 1, where significant relationships are highlighted by shaded boxes). What stands out in this analysis is that respondent wealth (as measured by a multi-item index of wealth in the home) contributed significantly to triple dissatisfaction (the better off were less dissatisfied) in 2004 and 2010, but not in 2006 and 2008. That indicates that rich and poor alike were triply dissatisfied in the years immediately prior to the 2009 coup, while after the coup the rich returned to their position of 2004 being significantly more triply satisfied than other Hondurans.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Other findings from the regression analysis are: First, respondent education levels mattered little. Second, the size of one's community of residence mattered for triple dissatisfaction in 2004 and 2010, with larger communities likely to have more disgruntled people. In 2006 and 2008, however, triple dissatisfaction was present in all sizes of communities. Finally, sex and age had little to do with shaping triple dissatisfaction over time. This evidence shows that during Zelaya's administration citizens' frustrations became generalized by urban geography and wealth prior to the 2009 coup, but afterward returned to prior patterns (urbanites and the poor more triply dissatisfied).

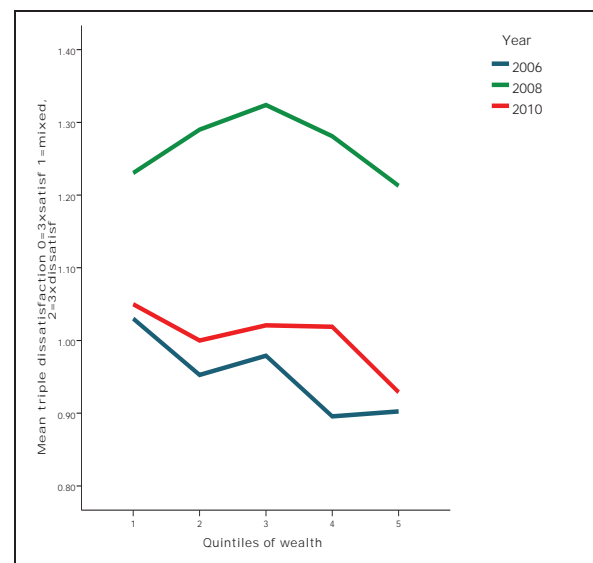
**Table 1.**  
**Predictors of levels of triple dissatisfaction in Honduras, by year**

Variables	T-scores			
	2004	2006	2008	2010
(Constant)	16.05	12.164	13.336	15.061
Wealth	-2.510	-1.899	1.408	-4.012
Age	2.099	.757	-1.825	1.300
Education	-.679	-1.873	-3.206	1.647
Female	.588	1.609	.861	-.428
Size of community of residence	3.151	1.717	-1.387	3.012

Shading indicates statistical significance.

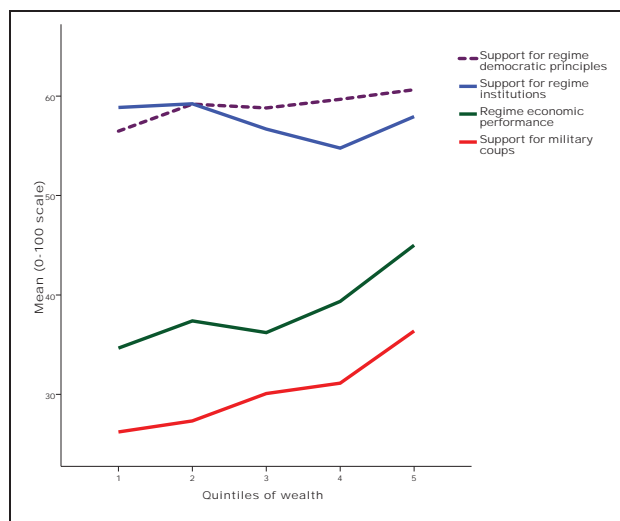
Analyzing further the connection between wealth and the triple dissatisfaction indicator provides evidence of the extent to which “satisfaction” with the Honduran regime is rooted in social class differences. First, Figure 3 clearly reveals the dramatic surge in triple dissatisfaction from 2006 to 2008, followed by an almost as large decline from 2008 to 2010. For 2006 and 2010 mean triple dissatisfaction levels were generally lower as income quintiles rose. For 2008, however, a distinctive curvilinear relationship appears, with lower and higher incomes showing less dissatisfaction than middle income respondents. This reinforces the evidence in Table 1 suggesting a shift in the class basis of dissatisfaction with regime economic performance. Specifically, middle quintile citizens showed much higher triple dissatisfaction than in 2006 or than they would later in 2010. Something clearly happened between 2006 and 2008.

**Figure 3.**  
**Triple dissatisfaction levels by year and levels of wealth**

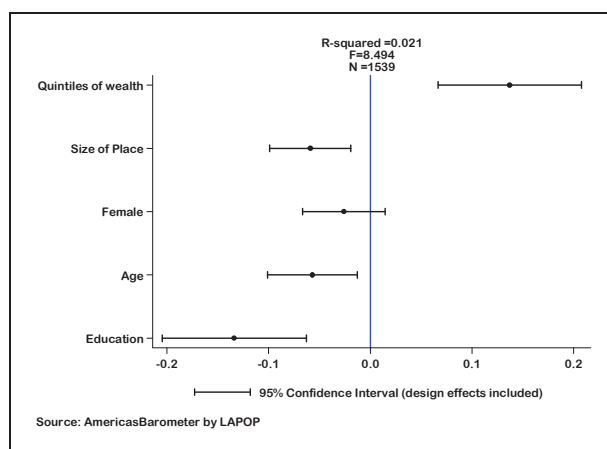


What was the relationship between Hondurans’ economic class position and their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the regime in 2010, some 8 months after the coup? Looking at the three components of the triple dissatisfaction measure, Figure 4 indicates that wealth was not a significant factor explaining two of the components of the triple dissatisfaction variable, namely differences in support for regime democratic principles or regime institutions. However, wealth was significantly related to citizens’ evaluations of regime economic performance. This provides further support for the argument that citizens were reacting to the sharply populist, pro-poor shift in his policies in the second half of his term in office. In 2010, in contrast, with the new administration in power, elites were more supportive of the economic performance of the regime than those in lower wealth quintiles. Elites, however, expressed far more support for coups than Hondurans in lower income quintiles, which suggests that the coup proved satisfactory to the interests of wealthier Hondurans, and reinforced their view that unpopular economic policies can be “cured” by unconstitutional means.

**Figure 4.**  
Legitimacy norms and coup justification in 2010,  
by levels of wealth



**Figure 5.**  
Determinants of Support for Coups, 2010



### What demographic factors determine support for coups?<sup>13</sup>

The regression analysis shown in Figure 5 indicates that wealth and education were significant determinants of support for coups in 2010. Wealthier Hondurans expressed higher support for coups, while Hondurans with lower levels of education expressed higher support for coups. These results suggest a combination of low education and high wealth may be lethal for democracy in Honduras, and perhaps elsewhere.

Figure 6 reveals higher support for coups in 2008 (the blue bars) than in 2006 (the green bars), indicating a rise in displeasure with the Zelaya administration. As in Figure 3, we also observe curvilinear effects. In 2006, support for coups was substantially elevated among middle sector respondents, and the pattern was similar in 2008. For 2010 (the red bars), however, we observe a precipitous pattern change -- a great drop in coup justification from 2008 for all wealth quintiles. Other patterns are worth noting. By 2010 the curvilinear patterns of coup justification by wealth level seen in 2006 and 2008 had disappeared. The wealth-coup justification relationship had become linear and positive. In 2010 -- following the coup of 2009 -- support for coups had declined substantially from 2008, from about 51 to 36, for the wealthiest, and from 44 to 23, for the poorest. That still left the wealthiest Hondurans with the highest levels of coup justification and the smallest decline of any quintile from 2008, again suggesting that elite interests may have been far better served by the coup than those of lower strata. There are various ways to interpret this overall decline in coup support. One is that a

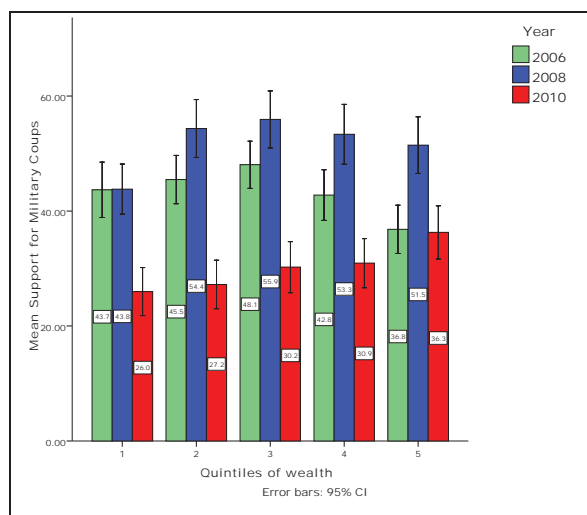
<sup>13</sup> Scale composed of the following questions: JC1. When there is high unemployment; JC10. When there is a lot of crime; JC13. When there is a lot of corruption: (1) A military take-over would be justified (2) A military take-over would not be justified. The scale is measured on a 0-100 metric.



“catharsis” or some purging of pent up emotions could indeed have occurred. Another is that Hondurans, upon reflection on the coup’s costs (increased domestic conflict and repression, external opprobrium, economic assistance cuts), had changed their minds about how good an idea a coup might be.

Figure 6 also reveals that everyone except the poorest supported a coup more in 2008 than in 2006. The biggest changes occurred among those in the top quintile or the wealthiest, whose support for coups went from 36.8 in 2006 to 51.5 on the 0-100 scale in 2008. However, every wealth group reduced its coup support between 2008 and 2010. The largest decreases seem to be among the middle classes.

**Figure 6.**  
**Justification of Military Coups by Wealth Quintiles by Year**

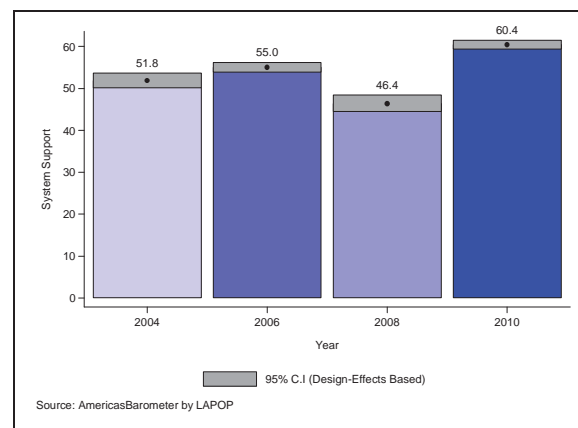


According to the AmericasBarometer data, Hondurans were the most triply dissatisfied citizens in Latin America in 2008. In 2009, they suffered a traumatic political crisis. Evidence from the AmericasBarometer 2010 survey conducted several months after the coup and following the election of a new government in November 2009 indicates that Hondurans’ level of triple dissatisfaction had waned considerably by 2010. Our analysis has shown that elites, defined operationally here as those in the

highest quintile of wealth, were the most triply satisfied in 2010 and, perhaps not coincidentally, the most supportive of military coups.

Finally, the AmericasBarometer 2010 survey, conducted during the honeymoon period a month after the inauguration of the new President, showed a significant increase in support for the political system over 2008. The victory of Porfirio “Pepe” Lobo in the November 2009 presidential elections, along with the departure of Zelaya from Honduras and a general amnesty to those involved on either side of the crisis, seemed to have significantly increased generalized support for the political system, as compared to 2008 when Zelaya was in power and when the prior AmericasBarometer survey had been taken. As shown in Figure 7, the AmericasBarometer measure of system support<sup>14</sup> increased by 14 points from an average of 46.4 in 2008 to 60.4 in 2010.

**Figure 7.**  
**Hondurans’ System Support Over Time**



<sup>14</sup> A scale composed of the following questions: **B1.** To what extent do you think the courts in Honduras guarantee a fair trial? **B2.** To what extent do you respect the political institutions of Honduras? **B3.** To what extent do you think that citizens’ basic rights are well protected by the political system of Honduras? **B4.** To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of Honduras? **B6.** To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of Honduras?



## Conclusions

After the tumultuous events of 2009, most Hondurans perceived the events as a *coup d'état*, and opposed both the coup and President Zelaya's exile from Honduras. However, large majorities nevertheless reported opposing Zelaya's attempted survey and his proposal for a constituent assembly.

Triple dissatisfaction was very high among Hondurans in 2008 but had declined significantly by 2010. Between 2006 and 2008 all of the component legitimacy measures making up the triple dissatisfaction index declined. Triple dissatisfaction's distribution by economic class changed dramatically in 2006 and 2008. In 2004 triple dissatisfaction was highest among the poor and lowest among the wealthy, and highest among rural and small-town dwellers while lower among urbanites. In 2006 and 2008 triple dissatisfaction became broadly generalized across wealth levels and urban settings. This pattern, however, reverted to the earlier pattern in 2010. Something very similar happened with justification of coups over time. So, irrespective of the predominant role of national elites as alleged architects of the coup,

Hondurans across the social spectrum became broadly discontented in 2006 and 2008. This likely created an atmosphere in which top political elites would consider that undertaking a coup would be much easier.

In the wake of the coup, support for institutions rose sharply and evaluation of economic performance increased as well. Hondurans' support for democratic regime principles, however, by 2010 had recovered very little of the ground lost between 2006 and 2008. This indicates that support for basic democratic principles remain at the levels prior to the coup, thus representing a continued potential threat to stable democratic governance. Between 2008 and 2010 support for coups among the wealthiest cohort of Hondurans declined the least of any economic group. And in 2010 the

wealthiest cohort remained the most coup-justifying segment of the Honduran citizenry.

Democratic consolidation is often described as a condition that prevails once citizens and elites of a nation have a generalized embrace of democratic norms and a commitment to constitutional democratic rules as the "only game in town." Whatever cathartic effect the 2009 coup may have had, or whatever second thoughts citizens may have had about what took place, coup justification remained highest among the best-off Hondurans in 2010 in the wake of months of political trauma, protest, violence, repression and international condemnation. The findings of the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey in Honduras offer little evidence that Hondurans, and especially Honduran elites, view democracy as "the only game in town."

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*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No. 46)\**

# Citizen Fears of Terrorism in the Americas<sup>1</sup>

Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, Vanderbilt University

Daniel Montalvo, Vanderbilt University

Jennifer L. Merolla, Claremont Graduate University

Contact: [liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu)

Increased sophistication, scope, and fatalities define modern terrorism and leave few corners of the globe immune from its threat. Terrorism (destructive attacks against non-military targets typically for political purposes)<sup>2</sup> has had a greater presence in some countries in the Americas, such as Colombia<sup>3</sup> and Peru, but terrorist acts have been recorded elsewhere in recent years including Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador.<sup>4</sup> Even in countries that have not experienced significant terrorist attacks, many citizens express concerns about terrorism so that, on average, worry about terrorism in the Americas is relatively high.

\* The *Insights* Series is co-edited by Professors Mitchell A. Seligson and Elizabeth Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt University.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insight series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>.

<sup>2</sup> Most definitions of terrorism fit this conception, though might also introduce exceptions or other refinements. The survey question we assess asks about violent attacks by terrorists but does not impose a definition of “terrorist.”

<sup>3</sup> As recently as August 12, 2010, a car bomb explosion was reported in Bogota (see [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)).

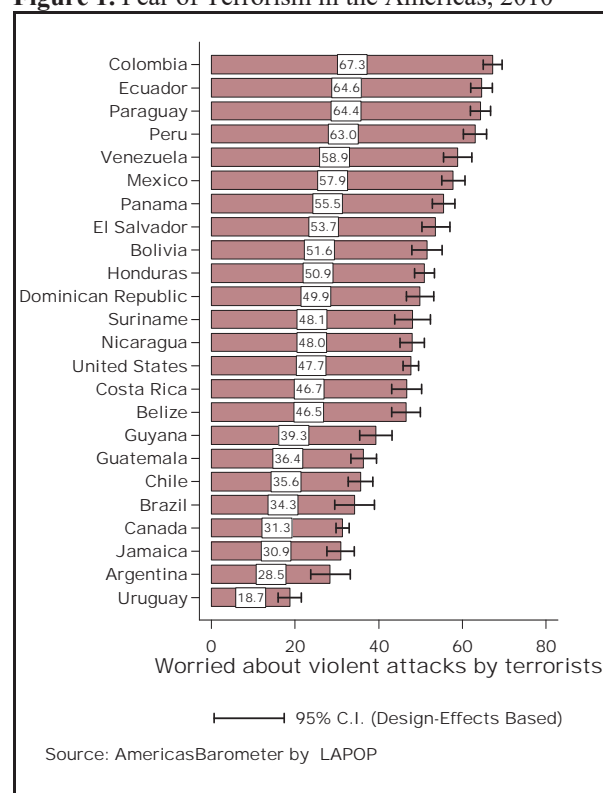
<sup>4</sup> See the RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents (RDWTI), <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents/>

Fear of terrorism is important because it affects the ways people think about others and about government. Merolla and Zechmeister (2009) show that terror threat can increase distrust and authoritarianism, change how people evaluate political leaders, and affect preferences over the balance of power, civil liberties, and foreign policy. In short, there is important reason to be concerned about the extent to which people in the Americas are fearful of terrorist attacks.

With this *Insights* report, we provide a portrait of worry about terrorism in the Americas and, as well, assess some factors that predict it. We focus on the following question from the 2010 AmericasBarometer<sup>5</sup> survey by LAPOP:

**WT1.** How worried are you that there will be a violent attack by terrorists in [country] in the next 12 months?

**Figure 1.** Fear of Terrorism in the Americas, 2010



<sup>5</sup> Funding for the AmericasBarometer has mainly come from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important additional support has come from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

Figure 1 shows mean responses (with confidence intervals) by country to this question, with responses recalibrated on a 0-100 scale, where 0 means “Not at all worried” and 100 “Very worried”.<sup>6</sup> The question also included an explicit option for those who “haven’t thought much about this”; those who responded that way are not included in this scale.<sup>7</sup>

Mean levels of worry about terrorist attacks, as shown in Figure 1, are above the 50-unit midpoint on the scale in ten of the 24 countries. Not surprisingly, Colombia and Peru, two countries that have suffered from numerous terrorist attacks, are found in the top tier of the list of countries, with mean levels of worry of 67.3 and 63.0, respectively. The RDWTI (see footnote 3) reports 46 attempted and/or successful terrorist attacks in Colombia in 2009, most of which are attributed to the FARC. Fewer incidents were reported in Peru, but the country has nonetheless continued to see occasional attacks, typically attributed to the Shining Path, which serve as reminders of much greater levels of terrorism in the 1990s.

Interestingly, Ecuador and Paraguay are at the top of the list, suggesting high levels of concern about security in those countries; in at least the former case, this may be due to concerns about FARC activity within Ecuador’s borders. In direct contrast to these cases, levels of worry are strikingly low in Jamaica, Argentina, and especially Uruguay. While some might expect the United States to place higher, its placement in the middle of the scale makes sense in light of the fact that economic decline rivaled for the public’s attention in 2010, while the public’s concern about terrorism likely had been dulled by nearly nine years of repeated terror alerts typically followed by little to no sign of terrorist

activity. The values in Figure 1 and relative rankings remain fairly stable even if individual characteristics are taken into account, as we do for the Latin American and Caribbean cases in Appendix Figure A2.

What determines variation in levels of worry about terrorism in the Americas? The above analysis and discussion suggest that country context matters, and it is possible that individual characteristics do as well. In the next section we take a closer look at determinants of worry about terrorism in the Americas.

## The Rule of Law Helps Reduce Citizens’ Worries about Terrorism

Among the country level factors that may influence worry about terrorism, we suggest that the rule of law matters. The stronger the rule of law, the more protected citizens should feel from violence by terrorists or others. A weak rule of law could create a climate that foment extremist views and/or might act as a proxy for state failures in the realm of the provision of security. The Freedom House organization provides a measure of the rule of law, which is operationalized using the following questions: (1) Is there an independent judiciary? (2) Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control? (3) Is there protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies? and (4) Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?<sup>8</sup>

In addition to country context, characteristics of individuals and the neighborhoods where they live can explain variation in levels of worry about terrorist attacks. We expect worry about crime (perception of neighborhood insecurity) to correlate with worry about terrorist attacks, as the latter is a subset of the former. We also expect that those who have been previously

<sup>6</sup> Mean non-response for this question was 5.3%.

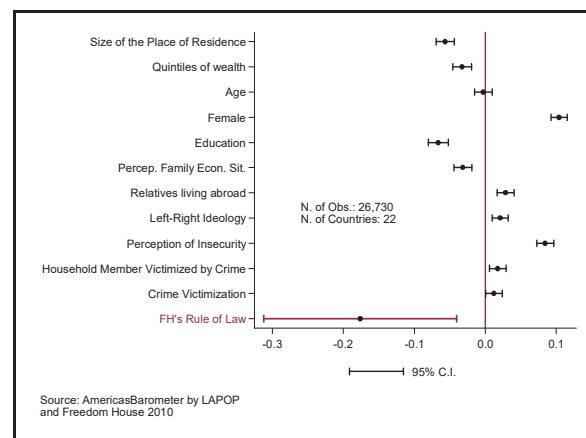
<sup>7</sup> The percentage of individuals who responded that they “haven’t thought much about this” is 22.99 percent; Appendix Table A1 provides a breakdown by country. If we instead code these respondents to the “not at all worried” category, the relative ranking of mean values across the countries remains fairly stable, as do the results presented later in this report (more information available upon request from the authors). To take into account the large number of “missing values,” we employ the “subpopulation” command in STATA to correctly compute the standard errors of the complex sample design.

<sup>8</sup> See: [http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana\\_page=341&year=2008](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana_page=341&year=2008) Last accessed on 07-20-10.

victimized by crime, or have a household member who was victimized, will be more concerned about the possibility of a violent attack by terrorists. In terms of political ideology, we expect that those on the right will be more worried about violent acts, in part because Latin American guerrillas are usually considered to the left.<sup>9</sup> Those with relatives abroad may have heightened perceptions of the risk posed by terrorism, given the prevalence of discussions about terrorism as well as terrorist incidents in both the United States and Europe, where most members of the Latin American and Caribbean diasporas reside. We also control for basic socio-economic and demographic factors.<sup>10</sup>

With these measures, we predict fear of terror with a multi-level model, and the results are presented in Figure 2. In the figure, each variable included in the analysis is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of those variables on fear of terror is shown graphically by a dot, which if located to the right of the vertical “0” line indicates a positive contribution, and if to the left of the “0” line a negative contribution. Statistically significant contributors are shown by confidence interval lines stretching to the left and right of each dot; only when the confidence intervals do not overlap the vertical “0” line is the variable significant (at .05 or better). The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients (i.e., “beta weights”).

**Figure 2.** A Multilevel Analysis of the Determinants of Fear of Terrorist Attacks, 2010<sup>11</sup>



The results in Figure 2 show that those who live in smaller towns and/or more rural areas, those who are poorer, less educated, and who perceive of their own economic situation in a relatively worse light are more concerned about terrorism. Likely this reflects an important reality of terrorism: the typical terrorist attack in the Americas inflicts more harm on groups of individuals who are marginalized in these ways. We see also that women are far more concerned than men and, as we expected, those with relatives abroad are more worried about terrorism. We suggest this latter result reflects a transmission of information from places abroad where the threat of terrorism on a daily basis is more palpable than it is in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. As expected, our variables measuring crime victimization, insecurity, and having an ideology to the right

<sup>9</sup> Examples of guerrilla groups considered on the left include the FARC, ELN, Revolutionary Movement Tupac-Amaru, Shining Path, Tupamaros, and Alfaro Vive Carajo.

<sup>10</sup> These factors are: (a) “Size of the City/Town of Residence,” which runs from 1 (Rural Area) to 5 (National Capital); (b) “Quintiles of Wealth,” which runs from 1 (Least Wealth) to 5 (Most Wealth); (c) “Age,” which runs from 18 (16 in the case of Nicaragua) to 98 years of age; (d) “Female,” coded 1 for women and 0 for men; and (e) “Education,” which runs from 0 to 18 years of completed education.

<sup>11</sup> In this model, we tried to include other theoretically relevant variables, such as “trust in the military” and “trust in the national government,” however, the coefficients were not statistically significant. We also included a question on personality, and found that those who consider themselves as critical and quarrelsome are more worried about violent attacks by terrorists. However, we do not include it in the model because that variable was not part of the Honduras questionnaire, and its exclusion does not change the significance and direction of the other coefficients. Also, we excluded the US and Canada from this model due to our focus in Latin America and the Caribbean and the lack of availability of some of the control variables.



of the scale center<sup>12</sup> are positively related to worry about terrorism.

Turning to the country-level indicator that we included, a country's level of rule of law is indeed associated with worry about terrorism. Citizens in countries with lower rankings on the Freedom House Rule of Law scale are more worried about terrorism than citizens in countries where the rule of law is more secured. In short, the ability of a state to maintain well-functioning courts and security forces that ensure rights and oversee a relatively peaceful citizenry is key to promoting perceptions of protection from the threat of terrorism.

## Conclusion

In this brief report, we have provided a portrait of concern about terrorism in the Americas. Worry about the threat of violent attacks by extremist individuals and groups is relatively high in many countries in the Americas, which is consistent with a reality in which both international and domestic terrorism is becoming more lethal, sophisticated, and brazen; and, a reality in which security concerns in general are quite high (when asked about the most serious problem facing the country, the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey shows that 29.6% of respondents in 25 countries in the Americas indicate an issue related to security).<sup>13</sup>

Of course, not all individuals are worried about terrorism, and our question was designed to take into account the fact that an important number of respondents would not have thought about terrorism. Therefore, rather than steer respondents to select a level of worry, we allowed the explicit option, "haven't thought much about it." As reported in footnote 6, 23 percent of respondents on average selected this option (see Appendix Figure A1 for a breakdown by country). While we excluded these individuals from the analyses here, we ran

robustness checks in which these individuals were coded into the "not at all worried" category, and these achieve similar results.

As we indicated in the introduction, there is important reason to be concerned about the extent to which individuals are worried about terrorism. A chief objective of terrorism is the spread of anxiety and various negative emotions, and extant research shows clearly that terror threat significantly affects political attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors in ways that may stress democratic values, processes, and even institutions (Merolla & Zechmeister, 2009).

Our analysis here shows that, in statistical terms, countries in which the rule of law is strong are those in which citizens are less worried about terrorism. It could be that such environments are less likely to breed extremists, either because efficient, well-executed, professional security policies act to prevent the growth of terrorist activity, or because such features and a general respect for individuals' legal rights stymies attempts by extremists to convert others to their cause. Alternatively, our rule of law variable may simply proxy for the general state of security in the country, leaving individuals feeling more secure with respect to terrorism, but likely also other types of crime, in contexts where the rule of law is judged to be comparatively high. Regardless of which interpretation, or whether a mixture of these interpretations, is most accurate, the results at least suggest the utility of a strong rule of law for promoting feelings of security, in this case with respect to concern about terrorist attacks.

Our results concerning the individual-level determinants of worry about terrorism are also illuminating, especially given that they offer the first region-wide assessment of the factors that predict citizens' fears of terrorism in the Americas. As we indicated, we find that those individuals who tend to occupy more marginalized positions in a country (rural inhabitants, the less educated, and even women) and/or those who are worse-off in terms of their personal financial situations, those who have recently experienced crime victimization, and

<sup>12</sup> Due to the large number of missing values (23.1%), we imputed the variable political ideology using the mean values per country.

<sup>13</sup> The AmericasBarometer survey of Haiti was being implemented at the time this report was drafted.



those who have relatives living abroad are more concerned about the threat of terrorist attacks.

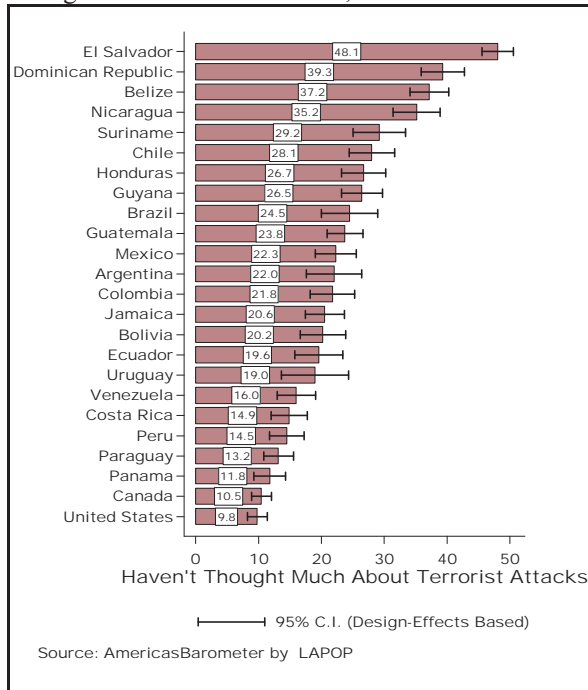
In this brief report, we have not examined the entire gamut of factors that might predict worry about terrorism, instead we only shed light on a select few, and have not at all directly examined the relationships between worry about terrorism and other individual attitudes that worry about terrorism might predict (that is, we have not examined worry as an independent variable). These tasks await us, and we intend to report on them in the future. For now, we hope we have clearly presented a portrait of worry about violent attacks by terrorists in the Americas, and demonstrated convincingly how this worry systematically varies across both countries and individuals.

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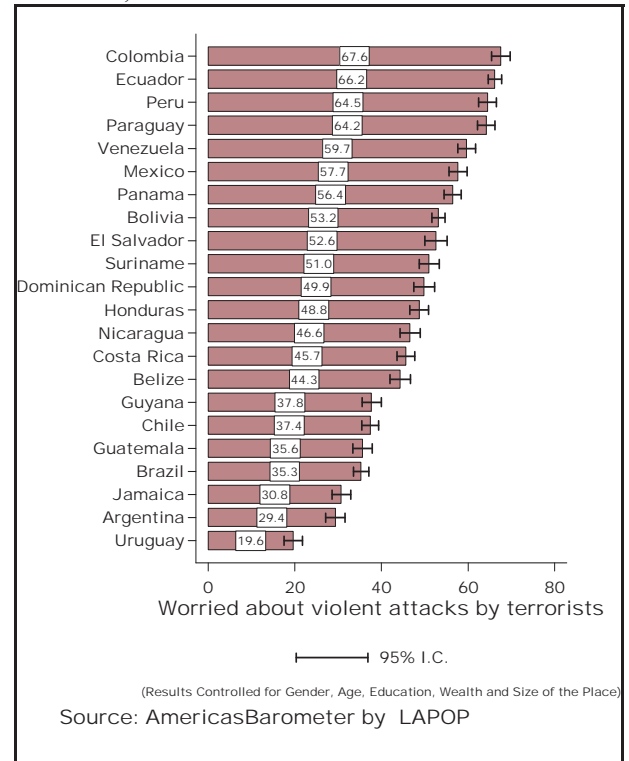
- Merolla, J. L., & Zechmeister, E. J. (2009). *Democracy at Risk: How Terrorist Threats Affect the Public*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

## Appendix

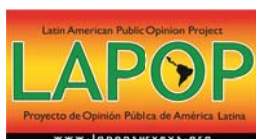
**Figure A1.** Percentage of People Who Haven't Thought Much about Terrorism, 2010<sup>14</sup>



**Figure A2.** Fear of Terror after Taking into Account Individual Characteristics in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010



<sup>14</sup> The coefficient of the correlation between the means of fear of terror by country, and the have not thought much about this by country is -0.02.



*AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010 (No.47)\**

## Who Benefits from Bolsa Família?

By Matthew L. Layton  
matthew.l.layton@vanderbilt.edu  
Vanderbilt University

**B**olsa Família (Family Stipend) is the largest of the innovative anti-poverty conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs that have emerged in Latin America over the last two decades. These programs offer cash incentives to impoverished families so long as their children attend school and participate in public health initiatives and, by most accounts, have effectively targeted the neediest populations of the region to help reduce overall poverty (Rawlings 2005). Still, there are concerns with Brazil's Bolsa Família program: the program may favor rural over urban locales (*Economist* 2010). This *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* looks at Bolsa Família and addresses that alleged bias.<sup>1</sup> To do so, I employ data from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).<sup>2</sup> In this round 2,482 respondents from Brazil were asked the same question:

\* The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.

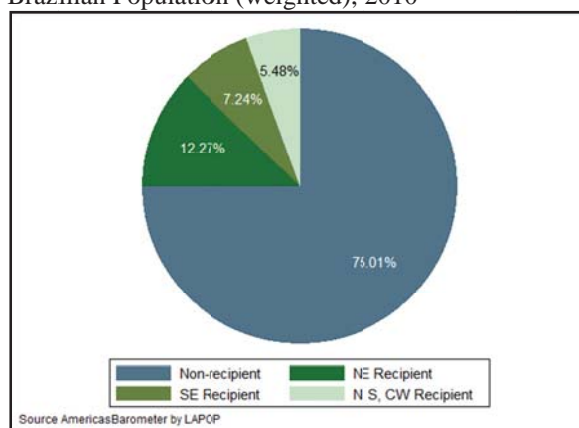
<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insight series can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations

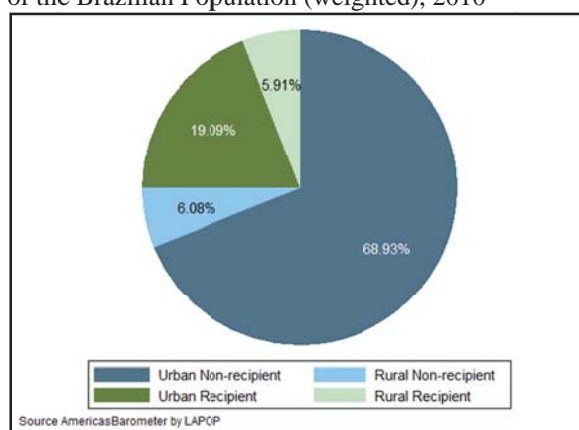
CCT1BRA. In the last three years were you or someone who lives in your household a beneficiary of the Bolsa Família program?

Responses were bivariate, and recoded here so that '0' indicates "No" and '1' indicates "Yes."<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 estimates recipients in each Brazilian region as a percentage of the country's population, adjusted for the sample design (i.e.,

**Figure 1.**  
Recipients in Each Region as a Percentage of the Brazilian Population (weighted), 2010



**Figure 2.**  
Recipients in Urban and Rural Areas as a Percentage of the Brazilian Population (weighted), 2010



Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University. The Brazilian survey was undertaken in partnership with the Universidade de Brasília and with the generous support of CNPq, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (National Council of Technological and Scientific Development).

<sup>3</sup> Item non-response was 1.01% for the sample.

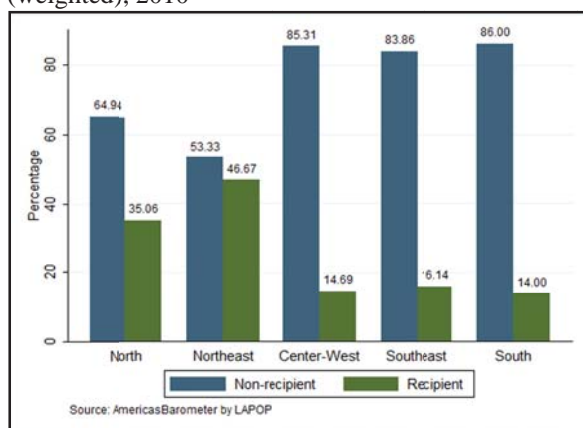
weighted). Figure 2 displays the design adjusted percentage of the Brazilian population receiving Bolsa Família, by urban or rural residence.

The figures show that Northeasterners and urban residents report the highest *absolute* levels of participation in Bolsa Família over the last three years. As shown in Figure 1, half of all participants in Bolsa Família live in the Northeast. Recipients from this region represent an estimated 12.27% of all Brazilians. In Figure 2, urban recipients (an estimated 19.09% of all Brazilians) outnumber their rural counterparts by more than 3 to 1.

Compare these results to those shown in Figures 3 and 4, which present the *rates* of participation

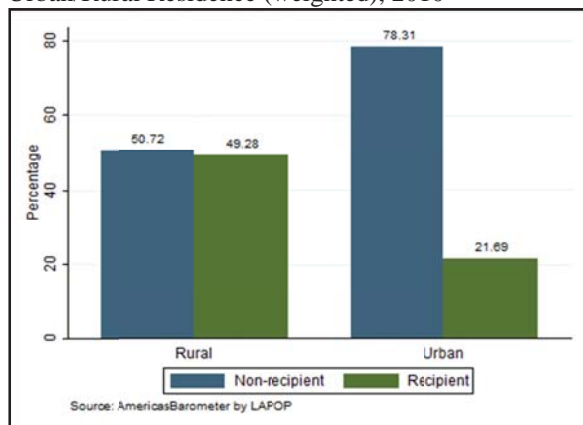
**Figure 3.**

Rate of Participation in Bolsa Família by Region (weighted), 2010



**Figure 4.**

Rate of Participation in Bolsa Família by Urban/Rural Residence (weighted), 2010



and non-participation in Bolsa Família by Brazilian region and by urban/rural area.

Figure 3 shows that an estimated 46.67% of residents in the Northeast region received benefits from Bolsa Família over the last three years compared to only 16.14% in the Southeast. Figure 4 shows that an estimated 49.28% of rural Brazilians participated in the program in the last three years whereas only 21.69% of urban residents have done so. However, using relative *rates* of participation is problematic for drawing inferences about Bolsa Família at the national level. Figures 3 and 4 help make statements about recipients versus non-recipients *within* each region or group, not across them.

Northeast Brazil is undoubtedly the poorest of Brazil's regions so it is not too surprising that its residents benefit in absolute terms from Bolsa Família more than any other region. On the other hand, Brazil is a highly urban country.<sup>4</sup> Brazil's urban areas tend to have large concentrations of impoverished Brazilians and given that urban participants only outnumber rural beneficiaries by a margin of 3 to 1 – as shown in Figure 2 -- it is important to carefully consider whether there may be some rural bias inherent in the program that unfairly favors rural over urban citizens.

## Is There a Rural Bias?

To reflect more on the evidence from the above figures, the fact that there is a higher *rate* of participation in the Bolsa Família program in rural areas is not, by itself, a sign of bias. In fact, there is only evidence of bias if it is possible to show that the rate of participation among the *poor* in each region is largely different. With the individual-level data available in this survey, it is possible to do better still with a multivariate analysis of the factors that lead to participation in Bolsa Família.

There are several other factors to consider when assessing whether there is a rural bias in the

<sup>4</sup> 88.09% (weighted) of respondents in the sample live in urban areas, reflecting a reality in which the Brazilian population has become highly urbanized over the last half century.

Bolsa Família program. Primarily, it is important to focus on eligibility thresholds to receive benefits. These thresholds depend on *per capita* household income. Therefore, holding all else equal, larger households should be more likely to receive cash payments. Likewise, households with a lower monthly income will be eligible for participation at a higher rate on average. These threshold variables may well differ across urban and rural areas and therefore must be taken into account.

Because education is highly correlated with income, parents with more education should be less likely to need government assistance.<sup>5</sup> It may be that age and gender will also predict a need for government assistance. Although Bolsa Família is not exclusively for those with children, it provides larger benefits (available at higher income cutoffs) for families with young children at home, thereby providing further incentives to participate for younger beneficiaries.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, because of frequent scenarios where a single mother raises her children alone, more women may report participation in Bolsa Família than men.<sup>7</sup> Race of the respondent may also predict participation given the tendency for white Brazilians to earn more than their fellow citizens.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, it may be that the high degree of association between President Lula and Bolsa Família leads his supporters or his party's supporters (PT sympathizers) to procure

government assistance at a higher rate.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, individuals who support an active role for government in society may also look to receive government support; conversely, those who reject government intervention in society may actively avoid participating in a government welfare program.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 5.**  
Weighted Standardized Effects on Probability of Reporting Participation in Bolsa Família in the Last Three Years, 2010

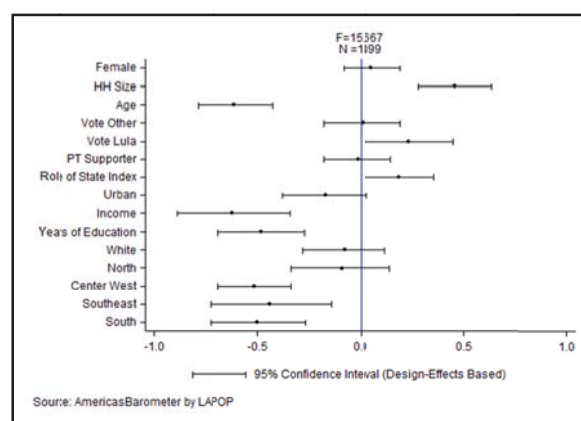


Figure 5 presents results from a design-corrected logistic regression model that controls for these variables and for urban/rural status and region of residence to analyze whether there is any bias evident in the probability of Brazilians reporting participation in Bolsa Família over the last three years.<sup>11</sup> The dots represent the point estimates of standardized coefficients and the bars show the 95% confidence intervals for those coefficients. If

<sup>5</sup> Respondents in each successive level of education response category in the AmericasBarometer survey (i.e. primary, middle, secondary, university, and post-graduate) report a higher mean level of income than do those in lower-level education categories.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed description (in Portuguese) of the program see the Brazilian Ministry of Social Development's webpage for Bolsa Família: <http://www.mds.gov.br/bolsafamilia/>

<sup>7</sup> Women who are not married or living with a partner in the AmericasBarometer survey have a mean of 1.50 children living with them at home whereas men with the same civil status have a mean of 0.80 children living with them at home. The difference of these means is statistically significant ( $t=5.50$ , design  $df=49$ ).

<sup>8</sup> In the AmericasBarometer survey, self-reported whites have a higher mean income category (3.09) than non-whites (2.56) – a difference that is statistically significant ( $t=5.42$ , design  $df=49$ ).

<sup>9</sup> 84.51% of respondents (weighted) claim that President Lula is most responsible for Bolsa Família. Although the variable used here to predict Bolsa Família participation in 2007-2010 is vote choice in 2006, it very well may be that (unobserved) participation in Bolsa Família in 2006 (which, it has been argued, should predict voting for Lula in 2006) is highly correlated with later participation. Therefore, there may be dual causality between participation in Bolsa Família and vote choice for the 2006 election as reported in 2010.

<sup>10</sup> It may also be that receiving Bolsa Família helps recipients feel better about government and desire a more active role for the state in society.

<sup>11</sup> Northeast is the reference category for region. No Vote Cast is the reference category for vote choice. Analysis conducted with STATA v.11.1. The Role of State Index is an additive index created using responses to items ROS2 through ROS6 from the AmericasBarometer questionnaire.



the bar crosses the blue vertical line at 0.0, there is no statistically significant effect for that variable. When the dot and bar fall to the left of the line, there is a statistically significant negative relationship between that variable and reporting participation in Bolsa Família. When the dot and bar fall to the right of the line the relationship is significant and positive.

Do these results provide strong evidence of a rural bias in the Bolsa Família program? In short, they do not, though were we to apply a more relaxed standard of evaluating statistical significance (say, an 89% confidence interval), there would be some evidence of a rural bias at the margins. Rather, as expected, the strongest predictors of participation in the program are household income (in the negative direction) and household size (in the positive direction), providing some evidence that Bolsa Família functions according to its design.

Nevertheless, regional effects are clearly at work in the implementation of the Bolsa Família program. In accord with the descriptive data presented in Figure 1, this is to be expected, but the effects are quite strong even after taking into account factors such as income that are related to region. Residents in the Center-West, Southeast, and South regions are all much less likely than residents of the Northeast to receive government help in the form of cash transfers. The political ramifications of this skewed distribution of government assistance have only begun to be explored (see Hunter and Power 2007; Zucco 2008; Licio, Rennó, and Castro 2009).

The results also show that each additional year of education lowers the probability of an individual reporting participation in Bolsa Família over the last three years – an effect that is present even after controlling for household income. Moreover, older respondents had a lower probability of reporting participation in Bolsa Família than did younger interviewees.

Finally, those who report voting for Lula in 2006 and those who support government intervention in society are more likely to report participation in Bolsa Família, all else equal. It may be that these individuals are more enthusiastic about

the program and are therefore more likely to seek out assistance.<sup>12</sup>

The effects of gender, voting for a candidate other than Lula, supporting the PT, urban residence, race, and living in the North are statistically insignificant.

Still, region and urbanization are correlated in Brazil and it is difficult to separate their partial effects. What happens in the analysis if, for the sake of argument, regional controls are left out? Without controlling for region, the variable for urban becomes significant and negative, suggesting that residents of urban areas are less likely to have participated in Bolsa Família over the last three years than rural residents, all else equal. The main finding nevertheless remains the most important given the need to control for region in the Brazilian context.

## An Alternative Interpretation of “Rural Bias”

The above results suggest that rural residents, even after controlling for numerous other factors, might be slightly advantaged in terms of participation in Bolsa Família (though only if a non-standard and more generous threshold is used for statistical significance). When this result is considered *alongside* several other realities of the urban/rural divide, one could make a somewhat stronger case that the Bolsa Família program is biased against urban areas. In particular, the cost of living is generally higher in urban areas than in rural areas (which biases the program in favor of rural areas because the program provides a universally standard cash allowance), the program may provide lower benefits than previous poverty-reduction initiatives, and the universally applicable *per capita* income thresholds tend to discourage participation in urban areas (Economist 2010). While this perspective is not unreasonable, it also fails to take into account

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<sup>12</sup> Given that we cannot discount this alternative explanation, it would be premature to say that these results suggest the presence of some sort of political favoritism for those who voted for the incumbent. It may also be that the relationship is reversed with receipt of government benefits preceding and causing higher levels of support for Lula.

increases in the minimum wage, which may have greater consequences for urban residents (who are more likely to be formally employed) and might thus dissuade some urban residents against participation in the program in favor of formal employment.

The minimum wage in Brazil has increased from R\$200 per month to R\$510 per month (a 255% increase) over the course of the last eight years (*Folha de São Paulo* 2010; Futema, Freire, and Mignone 2003).<sup>13</sup> This policy shift favors urban areas where formal employment subject to national labor law is much more prevalent. In the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey 41.24% of Brazilian urbanites reported that they are formally employed compared to 23.01% of those in rural areas.

A common criticism of Bolsa Família has been that it would discourage people from working (Llana 2008). *However*, these increases in the minimum wage and the contemporaneous increase in formal employment opportunities in Brazil decrease the relative attractiveness of Bolsa Família. In other words, the limited benefits provided by the program arguably are not as appealing as the chance to work as a formal employee with the right to the benefits associated with having a *carteira assinada* (signed working papers). This might well discourage individuals from participating in Bolsa Família in urban areas compared to rural areas; it is not clear that this means the program is biased but instead simply less attractive in urban areas. In fact, it would suggest that the program functions well as a guarantee of a minimal *supplementary* living for impoverished Brazilians willing to abide by its conditions.

## Policy and Program Implications

Independent of the presence or lack of bias, Bolsa Família is not the sole solution to poverty in Brazil and individual households cannot rely on it to fully take the place of other sources of income. Still, observers can take some comfort in the results presented here that provide evidence

that the observed systematic demographic variation in the provision of targeted benefits from Bolsa Família, while favoring regional bases, do not unfairly favor either side of the urban/rural divide in Brazil.

However, there is potentially other cause for concern. Individuals who report voting for Lula in 2006 are more likely to have participated in the Bolsa Família program over the last three years. This political connection with the social welfare program does not extend to supporters of Lula's party (after controlling for presidential vote choice in 2006) and it may not withstand the upcoming elections in October, so it is still unclear whether this relationship signals a unique relationship between Lula and voters who have rewarded his policy efforts, or if it represents a controlling, non-representative interaction between the national government and the most vulnerable of Brazilians.

Additionally, the results presented here suggest that smaller families, individuals on their own, and especially the elderly may be disadvantaged with respect to participation in the Bolsa Família. If targeted welfare is the present and future of social policy in Brazil, it is vital that citizens outside the bulls-eye not be forgotten and that political motivations for distributing funds are kept in check. To the extent that the Bolsa Família is distributed broadly and without bias, citizens should be more likely to feel that the system itself is functioning in a fair and efficient manner.

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<sup>13</sup> After accounting for inflation the real increase has been about 53% according to the *Folha de São Paulo*.

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## Appendix

### Determinants of Receiving Bolsa Família Assistance in Last Three Years

		Coefficient	t-score
Female		0.058	(0.83)
HH Size		0.459*	(5.24)
Age		-0.607*	(-6.66)
Vote Choice	Vote Other	0.008	(0.08)
	Vote Lula	0.238*	(2.25)
PT Supporter		-0.017	(-0.20)
Role of State Index		0.190*	(2.27)
Urban		-0.173	(-1.67)
Income		-0.617*	(-4.49)
Years of Education		-0.480*	(-4.62)
White		-0.080	(-0.79)
Region	North	-0.095	(-0.79)
	Center-West	-0.512*	(-5.85)
	Southeast	-0.437*	(-3.02)
	South	-0.497*	(-4.33)
Constant		-1.412*	(-14.60)
F(15, 35): 15.67			
Num. Obs.: 1,899			
Note: * p<0.05. Results of logistic regression using Taylor Series Linearization to calculate design-corrected standard errors. Coefficients have been standardized. The reference category for Vote Choice is "No Vote Cast". The reference category for Region is "Northeast".			

# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2010

Number 48

## Insecurities Intensify Support for Those Who Seek to Remove Government by Force

*By Arturo Maldonado*  
*arturo.maldonado@vanderbilt.edu*  
*Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** This *Insights* report looks at support for those seeking to overthrow an elected government by force. In part, this attitude speaks to the depth of individuals' commitment to the democratic system.

The principal findings are as follows. First, men, younger citizens, and the less educated are more likely to express approval of this type of confrontational tactic. Second, certain measures tapping insecurity related to the economy, crime, and corruption are related to approval of those working to overthrow an elected government. Specifically, national economic evaluations, feelings of neighborhood insecurity, and corruption victimization all positively predict approval of individuals seeking to overthrow government by force.

The report concludes that a decayed rule of law threatens emerging democracies by increasing levels of public support for antidemocratic actions.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
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The interruption of constitutional order by armed forces has been a recurrent part of Latin American's history. Recently, it is more common for a president's term to be interrupted by impeachment or some other non-violent means. Nonetheless, public attitudes concerning the use of force to remove executives provide insight into the potential for instability in the region and, as well, the degree to which the ordinary citizen is committed to constitutional, democratic, and peaceful process. What, then, explains support for such confrontational tactics in the Americas? In this AmericasBarometer *Insights* report I show that individuals' insecurities intensify support for such extreme measures.<sup>1</sup>

In the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer survey by LAPOP, over 43,000 respondents from 26 nations in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean were asked the following question<sup>2</sup>:

E3. "Do you approve or disapprove of people participating in a group working to violently overthrow an elected government?"

Figure 1 shows average scores with confidence intervals for 23 countries.<sup>3</sup> Responses were initially given on a 1-10 scale, but recoded to run from 0 (strong disapproval) to 100 (strong approval).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights Series* can be found at:

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>.

The data on which they are based can be found at:

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Given that the surveys of the United States and Canada do not contain some independent variables I use and given the focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, I exclude them for a total sample size of 39,238 before case-wise deletion due to missing values. In addition, Haiti is not included here, but was surveyed by LAPOP in 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Non-response was 1.54% for the sample.

**Figure 1.**

Average Approval Expressed for Individuals Who Seek to Remove Elected Government by Force, 2010

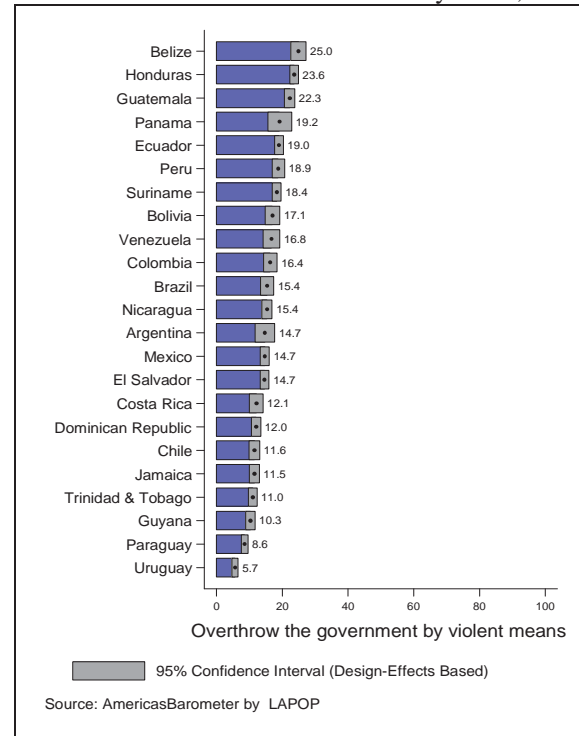


Figure 1 shows that overall levels of support are quite low, lower than 50 points on the 0-100 scale for all countries. Still, there is variance across the countries. Surprisingly, perhaps, respondents in Belize - at the top of the scale - express a level of support, on average, of 25 points on this scale. Likewise, Honduras shows a comparatively high score (23.6 points). In this case the result is arguably less surprising, given that Latin America's most recent military coup took place in that country in 2009. On the other end of the spectrum, the lowest average levels of support for this statement are found in Uruguay and Paraguay. In these two countries, average support for individuals working to overthrow the government by violent means is less than 10 points on the 0-100 scale. By other indicators, Uruguay is considered among the more democratic countries in the region. For instance, it scores comparatively high on trust in elections.<sup>5</sup>

Responses to the question provide insight into the extent of individuals' commitment to

<sup>5</sup> See AmericasBarometer *Insights* No. 37, 2010 [I0837].

democratic processes. It is important to note that the question does not ask for individuals' own level of support for government overthrow, but instead the extent to which they approve or disapprove of those who participate in groups with that objective. The question is worded so that the nature of those groups is left undetermined, and therefore individuals could have in mind groups seeking to provoke forceful intervention by the country's military or by guerrilla or other rogue organizations. Finally, the question does not make explicit reference to any specific country, and therefore may capture ambivalence toward the ways in which democracy is practiced at home and/or abroad.

In an analysis not reported here for the sake of space, I controlled for sex, age, education, wealth, and size of town. After controlling for those standard socioeconomic variables, the country rankings remain similar in comparison to those presented in Figure 1.<sup>6</sup>

What factors explain this attitude? In what follows, I will show first that selected socioeconomic and demographic factors matter.<sup>7</sup> I then turn to an assessment of the predictive power of insecurities, measured by way of economic evaluations, as well as perceptions of and victimization by crime and corruption.<sup>8</sup>

## The Predictive Power of Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics

Poverty, unemployment, and a poor education are factors scholars have identified as increasing opposition to representative democracy (Córdova and Seligson 2009). Age has also been shown to be positively correlated with support for democratic governance (Seligson 2007).

Given that the distribution of the responses is skewed toward lower values on the scale<sup>9</sup>, I recalibrate the measure into a dichotomous variable in which values from 1 to 5 are coded as disapproval (89.5%), and values from 6 to 10 are coded as approval (10.5%).

To explore the predictive power of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, I first run a multivariate logistic regression analysis with fixed country effects.<sup>10</sup> The analysis tests the ability of an individual's age, education, gender, wealth, and size of the place of residence to predict support for efforts to overthrow government by force.

The results are presented in Figure 2, in which dots indicate the contribution of each independent variable and horizontal lines indicate the confidence intervals of each contributor. If the interval does not cross the "0", the contribution is considered statistically significant. Those intervals on the left of the vertical zero line indicate a negative relationship, whereas those on the right indicate a positive impact.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> The data suggest interesting differences across countries, but assessing the causes of these lies outside the scope of this short report.

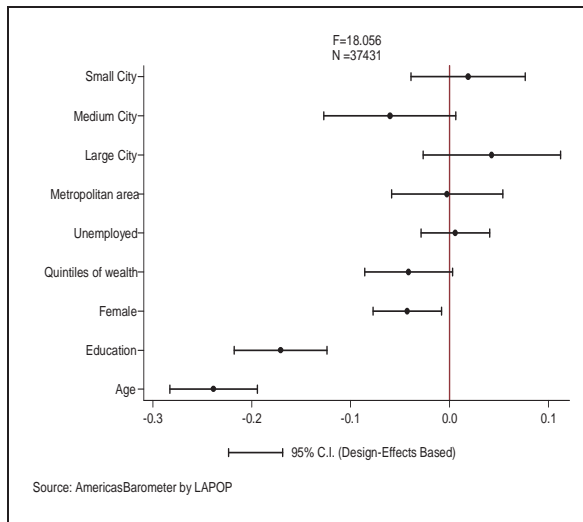
<sup>8</sup> All statistical analyses in this paper were conducted using STATA v11 and results were adjusted for the complex sample design employed.

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<sup>9</sup> 57.6% of respondents answer that they strongly disapprove (1 on the 1-10 scale), and 89.5% of respondents place themselves on the disapproving side (between 1-5 on the scale).

<sup>10</sup> Uruguay is the comparison (baseline) country.

**Figure 2.**  
Socioeconomic Determinants of Expressions of  
Approval for Individuals Who Seek to Remove an  
Elected Government by Force, 2010



Previous research (Booth and Seligson 2009) has shown that men, younger citizens, the poor, the less educated, and rural residents are those who more likely support this antidemocratic statement in eight Latin American countries (most of them in Central America). Here, the results show a picture that is fairly, though not entirely, similar. Specifically, men, the younger, and the less educated are more likely to express approval with respect to this confrontational position. Conversely, wealth, unemployment, and size of residence are not statistically significant. This result for wealth is particularly noteworthy because of conventional claims that the poor have less commitment to democratic values. While the direction of the coefficient on the wealth variable is expected (indicating the wealthy tend to express less support for this attitude), the substantive effect of wealth is minimal and the result is not statistically significant at the standard  $p < 0.05$  threshold. The largest and most significant effects, instead, are found for education and age.

## Relating Insecurities to Support for Efforts to Overthrow Government by Force

While some demographic and socio-economic factors matter, they ultimately explain only a small amount of the variation in opinions on support for efforts to overthrow elected government by violent means<sup>11</sup>. I therefore turn to additional explanations.

A long line of scholarship explains military coups, and public acquiescence or even support for them, as influenced by numerous factors including culture; (lack of) diffuse political support and legitimacy; social capital and interpersonal trust; and economic development and performance.<sup>12</sup> In considering what explains support for individuals who engage in groups seeking to overthrow an elected government with violent means, I assess the relevance of an individual's insecurities.

I distinguish among three dimensions related to insecurity: the economy, crime and violence, and corruption. Some of these dimensions have been utilized to explain support for military coups and democratic legitimacy (Pérez 2003). For example, crime has been associated with citizens' attitudes toward democracy and political participation (Malone 2010), and with the overall quality and durability of democracy (Bateson 2010). Booth and Seligson (2009) examine the relationship between indicators of legitimacy and experiences with crime and corruption, on the one hand, and willingness to accept armed overthrow of an elected government, on the other. In a similar vein as this existing research, but encompassing all three dimensions and with respect to 23 countries, I focus on the ability of these insecurities to predict support for those seeking to overthrow an elected government violently, a statement that can be considered to measure commitment to democracy, or the lack thereof.

<sup>11</sup> See the low Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> reported in the Appendix.

<sup>12</sup> Among others see Almond and Verba 1963; Bermeo 2003; Diamond 1999; Inglehart 1997; Lipset 1963; Linz 1990; Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010; Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982; Putnam 2002; Valenzuela 2004.

I consider two aspects of the economic dimension: the national and the personal economic situation.<sup>13</sup> The expectation is that when people perceive their personal and the national economic situations more poorly, they are more dissatisfied with the performance of the incumbent administration and, as well, with the political system (in these cases, democracy). To the extent the latter is true; I should find a negative relationship between economic perceptions and support for antidemocratic measures.

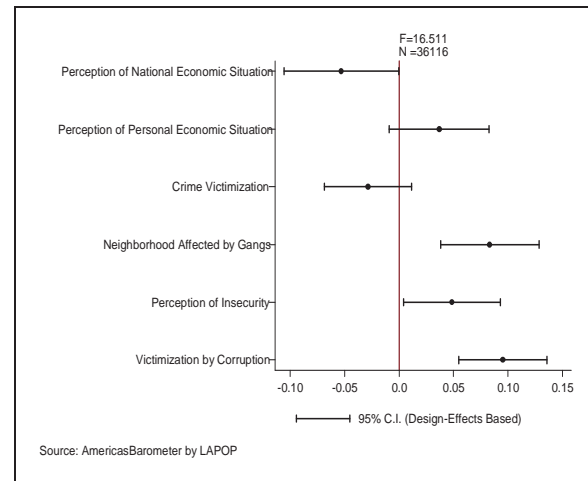
Regarding crime and violence, I include crime victimization<sup>14</sup>, the perception of insecurity in people's neighborhoods<sup>15</sup>, and the perception of the presence of gangs in their neighborhoods.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, corruption is measured through a dichotomous variable that gauges people who have been victimized by corruption at least once.<sup>17</sup> Again the expectation is that insecurities, in this case with respect to crime and corruption, decrease support for democratic politics.

Figure 3 shows a logistic model<sup>18</sup> in which these variables predict support for those seeking to overthrow government by force; socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and fixed

country effects are included but not shown here.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 3.**  
Determinants of Expressions of Approval for Those Who Seek to Overthrow an Elected Government by Force, 2010



The results in Figure 3 show somewhat mixed results for economic factors. On the one hand, those with better perceptions of the national economic situation are less likely to support those who seek to overthrow government by force. On the other hand, the direction of the coefficient for personal economic evaluations is the reverse but not statistically significant.

The variables related to crime and violence also present slightly mixed results. The fact of being victim of any sort of crime appears as statistically insignificant (and in the unanticipated direction). However, perceptions of gang activities in one's neighborhood and general neighborhood insecurity positively predict support for those seeking to overthrow government by force. Likely this says that the communal experience is more relevant than the personal experience with crime to explain support for extreme antidemocratic measures. In this way, the results mirror those for the economic factors, where perceptions of the national, but not one's personal, situation matter.

<sup>13</sup> Both the national and the personal economic situation are based on ordinal categorical responses questions with five alternatives that were recalibrated on a 0-100 scale. Higher values of these variables indicate better perceptions about national and personal economic situation.

<sup>14</sup> This variable asked people if they have been victim of any type of crime in the last 12 months.

<sup>15</sup> This question is worded as: "Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being victim of assault or robbery, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?" The responses were recalibrated to a 0-100 scale.

<sup>16</sup> This variable asked people if their neighborhood is affected by gangs (a lot, somewhat, little, or none). The responses were recalibrated to a 0-100 scale.

<sup>17</sup> This variable is based on a series of questions asking about whether the respondent has been received a request for a bribe from the police, public employees, municipal officials, anyone at work, in the justice system, when using health services, and at school.

<sup>18</sup> As a robustness check, I also run separate logistic regressions for each of these variables and I find the same results.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix for complete results.

Finally, victimization by corruption is statistically significant and in the expected direction. Those who have been victimized by corruption at least once are more likely to express support for individuals who seek to overthrow a government with violence.

In sum, personal insecurities as reflected in national economic evaluations, experiences with corruption, and perception of crime in one's community intensify support for individuals who seek to overthrow elected governments by force. That is, they chip away at individuals' commitment to the rules of the democratic game.

These findings share some similarities to those reported in previous studies. For instance Booth and Seligson (2009) also find that experience with corruption is a positive predictor of this confrontational attitude, but personal experiences with crime are not significant predictors (though they find that communal perception of crime is not significant, and this report finds it is, for this larger set of countries). In a previous *Insights Report*<sup>20</sup>, Pérez shows that perception of insecurity and crime victimization are determinants of support for military coups. Here, this paper shows another way in which public insecurity is linked to undemocratic attitudes. In all, taking into account findings in previous studies and the hemisphere-wide scope of the analyses reported here, there is overwhelmingly strong reason to conclude that insecurities undermine support for democratic processes and governance in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Discussion

The objective of this *Insights Report* is to identify some key factors that affect individuals' tendencies to approve of those working in groups to promote the violent overthrow of an elected government. I find that some socioeconomic characteristics matter. In particular, those who are less educated and younger are more likely to express support for

individuals working to overthrow an elected government.

At the macro level, extant scholarship has linked economic variables to events such as military coups and interrupted presidencies. At the micro level, I do not find that citizens' perceptions of the personal economy help explain support for individuals working to overthrow an elected government. However, evaluations of the national economy are important predictors of the likelihood that an individual will express approval of those who participate in antidemocratic groups.

The results for crime and corruption provide an indication of the ways in which mounting violence in the region can pose a threat to emerging democracies. As violence, crime, and corruption increase in these societies, support for those willing to break democratic rules increases. To the extent that commitment to democratic processes is relevant to democratic stability, such changes in public opinion arguably could increase the odds of new coups or new interruptions of presidencies.

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<sup>20</sup> See AmericasBarometer *Insights* No. 32, 2009 [I0832].

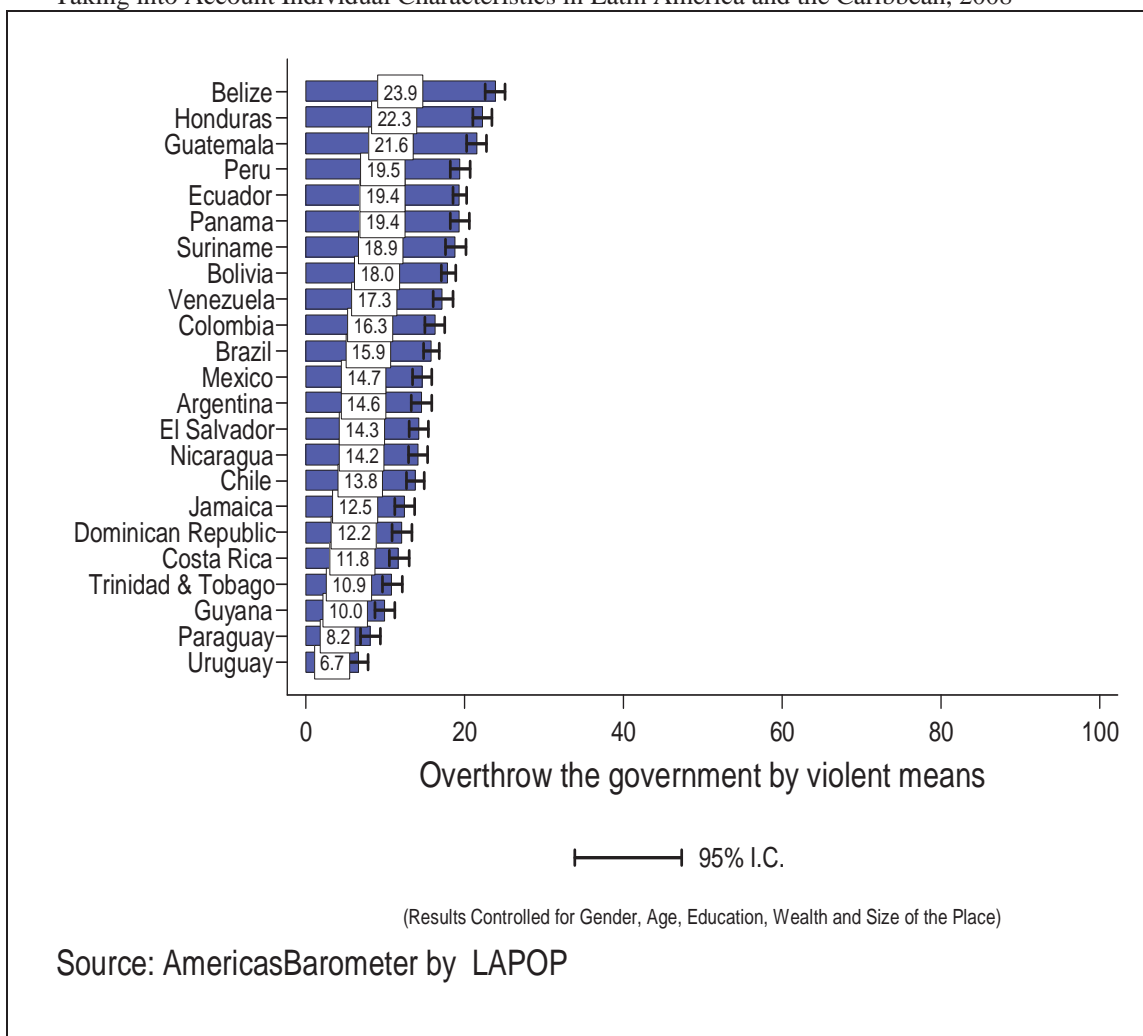


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## Appendix

**Figure 2a.**

Average Support for Individuals Seeking to Overthrow an Elected Government by Violent Means after Taking into Account Individual Characteristics in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008



**Table 1a.**

Determinants of Support for Support for Those Seeking to Overthrow an Elected Government by Violent Means, 2010

Variable	Figure 2		Figure 3	
	Coefficient	t	Coefficient	t
Victimization by Corruption			.095*	(.020)
Perception of Insecurity			.048*	(.022)
Neighborhood Affected by Gangs			.083*	(.023)
Crime Victimization			-.028	(.020)
Perception of National Economic Situation			-.053*	(.026)
Perception of Personal Economic Situation			.036	(.023)
Unemployment	.006	(.017)	-.001	(.018)
Metropolitan Area	-.002	(.028)	-.040	(.030)
Large City	.042	(.035)	.021	(.036)
Medium City	-.060	(.034)	-.067*	(.033)
Small City	.018	(.029)	.018	(.029)
Quintiles of Wealth	-.041	(.022)	-.039	(.023)
Woman	-.042*	(.017)	-.039*	(.018)
Education	-.170*	(.023)	-.173*	(.024)
Age	-.238*	(.022)	-.228*	(.023)
Mexico	-.056*	(.024)	.138*	(.034)
Guatemala	.088*	(.023)	.291*	(.033)
El Salvador	-.055*	(.024)	.156*	(.033)
Honduras	.035*	(.022)	.257*	(.033)
Nicaragua	-.033	(.025)	.184*	(.034)
Costa Rica	-.050	(.031)	.167*	(.039)
Panama	-.028	(.049)	.192*	(.051)
Colombia	-.004	(.028)	.210*	(.036)
Ecuador	.037	(.030)	.320*	(.044)
Bolivia	-.121*	(.041)	.161*	(.051)

*Insecurities Intensify Support for Those Who Seek to Remove Government by Force*  
*Arturo Maldonado*

Variable	Figure 2		Figure 3	
	Coefficient	t	Coefficient	t
Peru	-.017	(.031)	.176*	(.040)
Paraguay	-.175*	(.028)	.026	(.037)
Chile	-.070*	(.035)	.179*	(.043)
Brazil	-.223*	(.032)	.231*	(.046)
Venezuela	-.037	(.034)	.247*	(.039)
Argentina	.039	(.032)	.198*	(.043)
Dominican Republic	.021	(.037)	.142*	(.034)
Jamaica	-.061*	(.026)	.157*	(.038)
Guyana	-.064*	(.030)	.096*	(.037)
Trinidad and Tobago	-.113*	(.029)	.134*	(.036)
Belize	-.079*	(.028)	.326*	(.033)
Suriname	.123*	(.024)	.228*	(.032)
Constant	-2.25*	(.026)	-2.277*	(.026)
F	18.06		16.51	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.028		0.031	
Number of Obs.	37431		36116	

# AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010

Number 49

## Who Supports Affirmative Action in Brazil?

By Amy Erica Smith  
[Amy.e.smith@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Amy.e.smith@vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** The latest edition in the AmericasBarometer *Insights* series examines public support for racial quotas in Brazilian universities. A high percentage of Brazilians believes that reserving slots for Afro-descendants is fair. However, an important minority strongly opposes affirmative action. It turns out that the university educated and whites are most likely to oppose affirmative education. At the lowest educational levels, however, support is very high regardless of the respondent's race. While racism reduces approval of affirmative action, this report finds *no* differences in partisanship or ideology between supporters and opponents of affirmative action.

*The Insights Series presents short reports on topics of interest to the policymaking and academic communities. The series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

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In the past decade, the racial complexion of Brazil's institutions of higher education has begun to change, the result of a dramatic rise in affirmative action.<sup>1</sup> First implemented by the administration of former President Cardoso in 2001, affirmative action programs are taking hold in a growing share of institutions. A recent study found that 70 percent of Brazil's public universities, both federal and state, have adopted some form of affirmative action (Gois 2010).

These programs aim to redress long-standing, deep racial and socioeconomic inequalities. Through much of the twentieth century, scholars and Brazilian elites held Brazil to be a "racial democracy" untroubled by the problems encountered in the United States (Frazier 1942; Freyre 1973). Prize winning author Carl Degler (1971) argued that because races in the U.S. were divided into "black" vs. "white" while Brazilians had a third broad category of "mulatto," racial prejudices and discrimination were far lower in the latter country. Since 1980, however, activists and researchers have begun to challenge this conventional wisdom, showing that Afro-Brazilians remain deeply disadvantaged in public health outcomes, education, the labor market, and politics (Andrews 1991, 1992; Skidmore 1993, 2003; Telles 2004; Wood and Lovell 1992).

Nonetheless, affirmative action programs have been controversial among Brazilian elites, attracting great media attention and the opposition of important groups of intellectuals. Not only do opponents argue that affirmative action may unfairly disadvantage non-targeted groups; they also hold that it politicizes race in ways that are distinctly un-Brazilian.

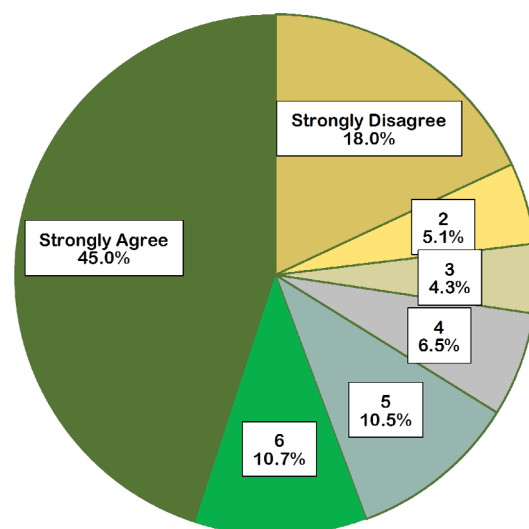
But outside of the media limelight, what do ordinary Brazilians think? This report in the *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* examines support for affirmative action in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Data

come from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).<sup>3</sup> In this round a random, nationally representative sample of 2,482 Brazilians was asked to what extent they agreed with the following statement on a scale from 1 to 7, where "1" represents "Strongly Disagree" and "7" "Strongly Agree":<sup>4</sup>

**RAC2.** It's fair for public universities to reserve spaces for Afro-descendants (people who are black or mulatto).

Figure 1 examines the distribution of responses

**Figure 1. Support for Affirmative Action (Weighted sample, Percentages of the Brazilian Population), 2010**



**Affirmative Action for Afro-Brazilians is Fair**

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/surveydata.php>.

<sup>3</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University. The Brazilian survey was undertaken in partnership with the Universidade de Brasília and with the generous support of CNPq, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (National Council of Technological and Scientific Development).

<sup>4</sup> Item non-response was 8.38% for the sample.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Edward Telles for kind feedback on this report.

<sup>2</sup> Prior issues in the Insight series can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data

to this question. The most salient finding is the high level of support for affirmative action. Nearly half of Brazilians strongly agree that reserving university spots for blacks and mulattoes is fair, and more than two-thirds are at least somewhat favorable to this statement, giving it a score of “5,” “6,” or “7.”

This high level of support for affirmative action is striking. Still, two caveats bear keeping in mind. First, in a country where the current president has a fourth grade of formal education (even though he is a highly self-taught individual), access to higher education is outside the reach of most Brazilians, black or white.<sup>5</sup> The average Brazilian might be more magnanimous with a university slot that he or she has little hope of accessing in any case than he or she would be with something closer to home. Thus, support for affirmative action in spheres such as the labor market might be lower than support for such programs in higher education. Unfortunately, the 2010 questionnaire did not include a question on that topic. Second, this question does not directly address the hidden trade-off, namely that a slot given to an Afro-Brazilian will likely mean one less space for a white applicant. We might expect support to be lower when affirmative action is framed in terms of trade-offs. These are all questions that need further exploration in our future surveys.

Figure 1 also shows that an important minority is strongly opposed to affirmative action. One in every six Brazilians strongly disagrees with this public opinion statement, indicating that this group believes that university quotas for Afro-Brazilians are very far from fair.

<sup>5</sup> In 2010, 10% of Brazilians have completed at least one year of higher education, while 38% have completed at least one year of high school (weighted percentages).

What explains the extent to which individual Brazilians agree or disagree with university quotas for Afro-descendants? The next section takes up that question, examining the effects of demographics, racism, and political attitudes.

## Who Supports Affirmative Action?

The first set of factors examined here reflect a set of personal circumstances and demographics that affect *who wins and who loses* from affirmative action. I expect that Brazilians who self-identify as white will oppose affirmative action to a greater extent than will those who self-identify as belonging to other races, simply because whites are most likely to lose out from affirmative action.<sup>6</sup>

*Who wins and who loses from affirmative action? In a country where the current president has a fourth grade formal education, access to higher education is out of the reach of most Brazilians, black or white, regardless of public programs.*

Similarly, I expect attitudes to vary by education and socioeconomic status. Brazilian affirmative action programs target not only blacks but also low-income and public school students. The universities and states that design the programs

<sup>6</sup> As a great many observers have noted, even the notions of “black” and “white” are contested and controversial concepts in Brazil, where most citizens have at least some heritage that is both African and European, and where national discourse for almost a century has celebrated Brazil as a country of racial mixing (Bailey 2008; Nobles 2000; Sansone 2003). I code race as a dummy variable for respondents who self-identify as white, in contrast to brown (*pardo*), black, indigenous, or yellow (meaning Asian). In 2010, the AmericasBarometer survey in Brazil also asked interviewers to rate their own and respondents’ skin colors using a color palette with 11 possible ratings, running from very dark to very light. These ratings are highly correlated with self-identified race, and the following results hold if skin color is substituted for self-identified race. Most of Brazil’s affirmative action programs allow black and mulatto students to self-identify, but a few have boards rate applicants’ racial classifications based on their photos.

typically exclude higher status Afro-Brazilians (Gois 2010). Those Brazilians who are already university educated are most likely to perceive affirmative action as at best unnecessary and at worst a threat to the future educational advancement of their own children and social network members, who would presumably have access to higher education without such programs. Those with secondary educations may be most likely to benefit from affirmative action.

Finally, self-interest is unlikely to matter much at all for the lowest educational group, which has little access to universities regardless of whether affirmative action is implemented. Even with affirmative action, Afro-Brazilians must take an entrance exam known as a *vestibular* and must complete high school to get into a university. Affirmative action merely sets lower standards for Afro-Brazilians' performance, using either quotas or some kind of a "bonus." Adult respondents with an 8th grade or lower formal education have little opportunity to clear these hurdles. As a result, affirmative action within universities does *not* benefit the poorest of the poor; rather, it gives a leg up to Afro-Brazilians who are already in the top half of the educational distribution. For those in the lowest educational group, then, the question is likely to evoke not self-interest, but symbolic attitudes regarding the desirability of opening up elite institutions to the disadvantaged.

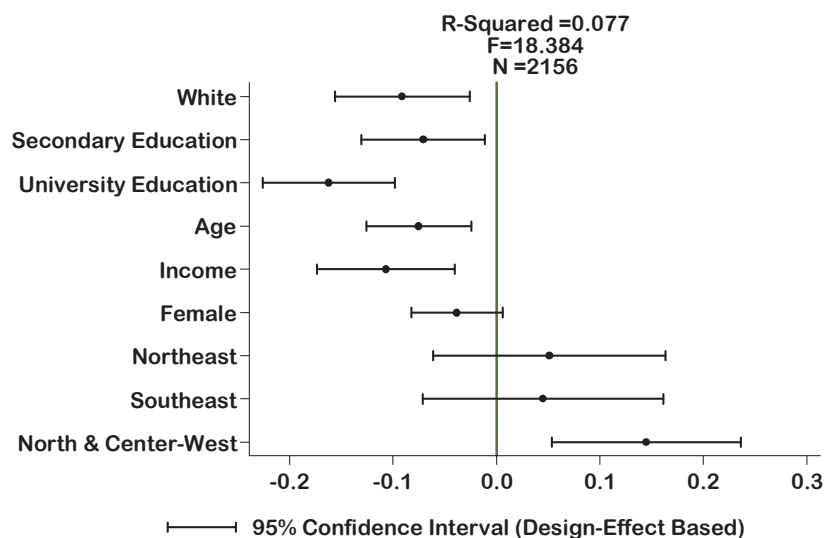
As a result of these considerations, I assess the extent to which affirmative action attitudes are predicted by having either a higher or a secondary education, as well as by respondents' incomes.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Those who report that their last full year of schooling was grades 9, 10, or 11 are coded as having a secondary education. Those who report 12 or more completed years of schooling are coded as having a higher education. The

Several other demographic factors might affect support for affirmative action: age, gender, and region of residence. With respect to the latter, the literature suggests that discrimination against Afro-Brazilians varies across the country, and is greater in the Southeast and South regions (Lovell 2000; Twine 1998).

Figure 2 presents results of a linear regression model in which I examine the extent to which race, education, income, age (coded in number of years), gender, and region affect attitudes towards affirmative action in Brazil. All variables are standardized for ease of comparison. Dots represent the estimated effect of each variable, while the horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals for those effects. We can be at least 95% confident that a given effect is statistically significant if its confidence interval does not cross the vertical axis at 0. Effects to the left of the vertical axis are negative; ones to the right are positive.

**Figure 2. The Impacts of Demographic Factors on Support for Affirmative Action (Weighted Standardized Effects), 2010**



baseline category thus includes all respondents with an eighth grade education or lower. Income is coded using an 11-point scale based on the number of minimum wages a respondent receives per month.

It turns out that having a university education (compared to having a primary education or lower) is the single strongest predictor of attitudes on this issue, such that the university-educated disagree much more strongly with the statement that university quotas are fair than respondents of any other educational group. Furthermore, I find that those with secondary educations also have significantly lower support for affirmative action than do those at lower educational levels. Thus, the strongest opposition to affirmative action in education comes from those who are already benefiting from (or have benefited from) the system prior to the introduction of affirmative action.

Beyond educational level, the respondent's race also has an important effect on his or her attitudes toward affirmative action, with whites being less favorable toward this program, controlling for all other demographic and socio-economic factors shown in Figure 2. And income is also a significant predictor; as Brazilians' incomes increase, they become more negative regarding university quotas for blacks. Taken together, the findings for education, race, and income suggest that self-interest plays a very important role in affecting which Brazilians support affirmative action and which Brazilians oppose it. Thus, those with more education, money and who are whiter are less supportive of affirmative action in a country in which average public opinion highly supports it. However, those with the least at stake—those with very low educational levels, who would be unable to access universities in any case—are the most supportive of affirmative action. As I argue above, this may be because respondents with primary or lower educations answer this question based on their desire to democratize elite institutions.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There are a couple of other possible interpretations of the very high levels of support at the lowest educational levels. First, primary-educated Afro-Brazilians might fail to understand how affirmative action works, and believe that

Results for other demographic factors are mixed. Older Brazilians are significantly less supportive of affirmative action than are younger ones. Gender, however, does not significantly affect attitudes. And attitudes do vary significantly by region, but not quite in the way expected. Support for affirmative action is lower in the South than in the Southeast or Northeast, but not significantly so. However, support in all three regions is substantially lower than in the North and Center-West regions, representing the less populated, more isolated states surrounding the Amazon and the grasslands and wetlands known as the Pantanal.<sup>9</sup>

But perhaps the effects for educational level vary by the race of the respondent. After all,

university-educated whites are the ones most likely to lose out with affirmative action. University-educated blacks and mulattos should be much more likely to perceive that their family members or members of their social networks might benefit from affirmative action, though to the extent that such programs exclude higher status Afro-Brazilians they may still perceive a threat from affirmative action. High-school educated Afro-Brazilians, in contrast, are the group most likely to benefit from such programs. High-school educated whites may perceive that race-based quotas also threaten their chances for admission, even

this question presents them with the possibility of a guaranteed university slot. However, this alternative interpretation based on self-interest would not explain the very high support among whites with primary or lower educations. Second, response set is a possibility; low socioeconomic status Brazilians might simply be more likely to agree with all public opinion items. Cognitive interviewing is needed to understand further how Brazilians at the lowest educational levels interpret this question.

<sup>9</sup> When the North and Center-West are taken as the baseline category, it turns out that the South, Southeast, and Northeast all have significantly lower levels of support for affirmative action than do the omitted regions.



though they might benefit from non-racially oriented affirmative action programs.

In Figure 3 I disaggregate support for affirmative action by educational level and race.<sup>10</sup> It turns out that among those with the lowest educational levels, there are essentially no racial differences in support for affirmative action. This supports the scholarship that has found little racial conflict among the lowest status Brazilians (Telles 2004). Among those with secondary education, however, a racial gap begins to open. And for the university-educated, this gap grows wide indeed. At the same time, I find that even for non-whites, a university education is associated with lower support for affirmative action. Whether this is due to self-interest, as speculated above, or to

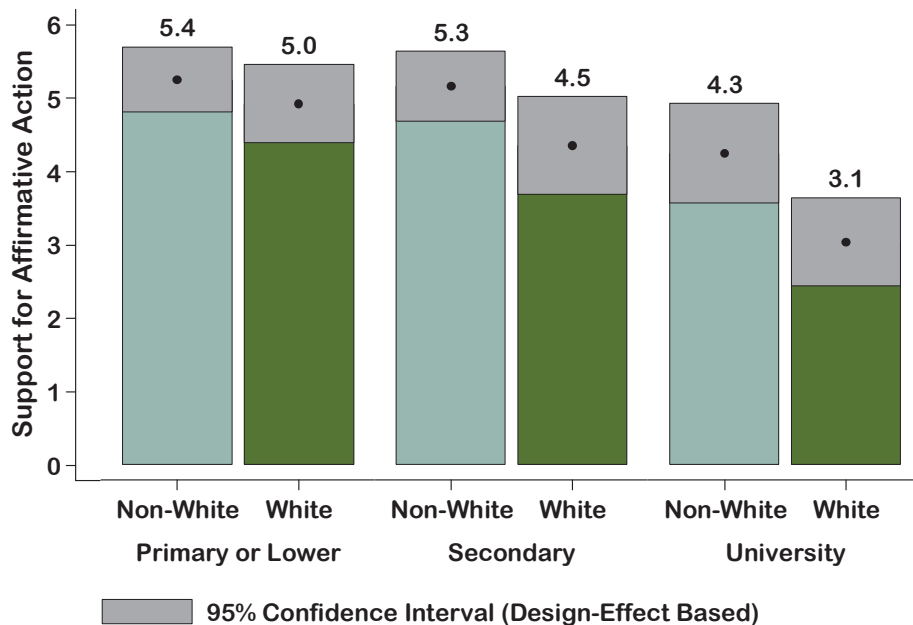
highly educated Afro-Brazilians absorbing anti-affirmative attitudes within social milieus that are generally less supportive of the program remains a question for later investigation.

Surely, though, attitudes towards affirmative action must be driven by more than simply self-interest. Literature on attitudes towards affirmative action in the United States shows the importance of racism; moreover, even after taking racism into account, ideology and partisanship have independent effects (Kuklinski et al. 1997; Sniderman and Piazza 1993).

In a final linear regression model (results available upon request), I assessed the association between affirmative action attitudes, on the one hand, and racism, support

for the ruling Workers' Party (PT) and for a welfare state, and self-location on either the left or the right, on the other. Two results were striking. First, after considerable analysis I was unable to find any standard political attitudes with much effect on support for affirmative action in Brazil, in marked contrast to what has been found in the U.S. *Even after removing demographic controls*, only support for a welfare state was significantly associated with a positive view toward affirmative action. Second, racism is clearly an important predictor of attitudes towards affirmative action, but its standardized effect is actually lower than that of several of the self-interest variables.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 3. Average Support for Affirmative Action, by Race and Educational Level (weighted), 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

<sup>10</sup> In Appendix Table 1, I present results for a model in which I interact both educational variables with race. In this multivariate model, it becomes clear that the differences between whites and blacks are significant for both the high school- and college-educated.

<sup>11</sup> Measuring racism in any context is challenging. In this analysis I assess racism using agreement, again on a 7-point scale, with the statement that "The mixture of races is good for Brazil."

## Policy Implications

Brazil's profound racial inequalities are similar not only to those in the U.S., but also to those found in other countries with sizable Afro-descendant populations throughout the Americas. The Brazilian experience with affirmative action thus suggests possibilities for other states as well as for more concerted policy efforts by the Brazilian federal government. But what do Brazilians think about their country's experiment with racial quotas? Judging by media coverage, one might expect to find stark divisions among citizens. This *Insights* report thus presents surprising results. First, support for affirmative action is quite high across Brazil; over two-thirds of Brazilians place themselves at more supportive than neutral on a 7-point scale evaluating the fairness of racial quotas.

Second, there appear to be no political divisions between affirmative action proponents and detractors. *Petistas* (i.e., those who support the Workers' Party of President Lula) approve of affirmative action to no greater degree than do non-supporters of the PT. Likewise, there are no significant differences in support between leftists and rightists, or even between those who favor a welfare state and those who do not. This finding suggests a large potential coalition in favor of new affirmative action policies.

Still, these findings also point a finger at the limits of such a coalition. An important and powerful minority strongly opposes affirmative action; and the wealthiest and best-educated Brazilians are concentrated in this group. These are the citizens most able to write letters to the editor, to lobby their federal deputies, and to participate in marches. Thus, voices of powerful minority opponents may be louder than those of majoritarian supporters.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This might suggest to affirmative action's proponents that a plebiscite would be the best way to pass affirmative action legislation.

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## Appendix

Appendix Table 1. Ordinary Least Squares Model: The Interactive Effects of Race and Education on Support for Affirmative Action (Design Effect Adjusted)

	Coefficient	Standard Error
White	-0.143	0.174
Secondary Education	-0.194	0.176
University Education	-0.825**	0.285
Secondary X White	-0.501*	0.212
University X White	-0.940*	0.382
Age	-0.011**	0.004
Income	-0.131**	0.041
Female	-0.182	0.103
Northeast	0.303	0.286
Southeast	0.229	0.273
North & Center West	0.811**	0.246
Constant	5.930	0.254
<i>Number of Observations</i>	2156	
<i>R-squared</i>	0.0811	
<i>F</i>	14.63	

Note: Coefficients from weighted linear regression are significant at \*p < .05; \*\* p < .01.

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2010

Number 50

## Who should be Responsible for Providing Health Care Services in Latin America?

By Margarita Corral  
[margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** This *AmericasBarometer Insights* series report examines the extent to which citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean agree that government should provide health care. Results suggest that positive perceptions of national and personal economic situations lead to lower support for government supplying health care, and perception of economic crisis is linked to support for government intervention. Furthermore, citizens who use public health care services and who have children are more likely to support this idea. Finally, evaluations of the government's economic performance have an interesting effect; those who give the government better ratings agree more strongly that the government should play a primary role in health care provision.

*The Insights Series presents short reports on topics of interest to the policymaking and academic communities. The series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

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The role of the state as provider of health care is an issue recently propelled into the limelight, in large part due to the recent vigorous debate on health care reform in the United States. On the heels of this debate, many are taking a closer look at the degree to which governments around the world supply health care services (e.g., the summer 2010 issue of *Americas Quarterly*). Another important topic concerns demand: to what extent and why do citizens prefer that the state provide health care services?

This discussion can be seen as part of a broader debate over the proper role of the government in the economy, a debate which continues in Latin America (Franko 2007) and worldwide. In prior *Insights* reports (I0801, I0808, I0816) we examined attitudes regarding the role of the government in creating jobs, in owning key businesses, and in ensuring citizens' well-being.<sup>1</sup> This new report assesses the extent to which mass publics across the Americas support the idea that the state should be the main entity responsible for the provision of health care services. Furthermore, it also analyzes the determinants of this support at both the individual and contextual levels within Latin America and the Caribbean.

The data we use to analyze this topic come from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).<sup>2</sup> In this round, 43,990 citizens in 26 countries were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statement on a scale from 1 to 7, where "1" represents "Strongly Disagree" and "7" "Strongly Agree":<sup>3</sup>

**ROS6.** The (Country) government, more than the private sector should be primarily responsible for providing health care services.

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insight* series can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/surveydata.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Item non-response was 1.71% for the sample.

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?<sup>4</sup>

Responses to this question were then recalibrated on a 0-100 scale to conform to the LAPOP standard, which facilitates comparability across questions and survey waves.

**Figure 1.**  
Average Support for Government Provision of Health Care in the Americas, 2010

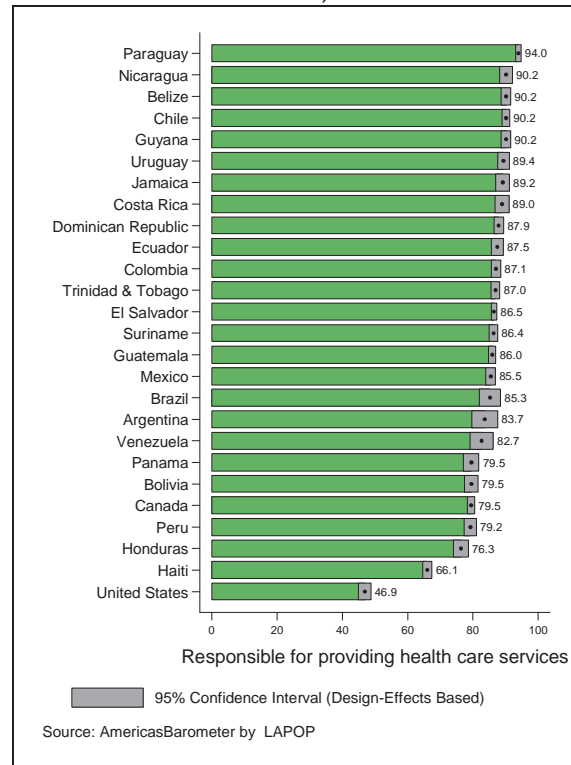


Figure 1, which displays national averages, shows that except for the United States, there is strong agreement over the notion that the state should be principally responsible for providing health care services in the Americas.

Support for this idea is especially high in Paraguay, Nicaragua, Belize, Chile, and Guyana, where the average rises above 90 points on the 0-100 scale. At the other extreme, the United States is the only country where the average does not exceed the midpoint of 50, a position that is not surprising given its traditional preference for a limited role of the

<sup>4</sup> In the Spanish-language version of the questionnaire, the word "el estado" (the state) is used since the term "el gobierno" (the government) refers to the incumbent administration rather than the state apparatus.

state. Between these two extremes, the vast majority of the countries in the Americas fall in the 80's, showing high agreement that the government is responsible for providing health care services.

How much of this variation across countries is explained by country-level variation in individuals' socio-economic and demographic characteristics? In order to assess the effects of these characteristics, we control for education, gender, age, wealth, and city/town size. Figure 2 in the appendix shows how the results remain quite consistent with Figure 1, with averages varying only a few points higher or lower.<sup>5</sup>

To the extent that there remains variation within and across countries, what factors predict differences in attitudes concerning the role of the state as a provider of health care services? The next section examines the effects of demographics and political and economic attitudes on support for government providing health care services.<sup>6</sup>

## Determinants of Support for the Government as Provider of Health Care

Conventional theories explaining attitudes toward state involvement in the provision of services focus on the role played by self-interest.<sup>7</sup> According to this perspective, citizens who are more economically vulnerable are more likely to support an active role of the government than are well-off citizens who are

unlikely to receive, or need, as much benefit (Hasenfeld and Rafferty 1989, Coleman 2001).

The underlying idea in this perspective is that citizens are not going to support programs "where they do not think that they will benefit" (Sanders 1988: 323). For example, in a comparison of eight Western countries, Svallfors (2003) found that people in a weaker market position, such as women, the unemployed, and workers, are more supportive of government intervention than are members of groups in a more favorable position in the market. This self-interest explanation is related to "economic insecurity," a term used in demand-driven explanations of public policies such as social insurance. The meaning of economic insecurity ranges from more abstract assessments to specific issues regarding aspects of one's personal financial situation, such as employment (Anderson and Pontusson 2007: 212).

Following a framework consistent with this scholarship, I consider factors that might reflect an individual's self-interest in health care provision. These key independent variables are wealth, age, gender, number of children, unemployment, having been a user of public health care services in the last year, and perceptions of the personal economy. The expectation is that, first, those in a better socioeconomic situation (the wealthy, the employed, and those who rate positively their economic situation) are less likely to support an active government role in health care. Second, those in positions to receive greater benefit from an expanded health care system (those with children, and those who have already used public health services) should be more likely to support health services provided by the government.

Some analysts also suggest that attitudes toward the role of the state depend on the economic, social or even political context (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003, Kam and Nam 2008, Gilens 1999, Schneider and Jacoby

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<sup>5</sup> An analysis of variance model was employed, with the socio-economic and demographic variables used as covariates.

<sup>6</sup> These analyses exclude the United States and Canada, given that citizens in these two countries hold sharply higher levels on many socio-economic characteristics, and that the focus of this report is on Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>7</sup> This concept has been defined as "tangible losses or gains to an individual or his or her immediate family" (Bobo and Kluegel 1993:445).



2005).<sup>8</sup> In this regard, I consider perceptions of the national economy and regarding whether the country is experiencing an economic crisis. I expect that the perception of a crisis may trigger citizens to seek the help of the government. Also, the perception of good times in the national economy might decrease the need for an active government.

Futhermore, as Franko (2007) suggests, poor administrative practices might affect the legitimacy of the state in Latin America.<sup>9</sup> Those who believe the state generally is not effectively dealing with important economic problems should be less likely to turn to the state for help in a particular issue area such as health care. Therefore, I expect a positive relationship between perceptions of government performance and support for an active role of the government in providing health care services.

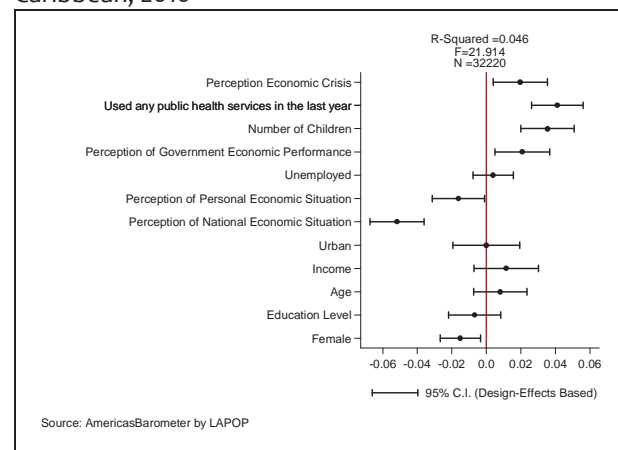
Figure 2 shows the extent to which this model explains support for the government providing health services in Latin America and the Caribbean. Seven out of the twelve variables displayed in Figure 2 are statistically significant. This significance is graphically represented by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical “0” line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical “0” line it implies a positive relationship, whereas when it falls to the left it indicates a negative contribution. The analysis also controls for sociodemographic variables and includes country fixed effects.

<sup>8</sup> Multilevel analyses predicting support for an active government role in health care using contextual variables such as GDP and level of democracy did not yield significant results. It is possible that other national-level data might explain the cross-national variation LAPOP has uncovered, but we leave that for future analyses.

<sup>9</sup> The index of the Perception of the Government’s Economic Performance was constructed from two items that asked to what extent people thought that the current administration fights poverty and unemployment. Higher values of the index mean greater satisfaction with the government.

We see that not all the variables measuring one’s personal economic situation are related to support for the government providing health care. While being unemployed and having low levels of income do not have a statistically significant impact, the perception of one’s personal economic situation does have a negative effect. The more positive this perception, the lower the support for the idea of government-provided health services. On the contrary, as we expected those who might consider themselves beneficiaries of the health care system are more likely to support public health services. That is to say, respondents with children and those who have already used public health services report more support.

**Figure 2.**  
Determinants of Support for the Government Providing Health Care in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010



Regarding perceptions of the national economic situation, we see that both of the variables we considered have a statistically significant effect. While those respondents who perceive an economic crisis are more likely to support an active role of the state, those who perceive a positive national economic situation are more likely to prefer limited state sponsorship of public health services. In addition, perceptions of the performance of the current government have a positive impact.

Finally, contrary to what the literature for advanced democracies suggests, women in Latin America and the Caribbean are less likely

to support an active role of the government as provider of health care services. Although we do not have enough data to disentangle the relationship between gender and support for public health care in this region, this difference from other settings might reflect negative personal experiences with health services or a critique of their quality.

## Conclusions

This *Insights* report has shown that, across the Americas with the exception of the United States, ordinary individuals strongly agree that their government should provide health services.

This attitude towards the role of the government regarding this kind of public policy appears to be linked to perceptions of the personal and national economic situation as well as to self-interest. On the one hand, positive perceptions of the national and personal economic situations lead to less support for state provision of health care services. However, perceptions of economic crisis lead citizens to ask for the intervention of the government. On the other hand, citizens who use health care services and who have children are more likely to support this idea.

Also, it is clear that when citizens see that the government is effective in dealing with the main economic problems (poverty and unemployment) they give it more space to take care of public services.

In sum, the results suggest that when economic situations are adverse, citizens tend to see the government as a source of protection and provider of public services--as long as they also perceive it as effective. Nonetheless, further research should analyze whether support for public health drops in "easy" times as well as the tension between economic development and preferences over the role of the state. In order for the government to provide public services, countries need some level of economic development. An adverse economic situation might create a disconnection between citizen preferences for public health care and governments' abilities to provide it. Such a

situation might affect levels of dissatisfaction with the political system more broadly.

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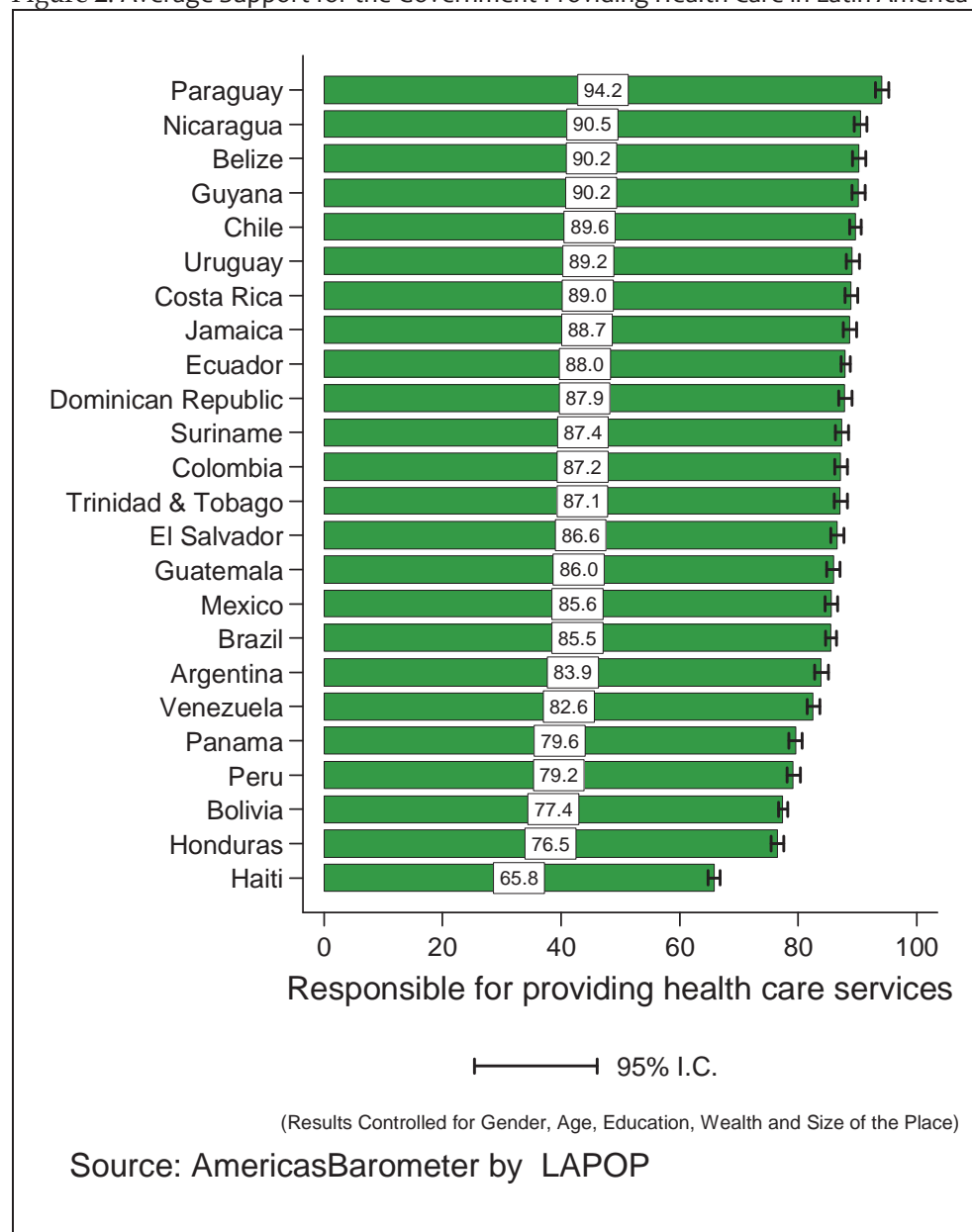
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## Appendix

Figure 2. Average Support for the Government Providing Health Care in Latin America and the Caribbean



**Table 1. OLS regression. Determinants of Support for the Government Providing Health Care**

	Coefficient.	t
Female	-0.015*	(-2.51)
Education Level	-0.007	(-0.87)
Age	0.008	(1.04)
Income	0.012	(1.22)
Urban	-0.000	(-0.01)
Perception of National Economic Situation	-0.052*	(-6.50)
Perception of Personal Economic Situation	-0.016*	(-2.09)
Unemployed	0.004	(0.66)
Perception of Government Economic Performance	0.021*	(2.57)
Number of Children	0.035*	(4.52)
Have you used any public health services in the last twelve months?	0.041*	(5.38)
Perception of Economic Crisis	0.020*	(2.44)
Mexico	-0.086*	(-9.68)
Guatemala	-0.080*	(-10.07)
El Salvador	-0.079*	(-11.58)
Honduras	-0.171*	(-14.47)
Nicaragua	-0.040*	(-3.65)
Costa Rica	-0.043*	(-4.10)
Panama	-0.127*	(-10.41)
Colombia	-0.062*	(-7.29)
Ecuador	-0.082*	(-5.84)
Bolivia	-0.171*	(-10.20)
Peru	-0.130*	(-12.75)
Chile	-0.039*	(-4.17)
Uruguay	-0.035*	(-3.56)
Brazil	-0.085*	(-4.39)
Venezuela	-0.099*	(-5.73)
Argentina	-0.081*	(-4.33)
Dominican Republic	-0.063*	(-7.59)
Jamaica	-0.065*	(-5.51)
Guyana	-0.036*	(-4.05)
Trinidad & Tobago	-0.066*	(-7.18)
Belize	-0.045*	(-5.28)
Suriname	-0.061*	(-7.27)
Constant	0.004	(0.33)
R-Squared	0.046	
Number of Obs.	32,220	
* p<0.05 Paraguay is the country of reference		



# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2010

Number 51

## The Impact of Religion on Party Identification in the Americas

By Alejandro Díaz-Domínguez  
[alejandro.diaz-dominguez@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:alejandro.diaz-dominguez@vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** This *Insights* report asks whether religion is related to the extent to which citizens across the Americas identify with political parties. It does so by examining three components of religious identification: *belonging*, measured by denominational affiliation; *believing*, measured by the importance of religion in one's life; and *behaving*, measured by attendance at church activities. Results show that members of the main religious groups are more likely to identify with political parties than are religious non-identifiers, but there are no significant differences between denominations. Moreover, even after taking religious affiliation into account, *believing* and *behaving* have independent effects on party identification. This indicates that religion affects politics in the Americas by helping citizens engage with party politics.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

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**D**oes religion predict whether citizens in the Americas identify with political parties? This question is not trivial given that the region contains one of the highest percentages of Catholic populations around the world, a strong Catholic Church organization, and also high rates of Church attendance among Protestant and Evangelical groups (Hagopian 2009). These factors are politically relevant, especially since several religious divisions are represented in some degree by political parties throughout the Americas (Lipset and Rokkan 1967[1990]; Mainwaring and Scully 2003).

The AmericasBarometer surveys, carried out by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)<sup>1</sup>, involved face-to-face interviews in 26 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as web surveys in the United States and Canada. This yields a total of 43,990 probabilistically selected respondents.<sup>2</sup> All respondents were asked the following question:

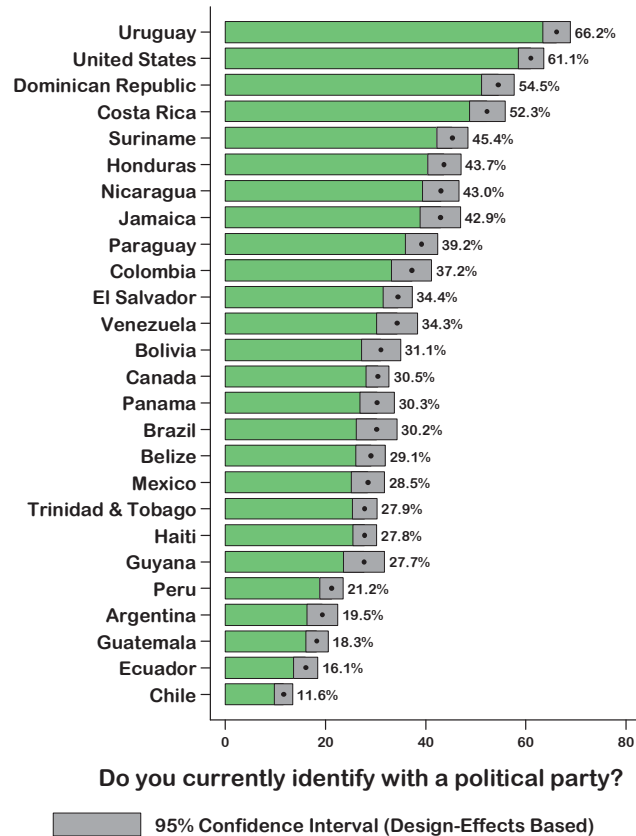
**VB10.** “Do you currently identify with a political party?”

Responses were bivariate, and recoded here so that ‘0’ indicates “No” and ‘1’ indicates “Yes.”<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 shows national percentages for the 26 countries analyzed. Uruguay is the country with the highest level of partisanship at 66.2%, while the average in the Americas is 33.1%. Twelve countries exceed this average, whereas five countries do not even reach 22%: Peru, Argentina, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Chile. In

sum, Figure 1 suggests that there is a great deal of variance in party identification across the Americas.

**Figure 1. Party Identification in the Americas, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

## How Does Religion Relate to Party Identification?

In this *Insights* report, I assess the religious bases of party identification in the Americas, considering three major components of religion: *belonging*, *believing*, and *behaving* (Layman 2001: 55). *Belonging* refers to religious group membership, *believing* speaks to the theological commitment or substantive knowledge in which

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> The non-response rate across the 26 countries was 2.31%.

people's faith lies, and *behaving* to concrete expressions of religious commitment.

Party identification has been defined as an "individual's affective orientation" to a political party (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960: 121). While the degree to which this attachment is influenced by factors aside from family socialization is debated, some scholars claim that non-partisan loyalties such as membership in religious groups increase identification with political groups. Examples include Catholics' identification with the Democratic Party in the United States and diverse religious denominations' identification with a variety of political parties across the Americas (Herberg 1955; Converse 1966; Magaloni and Moreno 2003; DeSipio 2007).

Nevertheless, *belonging* is not the only religious measure that explains political behavior; *believing* and *behaving* also explain identification with parties. Regarding *believing*, sacred texts and diverse theological messages received from religious leaders may shape partisanship when religious messages are related to current policy debates (Layman 1997). Regarding *behaving*, religious commitment, attendance of religious services, and religious group involvement also may increase party identification. Religious attendance implies that parishioners meet each other on regular basis, providing opportunities for political deliberation. This could lead to engagement in politics (Converse 1966; Wald, Owen and Hill 1988; Huckfeldt, Plutzer and Sprague 1993; Kaufmann 2004).

In sum, *belonging* has been found to be an important predictor of political behavior, and there are reasons to consider that *believing* and *behaving* are also relevant to the question of identification with political parties (Layman 1997). In short, and not surprisingly, party identification "is strongly correlated with religion" (Fiorina 1981: 254), since religion represents a way to interpret the world.

*Parishioners meet each other on regular basis, providing opportunities for political deliberation. This could lead to engagement in politics.*

## Measuring Religion and Other Determinants of Partisanship

I tap *belonging* by considering affiliation with four main groups: Catholics, Mainline Protestants, Evangelicals and other religions.<sup>4</sup> In addition, I measure *believing* using a question regarding the importance of religion in one's life (Layman 2001). Finally, to tap *behaving*, I include attendance of religious meetings such as those sponsored by religious societies and confraternities.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, I estimate an empirical model using cognitive and demographic variables. Regarding cognitive measures, some scholars argue that sophisticated citizens are less likely to be partisans, whereas their less educated fellow citizens tend to rely more on partisanship (Converse 1966; Huber, Kernell and Leoni 2005). Nevertheless, available evidence in Latin America suggests that sophistication, as measured by news media consumption, is a positive predictor of party identification (Pérez-Liñán 2002; Morgan 2007). Finally, strong identification with political and economic ideologies may increase partisanship given that differences between political parties are likely to matter more for those who are more extreme ideologically.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In the 26 countries of this study, 58.8% are Catholic, 8.28% Protestants, and 18.71% Evangelicals. The reference category is comprised of people who do not profess any religion (9.02%). The other religions category includes Latter Day Saints (1.03%), Jehovah's Witnesses (0.30%), Jews (0.19%), Eastern (3.14%), and Native religions (0.53%). For additional details regarding the classification of religious denominations, please see Number 29 of the *Insights Series*.

<sup>5</sup> In the US and Canada, respondents were not asked whether they attended religious services. The analysis here does not include this variable in order to keep these two countries in the equation. However, prior models considering only Latin America and the Caribbean suggest that weekly and monthly attendance increase partisanship.

<sup>6</sup> Political ideological intensity is measured using a 10-point scale from left to right (or from liberal to conservative) using a folded variable, in which I calculated the absolute value of the median point of scale (5.5) minus the self-reported placement, i.e.  $5.5-1=4.5$  and  $5.5-10=4.5$ . For 2 and 9

Regarding demographic factors, variables explaining party identification include gender, since women may be less partisan due to fewer socialization opportunities (Kaufmann 2004); wealth; age, since younger voters are still developing partisanship (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960); and level of education.<sup>7</sup>

## The Religious Bases of Party Identification

In order to test the relationship between religious variables and party identification in 24 countries, I use a logistic regression at the individual level with country fixed effects, while adjusting for the complex survey sample design.<sup>8</sup> The independent variables of interest are the importance of religion in one's life, attendance of religious meetings, and belonging to three major religious denominations across the Americas: Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals.

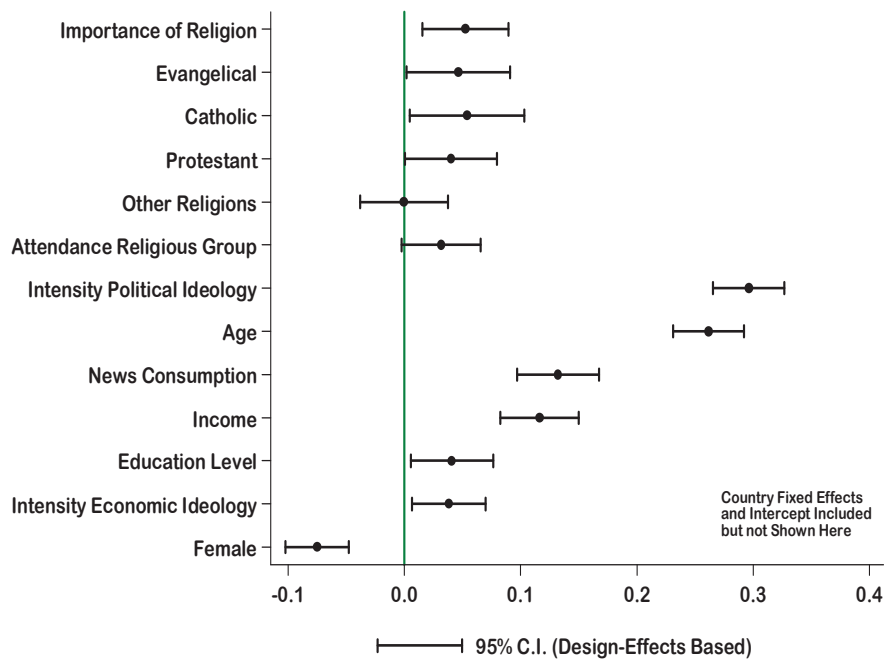
The significance of the variables in the model is graphically represented in Figure 2 (fixed country effects and intercept are excluded from the graph, but available in the report appendix).

ideological intensity is 3.5, for 3 and 8 it is 2.5, for 4 and 7 it is 1.5, and for 5 and 6 it is 0.5. Regarding intensity of economic ideology, I use nationalization versus privatization of the most important industries and enterprises of the country. The original scale runs from 1 to 7 and it was folded using 4 as median point.

<sup>7</sup> This model does not include size of the place of residence or peasant status in order to keep Canada and the US in the equation. However, prior models only considering Latin America and the Caribbean suggest that the impact of rural areas and peasants on partisanship is positive.

<sup>8</sup> This model and all the additional models mentioned in this *Insights* report exclude Haiti and Chile in order to prevent unexpected effects from earthquakes that occurred on January 12 and February 27, respectively, before the AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted.

**Figure 2. Religious Bases of Party Identification in the Americas, 2010**



Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP; 24 countries  
26,866 respondents; F=57.8; Goodness-of-fit (McFadden)=0.09

Statistical significance is captured by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical "0" line (at 0.05 or better). The dot represents the predicted impact of each variable. When it falls to the right of the vertical "0" line, it implies a positive relationship; when it falls to the left, it indicates a negative contribution.

In general, religious factors are positively related to partisanship. These factors include *belonging*, measured using three main religious groups; *believing*, measured using the importance of religion; and *behaving*, measured using attendance of religious groups.

The substantive effect of *belonging* alone is not large. However, it is important to recognize not only that religious denominations are positively related to party identification as expected, but also that *believing* and *behaving* positively predict partisanship across religious denominations.



For example, estimating the predicted probabilities from the logistic model, among Catholics with lower levels of attendance and for whom religion is less important, the probability of identifying with a political party is around 32%. Among Catholics with higher levels of attendance and for whom religion is more important, the probability of identifying with a political party is 38%. This means that the combination of the importance of religion and attendance in church groups increases party identification among Catholics by 6 percentage points.

Among Evangelicals, varying church group attendance and the importance of religion, the predicted probabilities range from 33% to 39%. Similarly, for Protestants the predicted probabilities range from 33% to 39%. In sum, lower levels of attendance of religious groups and lower levels of importance of religion are related to lower levels of partisanship across three main religious denominations.

Finally, the cognitive and demographic variables behave as expected. Intensity of political and economic ideologies, news consumption, age, income, and levels of education have a positive impact on party identification, whereas female gender has a negative impact on partisanship.<sup>9</sup>

## Political Implications

This *Insights* report shows that religious *belonging, believing, and behaving*, measured by membership in religious denominations, the importance of religion in one's life, and religious group involvement, are positive predictors of partisanship in the Americas. It does so using an empirical model which considers for the very

first time practically all of the Americas. While the analysis is constrained in its ability to demonstrate a causal connection, theory combined with the empirical evidence reported here supports the conclusion that religious affiliation, importance of religion, and religious participation increase partisanship.

High levels of partisanship are usually considered indicators of healthy democracies; however, intense partisanship during contested elections could decrease willingness to accept the final result (Medina, Ugues, Bowler and Hiskey 2010). Thus, party identification is not always a positive indicator of democratic attitudes, and religious activation of partisanship in a "culture war" over moral values could increase social divisions (Layman 1997; Hetherington 2001; Magaloni and Moreno 2003; Hagopian 2009).<sup>10</sup>

In sum, an active role of religion could activate partisanship in the Americas. Arguably, religion could also influence the ideological orientation of parishioners' party identifications,

encouraging them to identify with the left or the right wing of the political spectrum. That relationship, however, would be the topic of another *Insights* report. For now, this evidence suggests that religion influences partisanship in the Americas.

*Theory and empirical evidence support the conclusion that religious affiliation, importance of religion, and religious participation increase partisanship.*

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<sup>9</sup> I ran additional models using country level variables, such as the effective number of political parties (Laakso and Taagepera 1979) and fragmentation of the party-system (Rae and Taylor 1970) in the prior legislative election. However, only the effective number of political parties (N) came close to statistical significance ( $p > 0.11$ ; the relationship is negative).

<sup>10</sup> This model does not include measures related to moral traditionalism, such as attitudes towards gays' political rights and opinions about gay-marriage, in order to keep Canada and the US in the equation, since such questions were not asked in these countries. However, my expectation based on extant literature already discussed is that moral traditionalism would increase party identification.

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*The Impact of Religion on Party Identification in the Americas*  
Alejandro Díaz-Domínguez

**Appendix. Party Identification in the Americas, 2010**

Independent Variables	Coef.	Std.Err.	t
Importance of Religion	0.05	0.02	2.8
Evangelical	0.05	0.02	2.1
Catholic	0.05	0.02	2.1
Protestant	0.04	0.02	2.0
Other Religions	-0.0005	0.02	-0.02
Attendance to Religious Groups	0.03	0.02	1.8
Political Ideological Intensity (Left vs Right)	0.30	0.02	18.9
News Consumption	0.13	0.02	7.4
Age	0.26	0.02	16.9
Income	0.12	0.02	6.7
Education	0.04	0.02	2.3
Economic Ideological Intensity (Nationalization vs. Privatization)	0.04	0.02	2.4
Female	-0.08	0.01	-5.4
Mexico	-0.31	0.02	-14.3
Guatemala	-0.37	0.02	-16.6
El Salvador	-0.25	0.02	-14.1
Honduras	-0.17	0.02	-8.1
Nicaragua	-0.14	0.02	-6.5
Costa Rica	-0.14	0.02	-6.4
Panama	-0.29	0.02	-13.2
Colombia	-0.21	0.02	-9.2
Ecuador	-0.61	0.03	-19.6
Bolivia	-0.34	0.03	-11.0
Peru	-0.38	0.02	-17.8
Paraguay	-0.21	0.02	-9.2
Brazil	-0.33	0.03	-10.5
Venezuela	-0.25	0.03	-10.2
Argentina	-0.33	0.02	-14.5
Dominican Republic	-0.11	0.02	-5.3
Jamaica	-0.20	0.02	-8.3
Guyana	-0.34	0.03	-11.4
Trinidad and Tobago	-0.32	0.02	-14.4
Belize	-0.30	0.02	-13.0
Suriname	-0.20	0.03	-7.6
United States	-0.09	0.02	-4.9
Canada	-0.30	0.02	-17.2
Intercept	-0.61	0.02	-30.8

Source: 2010 Americas Barometer by LAPOP; 24 countries; 26,866 respondents

Goodness of fit (McFadden)= 0.09; F= 57.8; Country of reference: Uruguay.

Coefficients and standard errors were estimated based on variation between 128 primary sampling units via survey logistic regression.

# AmericasBarometer Insights: 2010

Number 52

## The Political Toll of Corruption on Presidential Approval

By Elizabeth J. Zechmeister

[liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu)

Daniel Zizumbo-Colunga

[daniel.zizumbo-colunga@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:daniel.zizumbo-colunga@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** Perceptions of corruption are high across the Americas and, generally speaking, these perceptions are negatively related to presidential approval. However, the effect of perceptions of corruption on executive evaluations is variable. Specifically, we show that perceptions of poor economic conditions exacerbate the relationship between perceptions of corruption and presidential approval. Our analysis of data from 24 countries supports the notion that the toll charged by citizens who perceive bad economic times is higher than the toll charged by citizens who perceive good times. In other words, individuals are more tolerant of perceived corruption when they believe the economy is on the right track, and less tolerant when they believe the nation is experiencing bad times.

*The Insights Series presents short reports on topics of interest to the policymaking and academic communities. The series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

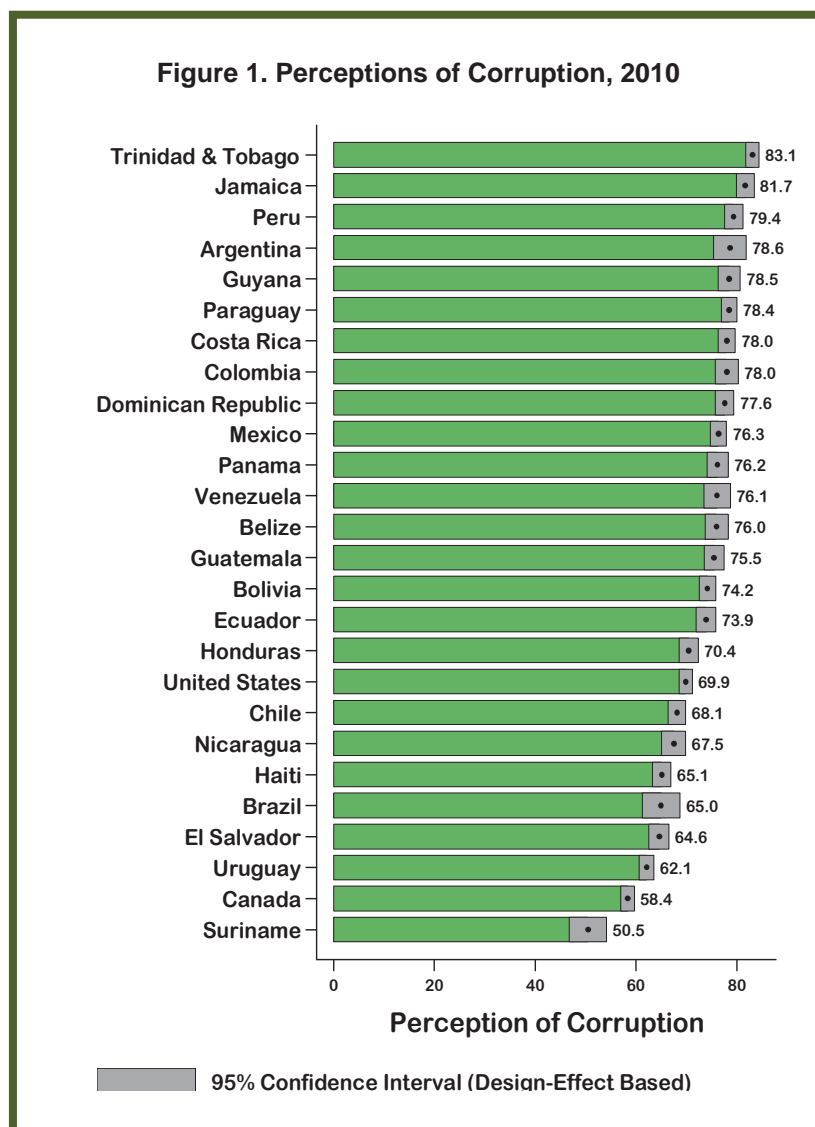
Perceptions of corruption are high across the Americas, but to what extent do individuals hold sitting executives accountable for such perceptions? In this *Insights* report, we assess the notion that perceptions of poor economic conditions exacerbate the relationship between perceptions of corruption and evaluations of government.<sup>1</sup> Consistent with an argument offered by Manzetti and Wilson (2006), we show that individuals are less tolerant of corruption when they believe that poor economic conditions prevail. Specifically, when the economy is perceived in a poor light, perceptions of political corruption have a stronger effect on executive job approval compared to when times are perceived to be good.<sup>2</sup>

The data for this report come from the AmericasBarometer 2010 survey, in which 43,990 respondents from 26 countries were asked the following question:

EXC7. “Taking into account your own experience or what you have heard, corruption among public officials is: (1) very common; (2) common; (3) uncommon; or (4) very uncommon?”<sup>3</sup>

The variable was recoded on a 0-100 scale, on which higher values indicate greater perceptions of corruption.

Figure 1 shows perceptions of corruption across the Americas are relatively high, though mean levels vary across countries. Perceptions of political corruption are highest in Trinidad &



Tobago and Jamaica, and lowest in Uruguay, Canada, and Suriname. If we control for standard demographic and socio-economic factors, the relative ranking of the countries remains similar to that shown here.<sup>4</sup> The relatively high overall levels lead us to consider their political relevance. In particular, what effect do perceptions of corruption have on evaluations of the president?

### Perceptions of Corruption, the Economy, and Presidential Approval

Under the assumptions of “accountability representation,” the mass public generally

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the Insight series can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/surveydata.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> Non-response (taking into account design effects) to this question is 4.71% across the sample as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> The appendix contains results showing how these controls affect the rankings.

holds elected officials responsible for prevailing conditions (Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). In classic terms, individuals are “rational gods of vengeance and reward” who punish politicians for negative output (Key 1966). Corruption implies financial and social costs, by creating economic inefficiencies and undermining the rule of law. It is logical then that scholars have found links between corruption and political trust and support (e.g., Morris and Klesner 2010; Seligson 2002). Given the visibility and authority of the executive office within governments across the Americas, we would expect perceptions of corruption to have a strong, direct effect on executive job approval.

Manzetti and Wilson (2006) have offered an insightful extension to this perspective, arguing that the relationship between perceptions of corruption and evaluations of government is conditional on economic conditions. When economic conditions are poor, individuals ought to be particularly intolerant of corruption. Financial distress may create a sharp contrast between one’s own situation and perceived government largesse; it might also leave individuals feeling the system can ill-afford the financial costs of corruption. Under these conditions, then, there should exist a clear negative relationship between perceptions of corruption and presidential approval. However, under conditions of relative prosperity, individuals may be more willing to tolerate corruption among elected officials. In short, if we are to understand the relationship between perceptions of corruption and government evaluations, we must take into account the economy.

Manzetti and Wilson (2006) tested and found evidence for an interactive relationship among perceptions of corruption, household economic assessments, and trust in government in Argentina in 1995. We extend this work in several ways. In particular, we focus on

relationships among perceptions of national economic conditions, perceptions of corruption, and executive job approval. Moreover, we test the extent to which the argument holds, generally speaking, across Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>5</sup>

The outcome variable we seek to explain is presidential approval. This variable is based on an AmericasBarometer survey question that asks individuals to rate the performance of the sitting executive on a five-point scale, which we convert to run from 0-100, where higher values indicate better evaluations.<sup>6</sup>

*Financial distress may leave citizens feeling the system can ill-afford the financial costs of corruption.*

While research on economic voting is abundant and has moved to address very refined questions, most scholars agree that economic evaluations matter (see

Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2008; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999, among others). In order to assess the effect of economic evaluations, we include an index of the respondent’s perception of the national economy (see Kinder and Kiewiet 1979 about the relevance of the measurement of evaluations of the national economy). The index was created by averaging respondents’ retrospective, current and prospective perceptions of the national economic situation.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> We omit the U.S. and Canada from the analyses presented here, though the general relationships remain similar if they are included (but we lose at least one control variable not present in the U.S. and Canada datasets).

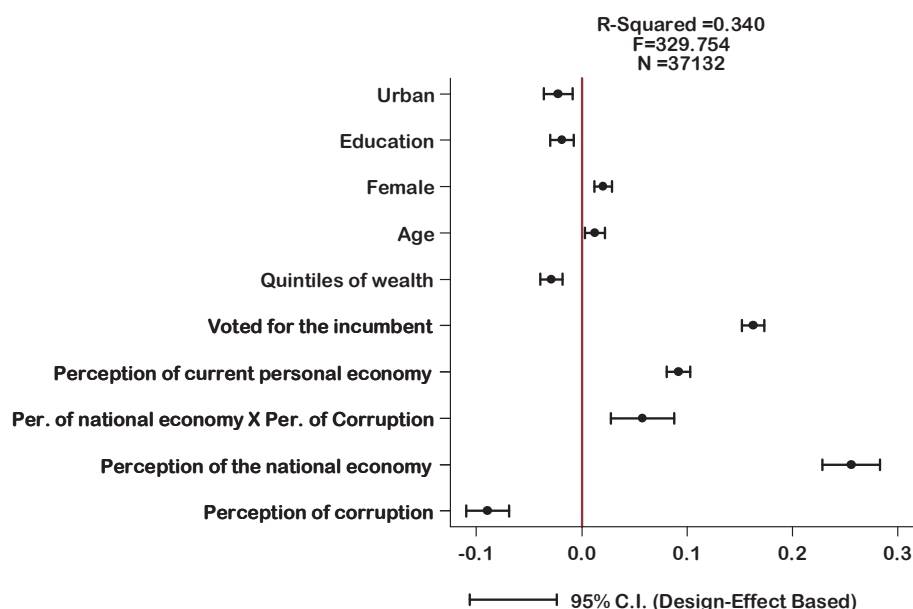
<sup>6</sup> M1. “Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of (Name of the President/Majority party in parliamentary countries)?” Non-response to this question is 3% across the sample as a whole, taking into account design effects.

<sup>7</sup> These variables are SOCT1, SOCT2, and SOCT3 ( $\alpha=.62$ ); the appendix contains the question wording. Each of the questions that compose the index was recoded on a 0 to 100 scale so that the final index runs from 0 to 100, where higher scores reflect better perceptions of the national economic circumstances.

In order to assess the extent to which the perception of “bad times” might condition corruption’s toll on executive approval, we created an interaction term by multiplying the economic evaluations index by our measure of perceptions of corruption.<sup>8</sup>

We further control for the following basic socio-economic and demographic measures: age; education; gender; urban versus rural area; and the respondent’s quintile of wealth.<sup>9</sup> As additional controls, we include evaluations of one’s personal economic situation, and having voted for the incumbent.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2. Determinants of Presidential Approval in the Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010 (Weighted Standardized Coefficients)**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

## Results

We assess the ability of the above-noted variables to predict presidential approval by way of OLS regression analysis.<sup>11</sup> Figure 2 shows the standardized coefficients for each of the independent variables.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Non-response to this question (taking into account design effects) is 0.7% across the sample as a whole. Even though a directional effect from perceptions of corruption to perceptions of the economy is possible, both variables are correlated only at a minor level (-.10); while, regardless, specifying this relation might increase the fit of the model, it is unlikely that its absence will bias the parameters in which we are interested.

<sup>9</sup> For more on this measure see Córdova 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Results are robust to the inclusion of political ideology.

<sup>11</sup> We present OLS results for ease of interpretation; however results are the same if we use ordered logistic regression.

<sup>12</sup> Country fixed effects were included but are not shown in the figure to economize on space. Per the LAPOP and *Insights* series standard, the dots in Figure 2 indicate standardized regression coefficients and the horizontal lines extending from them indicate confidence intervals, so that if the line crosses the vertical 0 line, the result cannot

As can be seen in the figure, males and people living in urban areas show, on average, less satisfaction with the executive, holding other factors constant. Additionally, all else equal, younger and wealthier individuals are less approving of the president. People who voted for the incumbent in the previous election have higher presidential approval.

Perceptions of one’s current personal economic situation are positively associated with approval of the current executive. And, positive perceptions of the national economy and a low perception of corruption are strong predictors of higher presidential approval.

Importantly, we find that, as expected and in agreement with Manzetti and Wilson’s

be considered statistically significant (distinguishable from 0). Dots that fall to the right depict a negative relationship between the independent and the dependent variable, and the converse for dots that fall to the left.



argument, there is a significant interaction between perceptions of corruption and perceptions of the national economy. This means that neither coefficient should be interpreted entirely in isolation.

Figure 3 shows the varying magnitude of the “toll of corruption” (i.e., the effect of perceptions of corruption on presidential approval) at different levels of national economic perceptions. As can be seen, when respondents perceive that the national economy is fantastic (when people think that the economy is very good, is better than in the past and will be even better in the future) the toll taken by corruption is nil. In short, under conditions of perceived prosperity, individuals do not punish the executive for perceived corruption in the government.

past and will be even worse in the future), the toll of corruption increases significantly.<sup>13</sup>

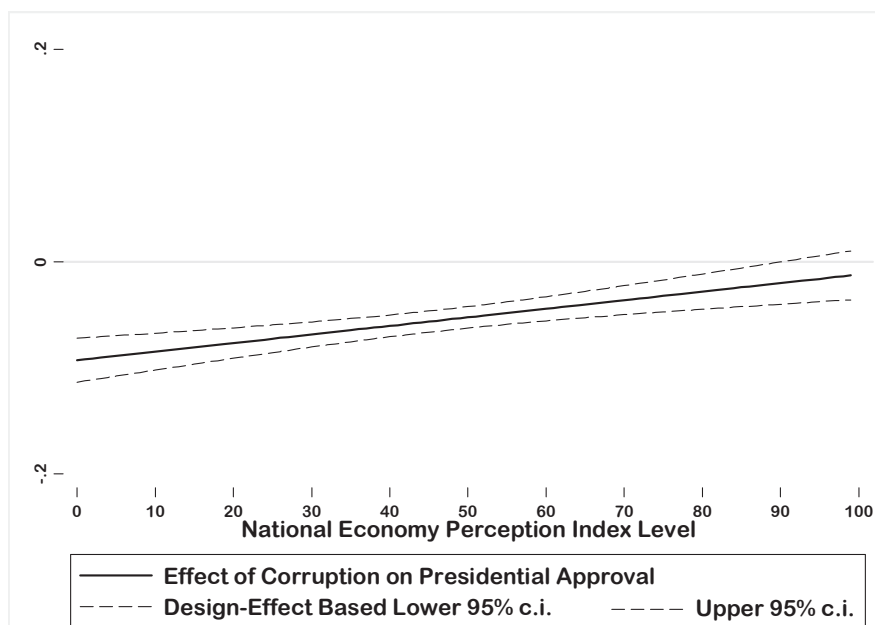
For example, when people score above 95 on our index of perceptions of the national economy, there is no significant corruption toll (i.e., an increase in perceptions of corruption is not associated with a significant decrease in the president’s rating).

When people are moderately optimistic about the economy (i.e., they score 75 on our index of index of perceptions of the national economy), a standard deviation increase in perception of corruption is associated with a 0.88 unit decrease in presidential approval.

Strongly negative perceptions of the national economy increase the toll of corruption substantively. That is, under extremely negative perceptions of the national economy (i.e., a 10 on our index), a standard deviation increase in perceptions of corruption is associated with a 2.14 unit decrease in presidential approval.

To further illustrate the implications of the interactive relationship, Table 1 shows predicted values for presidential approval at varying levels on the perceptions of corruption measure and the national economic evaluation index. The table allows us to consider and contrast the following scenarios. First, holding all other

**Figure 3. Marginal Effects of Corruption on Presidential Approval at Different Levels of Evaluations of the National Economy, 2010**



However, when people perceive bad or outright catastrophic times (i.e., they think that the economy is very bad, is worse than in the

<sup>13</sup> Even though the relationship between national economic perceptions and presidential approval is always positive and strong, it becomes even stronger when people also perceive high levels of corruption.

variables at their mean levels,<sup>14</sup> when perceptions of the economy are at their highest<sup>15</sup> and perceptions of corruption are at their lowest, our model predicts a presidential approval rating of 70.40; and, when perceptions of the economy still are at their peak but corruption is perceived to rampant (highest value), our model predicts a presidential approval rating of 69.02 (a difference of only 1.68 points).

Second, when both economic assessments and corruption perceptions are at their lowest levels,<sup>16</sup> our model predicts a presidential approval rating of 44.26. Holding economic assessments at their lowest and changing perceptions of corruption to take on the highest possible value, our model predicts a presidential approval of 36.16 (a drop of 8.1 points).<sup>17</sup> In short, under conditions in which people perceive very negative economic performance, evaluations in general are low; but, more importantly for us, it is under these circumstances that we find perceptions of corruption taking a significant toll on presidential approval.

**Table 1. Predicted Values for Presidential Approval, Varying Perceptions of Corruption and the Economy**

		Perceptions of Corruption	
		Lowest	Highest
Economic Evaluations	Lowest	44.26	36.16
	Highest	70.40	69.03

<sup>14</sup>Categorical variables are held at the modal value.

<sup>15</sup> This however, is rare, representing only 4.64% of the sample.

<sup>16</sup> This represents less than 1% of the sample.

<sup>17</sup>Predicted values take into account country specific effects by weighting each country effect by the proportion of people from that country in the sample used to estimate the parameters.

## Conclusion

Our results confirm that, generally speaking, across the Americas the toll that corruption takes on the executive's popularity is exacerbated by bad economic times and, alternatively, ameliorated by good economic times. The evidence, in short, supports ideas offered by Manzetti and Wilson (2006) regarding this conditioning relationship but, at the same time, extends their argument to a different dependent variable – presidential approval – and tests it in the current time period with a larger sample of countries.

*Corruption might be considered inconsequential during perceived prosperous times, but, in the midst of threatening economic times, will be more severely punished.*

These findings are consistent with the notion of “accountability representation,” to the extent that perceptions of bad times affect individuals and motivate them to express disapproval of government. At the same time, though, they

suggest a more complex logic under which corruption might be considered inconsequential, tolerated, or even regarded as “normal” when people perceive extraordinarily prosperous times, but, in the midst of threatening economic times, will be more severely punished.

We must recognize that perceptions of corruption may vary significantly from experience with corruption and, likewise, the same may be true for economic factors. In both cases, one's assessments of these performance factors may reflect more general feelings about the country, government, and politicians. While we find evidence here of the expected relationships, an obvious next step (and one we hope to document in a future report) is to examine relationships among experiences with corruption victimization, objective economic conditions (e.g., growth in GDP), and presidential approval. If our intuition (supported by the analyses here) is correct, we

will find a similar conditioning relationship among these variables such that individuals are more tolerant of corruption victimization under prosperous economic conditions than they are under economic decline.

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## Appendix

**Table A1. Ranking of Mean Corruption Perceptions and Presidential Approval Controlling for Main Socioeconomic Variables**

Presidential approval	Corruption		
Ranking	Ranking	Ranking with Controls	
24	1	1	Trinidad y Tobago
25	2	2	Jamaica
11	7	3	Costa Rica
13	5	4	Guyana
6	6	5	Paraguay
12	9	6	Rep. Dom.
21	3	7	Peru
23	4	8	Argentina
3	8	9	Colombia
22	13	10	Belize
7	11	11	Panamá
14	10	12	México
16	12	13	Venezuela
17	14	14	Guatemala
8	16	15	Ecuador
9	15	16	Bolivia
5	17	17	Honduras
15	20	18	Nicaragua
19	18	19	United States
10	19	20	Chile
2	22	21	Brazil
26	21	22	Haiti
4	23	23	El Salvador
1	24	24	Uruguay
18	25	25	Canada
20	26	26	Suriname

**Table A2. Wording of the questions that compose the National Economy Perception Index**

SOCT1.	How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? (1) Very good (2) Good (3) Neither good nor bad (fair) (4) Bad (5) Very bad
SOCT2.	Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago? (1) Better (2) Same (3) Worse
SOCT3.	Do you think that in 12 months the economic situation of the country will be better, the same or worse than it is now? (1) Better (2) Same (3) Worse



**Table A3. Ordinary Least Squares model of the main determinants of presidential approval (Design Effect Adjusted)<sup>18</sup>**

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Perception of corruption	-0.080**	0.009
National Economy		
Perceptions Index	0.261**	0.0142
Corruption X NEPI	0.0006**	0.0001
Evaluation of current		
personal economy	.112**	0.007
Partisan	9.05**	0.305
Wealth Quintiles	-0.525**	0.098
Age	0.209 **	0.080
Female	1.069 **	0.222
Education	-.112**	.034
Urban Area	-1.194**	0.370
Constant	44.59**	1.15
<i>Number of Observations</i>	37132	
<i>R-squared</i>	0.34	
<i>F</i>	329.75	

Note: Coefficients from weighted linear regression are significant at \*p < .05; \*\* p < .01.

<sup>18</sup> Country fixed effects included but not shown, available upon request to the authors.

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2010

## Number 53

### The 2010 AmericasBarometer

By Mitchell A. Seligson

[Mitchell.seligson@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Mitchell.seligson@vanderbilt.edu)

and

Elizabeth J. Zechmeister

[Liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

On December 1, 2010, the latest round of the AmericasBarometer survey by LAPOP will be made available to the public. This round represents our largest regional survey of the Americas to date, with 26 countries included in the wave for a total of 43,990 interviews. While the surveys contain a multitude of questions on democratic attitudes, values, and experiences, a central theme of the 2010 AmericasBarometer is economic crisis. The purpose of this Insights report is to announce the completion of the 2010 round, show how the economic crisis was perceived in the Americas, and describe the process underlying the development, implementation, and dissemination of LAPOP's 2010 AmericasBarometer survey.

*The Insights Series presents short reports on topics of interest to the policymaking and academic communities. The series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

The 2010 AmericasBarometer survey took place in the context of the greatest global economic crisis in the past 80 years. In order to look at the implications of this crisis for the people in the region, the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) made it a central theme of the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer series. The purpose of this *Insights* report is to announce the completion of the 2010 round, provide information as to how the economic crisis was perceived in the Americas, and describe the process underlying the development and implementation of the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey.<sup>1</sup>

The 2010 AmericasBarometer represents the largest survey of democratic values ever undertaken in the Americas. In 2010, we conducted nationally representative surveys of voting age adults in 26 countries in the Americas, including every independent country in mainland North, Central and South America, and all of the larger (and some of the smaller) countries in the Caribbean, with the exception of Cuba. With a typical sample size of at least 1,500 individuals, but in some countries far larger, the 2010 round yielded a total of 43,990 interviews.

### Economic Crisis as a Major Theme

Economic crisis resulted in decreased global GDP growth estimated (e.g., by the IMF) at negative 1.4 percent in 2009. While some countries were able to sustain growth, others, such as Mexico, were seriously affected. Moreover, while in many countries the economy was exhibiting signs of economic recovery by the time the 2010 round of surveys began, the direct and secondary effects of the crisis were still being suffered by many people in the region.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* Series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>

<sup>2</sup> Between 2008-2009, seven Latin American countries maintained positive growth: Colombia (0.4%); Argentina (0.9%); Peru (0.9%); Panama (2.4%); Haiti (2.9%); Uruguay (2.9%); Bolivia (3.5%); and, the Dominican Republic (3.5%).

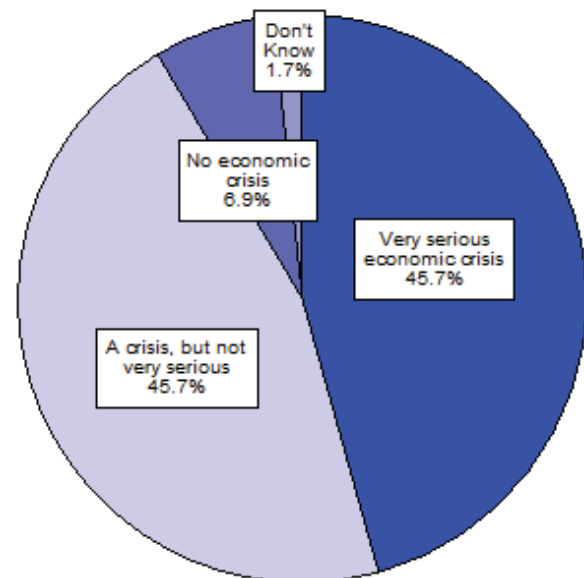
To examine the impact of the crisis, LAPOP fielded both new survey items and standard core questions on economic assessments and experiences. The result is a lengthy battery of items scholars may use to answer important questions about the impact of the economic crisis on public opinion in the Americas.

Two new questions, asked as a sequence, focused specifically on assessments of the crisis. First, respondents were asked if they perceived an economic crisis<sup>3</sup>:

**CRISIS1.** Some say that our country is suffering a very serious economic crisis, others say that we are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, while others say that there isn't any economic crisis. What do you think?

Figure 1 shows the percentages of the entire sample selecting each response. Considering the Americas as a whole, the data reveal that the majority of citizens in the Americas perceived an economic crisis in 2010, be it serious or not very serious. Generally speaking,

**Figure 1. Is There an Economic Crisis? Responses across the Americas**



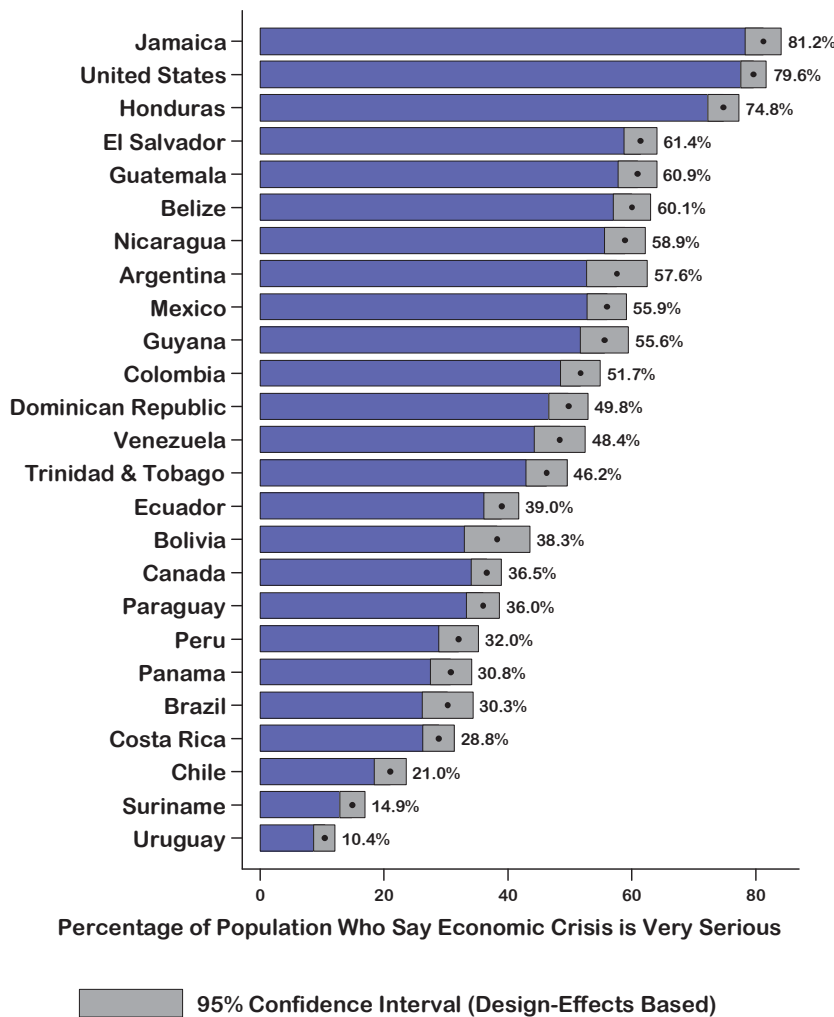
**Perception of Magnitude of Economic Crisis**

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

The Mexican economy fell from a growth rate of 3.3% in 2007 to -7.1% in 2009 (Izquierdo and Talvi, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> The question was not asked in Haiti. Item non-response averaged 1.8% across the countries in which it was asked.

**Figure 2. Perception that the Economic Crisis is Severe**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

respondents in the Americas were equally distributed between those perceiving the crisis as severe (45.7%) and those saying that it was moderate (45.7%).

When we examine the data at the country level, we find significant differences, suggesting that the impact of the crisis indeed varies across countries. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents in each country (Haiti excepted) included in the 2010 AmericasBarometer who perceive a *severe* economic crisis. In some countries, the vast majority of respondents perceive a severe crisis; at the top are Jamaica, the U.S., and Honduras. In other countries,

very few people perceive a severe crisis, for example in Chile, Suriname, and Uruguay.

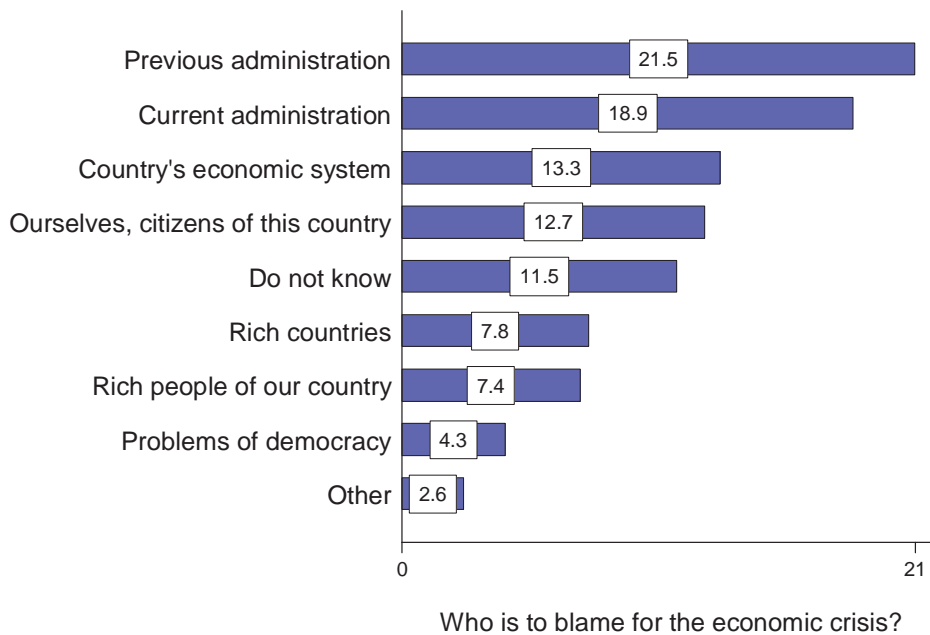
The political significance of economic development and crises has long-occupied the attention of scholars of comparative politics (e.g., Przeworski et al. 1996, Bermeo 2003). To begin to tap political attitudes related to the crisis, we asked those who thought that there was a crisis whom they blamed for it. This question was worded as follows:

**CRISIS2.** Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country from among the following? [see Figure 3 for options that were provided]

As Figure 3 shows, the majority of citizens who perceive a crisis in the Americas blame either their current or previous administrations for it. Fewer than 10 percent of Latin American and Caribbean residents who perceive a crisis blame the “rich countries.” This is surprising given media attention to the role played by the financial systems of the United States and other

advanced industrialized nations in the worldwide financial collapse. It is even more surprising when one considers the United States’ history of economic influence within Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as opposition historically expressed toward this influence among important segments of Latin American intellectuals and elites.

**Figure 3. Attributions of Blame for the Crisis in the Americas, Among Those Perceiving a Crisis**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

## The 2010 AmericasBarometer Survey

### *Making Our Results Accessible*

Above we have reported findings from just two of hundreds of variables available for one or more countries within the 2010 AmericasBarometer dataset. As data have rolled in from across the region, the LAPOP team has been busy conducting analyses. We have made research findings from 2010 available in a number of formats, all of which can be found on our website, [www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org). These include

- Our just-published report, *The Political Culture of Democracy, 2010: Democratic Consolidation in the Americas During Hard Times*, describing economic experiences and perceptions, democratic attitudes and behaviors, and the relationship between these across the Americas.

- Longer reports focused on these and other topics within a given country. Many country reports are online now, and others will be added in the coming months.
- This *Insights* series, which provides a biweekly glimpse at the richness of the data and the diversity of research questions one can tackle with them.

But even these reports barely begin to touch the many research questions the 2010 data

can address. The 2010 data will constitute a major resource for researchers throughout the scholarly and policymaking communities in the coming years. On our website we offer an online data analysis feature that allows researchers to run on-the-fly analyses of the entire database ranging from simple frequency distributions and cross-tabs to multivariate regression models. The underlying microdata are made available to individual and institutional subscribers (see our website for information as to how to subscribe). Moreover, citizens of any of the countries surveyed may immediately request the data from their own countries at no cost.

### *Development and Implementation of the Survey*

The release of the 2010 AmericasBarometer 2010 data on December 1, 2010 represents the culmination of a multi-year process. Building on prior waves, planning for the 2010 round began in January 2009 with a workshop



(sponsored by a generous grant from the Inter-American Development Bank), which allowed us to bring together leading scholars from around the globe in order to consider how the sharp economic downturn might influence democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. The LAPOP Central Team carefully considered proposals for new questions suggested at this conference and also sought input from its country teams and the donor community. The initial draft questionnaire was prepared in early 2009 and we then began the arduous task of determining which items from prior AmericasBarometer surveys would be cut and which new items would take their place. In addition to distributing the draft questionnaire to our country teams and donor organizations, we built a Wiki on which we placed the draft so that all could make comments and suggestions.

We then began pretesting the instrument, first on the Vanderbilt campus, then in the local Hispanic community, and, once we had items that seemed to be working well, in countries throughout the hemisphere. Very slowly, over a period of months spent testing and retesting, we refined the survey by improving some items and dropping modules that were just not working. We sent repeated versions to our country teams and received invaluable input. In the end, the questionnaire was subject to hundreds of revisions, some major, most minor. The core items used in prior years, however, remained the same so that cross-time comparisons could be made. In November 2009, with the generous support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), we brought together all of our country teams and several members of the donor community to San Salvador, El Salvador in order to agree upon the final core questionnaire and plan for the survey's implementation.

*Questionnaires and information  
on how to access or obtain the  
data are available on our website  
([www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org))*

A common sample design has been crucial for the success of this comparative effort. We used a common design for the construction of a multi-staged, stratified probabilistic sample (with household level quotas<sup>4</sup>) of approximately 1,500 individuals per country.<sup>5</sup> Detailed descriptions of the sample are contained in the appendices of each country report and on our website.

A concern from the outset was minimization of error and maximization of the quality of the database. We did this in several ways. First, we agreed on a common coding scheme for all of the closed-ended questions. Second, data files were entered in their respective countries, and verified (i.e., double entered), after which the files were sent to LAPOP at Vanderbilt for review and audit. Third, in the 2010 round we were able to expand the use of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to collect data in 17 of the countries, and we added the Windows Mobile platform for handheld computers. Our partners at the Universidad de Costa Rica developed and enhanced the program, EQCollector, and formatted it for use in the 2010 round of surveys. We have found this method of recording the survey responses extremely efficient, resulting in higher quality data with fewer errors than with the paper-and-pencil method. The PDAs have another practical advantage: interviewers can switch languages used in the questionnaires even mid-question in linguistically diverse countries.

## Conclusion

The data presented here only scratch the surface with respect to the numerous questions

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<sup>4</sup> Except in the case of Ecuador and Chile, where probabilistic selection at the household level was carried out.

<sup>5</sup> With the exception in 2010 of larger samples in Bolivia (N=3,018), Brazil (N = 2,482), Chile (N = 1,965) Ecuador (N=3,000), and Haiti (1,752).

asked in the 2010 wave of the AmericasBarometer survey. The questionnaires used and information on how to access or obtain the data are available on our website.

Funding for the 2010 round came from our core donors, especially the United States Agency for International Development. Important additional sources of support also included, but were not limited to, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United States National Science Foundation (NSF), the Swedish Development Corporation (SIDA), and Vanderbilt University. We also collaborated with and received support from a number of other academic and non-governmental institutions across the Americas. We are especially grateful to Princeton University, the Université Laval and York University (Canada) as well as the Kellogg Institute of Notre Dame University. We are grateful to the individual people involved in this effort to develop and implement the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer and the thousands of citizens of the Americas who responded to our survey. In addition to financial support, an extensive network of individuals at Vanderbilt and across the Americas put countless hours of human capital into the project.

We embarked on the 2010 AmericasBarometer in the hope that the results would be of interest to and of policy relevance for citizens, NGOs, academics, governments, and the international donor community. We are confident that the study can not only help individuals and agencies actively promote democratization, but that it will also serve the academic community, which has been engaged in a quest to determine which values and behaviors are the ones most likely to promote stable democracy.

More information on the AmericasBarometer and LAPOP can be found on our newly-redesigned website: [www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org) (also [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop)).

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# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

## Number 54

### What Determines Trust in the Supreme Court in Latin America and the Caribbean?

*By Arturo Maldonado*  
[arturo.maldonado@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:arturo.maldonado@vanderbilt.edu)  
*Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** This *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* report examines the determinants of trust in the Supreme Court in Latin America and the Caribbean. The results show that trust in the Court is strongly related to the performance of the president. This close relationship suggests that individuals do not perceive the judicial and executive branches as entirely independent. Further, I find that citizens' economic evaluations are positively related to trust in the Court. Finally, negative experiences with crime and corruption erode trust in the Supreme Court.

*The Insights Series presents short reports on topics of interest to the policymaking and academic communities. The series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

How much do people trust the Supreme Court across the Americas? As the most prominent institution within the judicial branch, the Court can play an important role in issues of law and rights that affect the lives of individual citizens. Yet, the study of Latin American and Caribbean public opinion toward the courts is a relatively neglected research area. Drawing on the comparatively large body of research focused on the U.S. context<sup>1</sup>, I propose that trust in the Supreme Court ought to be related to evaluations of the executive, economic assessments, and experiences with crime and corruption. As I will show, each of these factors predicts trust in the Supreme Court in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Thus, this report in the *AmericasBarometer Insights Series* compares public trust in the Supreme Court<sup>2</sup> across the Americas, and then examines the roles of socio-economic, demographic, and other variables in explaining this attitude.<sup>3</sup> Data come from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).<sup>4</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Research focused on the U.S. case discusses, for instance, how the Supreme Court affects public opinion (Caldeira 1986; Flemming, et. al. 1997; Hoekstra and Segal 1996; Johnson and Martin 1998) and how the public shapes the Court's decisions (Mishler and Sheenan 1993; Norpoth and Segal 1994; McGuire and Stimson 2004). With respect to Latin America, scholars have focused on the independence of the judicial sector (Verner 1984; Larkins 1996) and judicial reform (Dakolias 1996; Domingo 1999).

<sup>2</sup> I will use Supreme Court as a general name for the higher institution within the judicial branch, knowing that this institution has other names in some countries, such as High Court in Guyana or Federal Supreme Court in Brazil. In some countries, like Peru and to some extent Chile, the constitutional court is a separate and autonomous institution, whereas in the rest of Latin America, it is part of the Supreme Court (Navia and Rios-Figueroa 2005). For details see:

<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Comp/Judicial/Suprema/suprema.html>

<sup>3</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>.

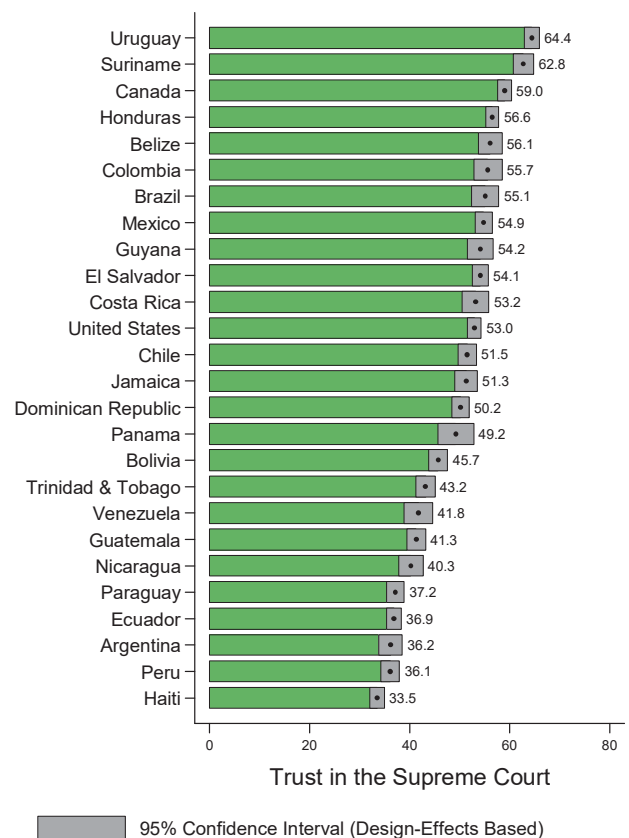
<sup>4</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

this round a total of 43,990 persons were asked the following question on a scale from 1 to 7, where "1" represents "Not at all" and "7" "A lot." This variable was later recalibrated on a 0-100 scale.

**B31.** To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court?<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 presents mean levels of trust in each country. Uruguay and Suriname are at the top of this comparative ranking, while Haiti, Peru and Argentina are at the bottom. The figure shows great variation in mean levels of trust in the Supreme Court across countries. The difference between the country at the top (Uruguay) and the country at the bottom (Haiti) is 31 points. Considering all 26

**Figure 1. Trust in the Supreme Court, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

<sup>5</sup> Non-response was 5.12% for this question across the sample as a whole.

countries, 15 have average levels of trust that exceed 50 points; in other words the average citizen in these countries is positively disposed toward trusting this institution. Interestingly, Costa Rica, the United States, and Chile are located in the middle of the ranking, around the 50-point position on the scale, whereas by other measures these judicial branches are considered the best developed in the region (Verner, 1984).

To what extent are individuals' attitudes toward the Supreme Court explained by their characteristics, evaluations, and experiences? The next sections take up this question.

## Trust in the Supreme Court by Socio-Demographic Groups

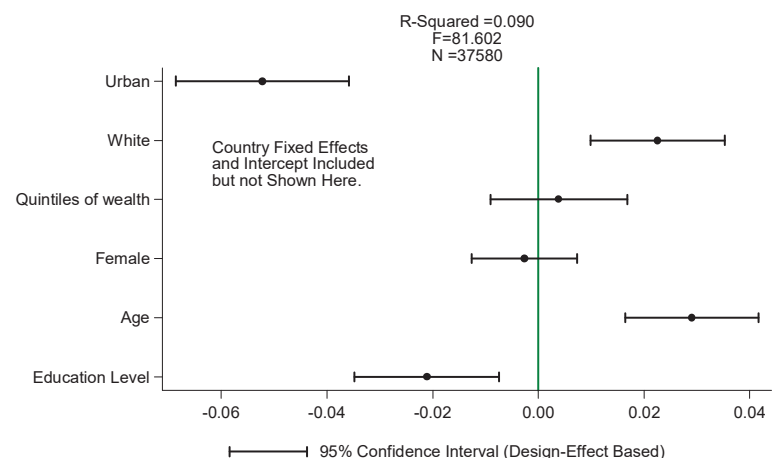
I first test the explanatory power of selected socio-economic and demographic variables in predicting trust in the Supreme Court in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>6</sup> I consider the following variables: education, age (coded in number of years), gender, wealth, racial self-identification, and urban/rural residence. All variables are standardized for ease of comparison. Dots represent the estimated effect of each variable, while the horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals for those effects. We can be at least 95% confident that a given effect is statistically significant if its confidence interval does not cross the vertical axis at 0. Effects to the left of the vertical axis are negative; ones to the right are positive.

Figure 2 shows the results for a linear regression model that examines the relationship between these factors and trust in

the Supreme Court. The results indicate that four out of the six variables included are statistically significant. Specifically, the less educated, the older, those who self-identify as white, and urban dwellers have more trust in the Supreme Court. Conversely, there is no significant difference between men and women in their trust in the judicial branch, and there is also no significant effect detected for the quintiles of wealth indicator.

Socio-economic and demographic variables explain some, but far from all of the variation in trust in the Supreme Court. Thus, in the next section I add to this model by considering the predictive power of individuals' evaluations and experiences.

**Figure 2. The Impacts of Demographic Factors on Trust in the Supreme Court, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

## Predicting Trust in the Supreme Court with Political Evaluations, Economic Assessments, and Experiences with Crime and Corruption

Among a variety of factors that have been identified as potentially important for

<sup>6</sup> I exclude the USA and Canada, because some of these questions were not asked in these countries, and because the focus of this report is on Latin America and the Caribbean.



predicting trust in the Supreme Court in the U.S. I selected the following: presidential popularity, economic performance, and experiences related to security. Given the dominance of the executive and the salience of economic and security issues in many countries, I consider these as likely predictors of trust in the court. Below I justify and describe the independent variables used to assess these relationships.

With respect to presidential popularity, as research on the independence of the Supreme Court in Latin America indicates, this institution is traditionally subordinate to the executive in some countries (Verner, 1984; Navia and Ríos-Figueroa, 2005). As such, the courts are seen as part of the ruling coalition, and support for these institutions may move hand-in-hand (Caldeira 1986, p. 1214). To assess this possibility, I include a measure of presidential approval.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to economic conditions, while the “court has no direct impact on economic evaluations” (Caldeira 1986, p. 1214), bad economic times could affect support for this institution. I test this hypothesis at the micro level using perceptions of the personal economic situation<sup>8</sup> and of the national economic situation.<sup>9</sup> Higher values on these

variables indicate better perceptions of the economic situation.

With respect to security experiences, I examine indicators related to both crime and corruption. Negative experiences in these realms may indicate failures within the judicial branch (see, e.g., Caldeira 1986, p. 1216). Thus, I hypothesize that being victimized by crime<sup>10</sup> and corruption<sup>11</sup> will be associated with lower levels of trust in the Supreme Court.

Do characteristics of judiciaries themselves affect support for these institutions? One may suspect that country-level factors such as Supreme Courts’ independence, autonomy, and visibility all help to explain variation among countries in support. As a preliminary step to assess such institutional explanations, I include dummy variables for each country. These country fixed effects are not shown in the figure for the sake of presentation.

Figure 3 presents the results of the new analysis. In the first place, the results show that presidential approval has the largest effect on judicial trust among this set of variables. Thus, it appears that in Latin America and the Caribbean, support for the executive and for the Court do indeed move in tandem. The substantive effect is overwhelmingly strong in comparison to the other variables.

I also find that evaluations of one’s personal economic situation and the national economic situation are significant, and in the expected direction. Those who perceive these economic situations poorly express lower trust in the Court. Finally, the results suggest that victimization by crime and corruption erodes

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<sup>7</sup> M1: “Speaking in general, of the current administration/government, how would you rate the job performance of (Name of the president/Majority party in parliamentary countries)?” While differences exist across system types, this question taps approval of the sitting administration in both presidential and parliamentary systems.

<sup>8</sup> This variable is an index created from IDIO1 and IDIO2 ( $\alpha=0.46$ ). These variables gauge the retrospective and the current evaluation of the personal economic situation, and they were recoded on a 0-100 scale so that the final index also runs along this interval. I also ran a regression with each of these variables independently and the results are similar.

<sup>9</sup> This variable is an index created from SOCT1 and SOCT2. These variables also tap the retrospective and current evaluation of the national economic situation, and they were recoded in the same way as the previous index. I also ran a regression with each of these variables independently and found similar results.

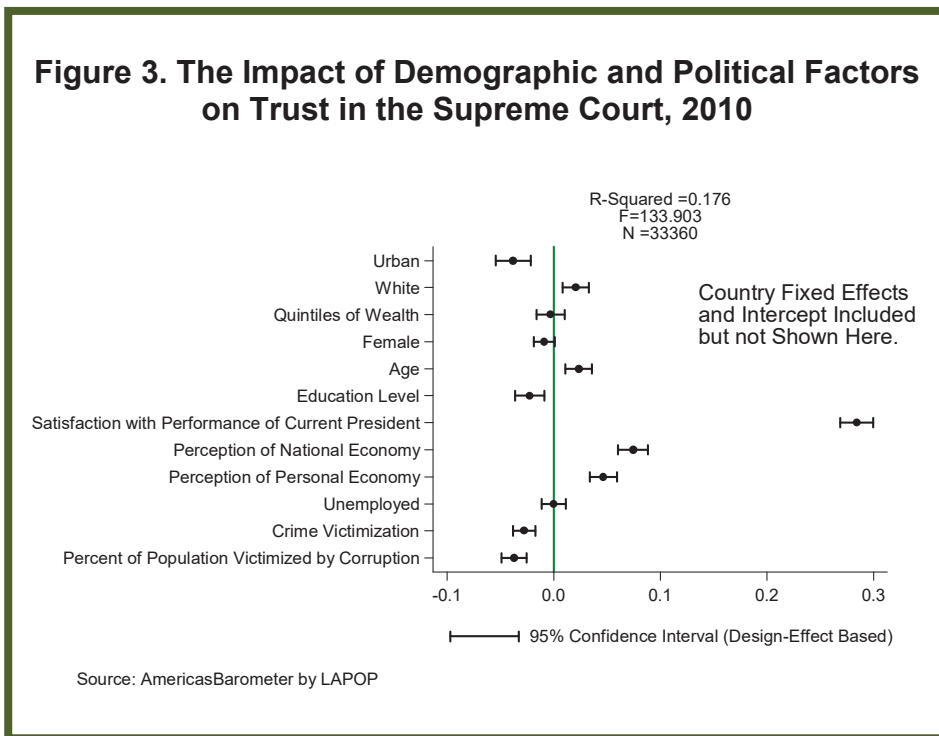
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<sup>10</sup> VIC1: Have you been victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? This question was recalibrated on a 0-100 scale.

<sup>11</sup> Corruption is measured through a dichotomous variable that gauges whether respondents have been victimized by corruption at least once and is based on a series of questions asking whether the respondent has been asked for bribes in a number of public settings.

## Discussion

As mentioned at the beginning, public opinion toward Latin American and Caribbean courts is a relatively neglected research area, but also a fertile one. Scholars have mostly focused their attention on levels of judicial autonomy with respect to the executive within this region. This *Insights report* shows that people strongly relate their approval of the executive to their trust in the Court. This is consistent with the notion that, in the public's perception, the judicial institution is subordinate to the executive branch.



support for the judicial branch, represented here by the Supreme Court.

It is noteworthy that these results differ from the conclusions drawn by Caldeira (1986). In the U.S. case, Caldeira does not find significant effects of the economy, measured by inflation, or of crime measured at the aggregate level.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, in the Latin American and Caribbean context, these variables (measured at the individual level and also including corruption experiences) play important roles in explaining trust in the Supreme Court. Presidential popularity reaches statistical significance in both models.

I also test these findings by running separate regression in each country. The results follow the general trend for the economic and political factors discussed here.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Though the coefficient for inflation does not achieve standard levels of statistical significance in Caldeira's (1986) model ( $p < .23$ ), he concludes that inflation does have a substantively important effect on support for the U.S. Supreme Court.

<sup>13</sup> The results for education and age show notable differences by country. For instance, in South America, Peru, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Bolivia display negative

If separation of powers is one of the fundamental characteristics of a modern democratic regime, it may be desirable that people make independent evaluations of each branch of government. In other words, one might expect institutional separation of powers to be mirrored within public opinion as distinct evaluations of each political institution. To the degree that this is not the case, it could be that separation of powers is not achieved to the fullest degree possible or that the public, at least, does not perceive the Supreme Court as a completely autonomous agency.

coefficients for education and age. At the same time, these countries have low trust in the Supreme Court. On the other side, models for Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, and Colombia all present positive coefficients for education and age; and they have high trust in the Court (except for Argentina). In sum, in countries with the lowest levels of trust in the Supreme Court, the most educated and older people are those who have least trust in the judicial branch. Conversely, in countries with highest support for the Supreme Court, the most educated and the older are those who most strongly support this institution.

I also find that people's evaluations of the economy affect their trust in the Court. The results suggest that people apply economic evaluations not only to the executive branch (Downs 1957; Fiorina 1981), but also to the judicial branch.

In addition, in the Latin American and Caribbean region, corruption and crime play a significant role in explaining trust in the Supreme Court. These problems are directly relevant to the job of the judicial branch. In this case, then, individuals are clearly applying germane performance evaluations to their assessments of trust in the Court. This finding suggests an opportunity for courts seeking to improve their public images. If the judicial branch achieves better results in the struggle against corruption and crime, there are likely to be positive returns with respect to the amount of trust the public places in the Court.

The Court is a principal representative and arbiter of the rule of law in a democracy. Further, in the Latin American region, it is an institution that has been undermined by military dictatorships in the past (Larkins 1996) and, in some countries at least, is currently threatened by political actors who seek to limit checks and balances among and across branches and levels of government. Therefore, research regarding public opinion toward the judicial branch in general, as well as the Supreme Court in particular, is important due to both the current and historical relevance of this branch to democratic politics.

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## Appendix

Appendix Table 1. Ordinary Least Squares Model of Trust in the Supreme Court (Design Effect Adjusted)<sup>14</sup>

	Coefficient	t-value
Victimization by Corruption	-.040*	-6.09
Victimization by Crime	-.028*	-5.16
Unemployed	-.001	.02
Perception of Personal Economy	.047*	7.14
Perception of National Economy	.074*	10.46
Satisfaction with Perf. of Current President	.284*	36.16
Education Level	-.022*	-3.20
Age	.024*	3.69
Female	-.009	-1.7
Quintiles of Wealth	-.003	-0.42
White	.021*	3.29
Urban	-.038*	-4.54
Mexico	0.002	0.3
Guatemala	-0.08*	-10.12
El Salvador	-0.04*	-5.26
Honduras	-0.022*	-3.31
Nicaragua	-0.092*	-9.54
Costa Rica	-0.044*	-4.3
Panama	-0.076*	-5.54
Colombia	-0.033*	-3.22
Ecuador	-0.19*	-19.21
Bolivia	-0.115*	-9.66
Peru	-0.1*	-12.09
Paraguay	-0.146*	-19.08
Chile	-0.056*	-6.43
Brazil	-0.065*	-5.87
Venezuela	-0.076*	-8.2
Argentina	-0.095*	-11.53
Dominican Republic	-0.044*	-5.54
Haiti	-0.065*	-6.57
Jamaica	0.013	1.23
Guyana	-0.027*	-2.78
<i>Number of Observations</i>	33,360	
<i>R-squared</i>	0.174	
<i>F</i>	134.02	

Note: Coefficients from weighted linear regression are significant at \*p< .05.

<sup>14</sup> Uruguay is the country of reference.



# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

Number 55

## Political Knowledge and Religious Channels of Socialization in Latin America

By *Alejandro Díaz-Domínguez*  
*alejandrodiaz-dominguez@vanderbilt.edu*  
*Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** In this *Insights* report, I consider how religion relates to what Latin Americans know about politics. Using data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer, I assess the effects of two components of religion: *belonging* and *behaving*. Overall I find little difference in political knowledge across Christian dominations and in comparison to the non-religious. Attendance of religious services is related to lower levels of political knowledge, though this relationship reverses itself among Mainline Protestants. In a previous report in the *Insights* series I showed that religious identification is related to higher levels of identification with political parties; this report, however, suggest the possibility that religion may not always boost political engagement and understanding.

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*www.AmericasBarometer.org*

Knowledge about politics is not equally distributed among citizens of the Americas. Although what increases political knowledge in the US is well known (Zaller 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), the determinants of Latin Americans' political knowledge are less understood (Boidi 2007). In this *Insights* report, I explore relationships between religious channels of socialization at the individual level and knowledge of political facts.<sup>1</sup>

In its 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys, the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) conducted face-to-face interviews with nationally representative samples in 24 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as web surveys in the United States and Canada. This yielded a total of 43,990 probabilistically selected respondents.<sup>2</sup> The AmericasBarometer asked all respondents in Latin America and the Caribbean the following questions in 2010:

**GI1.** "What is the name of the current president of the US?"

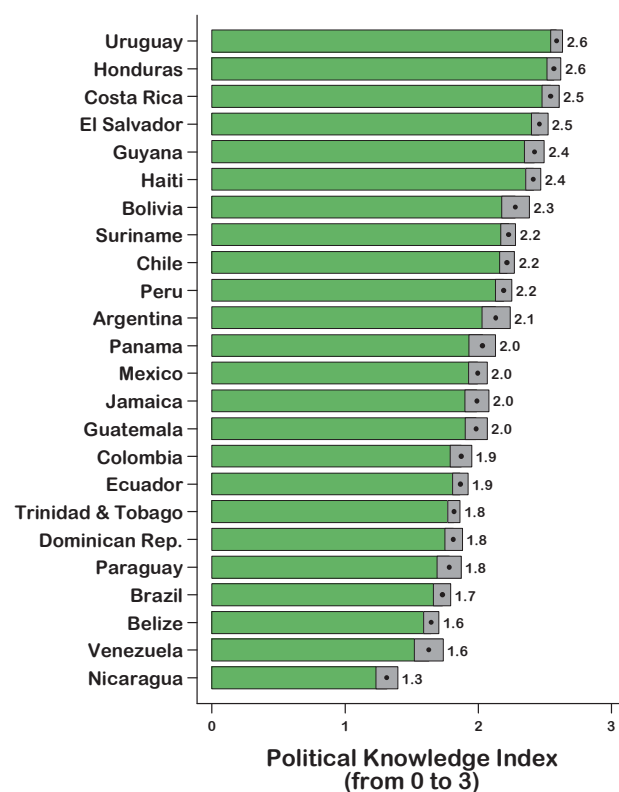
**GI3.** "How many [provinces / departments / states] does [the country] have?"

**GI4.** "How long is the [presidential / prime ministerial] term of office in [the country]?"

Responses were recorded as "correct," "incorrect," and "does not know." Each response was recoded here so that '0' indicates "Does not know/Incorrect" and '1' indicates "Correct"; I then created an additive index running from 0 to 3.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 shows national

average scores in the 24 countries where these questions were asked. Uruguay, Honduras, and Costa Rica have the highest averages, at 2.6 and 2.5, whereas Nicaraguans rank at the bottom with an average of 1.3 correct answers. The average number of correct answers in the region is 2.04, and eleven countries exceed this average. In sum, Figure 1 shows a great deal of variance across the region.

**Figure 1. Political Knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



95% Confidence Interval (Design-Effects Based)

Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>.

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>3</sup> The rate of "Does not know" (DK) responses in these 24 countries was 19.5% for GI1; 25.2% for GI3, and 8.9% for GI4. Some scholars argue that offering explicit "do not know" options increases the impact of individuals' varying propensities to guess on knowledge scores, and recommend avoiding DK options (Mondak 2001; Barabas 2002). The LAPOP question wording does not offer explicit DK options; thus, it seems reasonable to group DK and incorrect answers.

Although there is no consensus on what political knowledge entails (Luskin 1987; Mondak 2001), most scholars measure it by testing factual information about politics (Zaller 1992; Delli Carpini *et al* 1996; Mondak 2001; Barabas 2002; Prior and Lupia 2008). Variance in the degree of factual information that the Latin American and Caribbean publics possess suggests that there are factors at the country-level that shape

citizens' abilities to respond correctly to these political information questions. These factors might include countries' distinct histories and institutional structures of government, as well as their traditions of civic education and levels of formal education. In this *Insights* report, however, I focus on individual-level predictors of knowledge. In order to increase comparability, I only assess predictors of knowledge in 15 countries (see the appendix) for which reliability tests at the country level suggest that the political knowledge questions comprise a robust index.<sup>4</sup>

## Religion as a Channel of Socialization

Conventional theories predict that citizens could learn politics through channels of socialization such as schools and churches (Wald, Owen and Hill 1988; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). I focus on two aspects of citizens' religious experiences: *belonging* and *behaving* (Layman 2001). I expect that *belonging* to certain religious

denominations, such as Mainline Protestant churches, might increase political knowledge because parishioners from these churches tend to see political engagement as a natural consequence of religious activity (Djupe and Grant 2001: 311). *Belonging* to the Catholic Church and Evangelical churches, meanwhile, may decrease it (Djupe and Grant 2001;

*Church attendance may decrease sophistication if political facts are not salient for churches, and actually may lead to conscious withdrawal from the wider community.*

Campbell 2004), since parishioners from these denominations tend to engage in politics mainly "in times of crisis and opportunity" (Djupe and Grant 2001: 311). *Behaving*, as measured by church attendance, may decrease sophistication if political facts are not salient for churches (Converse 1964; 1966; Campbell 2004), and actually may lead to conscious withdrawal from the wider community (Campbell 2004). In particular, *behaving* is expected to decrease sophistication because citizens' time devoted to the church takes time away from engagement in politics and the broader community.<sup>5</sup>

I use two religious measures. The first is *belonging*, or affiliation with the five major religious groups in Latin America: Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses, and non-

Christian religions.<sup>6</sup>

Second, *behaving* is a measure of attendance of religious services, and is intended to capture a channel of socialization that I expect to have a negative effect on political knowledge, due to the withdrawal hypothesis.

## Predictors of Political Knowledge

In order to test the relationship between religious variables and political knowledge, I use a least squares regression at the individual level with country fixed effects, while adjusting for the complex survey sample design within

<sup>4</sup> Using Cronbach's alpha as a measure of reliability, the threshold was defined as 0.5 in order to maximize internal consistency among the three items (Manheim *et al* 2006: 159). In addition, this analysis excludes Haiti (alpha=0.65), in order to prevent unexpected effects of the earthquake that occurred on January 12, before the 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted; and Chile (alpha=0.49), where an earthquake occurred on February 27, 2010. However, when these countries are included in the analysis, the findings discussed below remain valid. Church attendance is significant and negative across denominations ( $p<0.013$ ), while coefficients are positive for Protestants ( $p<0.087$ ), negative for Evangelicals and Catholics ( $p<0.018$  and  $p<0.064$  respectively), and insignificant for Latter Day Saints (LDS) and non-Christians ( $p<0.835$  and  $p<0.44$  respectively).

<sup>5</sup> Although I will base my expectations on the aforementioned theories, questions remain regarding the causal mechanisms that explain *belonging's* impact on political knowledge.

<sup>6</sup> In the 15 countries of this report, 67.7% of respondents are Catholics; 7.07% are Protestants; 15.3% are Evangelicals; 0.9% are LDS; 0.4% are Jehovah's Witnesses, and 2.02% belong to non-Christian religions (Islam, Jews, and native religions). The reference category is comprised of people who do not profess any religion (7.4%). Given the small number of respondents who are Jehovah's Witnesses and members of LDS, these two denominations are grouped together in the analysis. For additional details regarding the classification of religious denominations please see Díaz-Domínguez (2009).

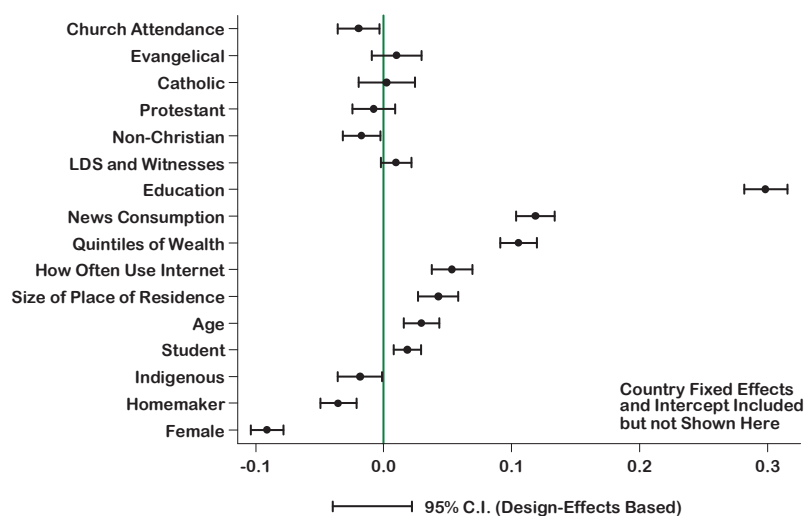
the 15 nations. The independent variables of interest are attendance of religious services, and belonging to five major religious denominations: Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Latter Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses, and non-Christian religions.

The empirical model includes other channels of political socialization, such as current school attendance, i.e. whether the respondent is a current student (Morduchowicz *et al* 1996), and respondents' levels of education (Prior and Lupia 2008). It also includes variables tapping the lack of exposure to channels of political socialization, such as female gender (Bartels 1996; Kam, Zechmeister and Wilking 2008), homemaker status (Prior and Lupia 2008), and self-identification as indigenous (Boidi 2007). In addition, I include measures of citizens' available resources (Mondak 2001; Barabas 2002, Boidi 2007), such as news media consumption, from never to daily consumption of news on radio and TV; levels of wealth; urban residence; age; and frequency of using the internet, from never to daily use.

Figure 2 presents the results of this full model. The significance of the variables in the model is graphically represented in the following figures (the fixed country effects and intercept are excluded from the graph, but available in the report appendix). The dot represents the predicted impact of each variable. When it falls to the right of the vertical "0" line, it implies a positive relationship; when it falls to the left, it indicates a negative contribution. Statistical significance is captured by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical "0" line (at 0.05 or better).

I find that *belonging* alone is not a statistically significant predictor of correct answers about political facts, except just marginally for non-Christian respondents, as shown in Figure 2. In addition, church attendance is negatively related to political knowledge, as expected according to the withdrawal hypothesis, perhaps because

**Figure 2. The Effect of Religious Factors on Political Knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP; 15 countries  
R-sq=0.33; F=209.7; 23,346 respondents

knowledge of political facts is not emphasized within churches.

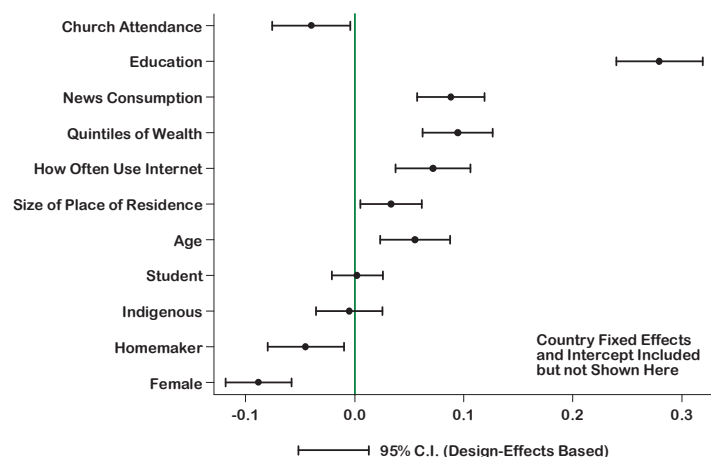
Other channels of socialization such as current school attendance and levels of education have the expected positive effects. In addition, the lack of exposure to channels of socialization among indigenous people, women, and specifically among female homemakers has a negative effect on political knowledge in these groups. Finally, variables such as news consumption, frequent internet use, wealth, and urban residence increase levels of political knowledge, as expected.<sup>7</sup>

I estimated the same model (minus religious affiliation) for Evangelicals, Catholics, and Protestants respectively, as shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5. Figures 3 and 4 show that, consistent with the withdrawal hypothesis, the relationship between church attendance and political knowledge is negative for both Evangelicals and Catholics (though for the latter it does not reach the  $p < 0.05$  threshold of statistical significance). In contrast, for Mainline Protestants, as shown

<sup>7</sup> The substantive results remain when ordered probit or logit models are employed, but for the sake of simplicity, I estimated least squares models. This strategy may be inefficient, but it is not biased (Kosuke, King and Lau 2007).

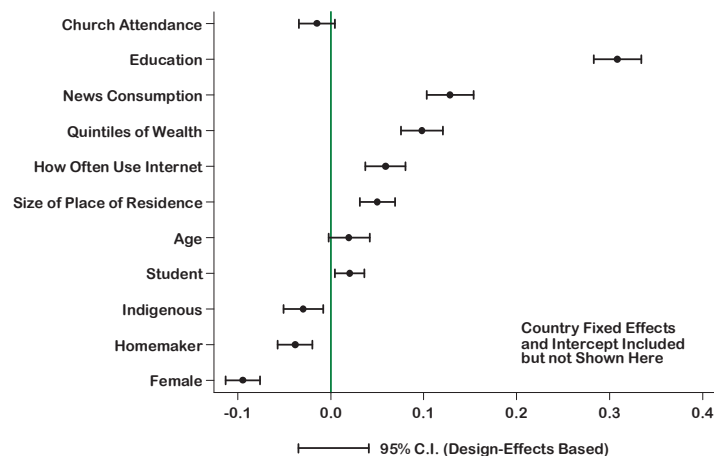


**Figure 3. The Effect of Church Attendance on Political Knowledge among *Evangelicals* in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP; 15 countries  
R-sq=0.325; F=60.1; 3,984 Respondents

**Figure 4. The Effect of Church Attendance on Political Knowledge among *Catholics* in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP; 15 countries  
R-sq=0.334; F=90.3; 16,086 Respondents

in Figure 5, the effect of church attendance on political knowledge is positive.

In sum, this preliminary analysis suggests that there are different effects of church attendance across different religious denominations. In fact, this initial evidence could suggest that perhaps

Mainline Protestants are less likely to fall prey to the withdrawal effect than are Evangelicals and Catholics. However, more theoretical work is required in order to explain how and why the withdrawal effect appears to operate differently across religious denominations.<sup>8</sup>

## Discussion

This *Insights* report suggests that religious *belonging* and *behaving* may influence an individual's knowledge of political facts. In combined analysis, I find no differences across Christian traditions, and church attendance operates as a negative channel of socialization. Additional differences emerge when Christian traditions are analyzed separately; the results suggest that those Evangelicals and Catholics who attend church more regularly withdraw from the political world, but the reverse may be the case for Protestants.

Although the effect of religious variables on political knowledge appears to be fairly small, the relevance of these findings lies in testing the withdrawal hypothesis. Additionally, this report has gone beyond traditional analysis of *belonging* or affiliation with religious denominations (Bartels 1996). It has added a measure of *behaving* in order to explore how religion affects political knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

It is likely that church services typically are not used to communicate messages conveying political facts, given that this specific information is not always relevant to churches' agenda at the mass level. Nevertheless, through small scale socialization processes within some religious groups, there may be opportunities for those who frequently attend church to gain, or become more motivated to gain, political knowledge. Such an interpretation of church processes is consistent with the evidence found

<sup>8</sup> For the other religious groups, I find that church attendance is not a significant predictor of political knowledge ( $p < 0.22$  for LDS and Witnesses and  $p < 0.49$  for non-Christians).

<sup>9</sup> In this way, the report speaks to Hagopian's (2009) suggestion that the potential effects of church attendance on different political attitudes be placed on the research agenda among those who study Latin American political behavior.



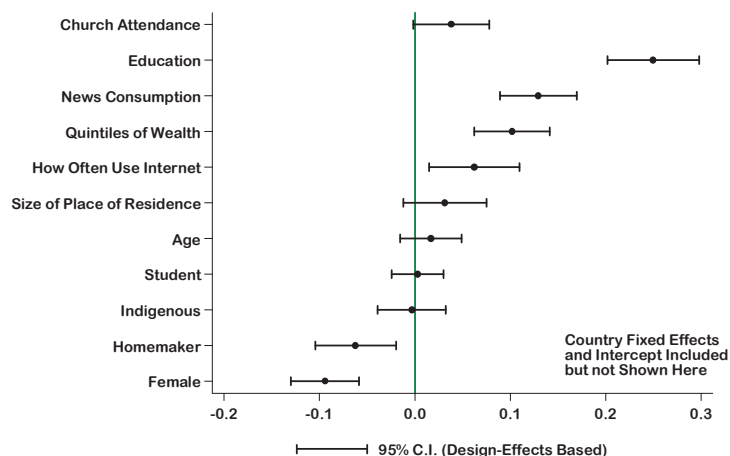
here regarding Mainline Protestant churches, in which there is a positive relationship between attendance and political knowledge, although this effect is fairly small in substantive significance.

As religious competition increases in Latin America, church attendance remains robust, and in fact higher than in many other regions in the world (Cleary 2009). How does religious involvement affect citizens' political attitudes and dispositions? In a previous report in this *Insights* series, I showed that participation in religious groups may facilitate citizens' attachments to electoral politics and in particular to the party system (Díaz-Domínguez 2010). Here, however, I find that religious groups may have a somewhat less beneficial impact on mass politics, to the extent that for some individuals attendance of religious services may lead to a deprioritizing of political information and for some others neither *belonging* nor *behaving* positively affect political knowledge. Nonetheless, the fact that attendance among those belonging to Mainline Protestant churches is positively related to political knowledge suggests that under some specific conditions, churches might play a positive role in this form of political socialization.

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**Figure 5. The Effect of Church Attendance on Political Knowledge among Mainline Protestants in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP; 15 countries  
R-sq=0.332; F=33.1; 2,223 Respondents

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**Appendix. Political Knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**

	Full Sample			Evangelicals			Catholics			Protestants		
	Coef.	Std.Err.		Coef.	Std.Err.		Coef.	Std.Err.		Coef.	Std.Err.	
Female	-0.091	0.006	***	-0.088	0.015	***	-0.095	0.009	***	-0.094	0.018	***
Homemaker	-0.035	0.007	***	-0.045	0.018	***	-0.038	0.009	***	-0.062	0.021	***
Indigenous	-0.019	0.009	**	-0.005	0.015		-0.028	0.011	***	-0.003	0.018	
Student	0.019	0.005	***	0.002	0.012		0.020	0.008	***	0.003	0.014	
Age	0.030	0.007	***	0.055	0.016	***	0.019	0.011	*	0.017	0.016	
Place of residence	0.043	0.008	***	0.033	0.014	**	0.049	0.009	**	0.032	0.022	*
Use internet	0.053	0.008	***	0.072	0.017	***	0.059	0.011	***	0.062	0.024	***
Quintiles of Wealth	0.106	0.007	***	0.094	0.016	***	0.097	0.011	***	0.102	0.020	***
News consumption	0.119	0.008	***	0.088	0.016	***	0.128	0.013	***	0.129	0.020	***
Education	0.299	0.009	***	0.280	0.020	***	0.308	0.013	***	0.250	0.024	***
LDS and Witnesses	0.010	0.006	*									
Non-Christian rel.	-0.017	0.008	**									
Protestant	-0.008	0.009										
Catholic	0.002	0.011										
Evangelical	0.010	0.010										
<b>Church attendance</b>	-0.020	0.008	**	-0.040	0.018	**	-0.014	0.010	*	0.038	0.020	*
Mexico	-0.174	0.011	***	-0.139	0.015	***	-0.186	0.022	***	-0.140	0.024	***
Guatemala	-0.132	0.011	***	-0.223	0.019	***	-0.105	0.019	***	-0.111	0.028	***
El Salvador	-0.063	0.010	***	-0.058	0.015	***	-0.058	0.019	***	-0.040	0.020	***
Costa Rica	-0.044	0.011	***	-0.042	0.016	***	-0.038	0.019	**	-0.034	0.021	*
Colombia	-0.228	0.010	***	-0.144	0.016	***	-0.238	0.022	***	-0.212	0.017	***
Ecuador	-0.331	0.014	***	-0.286	0.017	***	-0.360	0.029	***	-0.303	0.037	***
Bolivia	-0.173	0.015	***	-0.125	0.020	***	-0.172	0.035	***	-0.140	0.027	***
Peru	-0.173	0.011	***	-0.159	0.016	***	-0.182	0.023	***	-0.101	0.032	***
Paraguay	-0.232	0.011	***	-0.161	0.018	***	-0.260	0.025	***	-0.132	0.030	***
Brazil	-0.286	0.015	***	-0.286	0.018	***	-0.264	0.029	***	-0.336	0.033	***
Venezuela	-0.299	0.014	***	-0.162	0.019	***	-0.309	0.023	***	-0.251	0.030	***
Argentina	-0.168	0.012	***	-0.147	0.019	***	-0.170	0.022	***	-0.109	0.032	***
Dominican Rep.	-0.221	0.010	***	-0.216	0.014	***	-0.210	0.019	***	-0.184	0.017	***
Guyana	-0.065	0.012	***	-0.076	0.018	***	-0.024	0.016	***	-0.117	0.041	***
Intercept	0.023	0.008	***	0.035	0.014	***	0.026	0.013	**	0.036	0.024	*
Respondents	23,346			3,984			16,086			2,223		
F statistic	209.7			60.1			90.3			33.1		
R-squared	0.326			0.325			0.334			0.332		

Note: \* 90%, \*\* 95%, \*\*\* 99%

Source: 2010 AmericasBarometer by LAPOP; author's estimations based on survey least squares regressions.

Country of reference: Honduras.

# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2011

Number 56

## Democracy in Hard Times: Belize

By Diana Orcés, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister

[diana.m.orces@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:diana.m.orces@vanderbilt.edu), [amy.e.smith@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:amy.e.smith@vanderbilt.edu), and

[liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** This report marks the first in a subseries examining the economic crisis and democratic attitudes within selected countries studied in the 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys. We find that in early 2010, almost all Belizeans perceived that their country was in the midst of an economic crisis, and that many had experienced personal or family job and income loss. However, we find little change in Belizeans' support for democracy between 2008 and 2010. Moreover, when we examine relationships at the individual level, we find that neither economic evaluations nor perceptions of government economic performance are significantly associated with democratic attitudes. Thus, Belize is an exception to previously reported findings that economic evaluations and democratic attitudes are strongly linked in the Americas as a whole.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

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**H**ard times—in particular the economic crisis—and their impact on democracy was established as the theme for the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer survey.<sup>1</sup> In recent months, LAPOP has published book-length reports on this subject for the Americas as a whole and for many individual countries; all reports are available at our website. In 2011, the *Insights* series will feature a subseries entitled *Democracy in Hard Times*, providing short reports on countries for which book-length reports are not available. In this, the first of this subseries, we examine Belize. We look at Belizeans' economic perceptions and experiences, and at the relationship between these and support for democracy in 2010.

Belizeans are not unaccustomed to fluctuations in their country's economy. Past episodes of volatility have been linked to Belize's susceptibility to changes in the international market and to instances of government overspending (Hausman and Klinger 2007). In the midst of the recent global economic decline, Belize's GDP growth dropped from a healthy 3.8% in 2008 to -0.5% in 2009.<sup>2</sup> What effects might this recent economic contraction have had on public opinion in Belize? In particular, has it affected attitudes towards the democratic regime?

Despite some salient differences in the country's politics and culture<sup>3</sup>, economically Belize shares

important similarities with other Central American countries. Like these other countries, its economy is tightly connected to that of the United States, and tourism and agriculture form important economic sectors. It is not surprising, then, that the country experienced negative consequences of the recent worldwide economic recession found in the rest of the region.<sup>4</sup> The negative growth rate for 2009 may be one reason that Belizeans identified the economy as the most important problem facing the country in 2010.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the nations in the Americas, however, have managed the crisis unusually well, recovering quickly. Belize also fits this pattern, in that its growth rate is expected to be positive by the end of 2010.<sup>6</sup> Such a quick recovery might be one factor militating against finding deep imprints of the crisis

on Belizean public opinion, in particular with respect to support for democracy.

There are other reasons to expect support for democracy to be relatively robust in Belize. As a previous *Insights* report based on 2008 AmericasBarometer survey data found, Belizeans' support for democracy, the political system, and democratic participation are high, in many cases higher than in other countries of Central America and the Caribbean (Seligson

*With democratic rule uninterrupted since independence, and with economic growth projected to be positive by the end of 2010, Belizeans' support for democracy is expected to be relatively high and stable.*

<sup>1</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org>

<sup>3</sup> A former British colony, Belize's official language is English (though Spanish is common; in fact, 39.6% of respondents to the 2010 AmericasBarometer Belize survey were interviewed in Spanish); it is a parliamentary democracy led by a prime minister; and it remains a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

<sup>4</sup> If there is an exception in Central America with respect to the economic effects of the global crisis, it is Panama, which managed to maintain a positive growth rate in 2009 (<http://www.worldbank.org/>).

<sup>5</sup> In the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey, while issues related to security troubled many (21.9% of Belizeans indicated that the most important problem was related to crime and violence), the majority of survey respondents, 51.8%, indicated an economic issue.

<sup>6</sup> Economic growth information taken from <http://www.worldbank.org/>.



and Zéphyr 2009).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, since independence from the United Kingdom in 1981, Belize has had uninterrupted democratic rule. While Belizeans are certainly not strangers to political scandal, and while many inequities by social class and gender remain, politics has been relatively consolidated around two major parties throughout the country's democratic history.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we expect to find high support for democracy in Belize, and we expect this support to be relatively resistant to any depressive effects from the economic downturn.

First included in the 2008 round of the AmericasBarometer, Belize was surveyed a second time as part of the 2010 AmericasBarometer. In that round, 43,990 individuals from 26 countries in the Americas were interviewed with a nationally representative, probability sample. The 2010 survey of Belize asked 1,504 people about their experiences, concerns, political attitudes, and socio-economic and demographic profiles, among other topics.

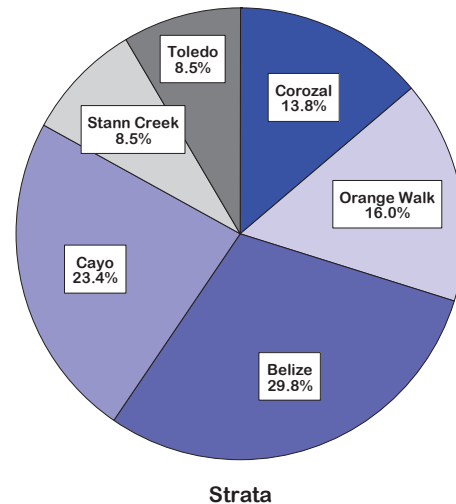
Figure 1 shows the distribution of the sample in six strata, which correspond to the six districts in Belize. The full description of the sample design is available at [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/argentina/Belize\\_2010\\_Tech\\_Info.pdf](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/argentina/Belize_2010_Tech_Info.pdf).<sup>9</sup> The questionnaire was prepared, tested, and administered in both English and Spanish (see earlier footnote on the percentage of respondents selecting to be interviewed in Spanish). We believe these two surveys to be the first scientific, nationwide studies of public opinion on democracy in Belizean history.

<sup>7</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Fernández (1989), McClaurin (1996), Moberg (1992), and Weigand and Bennet (1993).

<sup>9</sup> Consistent with AmericasBarometer practices, the sample was further stratified by urban and rural areas of residence. All interviews were carried out using handheld computers (PDAs).

Figure 1. Distribution of the Sample by Districts, 2010



Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 by LAPOP

## Perceptions and Experiences in Hard Times

How did Belizeans perceive the economic crisis? The AmericasBarometer 2010 included for the first time two items to try to assess these perceptions. First, respondents were asked if they perceived an economic crisis.<sup>10</sup> Second, those who thought that there was one were asked who is to blame for it.<sup>11</sup>

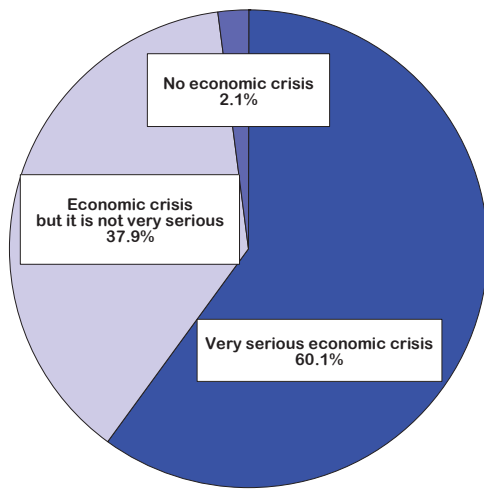
Figure 2 shows that more than 60% of Belizeans perceived a very serious economic crisis, whereas 37.9% reported that there was an economic crisis but it was not very serious. Only 2.1% said that there was not an economic crisis.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> **CRISIS1.** Some say that our country is suffering a very serious economic crisis, others say that we are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, while others say that there isn't any economic crisis. What do you think? (1) We are suffering a very serious economic crisis, (2) We are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, or, (3) No economic crisis

<sup>11</sup> **CRISIS2.** Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country from among the following: (01) The previous administration, (02) The current administration, (03) Ourselves, the Belizeans, (04) The rich people of our country, (05) The problems of democracy, (06) The rich countries, (07) The economic system of the country, or, (08) Never have thought about it, (77) Other

<sup>12</sup> Non-response was very low, at 1.13%.

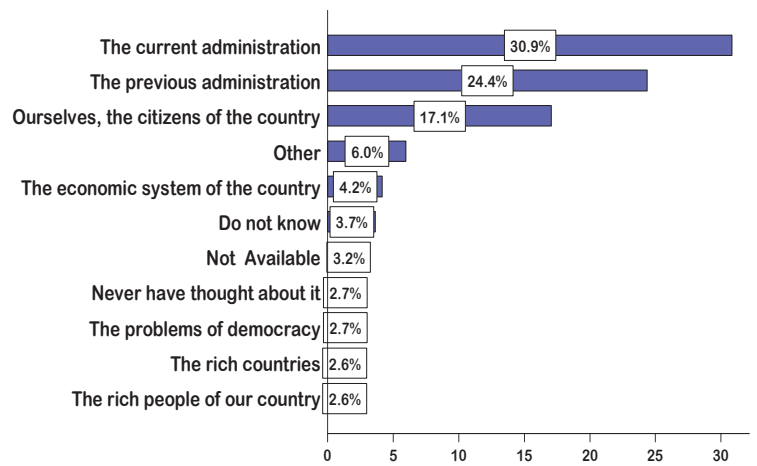
**Figure 2. Percentage of the Population Who Perceived an Economic Crisis in Belize, 2010**



**Perception of Magnitude of Economic Crisis**

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 by LAPOP

**Figure 3. Who is to Blame for the Economic Crisis in Belize?**



**Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country?**

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 by LAPOP

Whom did Belizeans blame for the crisis? Figure 3 shows that nearly 1 out of 3 Belizeans who perceived a crisis blamed the current administration and about a quarter blamed the previous administration. The United Democratic Party (UDP) and Prime Minister Dean Barrow took control of government following the February 2008 parliamentary elections, just as the economic crisis was beginning to unfold. However, economic growth had been slowing under the administration of the former Prime Minister Said Musa of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Thus, it makes sense that Belizeans would be divided in their attributions of blame for economic troubles. At the same time, almost 20% of Belizeans who perceived a crisis blamed themselves, as a collective, and less than 6% blamed either rich countries or rich Belizeans.

In addition to examining perceptions, we can also examine economic experiences during the period of the crisis. Among the many questions available in the larger survey, here we select out responses to questions related to job loss.<sup>13</sup>

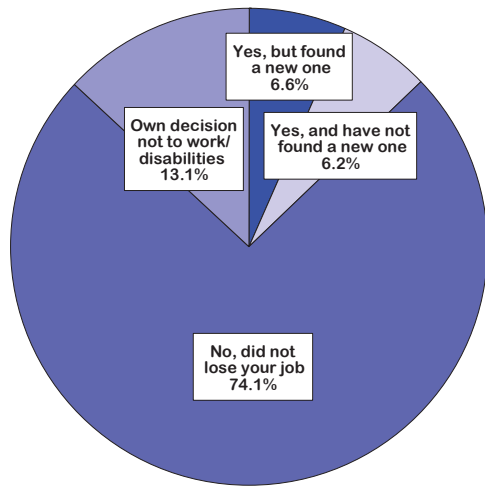
<sup>13</sup> OCUP1B1. Have you lost your job in the past two years? (1) Yes, you lost your job but found a new one, (2) Yes, you

Figure 4 shows that at the beginning of 2010, 13% of Belizeans had lost a job in the past two years, though about half reported having subsequently found a new one. Moreover, about 11% reported that another household member had lost a job in the past two years. Overall, 21% of respondents had experienced some form of job loss in their households in the past two years, suggesting that many Belizeans' perceptions of the crisis are based on their real experiences.<sup>14</sup> This rate of job loss places Belize in the middle of the pack in both Central America and the Caribbean. Job loss in Belize was higher than in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean, as well as Honduras and Panama in Central America; nonetheless, Belizeans did better than neighbors in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Jamaica, among other countries.

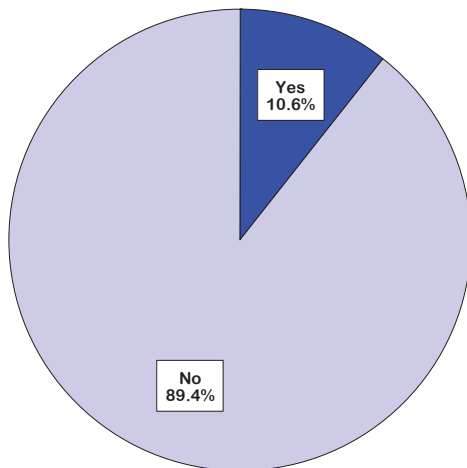
lost your job and have not found a new one, (3) No, did not lose your job, (4) Did not work because you decided not to work or because of disabilities. OCUP1B2. Besides you, has anyone in your household lost his or her job in the past two years?

<sup>14</sup> Unemployment in Belize stood at 12.6% in late 2009. See <http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/>.

**Figure 4. Job Loss in Belize, 2010**



Have you lost your job in the past two years?



Has anyone else in your household lost a job in the past two years?

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 by LAPOP

They then ask respondents how much they agree with this point of view on a 1-7 scale. As is standard for LAPOP reports, that scale is converted here to a 0-100 scale for ease of presentation.

This round of the AmericasBarometer provides evidence that, despite the economic crisis, Belizeans' support for democracy has not declined. Results comparing support for democracy in 2008 and 2010 in every country in Central America are shown in Figure 5. The dark blue bars show the average levels of support for democracy found in 2010 whereas the light blue bars show the average levels found in 2008. Whenever the two grey areas at the ends of the bars overlap, there is no statistically significant difference between the two years. For example, support for democracy declined in Belize from 71.9 to 70.9, but this decline is not statistically significant. Across the entire Americas, support for democracy experienced only a very small but statistically significant decline from an average score of 72.5 to 71.4, measured on a 100-point scale.

It is possible that national averages mask a correlation at the individual level between perceptions of economic crisis and democracy. Indeed, this has been shown to be the case in the Americas as a whole (Seligson and Smith 2010).

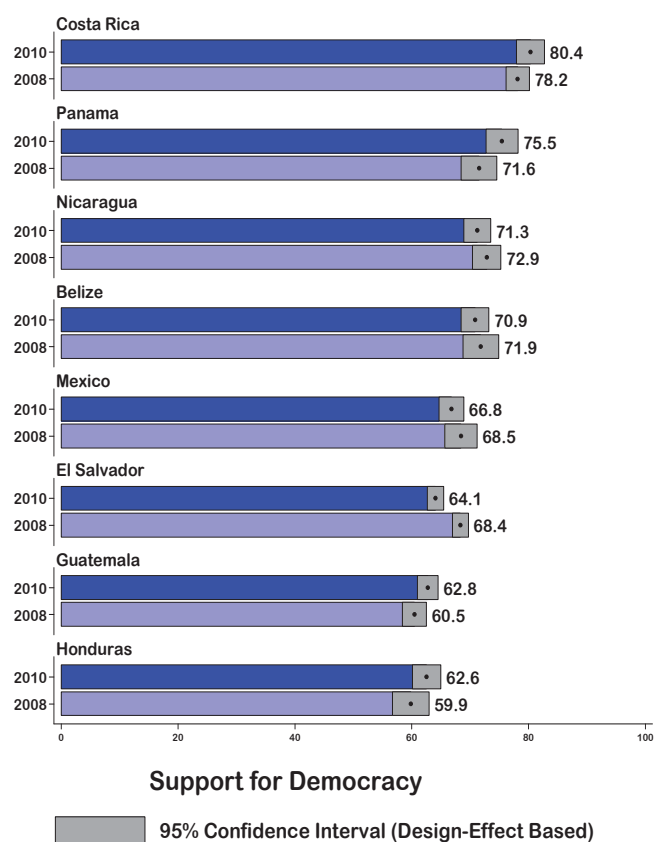
To examine the relationship between perceptions of economic crisis and support for democracy in Belize, we conduct regression analysis using individual survey responses. First, we include traditional socioeconomic and demographic control variables: age, sex, education, place of residence (urban vs. rural area), and wealth quintiles.<sup>15</sup> We also include measures of satisfaction with the prime minister and with the economic performance of the government. Finally, we included variables

## Economic Crisis and Support for Democracy

Did the economic crisis affect Belizeans' attitudes towards their political system? The AmericasBarometer surveys contain numerous indicators of democratic attitudes and values. Among these is a question derived from a classic statement by Churchill on democracy. Interviewers provide respondents with the statement: "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government."

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the wealth indicator, see: Córdova, Abby B. 2009. "Methodological Note: Measuring Relative Wealth using Household Asset Indicators." *AmericasBarometer Insights*. (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>).

**Figure 5. Average Support for Democracy in Central America, 2008-2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

measuring personal and national economic evaluations. In order to reduce the number of economic variables we include in the same model, we ran a factor analysis on four variables: negative current perceptions of the national and personal economic situations as well as negative retrospective perceptions of the national and personal economic situations.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> These variables were measured as follows: **SOCT1**. How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? **SOCT2**. Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago? **IDIO1**. How would you describe your overall economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? **IDIO2**. Do you think that your economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?

This analysis yielded a single factor (assessed by an eigenvalue over 1.0), which we include to capture economic evaluations.

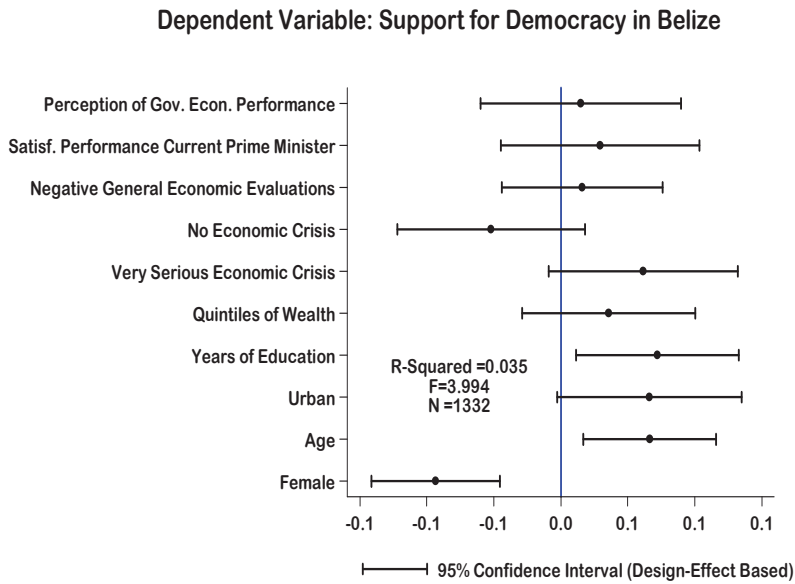
Figure 6 shows the effects of these variables on support for democracy in Belize. Each variable included in the analysis is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of those variables on support for democracy is shown graphically by a dot, which if located to the right of the vertical "0" line indicates a positive effect, and if to the left of the "0" line a negative effect. If the effects are statistically significant, the confidence interval lines stretching to the left and right of each dot do not overlap the vertical "0" line (at .05 or better). If the confidence intervals overlap the vertical line, the effects are statistically insignificant. Since coefficients are standardized, the magnitude of each effect indicates its relative strength.

Figure 6 shows that education increases support for democracy. This result is consistent with our previous studies of democracy in the Americas, and once again reinforces the notion that education is one of the most effective ways to build a political culture that is supportive of democracy. In addition, males and older individuals are more supportive of democracy than females and younger individuals, even when controlling for education and other variables.

What is most striking about the results presented in Figure 6, however, is that *economic perceptions and experiences are not associated with support for democracy*, again suggesting that the economic crisis did not significantly affect public opinion toward democracy in Belize.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> When we run several new models, the results are virtually unchanged. We separately analyzed each economic evaluation included in Figure 6 as well as additional economic measures, while controlling for socio-economic and demographic factors, satisfaction with the performance of the current prime minister, and perceptions of government economic performance. The only models in which the economic variables yield statistically significant results are for negative perceptions of the national economic situation (although the effect is very small), decrease in

**Figure 6. The Impact of Perceptions and Experiences with the Economic Crisis on Support for Democracy in Belize, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

These results hold even in models in which we separately introduce perception of government economic performance, satisfaction with the performance of the prime minister, and economic evaluations, while controlling for demographic factors.<sup>18</sup> This is certainly

household income, and perception of a very serious economic crisis. Interestingly, however, in each of those cases the results run counter to expectations: negative perceptions of the national economic situation, a decline in household income, and the perception of a very serious economic crisis each *increase* support for democracy. Moreover, when we run the same models but control for crisis perceptions, the economic variables lose statistical significance while the effect of perceiving a very serious crisis remains virtually the same, with the exception of the model for a decline in household income (where crisis perceptions are statistically insignificant but income decline has a significant and positive impact on support for democracy). Thus, we conclude with a certain level of confidence that the crisis did not negatively affect attitudes toward democracy in Belize.

<sup>18</sup> When we run the models without perception of government performance or satisfaction with the performance, the positive effect of a decrease in household income remains, but the coefficient for household job loss becomes statistically significant and negative. Of the many models we have tested, this is the only one in which an

encouraging news, indicating that Belizeans remain committed to democracy even when confronting negative experiences with the economy.

## Conclusions

In this paper, we examined Belizeans' perceptions and experiences with the economic crisis and how it affected their support for democracy. First we found that almost all Belizeans perceived either a serious or very serious economic crisis. Only 2.1% reported that there was not an economic crisis. In addition, a high percentage (55%) of those perceiving a crisis tends to blame the current or the previous administration for the crisis. One out of five Belizean households had at least one member who had recently lost a job, demonstrating that the crisis had had a pronounced personal impact.

Did these negative economic experiences influence Belizeans' support for democracy? Our findings in this regard are striking, and differ from what we have found across the Americas as a whole (Seligson and Smith 2009). Despite the fact that the crisis personally affected an important percentage of the population, Belizeans' democratic attitudes (as measured on this single indicator) proved robust and stable. We do not find an overall trend in the direction of lower democratic support. Moreover, at the individual level, we find that neither economic perceptions and experiences nor evaluations of government economic performance have affected Belizeans' commitment to the democratic regime. The only important predictors of democratic attitudes that we find are sociodemographic ones, including education, age, place of residence, and gender. This indicates that in Belize commitment to democracy in the abstract is a

economic variable has a negative impact on support for democracy, yet the effect is very limited.



relatively stable personal trait, perhaps akin to a value, one that is developed through long-term socialization processes and that is not responsive to short-term economic and political forces. Thus, Belize may be an exception to patterns found in many new democracies around the world, where support for the democratic regime is strongly linked to both immediate experiences and evaluations of the government of the day (for instance, Booth and Seligson 2009; Bratton et al., 2004; Mishler et al., 1998).

Owing to space constraints, we have been unable to address Belizeans' attitudes towards many other components of their political system. A future study should examine the effects of the crisis on other public opinion indicators in Belize, including life satisfaction, political tolerance, support for the political system, and satisfaction with democracy. This would allow us to assess more completely the consequences of the economic downturn on democratic political culture in Belize.

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## Appendix. Predictors of Support for Democracy in Belize

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Female	-0.093*	.0238
Age	0.066*	.0247
Urban	0.066	.0342
Years of Education	0.072*	.0302
Quintiles of Wealth	0.036	.0321
Very Serious Economic Crisis <sup>+</sup>	0.062	.0351
No Economic Crisis <sup>+</sup>	-0.052	.0348
Negative General Economic Evaluations (Factor Score)	0.016	.0298
Satisfaction with Performance Prime Minister	0.030	.0368
Perception of Government Economic Performance	0.015	.0372
Constant	0.004	.0319
<i>R-Squared</i>	0.035	
<i>Number of Obs.</i>	1332	
* p<0.05		

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

<sup>+</sup>Reference Group: Economic Crisis but Not Very Serious

# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2011

Number 57

## Vote Buying in the Americas

By Brian M. Faughnan

[brian.m.faughnan@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:brian.m.faughnan@vanderbilt.edu)

Elizabeth J. Zechmeister

[liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:liz.zechmeister@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** Vote buying practices have long attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners, but cross-national analyses of clientelism are rare. To facilitate research on vote buying in the Americas, the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey included two questions on this topic. In this *Insights* report, we present a preliminary look at the first of these questions, which provides perspective on where and among whom attempted vote buying is more common. Grounding our expectations in extant literature, we analyze predictors of vote buying practices across 22 countries. The results affirm the importance of individual level poverty and, as well, country level income inequality in predicting offers of vote buying. In addition, the politically and civically engaged are more frequently targeted by vote buying efforts. Overall, the propensity to be targeted by clientelistic offers is greater in unequal contexts and among individuals that provide greater marginal pay off to offers of material benefits in exchange for the vote.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

The exchange of private material goods for a vote, or clientelism, runs counter to basic democratic principles and has the potential to create economic inefficiencies (e.g., Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002). But, where in Latin America and the Caribbean is clientelism a more common political practice and which individuals are more likely to be targeted with offers of material benefits in exchange for their vote?

To examine vote buying behavior in the Americas, LAPOP introduced two new questions to the 2010 AmericasBarometer.<sup>1</sup> In this *Insights* report, we address the first of these questions, which provides perspective on where and among whom attempts at vote buying are more prevalent.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey asked:

**CLIEN1:** In recent years and thinking about election campaigns, has a candidate or someone from a political party offered you something like a favor, food, or any other benefit or thing in return for your vote?<sup>3</sup>

Respondents could indicate that they “never,” “sometimes,” or “often” have been offered material benefits in exchange for their vote. For each of 22 countries<sup>4</sup>, Figure 1 displays the percentage of respondents who answered *either* “sometimes” or “often” regarding the frequency with which they were offered a good or favor in exchange for their vote.

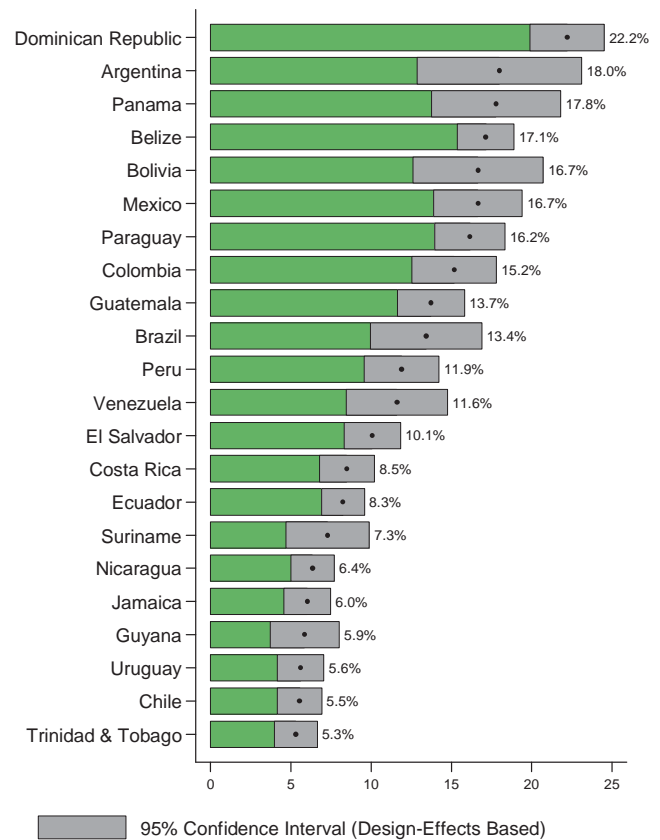
<sup>1</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>2</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>.

<sup>3</sup> Non-response was 1.8% for this question across the sample as a whole. Analysis conducted using STATA v10.

<sup>4</sup> This represents a total of 37,642 individuals. The question was not asked in Haiti nor in Honduras. It was asked in surveys in the United States and Canada; however, given our focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, we omit these two countries from the analysis.

**Figure 1. Percentage reporting having been offered a material benefit in exchange for a vote**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

The figure shows important variation across the Latin American and Caribbean regions. The Dominican Republic falls at the top of the chart, with 22% of respondents reporting that they were offered a material benefit in exchange for their vote at least “sometimes” in recent elections. Following the Dominican Republic is Argentina with 18% of those surveyed saying either sometimes or often, and then Panama with 17.8%. At the other extreme we find Uruguay (5.6%), Chile (5.5%) and Trinidad & Tobago (5.3%) among those countries in which citizens are least likely to report recently having been exposed to attempts aimed at vote buying.<sup>5</sup>

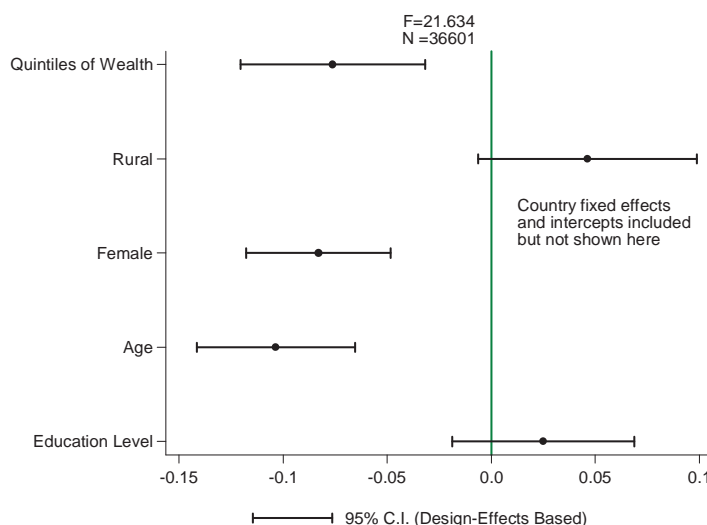
<sup>5</sup> Some individuals may censor the degree to which they participate in clientelism, since the practice is stigmatized in

## Who is more likely to report having been the target of vote buying practices?

What predicts the likelihood that an individual will report having been offered a favor or item in exchange for her vote? One prominent explanation for clientelism is poverty. Poorer individuals have a greater immediate need for the goods typically offered in a clientelistic exchange (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, p. 25), while the votes of wealthier individuals may only be influenced by prohibitively high priced material incentives (see the discussion in Dixit and Londregan 1996). Likewise, scholars have suggested that those with greater levels of education will be more likely to eschew vote buying practices in favor of competition over public goods (Kitschelt 2000, p. 857). In addition, if residents in large urban areas are more difficult to monitor effectively, a condition that makes vote buying less attractive for political candidates and parties (Stokes 2005, p. 322), then levels of clientelism should vary across urban and rural divides. In fact, wealth, education, and size of town have been found to be negatively correlated with clientelism in the case of Argentina (Brusco et al. 2004, Stokes 2005).

With these prior arguments and findings in mind, we created a model to predict the likelihood of a person reporting being offered a favor or item (either sometimes or frequently, in contrast to never) in exchange for their vote. As independent variables we include wealth, education, an indicator of rural versus urban residence, gender, and age. Figure 2 shows the

**Figure 2. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics predicting the likelihood of being offered a material benefit in exchange for a vote, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

results of this individual level logistic regression analysis.<sup>6</sup>

In keeping with the LAPOP standard for presenting regression results, statistical significance is graphically represented by a confidence interval that does not overlap the vertical “0” line (at .05 or better). When the dot, which represents the predicted impact of that variable, falls to the right of the vertical “0” line, it implies a positive relationship; when it falls to the left it indicates a negative contribution. Given that the results displayed in Figure 2 were estimated using the logistic regression technique, the substantive effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable cannot be directly interpreted from the coefficients. However, because the coefficients are standardized (i.e., “beta weights”), we can get a sense of the magnitude of each effect relative to the others.

certain contexts. The question was explicitly designed to avoid asking whether the respondent took or rejected the gift; as a result, concerns about censoring should be minimized.

<sup>6</sup> As noted on the figure itself, fixed country effects are modeled but the results are not reported in the figure here. Those results are available in the report appendix.



As Figure 2 shows, we find that those who are wealthier are less likely to be targeted by clientelistic offers. We also find that older individuals and females report less experience with vote buying practices. In addition, the analysis presented above reveals a marginally significant effect for rural residence, such that those living in rural areas are somewhat more likely to report having been offered a material benefit in exchange for their vote.<sup>7</sup> Unexpectedly, we do not find that education is a significant predictor of our dependent variable.

Although much of the research on vote-buying focuses on socio-economic and demographic variables and relationships, extant literature also points to other individual level and contextual variables that may influence an individual's propensity to be associated with clientelism. The next section of this report examines the degree to which political participation and income inequality measures predict the likelihood of being offered a material benefit in exchange for the vote.

## Participation, Inequality, and Vote Buying

Parties and politicians using vote buying methods face resource constraints and therefore ought to target individuals who are most likely to reciprocate by casting the agreed upon ballot. To achieve the maximum possible marginal payoff, it seems logical that political operatives seeking to buy votes will more often target those citizens who are civically and politically engaged (and thus more likely to vote in the first place).

In fact, one of the most significant behavioral characteristics scholars have linked to clientelism is civic and political engagement.

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<sup>7</sup> The variable, rural residence, is significant at the 0.1 level, and its substantive effect is close in magnitude to variables that reach the 0.05 significance cut-off; we therefore have some confidence that there is at least a modest relationship between it and the dependent variable.

Brusco, Nazareno and Stokes (2004), among others, suggest that, given the difficulty of monitoring secret ballot electoral processes, candidates and parties often have to make probabilistic calculations over whom to target for vote buying. This can make an active individual a more attractive target than an inactive citizen, and some evidence supports this logic. Using a list experiment, Gonzalez-Ocantos and his colleagues (n.d.) find that Nicaraguans who participate in local civil society meetings (*Consejos de Poder Ciudadanos*) are “far more likely to report vote buying than those who never attend” (21).

To assess the relationship between civic and political engagement and our dependent variable, we created an additive index, ‘participatory citizen’, based on responses to a battery of four questions that ask how often the respondent does the following: assists in community problem solving (cp5); attends community improvement committee meetings (cp8); attends professional association meetings (cp9); and attends political party meetings (cp13).<sup>8</sup>

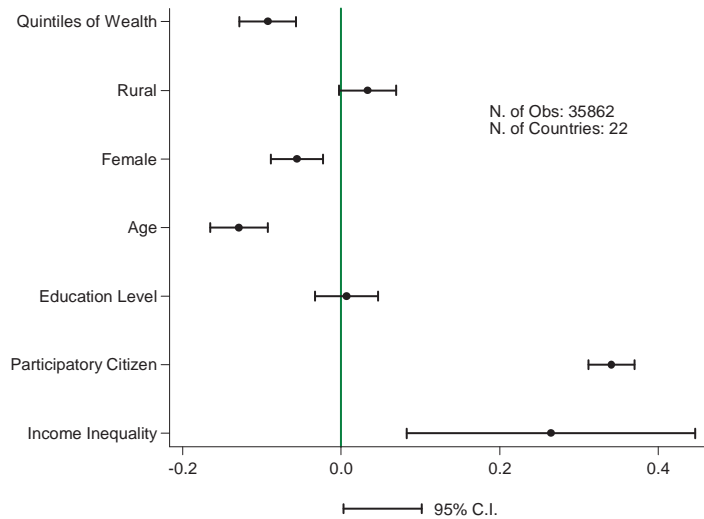
Another factor that may affect clientelism is inequality (e.g., Hicken 2007 and Stokes 2007b). Stokes (2007b, p. 84) writes that “the degree of inequality is central to determining the relative effectiveness of vote buying versus programmatic appeals.” Despite the theoretical strength of this argument, to our knowledge there exists no extensive cross-national test of the connection between income inequality and clientelistic practices (but see Debs and Helmke 2009). To this end, we assess the degree to which a country's income inequality, measured using the Gini coefficient,<sup>9</sup> predicts the likelihood that

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<sup>8</sup> The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variables that make up the Participatory Citizen Index is 0.57. A principal components factor analysis of the four items yields just one factor with an eigenvalue over 1.0.

<sup>9</sup> Gini coefficients for each of the 22 countries included in the analysis were obtained from the *Human Development Report 2009* (UNDP 2009).

**Figure 3. Hierarchical logistic regression analysis of the determinants of being offered a material benefit in exchange for a vote, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP and UNDP (2009)

individuals in that context report being targeted by vote buying.

Since our expectations and measures involve individual and contextual (second-level) variables, we estimate a multi-level logistic regression model that allows us to assess the effects of individual characteristics while simultaneously examining the effects of the context (in this case, the country's income inequality) in which the individual resides. Figure 3 shows the relationships between the socio-economic, demographic, behavioral, and contextual variables and the likelihood of being offered a good or favor in exchange for a vote.

The relationships between the dependent variable and the socio-economic and demographic variables remain largely unchanged when comparing Figure 2 to Figure 3. However, it is the behavioral and contextual variables that show the strongest relationships with the dependent variable, reporting having been offered a material benefit in exchange for a vote.

The results of the statistical analysis strongly support the notion that individuals who are more civically and politically engaged are more likely to report being offered a gift or favor for their vote. Indeed, of all variables included in the analysis, the 'participatory citizen' measure is the strongest predictor of the likelihood that an individual is offered a material benefit in exchange for his vote.

Also interesting in Figure 3 is the statistically significant, positive effect for the income inequality measure. Considering the Latin American and Caribbean regions and all else equal, the results suggest that as income inequality within a country increases (meaning distribution becomes *more* unequal), reported levels of vote buying will also increase.

## Conclusions

In this report, we have examined an issue that strikes at the core of democratic accountability. While instances of vote buying have been documented and studied in individual Latin American countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and Nicaragua, this report shows that vote buying practices affect all countries within the Americas, though to different degrees. In analyzing the tendency for individuals to report having been targeted by vote buying efforts across 22 countries, this report heeds Stokes' (2007a) call for more cross-national research with respect to the study of clientelism.

For the most part, our results are consistent with some of the principal arguments and findings in the vote buying literature. For example, in accord with previous research (Brusco et al. 2004, Stokes 2005), our analyses suggest that the poor and young are more likely to be approached with vote buying offers than are

wealthier and older citizens. Furthermore, while the effect of rural residence failed to reach statistical significance in the strictest sense ( $p < 0.05$ ), it does appear that this variable works in much the same way that some scholars have suggested, in that those living in rural areas are at least somewhat more likely to be targeted by offers of material benefits in exchange for their votes.

We further find strong evidence that, considering the Latin American and Caribbean regions as a whole, the more civically and politically engaged a person is, the more likely she is to report being offered a material benefit in exchange for her vote. Finally, the analyses presented here strongly support scholars' previously stated, but under-tested, expectation that income inequality is positively associated with the prevalence of vote buying practices.

This report has presented a very basic analysis of factors predicting vote buying behaviors in the Americas, and its implications can likewise be summarized in simple terms. First, individual factors that make vote buying practices a relatively low cost investment predict, and likely help to maintain, clientelism as a political practice in the Americas. Thus, those who are poorer and more engaged are more likely to be targeted with vote buying offers. Second, in addition to individual factors, context matters in predicting clientelism. Specifically, income inequality is positively related to the pervasiveness of vote buying efforts. Income inequality has been linked to a number of deleterious social and political outcomes,<sup>10</sup> and our findings here raise one more reason to be concerned about the quality of democratic politics under conditions of income inequality.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, income inequality has been argued to have negative effects on social and interpersonal trust (Uslaner and Brown 2005, Córdova 2008) and democratic consolidation in fragile democracies (see Geddes 2007); likewise it is believed to make politics more susceptible to insurgency and political violence (Muller and Seligson 1987).

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### Appendix 1. Logistic regression model of likelihood of being offered a material benefit in exchange for a vote (Design Effect Adjusted)

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Education Level	0.025	0.022
Age	-0.103*	0.019
Female	-0.083*	0.018
Rural	0.046	0.027
Quintiles of Wealth	-0.076*	0.023
Mexico	0.232*	0.035
Guatemala	0.178*	0.033
El Salvador	0.112*	0.035
Nicaragua	0.005	0.037
Costa Rica	0.077*	0.035
Panama	0.239*	0.04
Colombia	0.198*	0.034
Ecuador	0.096*	0.045
Bolivia	0.315*	0.056
Peru	0.148*	0.035
Paraguay	0.213*	0.032
Chile	-0.006	0.043
Brazil	0.230*	0.052
Venezuela	0.148*	0.041
Argentina	0.236*	0.043
Dominican Republic	0.302*	0.031
Jamaica	0.001	0.037
Guyana	-0.008	0.049
Trinidad & Tobago	0.036	0.039
Belize	0.228*	0.031
Suriname	0.039	0.047
Constant	-2.116*	0.029
<i>Number of Observations</i>	36,601	
<i>F</i>	21.63	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \* $p < .05$ , two-tailed  
Country of reference: Uruguay



## Appendix 2. Hierarchical logistic regression model of likelihood of being offered a material benefit in exchange for a vote (Design Effect Adjusted)

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Income Inequality	0.264*	0.093
Participatory Citizen	0.341*	0.01
Education Level	0.007	0.020
Age	-0.129*	0.019
Female	-0.056*	0.017
Rural	0.033	0.018
Quintiles of Wealth	-0.093*	0.018
Constant	-2.114*	0.092
<i>Number of Observations</i>	35,682	
<i>Number of Countries</i>	22	
<i>Wald Chi2</i>	637.11	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2011

Number 58

## The Economics of Happiness in the Americas

By Margarita Corral  
[margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:margarita.corral@vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** Does money buy happiness? Classic research into the question argued the affirmative but *only* at the individual level, maintaining that living in a wealthier country does not lead to comparatively higher levels of life satisfaction (Easterlin 1995). The “Easterlin paradox,” as this is termed, has since been subjected to debate. In this *Insights* report, with data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer, I document that economic factors matter at both the individual and national levels in the Americas. Specifically, perceptions of one’s personal economic situation, household wealth, and national economic development are strong predictors of happiness. In addition, other factors, such as church attendance, interpersonal trust, ideology and socio-demographic traits play a significant role in predicting levels of life satisfaction in the region. I conclude with a discussion of remaining questions, suggesting in particular that future research focus on happiness as an independent variable in explanations of political attitudes and behavior.

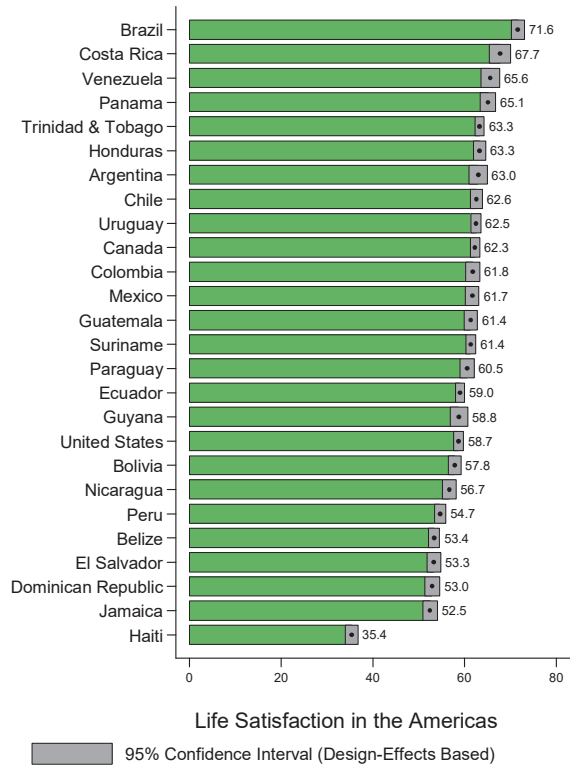
*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

What brings happiness? In the academic pursuit of the formula for happiness, there is no consensus view on what determines “the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life favorably” (Veenhoven 1991, 565)<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, economic factors are frequently linked to happiness and life satisfaction (Easterlin 1995; Stevenson and Wolfers 2008; Tella and MacCulloch 2008).<sup>2</sup> However, a debate has developed over an important early finding suggesting that economic fortunes matter *only* at the individual level, so that living in a wealthier country does not lead to comparatively higher levels of life satisfaction. While Easterlin (1995) provided important evidence in support of this “paradox,” newer research suggests that national wealth may indeed matter for happiness. The *AmericasBarometer* survey allows the opportunity to ask these questions: To what extent do economic factors predict life satisfaction in the Americas? Does economic development across countries explain levels of well-being in the region? Furthermore, what other factors explain happiness in the Americas?

This *Insights*<sup>3</sup> report looks at levels of life satisfaction in the Americas and assesses both individual and national determinants of variation in those levels. To evaluate this topic, I query the 2010 round of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) surveys,<sup>4</sup> in which 43,990 respondents from 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States and Canada were asked the following question:

LS6. On this card there is a ladder with steps numbered 0 to 10, where 0 is the lowest step and 10 the highest. Suppose that I tell you that the highest step represents the best life possible for you and the lowest step represents the worst life possible for you...if the highest is 10 and the lowest 0, on what step of the ladder do you feel at this moment?<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1. Life Satisfaction in the Americas, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Carol Graham for her comments on a previous version of this report

<sup>2</sup> Scholars agree that life satisfaction and happiness are extremely highly correlated and that the concepts can be used interchangeably (Schyns 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>

<sup>4</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>5</sup> Recent studies find that support for the Easterlin paradox depends on multiple factors such as the question used to measure life satisfaction. Specifically, it is found that questions framed like the one used in this report show a clear relationship with income, while using questions that ask directly about the level of happiness or life satisfaction attenuates that relationship (Graham et al 2010). The LAPOP questionnaire has another question tapping the same issue of life satisfaction, LS3. This question asks respondents if they are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with their lives in general. Although average scores are higher using LS3, countries remain almost in the same positions, with the exception of Colombia, which appears at the top. When the models presented here are estimated using LS3 as the dependent variable, results are quite similar, though married becomes statistically significant and size of town becomes insignificant. GDP at the national level is significant at  $p=0.07$ .

Responses were recoded on a 0-100 scale to follow the LAPOP standard, which facilitates comparability across questions and survey waves.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 displays national average scores with their confidence intervals. The average level of life satisfaction in the Americas is 59.5. All the countries except for Haiti, with an average of only 35.4, surpass the middle point on the scale. Nonetheless, there is some variation across countries. At the one extreme, citizens in Brazil report the highest levels of life satisfaction in the Western hemisphere; Brazil is the only country with a score higher than 70. Costa Rica, Venezuela and Panama also show relatively high levels of life satisfaction. At the other extreme, apart from the aforementioned low levels in Haiti, we find Peru, Belize, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, where average life satisfaction scores fall in the low 50s.

What factors explain variation in life satisfaction in Latin America and the Caribbean?<sup>7</sup> I approach this question by assessing the impact of different factors pointed out by the literature on happiness, first using a linear regression model with individual level variables, and then a multilevel analysis in order to capture the effects of national income.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The rate of non response for the whole sample is 2.36%.

<sup>7</sup> Citizens in Canada and the United States hold sharply higher levels on many socio-economic characteristics; for this reason and because the focus of this series is on Latin America and the Caribbean, I excluded these cases from the analyses. Nonetheless, when I estimated the models presented here including Canada and the United States, the impact of GDP at the national level remains statistically significant, though diminished. Because not all questions were asked in the United States and Canada, these models do not contain all the independent variables used in this report (i.e. wealth, size of city and unemployment). Without these three variables, GDP remains significant at  $p < 0.05$ . When including income, which leads to a drop of 10% of cases, GDP is significant at  $p = 0.07$ .

<sup>8</sup> All statistical analyses in this report were conducted using STATA v10.1 and results were adjusted for the complex sample designs employed. Given that levels of life satisfaction vary across countries, dummy variables for each country were included in the OLS model, with Uruguay

## Individual Determinants of Life Satisfaction: Economic Factors and Beyond

The numerous factors identified in existing scholarship as relevant to life satisfaction or happiness can be grouped into broad categories of variables that encompass economic, social, political, and demographic factors. While these can be considered at both the individual and national levels, in this section I focus on individual-level predictors of happiness.

Many scholars have linked economic conditions to happiness, although there is dispute over the extent to which national versus individual level economic factors matter (Clark, Frijters, and Shields 2008; Easterlin 1995; Stevenson and Wolfers 2008; Tella and MacCulloch 2008). Easterlin's well-known paradox states that the relationship between income and well-being is only clear within countries and not between countries. For Easterlin (1995), "subjective well-being varies directly with one's income and inversely with the income of others" (p. 36). In the next section I test the extent to which Easterlin's argument holds at the national level. At the individual level, however, previous research in Latin America has shown that wealth (Graham and Felton 2006) and satisfaction with one's financial situation (Graham and Pettinato 2001) are positively related to happiness. It would be consistent with this literature to find that levels of individual wealth and perceptions of both the personal and national economy are directly linked to life satisfaction in Latin America and the Caribbean. Along the same line, some have found that unemployment has a strong influence on well-being (Lucas et al. 2004).

Beyond economic conditions, some scholars stress the influence of "companionship" (Lane

being the country of reference (see Table 1 in the Appendix for the complete model).

2000); that is to say, families and friends provide individuals with social support that positively affects their happiness. In the same vein, some studies have found that church attendance is positively related to life satisfaction (Radcliff 2001; Napier et al 2008), given that religion can be seen as an insurance that offers social and personal support especially in hard times (Clark and Lelkes 2006). Following this line of logic, we might expect that married people and those with children will exhibit higher levels of life satisfaction. The same is expected for churchgoers.

Age is another factor often explored in the literature. The relationship is defined as a U, with young and old people being the most satisfied with their lives. Research shows that people after their 50s become happier, as they are increasingly able to control emotions, resolve conflicts, and escape from difficulties (Economist 2010; Jopp and Rott 2006). I thus expect that citizens in Latin America in the youngest and oldest cohorts will express comparatively higher levels of life satisfaction.

Other scholars focus on cultural and political characteristics to explain variations in happiness. The cultural approach states that there is a positive correlation between life satisfaction and interpersonal trust (Inglehart 1988). Ideology is also seen as a factor that may predict levels of happiness. Studies in the United States (Taylor, Funk, and Craighill 2006) and cross-national works (Napier and Jost 2008) have found that conservative (or rightist) citizens are happier than liberals (or leftists).

To test expectations generated from the above discussion, I model happiness as a function of individuals' wealth and economic evaluations; family structure (marital status and whether or not the respondent has children); age; interpersonal trust; and ideological self-placement.<sup>9</sup> In addition, because most studies

identify demographic variables as statistically significant predictors of happiness, I include measures of gender, education, and size of town in the model. Finally, although they are not shown in the figure, the model includes country dummy variables to account for the impact of non-measured factors related to the different countries.

The results of this regression analysis are shown in Figure 2. Each variable included in the model is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of those variables on life satisfaction is shown graphically by a dot, which if falling to the right of the vertical "0" line implies a positive contribution and if to the left of the "0" line indicates a negative impact. Only when the confidence intervals (the horizontal lines) do not overlap the vertical "0" line is the variable statistically significant (at  $p < .05$  or better). The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients (i.e., "beta weights").

The model shows that, at the individual level, economic factors (wealth and perception of the national and personal economic situation) are positively related to levels of life satisfaction in Latin America and the Caribbean. Those with better economic profiles are happier. Interestingly, the variable with the strongest effect is perception of one's personal economic

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rightist/conservative positions. The variable called *married* includes married respondents and those in common law marriages. *Unemployed* refers to respondents who are actively looking for a job. The baseline category contains those who are working, students, housewives, retired or disabled, and who do not work but are not looking for a job. The variable called *children* is a dummy variable which accounts for those who have children, regardless of how many. The economic perception variables come from two questions that ask respondents to describe both the country's economic situation and their overall economic situation as very good, good, fair, bad or very bad. *Church attendance* is measured based on the following question: Do you attend meetings of any religious organization once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year or never? *Interpersonal trust* is measured based on a question that asked respondents about the extent to which people in their community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy. Finally, the measure of *wealth* is based on an index which takes into account household asset items such as television, vehicles, refrigerator, telephone, etc. For more details on the construction of this index see Córdova (2009).

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<sup>9</sup> The *ideology* variable is based on merging two different questions that ask respondents to place themselves on the left-right continuum (asked in Latin America) or on the conservative-liberal one (asked in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago). Higher values refer to



situation. The influence of this subjective determination is far greater than the more objective wealth measure.<sup>10</sup> In the model, perception of the national economic situation is also statistically significant but its effect is smaller than that of the other economic variables. Also, as expected, being unemployed decreases levels of life satisfaction.

Contrary to what researchers have found in other contexts, being married has a positive effect, but one that is not statistically significant.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, having children is negatively related to one's reported level of life satisfaction. In line with the expectation, we observe that those who attend church more frequently are more satisfied with their lives.

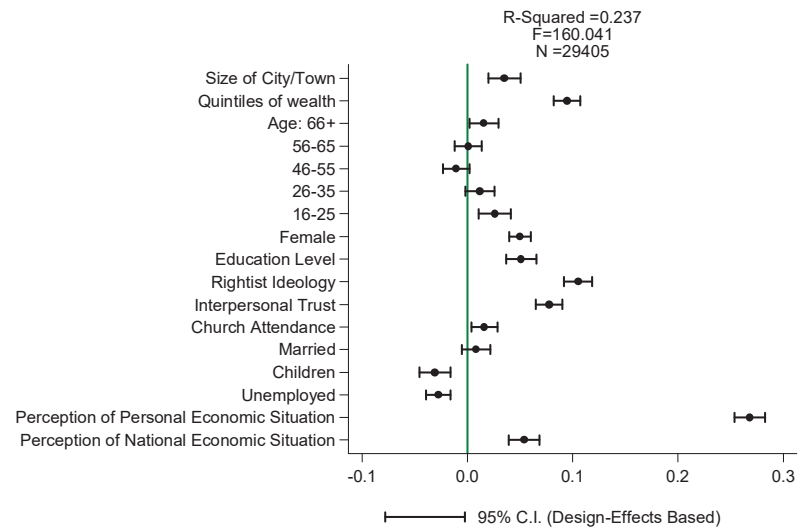
Interpersonal trust has a statistically significant relationship with happiness. Those citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean who consider the people around them to be trustworthy have higher levels of life satisfaction, holding all other variables constant.<sup>12</sup> Also, as is found in advanced democracies, ideology plays a role in explaining happiness. Those at the right end of the ideological spectrum tend to report higher levels of life satisfaction than those placed on the left.

<sup>10</sup> It is possible that this relationship is driven by dual causality: a perceived positive economic situation increases happiness and, as well, happy people tend to perceive better economic situations. It is beyond the scope of this report to test for such dual causality. Nonetheless, it is consistent with the literature to interpret the results to mean that economic evaluations exert an influence on happiness.

<sup>11</sup> Breaking this into further categories, I find that, compared to single respondents, married ones are happier, but this is not statistically significant. Divorced and separated citizens are unhappier than singles, but this is not statistically significant. The same is true for a comparison between widowed respondents and married ones; the latter appear slightly happier but the difference is not significant.

<sup>12</sup> We might expect that higher levels of life satisfaction increase interpersonal trust. However, given the scope of this short report I do not test this possible dual causality.

**Figure 2. Determinants of Life Satisfaction in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Country Fixed Effects and Intercept Included but not Shown Here

Finally, and consistent with Graham and Felton's (2006) research on Latin America, women, the oldest and youngest, and those who are more educated express higher levels of happiness. However, contrary to a finding in that same study, the results here suggest that living in large cities is related to higher levels of life satisfaction.

## Economic Development and Life Satisfaction

But how does a country's economic condition affect its citizens' levels of happiness? Two contrary positions have emerged. Specifically, Easterlin (1995) states that national income and happiness are not related. He argues that citizens determine their levels of life satisfaction by comparing themselves to the others around them; thus, when the national income rises, citizens simply adjust their expectations upwards. However, other scholars find a strong correlation, with citizens in richer countries being happier than those in poorer ones (Economist 2010; Stevenson and Wolfers 2008). This would be consistent with an approach based on needs or welfare (Sen 1999, Maslow

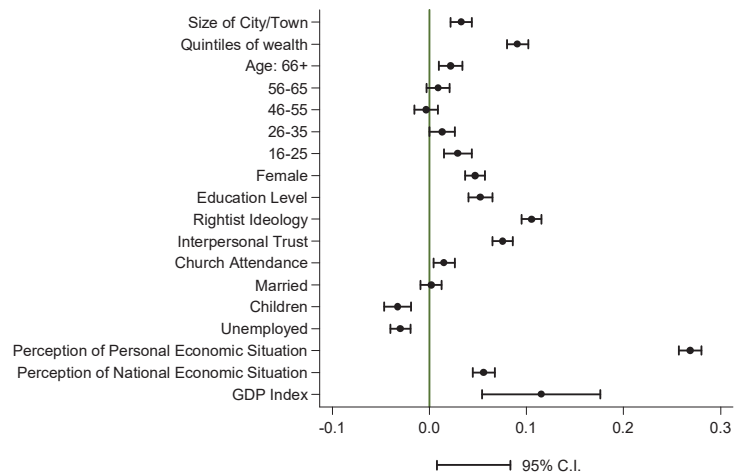
1987). That is, in wealthier states, citizens are better able to meet their basic needs and have greater capabilities for human development; this then affects their levels of life satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>

To empirically test this relationship in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, I estimate a multilevel regression model which includes the previous individual level characteristics *plus* an indicator of economic development. Specifically, national income is measured by an index of GDP per capita.<sup>14</sup> Results from this model are graphically shown in Figure 3. The effects of individual level variables remain practically the same when compared to the previous model. In addition, the national level variable displays a positive effect. Citizens living in richer countries express significantly higher levels of life satisfaction.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

In sum, this *Insights* report suggests that happiness in Latin America and the Caribbean is related to economic factors as well as social, political, and demographic variables. With the exception of Haiti, all the countries display levels of life satisfaction higher than the midpoint on a 0-100 scale. But, still, variation exists within and across countries. Overall, however, we have found that individual and national economic circumstances have a

**Figure 3. The Effect of Economic Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP and UNDP (Human Development Report 2009)

powerful effect on happiness and thus find no evidence of the Easterlin's paradox.

This variation in the levels of happiness can be explained by both individual and national characteristics. Therefore, results in this report do not support Easterlin's paradox, according to which happiness is only related to economic conditions at the individual level. We observe that at least within Latin America and the Caribbean, economic development at the national level explains different levels of life satisfaction among citizens in the region. While other factors matter, we clearly see that economic conditions at both levels help to explain a great part of the variance. In fact, it is striking that perceptions concerning one's personal economic situation, a household wealth measure, and a measure of a country's level of development are among the factors with the most substantial power (that is, they have the greatest substantive effects) to predict happiness in Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore, if policy makers are interested in increasing levels of life satisfaction among citizens, improving economic conditions would seem to be one of the most effective ways to achieve this goal.

It is also striking that most research on happiness is focused on finding its determinants

<sup>13</sup> Other researchers have focused on types of welfare state regime (Pacek and Radcliff 2008) and democracy (Dorn et al. 2007) among other country-level factors that may affect happiness levels. Democracy is moderately correlated with economic development. Nonetheless, using democracy as a second level variable, measured by Freedom House scores, does not yield statistically significant results, suggesting that economic development is what matters for happiness, rather than democracy.

<sup>14</sup> To measure national wealth, I rely on the 2009 UNDP's GDP index. This index, which can take values between 0 and 1, is based on GDP per capita in purchasing power parity terms in US dollars.

<sup>15</sup> Results for other economic variables at the national level such as GDP growth and inequality did not yield statistically significant results.

rather than on looking at its implications, with few exceptions such as a recent study that finds a relationship between levels of life satisfaction and voter turnout among Latin-Americans (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2011). This report has followed the former model. However, future research could assess the effects of life satisfaction on politics, such as the way citizens get involved in their communities. We might expect happiness to affect how citizens interact

*Economic conditions at the personal and national levels are among the factors with greatest substantive impact on happiness in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

with their social and political environments or express their demands. For instance, it would be useful to learn the extent to which dissatisfied citizens engage in political activities to demand policies that could improve their levels of happiness. Also, it would be interesting to assess the extent to which life satisfaction is translated into satisfaction with democracy. In short, the study of happiness offers researchers a wide array of possibilities worth exploration.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1. Predictors of Life Satisfaction in Latin America and the Caribbean 2010

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Percep. National Econ. Situation	0.0538*	0.0074
Percep. Personal Econ. Situation	0.2680*	0.0074
Unemployed	-0.0275*	0.0059
Children	-0.0307*	0.0075
Married	0.0083	0.0069
Church Attendance	0.0162*	0.0062
Interpersonal Trust	0.0777*	0.0064
Rightist Ideology	0.1050*	0.0068
Education	0.0512*	0.0072
Female	0.0499*	0.0052
16-25 years old+	0.0261*	0.0077
26-35 years old+	0.0118	0.0070
46-55 years old+	-0.0105	0.0064
56-65 years old+	0.0009	0.0065
66+ years old+	0.0158*	0.0070
Quintiles of Wealth	0.0945*	0.0064
Size of Town	0.0352*	0.0077
Mexico	0.0032*	0.0072
Guatemala	0.0296*	0.0078
El Salvador	-0.0420*	0.0070
Honduras	0.0337*	0.0086
Nicaragua	-0.0142	0.0079
Costa Rica	0.0365*	0.0134
Panama	0.0104	0.0074
Colombia	-0.0007	0.0070
Ecuador	-0.0150	0.0094
Bolivia	-0.0374*	0.0094
Peru	-0.0366*	0.0068
Paraguay	-0.0280*	0.0077
Chile	0.0014	0.0077
Brazil	0.0902*	0.0113
Venezuela	0.0468*	0.0085
Argentina	0.0219*	0.0092
Dominican Rep.	-0.0340*	0.0085
Haiti	-0.1176*	0.0075
Jamaica	-0.0240*	0.0082
Guyana	-0.0301*	0.0089
Trinidad & Tobago	0.0152*	0.0065
Belize	-0.0271*	0.0079
Suriname	-0.0197*	0.0078
Constant	0.0034	0.0070
<i>R-Squared</i>	0.237	
<i>Number of Observations</i>	29,405	
* p<0.05		

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

Country of Reference: Uruguay

+ Cohort of reference: 36-45 years old



Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Model Predicting Life Satisfaction in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010

	Coefficient	Standard Error
GDP	0.1153*	0.0310
Percep. National Econ. Situation	0.0561*	0.0059
Percep. Personal Econ. Situation	0.2686*	0.0059
Unemployed	-0.0297*	0.0052
Children	-0.0325*	0.0070
Married	0.0018	0.0057
Church Attendance	0.0153*	0.0055
Interpersonal Trust	0.0756*	0.0053
Rightist Ideology	0.1052*	0.0052
Education	0.0526*	0.0063
Female	0.0470*	0.0052
16-25 years old+	0.0292*	0.0073
26-35 years old+	0.0131*	0.0066
46-55 years old+	-0.0033	0.0062
56-65 years old+	0.0092	0.0061
66+ years old+	0.0220*	0.0061
Quintiles of Wealth	0.0908*	0.0056
Size of Town	0.0329*	0.0056
Constant	0.0009	0.0314
<i>Number of Observations</i>	29,253	
<i>Number of Countries</i>	24	
<i>Wald Chi2</i>	5711.51	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

+ Cohort of reference: 36-45 years old

# AmericasBarometer Insights: 2011

Number 59

## Trust in the National Police

*By Nabeela Ahmad, Victoria Hubickey,  
and Francis McNamara, IV  
with Frederico Batista Pereira  
Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** This AmericasBarometer *Insights* report compares and analyzes the degree of trust in the national police force across the Americas. We find a positive correlation between self-identifying as white (compared to all other groups) and trust in the police, while other factors such as a history of crime victimization, fear of crime, and victimization by corruption contribute negatively to people's perceptions of the national police force. These findings are consistent with our expectations based on our survey of extant scholarship. Our findings help us to better understand an important component of the rule of law in the Americas.

LAPOP is pleased to note that this report was developed and written by Vanderbilt undergraduate students participating in a Vanderbilt University honors seminar (HNRS186, taught by Professor E. J. Zechmeister). Biographies of the authors are provided in the report appendix.

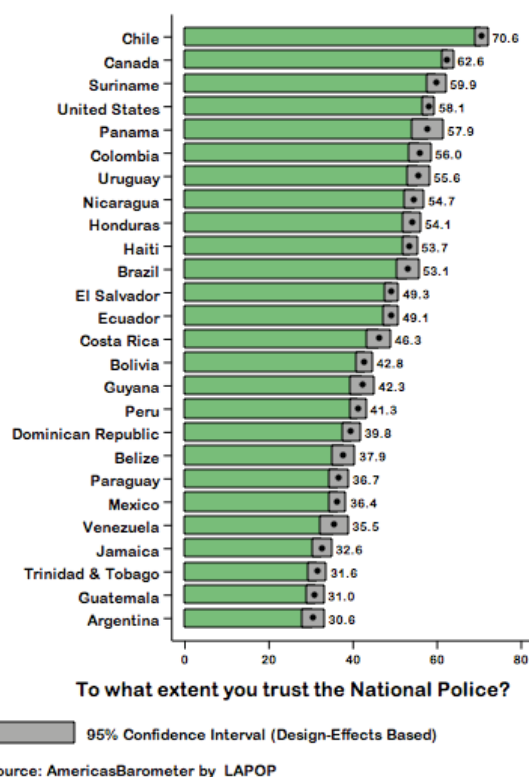
*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

Having a trustworthy national police force is important to a stable, well-functioning democracy. This is arguably the case in general, and may be even more important in countries coping with high levels of crime and violence. Concerns with issues of security in many Latin American and Caribbean countries are high and, in some cases, have increased in recent years.<sup>1</sup> In a number of countries, problems related to security and citizen-police relations have led governments to undertake reforms aimed at improving the capacity and profile of their police forces. Examples of such cases include Chile, Brazil, El Salvador, and Colombia, among others in the Americas. In Chile, for example, reforms reinforced the national police, and police role in crime prevention and control greatly increased in the early 2000s (Bailey and Dammert 2006, 16, 58-60).

Trust in the police force is important because security is one of the principal directives of a sovereign state. If people are unsure that the police can and will provide security and order, public confidence in the law enforcement, criminal justice, and judicial systems and potentially in the democratic regime more broadly will be undermined. Conversely, when citizen trust in the police increases, it can facilitate citizen involvement with local police services, public cooperation with the police, and compliance with the law (Jackson and Bradford 2010).

<sup>1</sup> Across the Americas in 2010, an average of 28.3 percent of individuals reported an issue related to security as the most important problem facing the country (Zechmeister and Seligson 2011). While this aggregate number does not reflect a significant increase in insecurity at the regional level when comparing to 2008, Zechmeister and Seligson (2011) report that in six cases “(Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay), the percentage of people indicating a security-related problem increased by 10 or more percentage points.” As is clear, the salience of the issue varies across countries and time.

**Figure 1. Trust in the National Police**



Why do some citizens trust the police more than others? In this *Insights* report<sup>2</sup>, we compare levels of trust in the national police across the Americas and examine individual factors that predict the extent to which one trusts the national police.

The data analyzed in this report are part of the AmericasBarometer 2010 survey, for which 43,990 people were surveyed across 26 countries.<sup>3</sup> In this wave, individuals from all 26 countries were asked to respond to the following question on a scale from one (“not at all”) to seven (“a lot”):

<sup>2</sup> Previous issues of the *Insight* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/studiesandpublications>. The data on which they are based is located at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/datasets>.

<sup>3</sup> Funding for the AmericasBarometer has mainly come from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important additional support has come from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

**B18. To what extent do you trust the National Police?**<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 shows the mean responses to the question, with the values recalibrated on a 0-100 scale in order to conform to the LAPOP standard. A value of 0 reflects the attitude that the police force is “not at all” trusted, whereas a value of 100 represents the feeling that the police are trusted “a lot.” Dots on the bars indicate the average value for each country, while the grey sections indicate the 95% confidence interval.

There is relatively wide variance in average levels of trust in the national police across countries in the Americas. Countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Guatemala and Argentina report particularly low levels of trust while populations in countries such as Chile, Canada, Suriname, and the United States on average view the police as more trustworthy. Registering the highest levels of trust in the police by far is Chile.<sup>5</sup> There are a number of factors that could account for this, including Chile’s high level of human and economic development, but it may also be important that in the late 90s and early 2000s Chile significantly reformed its police and criminal justice system (Bailey and Dammert 2006, 16).

While Chile and a few other countries have fairly high values in Figure 1, it is noteworthy that more than half of the countries in the study have average values below the midpoint on the scale. This reflects a general sense of distrust in the police within the Americas. In the following sections, we assess factors that may help explain the differing levels of trust in the police.

<sup>4</sup> The percentage selecting not to answer this question was 1.16%. The analysis was conducted using STATA v10.1.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the other factors mentioned, the survey was taken soon after the earthquake in Chile in 2010; the role of the police in post-disaster efforts may have contributed to the comparatively high levels of trust we see here.

## Who Trusts the National Police?

Characteristics of individuals and the neighborhoods where they live may help explain variation in levels of trust in police. Therefore, we first explore the effects of a set of basic socioeconomic and demographic factors. Specifically, we assess the extent to which an individual’s wealth, size of town of residence, age, gender, and education predict trust in the police.<sup>6</sup>

*[There exists] a general sense of distrust in the police within the Americas.*

In a previous *Insights* report, the following characteristics were shown to predict an increased likelihood of being abused by the police: being male, being a young adult, and living in a large city or metro area (Cruz 2009).<sup>7</sup> We expect that the demographic groups most likely to experience abuse at the hands of the police will be the same ones who are the least likely to trust the police.

In Figure 2, each independent variable included in the analysis is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of these variables on trust in police is shown graphically by a dot, which if located to the right of the vertical “0” line indicates a positive contribution, and if to the left of the “0” line a negative contribution. Statistically significant contributors are shown

<sup>6</sup> The variables are as follows: (a) “Quintiles of Wealth,” which runs from 1 (Least Wealth) to 5 (Most Wealth); (b) “Size of City/Town” which runs from 1 (Rural Area) to 5 (National Capital); (c) “Age,” which runs from 18 (16 in the case of Nicaragua) to 96 years of age; (d) “Female,” coded 1 for women and 0 for men; (e) “Education” which runs from 0 to 18 years of completed education. We omit the United States and Canada from the analysis in order to focus the report on Latin America and the Caribbean, as is standard for most reports in the *Insights* series. Country fixed effects are included but not shown in the figure. See the Appendix for the full regression output.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the question used in the 2008 survey to examine police abuse was not subsequently included in the 2010 survey, so we are unable to examine the explicit relationship between police abuse and trust in the national police at this time.

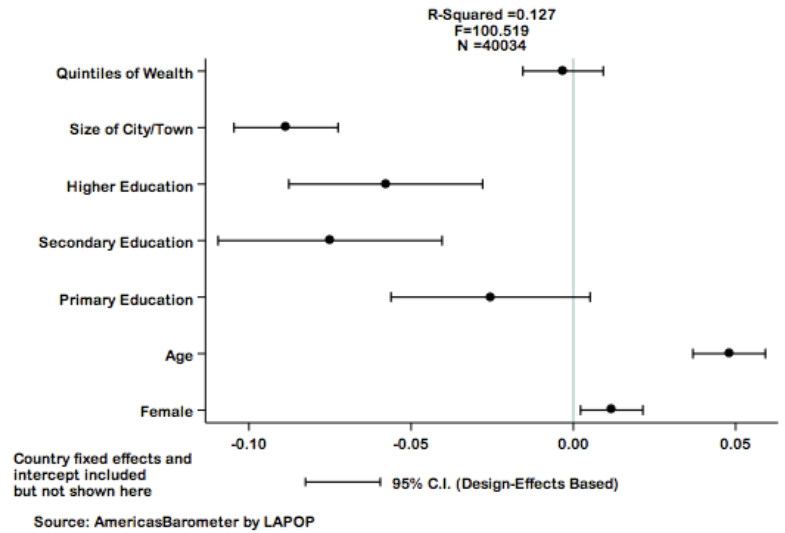
by confidence interval lines stretching to the left and right of each dot; only when the confidence intervals do not overlap the vertical “0” line is the variable significant (at .05 or better). The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients (i.e., “beta weights”).

As the results in Figure 2 show, the size of city has a negative relationship with trust in the police. In other words, those living in small, rural communities are more likely to trust the police. This measure has a particularly large effect compared to the other variables in the model. We find that education is not a linear predictor of trust in police. Those with the highest levels of education (post-secondary) and those with the lowest levels of education (primary education) are more likely to trust the police than those who received an average level of education (secondary education). Meanwhile, age has a positive correlation, indicating that older citizens tend to have more trust in police. Gender is just barely statistically significant, but the graph reveals that women tend to trust in the police somewhat more than their male counterparts. Interestingly, wealth does not have a statistically significant relationship to trust in the national police.

## Corruption, Race/Ethnicity, and Crime Victimization as Predictors of Trust in the Police

In expanding the analysis beyond basic socioeconomic and demographic factors, we focus on four experience-related measures that may help predict trust in the police: corruption; race/ethnicity; crime victimization; and fear of crime victimization. First, we believe one’s exposure to corruption has a significant impact on level of trust. Citizens who have witnessed bribes may be less inclined to trust that the

**Figure 2. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics predicting levels of trust in the national police, 2010**



police have their best interests in mind (Seligson 2002, Chevigny 1990). Seligson (2002, p. 324) argues that exposure to corruption reduces “belief in the political system and reduces interpersonal trust.” Carrying this logic forward, we argue that specific experience with corruption by police officers will decrease the trust one has in the police.

In addition to exposure to corruption, we believe race/ethnicity can predict trust in the police. It is possible that certain racial/ethnic groups may simply be more likely to face discrimination or other mistreatment at the hands of the police. While admittedly not a study focused on Latin America or the Caribbean, Lai and Zhao (2010) find that in the United States, African Americans hold the least favorable views of the police, followed by Hispanics and then whites. We recognize the significant variation in race and ethnic demographic profiles across the Americas (both within the societies at large and within the police forces), but as an exploratory exercise we nonetheless assess whether those who self-identify as white express greater trust in the police compared to all others.



Lastly, we believe one's experience with crime victimization can predict trust in the police. According to Malone (2010, p. 116), "as respondents grow more fearful of victimization in their immediate environments, they are significantly less likely to support the police... This is likely due to the fact that crime prevention is the principal task of police... Consequently, victims of crime are more prone to blame the police, the most visible faces of public service provision." As a result, we predict higher levels of individual crime victimization will lead to decreased levels of police trust. Likewise, we expect that an individual's fear of crime victimization will also be associated with lower levels of trust in the national police.

With these factors, we predict trust in the police with a regression model that includes measures of experience with police corruption<sup>8</sup>; race<sup>9</sup>/ethnicity, fear of crime victimization<sup>10</sup>, and actual crime victimization<sup>11</sup> (using measures of

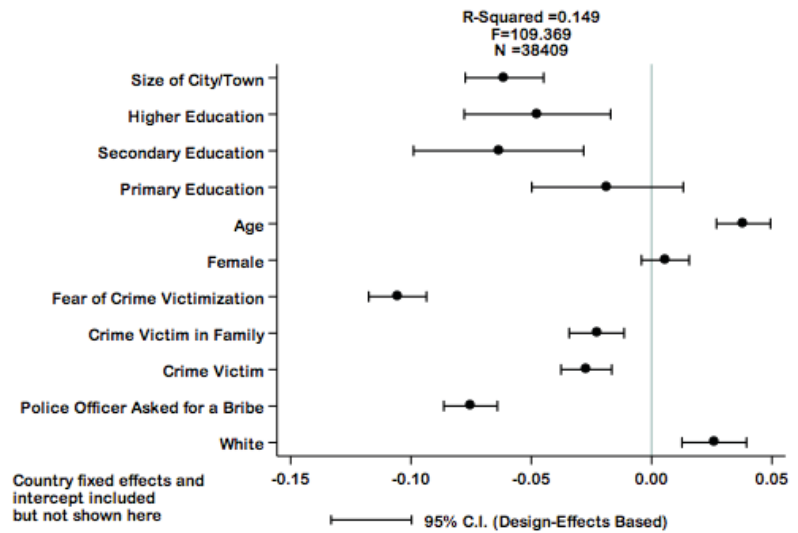
<sup>8</sup> Police corruption was measured by EXC2: "Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last 12 months?" Responses were coded 0 for "no" and 1 for "yes."

<sup>9</sup> Race was measured by ETID: "Do you consider yourself white, mestizo, indigenous, black, mulatto, or of another race?" Responses were coded 1 for "white," 2 for "mixed," 3 for "indigenous," 4 for "black," 5 for "mulatto," 6 for "moreno," 7 for "other," 9 for "Chinese," 10 for "Indian," 11 for "creole," and 12 for "Spanish." In the analysis presented here, we code those responding "white" to "1" and all others to "0", the baseline category.

<sup>10</sup> Fear of crime victimization was measured using the question AOJ11: "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?" The variable is coded here so that higher values indicate greater security.

<sup>11</sup> Responses to the crime victimization questions, as measured by the variables VIC1EXT and VIC1HOGAR, were coded either as 0 or 1, where 1 represented "yes" and 0 represented "no." VIC1EXT asked whether the respondent had been a victim of any type of crime in the past twelve months while VIC1HOGAR asked whether anyone else

**Figure 3. Multivariate regression analysis of the determinants of trust in the national police, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

both the individual's and their family members' victimization). The model also includes the same socioeconomic and demographic measures shown in Figure 2 and country fixed effects, though the latter are not shown for the sake of brevity (for the full regression output see the Appendix).

The results are presented in Figure 3. Considering first the socioeconomic and demographic factors, we see that the results remain pretty much the same as we found in Figure 2 for education and wealth (insignificant), size of city/town (significant and negative), and age (significant and positive); meanwhile, the coefficient on female, which was significant but small in relative size in Figure 2, is no longer significant.

Turning to the variables of interest in this section, the results in Figure 3 reflect our expectations. Self-identification as white has a significant, positive correlation with trust in the police, while the variable measuring victimization by police corruption (a police

living in the respondent's household had been a victim of a crime in the previous twelve months.

officer asking for a bribe) has a significant, negative correlation. Furthermore, the variables measuring crime victimization (both for family members and for the respondent) negatively and significantly correspond with trust in police. It is important to note there is a stronger negative effect found for those who have been targets of crime compared to those whose relatives were targets of crime. This reveals that the extent of direct victimization by crime is an important factor to consider. Lastly, the variable measuring fear of crime also correlates negatively with trust in police. It is important to note that this variable has a stronger negative correlation to trust in police than actual individual crime victimization. Consequently, this reveals that an individual's perception of security is an important factor to remember when analyzing trust in the police.

In short, our findings elucidate a reality of the police system in Latin America: faith in the police is diminished by negative encounters with the police, among certain racial/ethnic groups (compared to those identifying as white), and among those who have been victims of crime or fear becoming a victim of crime. More simply, trust in the police in Latin America and the Caribbean is unequally distributed.

## **Conclusions**

An effective police force is essential to keeping order and safeguarding the rule of law. This police force cannot be effective, however, if citizens do not trust it. In this report, we examined the differing levels of trust in the police as recorded by the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey, and uncovered some of the factors that appear to result in lower or heightened amounts of trust among individuals.

We hypothesized four different factors, beyond basic socioeconomic and demographic variables, that likely affect the level of trust in the police

within a country: victimization by corruption (in the form of bribes), racial identity, recent experience with crime victimization, and fear of crime. The results presented corresponded to our expectations, such that self-identification as white is positively correlated with trust in the police, while being a victim of a crime, having a crime victim in the family, fearing crime, and having a police officer ask for a bribe all are negative predictors of trust in the police.

Comparatively, corruption (as measured by a police officer asking for a bribe) had a large effect on trust in the national police. The effect of ethnicity was less substantial, and this may be due to the country-to-country variation with respect to skin colors, stereotypes, and discrimination. A more complex analysis of race/ethnicity and trust in the police was beyond the scope of this report, but we suggest that future scholarship should examine this topic closely.

Developing national trust in the police is key to nation building and, as well, critical to democratic stability. With an effective and credible police force, citizens are more likely to engage in civic activities and feel safe within their own neighborhoods. They are also more likely to feel that government is doing an effective job because the police force is one of the most public arms of the government. In countries where trust in the police is low, our research and analysis underscores the importance of investing in policies of police reform in order to eliminate corrupt practices and bolster programs that deter criminal activity. In these ways, the national police forces can gain credibility in the eyes of the citizenry and pave the way towards a more stable, high quality democratic future.

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## Appendix

Table 1. Demographic Predictors of Trust in the National Police

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Female	0.012*	0.005
Age	0.048*	0.006
Primary Education	-0.026	0.016
Secondary Education	-0.075*	0.018
Higher Education	-0.058*	0.015
Size of City/Town	-0.089*	0.008
Quintiles of Wealth	-0.003	0.006
Mexico	-0.120*	0.010
Guatemala	-0.161*	0.010
El Salvador	-0.045*	0.009
Honduras	-0.026*	0.010
Nicaragua	-0.012	0.010
Costa Rica	-0.067*	0.011
Panama	0.013	0.011
Colombia	-0.001	0.010
Ecuador	-0.054*	0.013
Bolivia	-0.107*	0.013
Peru	-0.083*	0.010
Paraguay	-0.119*	0.010
Chile	0.107*	0.010
Brazil	-0.015	0.013
Venezuela	-0.121*	0.013
Argentina	-0.144*	0.011
Dominican Republic	-0.102*	0.010
Haiti	-0.024*	0.011
Jamaica	-0.146*	0.011
Guyana	-0.092*	0.012
Trinidad & Tobago	-0.153*	0.011
Belize	-0.121*	0.012
Suriname	0.042*	0.011
Constant	0.003	0.007
<i>R Squared</i>		0.127
<i>Number of Observations</i>		36192
* <i>p</i> <0.05		

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \**p*<0.05 two tailed.

**Table 2. Predictors of Trust in the National Police**

	Coefficient	Standard Error
White	0.026*	0.007
Police Officer Asked for a Bribe	-0.075*	0.006
Crime Victim	-0.027*	0.005
Crime Victim in Family	-0.023*	0.006
Fear of Crime Victimization	-0.106*	0.006
Female	0.006	0.005
Age	0.038*	0.006
Primary Education	-0.018	0.016
Secondary Education	-0.064*	0.018
Higher Education	-0.047*	0.016
Size of City/Town	-0.061*	0.008
Quintiles of Wealth	0.000	0.006
Mexico	-0.098*	0.010
Guatemala	-0.143*	0.010
El Salvador	-0.027*	0.009
Honduras	-0.017	0.009
Nicaragua	-0.003	0.010
Costa Rica	-0.067*	0.011
Panama	0.015	0.012
Colombia	0.005	0.010
Ecuador	-0.028*	0.013
Bolivia	-0.077*	0.013
Peru	-0.055*	0.010
Paraguay	-0.106*	0.010
Chile	0.105*	0.010
Brazil	-0.015	0.013
Venezuela	-0.104*	0.012
Argentina	-0.130*	0.011
Dominican Republic	-0.087*	0.010
Haiti	-0.005	0.011
Jamaica	-0.140*	0.011
Guyana	-0.081*	0.013
Trinidad & Tobago	-0.146*	0.011
Belize	-0.104*	0.012
Suriname	0.046*	0.011
Constant	0.003	0.007
<i>R Squared</i>		0.149
<i>Number of Observations</i>		38804

\* $p < 0.05$

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \* $p < 0.05$  two tailed.



## **Appendix: Author Biographies\***

Nabeela Ahmad is a junior at Vanderbilt University, majoring in French and Public Policy. She is from Oak Ridge, TN. After graduating, she hopes to move to New York to pursue a career in public and media relations.

Victoria Hubickey is a senior at Vanderbilt University double majoring in Political Science and Latin American Studies with a minor in Spanish. She is from Huntsville, Alabama and is planning to attend law school in the Fall of 2011.

Francis McNamara, IV, is a sophomore at Vanderbilt University studying economics and mathematics. He is from Louisville, KY, and he intends to attend graduate school and ultimately work in finance.

*\* Author names are listed alphabetically. Federico Batista Pereira, a graduate student in Political Science at Vanderbilt University, acted as a technical consultant on this report.*

# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2011

Number 60

## Democracy in Hard Times: Suriname

By Hillary Voth

[hillary.m.voth@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:hillary.m.voth@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** In mid-2010 the majority of Surinamese people perceived only a mild economic crisis in their country, and few had experienced personal or family job loss. At the same time, Surinamers reported high levels of support for democracy in the abstract, but much lower levels of satisfaction with the way it works in their country. Analysis reveals that economic evaluations and democratic attitudes are strongly linked in Suriname, as tends to be the case in the Americas as a whole. While support for democracy in the abstract is not influenced by perceptions that the country is in crisis, the data suggest it is affected by general evaluations of the national economy. Moreover, satisfaction with democracy is lower among those with more negative general and crisis-specific economic perceptions. Nonetheless, in spite of the effect of the comparatively mild economic crisis on some citizens' democratic attitudes, the Surinamese continue to be strongly supportive of this form of government. This report constitutes part of a subseries examining the region-wide economic crisis and democratic attitudes within selected countries included in the 2010 AmericasBarometer.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

In light of the recent economic crisis, the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer survey set out to determine the impact of hard times on democracy.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, the *Insights* series began a subseries entitled *Democracy in Hard Times*, providing short reports on this subject in several countries.<sup>2</sup> This report on Suriname constitutes part of that subseries; it focuses on Surinamese citizens' perceptions of and experiences with the economic crisis, and on the correlation between these and support for and satisfaction with democracy in 2010.

Formerly a colony of the Netherlands, Suriname gained its independence peacefully in 1975. Its democratic start was stunted by a military coup in 1980, which led to a seven year period of autocratic rule under Desiré "Dési" Bouterse. Elections were held again in 1987, but the civilian government was forced to hand over the reins of power to the military once again in 1990. Democracy has continued uninterrupted since 1991 and today Suriname is a constitutional, parliamentary democracy. Interestingly, in August 2010, shortly after the AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted, Bouterse was elected president by the National Assembly. This was in spite of national charges against him for murder stemming from his days as the military ruler of the country (*Associated Press Online* 2010; *BBC News* 2010) and a conviction for drug trafficking

*While Suriname faces many challenges, the economic crisis was relatively minor in this country, and the Surinamese continue to show high support for democracy.*

by the Netherlands (*The Economist* 2010; Wallis 2010).

According to its citizens, the most serious problems facing Suriname are housing, unemployment, and corruption.<sup>3</sup> Though perceptions of corruption in Suriname are the lowest in the Americas, the issue became particularly salient in 2007, when a fraud conspiracy was exposed in the Finance Ministry involving public and private employees (*EIU ViewsWire* 2007, Joynes 2010).

Furthermore, Suriname suffers from high levels of economic inequality, as well as ethnic and racial divisions. The country has significant Indian, Javanese and Chinese immigrant populations. In fact, the Hindustani population (27%) accounts for the largest ethnic group in Suriname, followed by Creole (18%), Javanese (15%) and Maroon (15%).<sup>4</sup>

These issues might signal democratic weaknesses in Suriname. The following report will demonstrate, however, that Surinamers strongly support democracy. While those who perceive negative economic conditions are generally less supportive and satisfied, overall public attitudes toward democracy in Suriname are robust in the face of those and other problems facing the country.

Suriname was included in the AmericasBarometer for the first time in 2010. In that round, 43,990 individuals from 26 countries

*Note:* Data analysis support for this report was provided by Margarita Corral (Vanderbilt University). Special thanks also to Ruben Martoredjo and Maikel Soekhnandan for their comments on this report.

<sup>1</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>2</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* Series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>.

<sup>3</sup> In the AmericasBarometer survey, participants most often cited housing (14.5%), unemployment (10.3%) and corruption (9.8%) as the most serious problems facing the country. However, there seem to be some serious concerns not captured by the survey since 14.2% of citizens' complaints fell into the "other" category.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics come from the 2004 census as reported by the U.S. Department of State, see <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1893.htm>

in the Americas were interviewed, with a nationally representative probability samples selected from each country. The 2010 survey of Suriname asked 1,516 people about their experiences, concerns, political attitudes, and socioeconomic and demographic profiles, among other topics. Importantly, the survey was conducted in April and May of 2010, in the midst of the parliamentary election campaign that resulted in the election of President Bouterse. Thus, the results presented here reflect the state of Surinamese public opinion in the final days of the administration of outgoing President Ronald Venetiaan, and prior to further economic troubles experienced in early 2011. The full description of the sample design in Suriname is available at [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/suriname/Suriname\\_2010\\_Tech\\_Info.pdf](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/suriname/Suriname_2010_Tech_Info.pdf).

## Perceptions and Experiences in Hard Times

Suriname has a small but expanding economy. While GDP growth was strong between 2003 and 2008, hitting 6.0% in 2008, growth dropped to 2.5% in 2009,<sup>5</sup> in an atmosphere of global economic decline. How did Surinamese citizens perceive this slowdown in their economy?

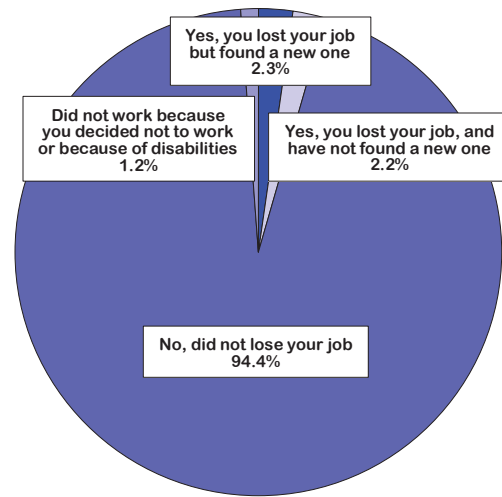
The first thing to note is that, though Suriname's economy slowed, it did not contract as in much of the Americas. In fact, Suriname showed the fourth-highest level of GDP growth in the region, after Uruguay, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Figure 1<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Economic growth statistics come from the IMF's 2010 *World Economic Outlook* report.

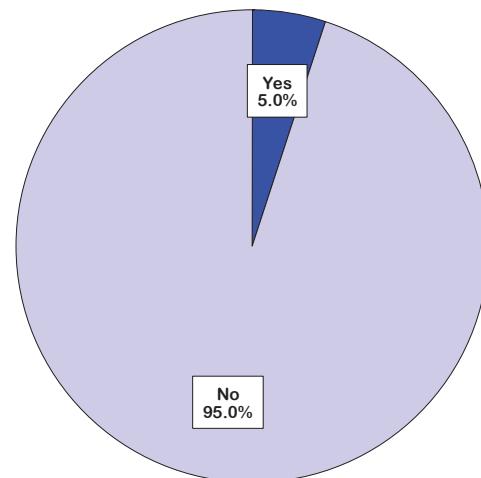
<sup>6</sup> Suriname's GDP growth rate is from the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, <http://websie.eclac.cl/infest/ajax/cepalstat.asp?idioma=i>. Growth rates from other countries are summarized in Seligson and Smith (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Based on OCUP1B1: "Have you lost your job in the past two years? (1) Yes, you lost your job but found a new one, (2) Yes, you lost your job and have not found a new one, (3) No, did not lose your job, (4) Did not work because you decided not to work or because of disabilities." and OCUP1B2: "Besides you, has anyone in your household lost

Figure 1. Job Loss in Suriname, 2010



Have you lost your job in the past two years?



Has anyone else in your household lost a job in the past two years?

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

shows that 94.4% of those surveyed attested that they had *not* lost their job in the past two years, while only 5.0% of respondents said that someone else in their household had lost a job in the past two years.<sup>8</sup> In total, only 9% of households reported that a member had lost his

his or her job in the past two years? (1) Yes (2) No" Non-response in Suriname was 3.1% for OCUP1B1 and 1.8% for OCUP1B2.

<sup>8</sup> All analysis was conducted with Stata 10.

or her job in the past two years, the lowest level of job loss in the AmericasBarometer 2010 survey.

Because the economic decline in Suriname has been relatively mild, we would not expect citizens to perceive a serious economic crisis in the country. This is in fact the case. Figure 2<sup>9</sup> shows that only 14.9% of Surinamese citizens perceived a serious economic crisis in their country. The majority, instead, perceived a crisis but reported that it was not very serious.

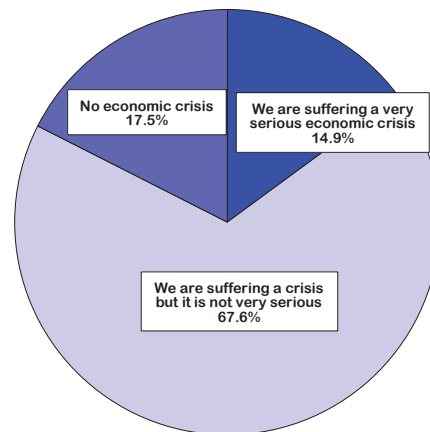
Whom did the Surinamese blame for the crisis? Figure 3<sup>10</sup> shows that the largest portion (37.0%) blamed the current administration. It is important to note that, at the time of the survey, Ronald Venetiaan of the New Front party was serving his third term as president. Venetiaan served his first presidential term from 1991 to 1996, which marked Suriname's return to democracy after a year-long military intervention. He then served two straight terms from 2000 to 2010. At the time of the AmericasBarometer surveys in the country, Venetiaan was concluding his most recent term in office and legislative elections were in progress. Considering that the largest portion of the Surinamese blamed his administration for the economic crisis, it is not surprising that in the 2010 parliamentary elections, Venetiaan's party won only 14 seats in the National Assembly, down from 23 in the previous term.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Based on CRISIS1: "Some say that our country is suffering a very serious economic crisis, others say that we are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, while others say that there isn't any economic crisis. What do you think? (1) We are suffering a very serious economic crisis, (2) We are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, or, (3) No economic crisis." Non-response in Suriname was 3.7%.

<sup>10</sup> Based on CRISIS2: "Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country from among the following: (01) The previous administration, (02) The current [Venetiaan] administration, (03) Ourselves, the Surinamers, (04) The rich people of our country, (05) The problems of democracy, (06) The rich countries, (07) The economic system of the country, or, (08) Never have thought about it, (77) Other." This question was only asked of the 79.4% of respondents who perceived a crisis.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2299\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2299_E.htm)

**Figure 2. Percentage of the Population who Perceived an Economic Crisis in Suriname, 2010**



Perceptions of Economic Crisis in Suriname

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

It is worth noting that the smallest percentage of Surinamese respondents placed the blame for the economic crisis on problems of democracy.

## Economic Crisis and Support for Democracy

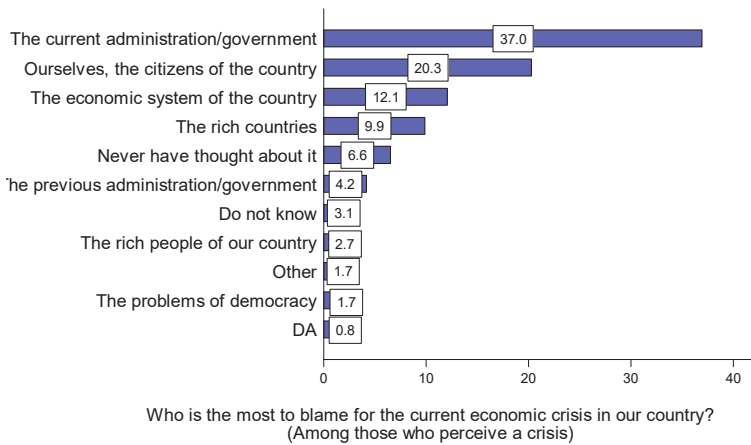
Did the economic crisis hurt Surinamese citizens' opinions of their political system? One question that the AmericasBarometer survey uses to measure democratic attitudes is derived from a classic statement by Churchill on democracy: "Democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government." Interviewers present respondents with this *Churchillian* statement and then ask them to what extent they agree or disagree on a scale from 1 to 7.<sup>12</sup> Their responses have been recoded here on a 0-100 scale for ease of presentation, where higher numbers indicate greater support for democracy.

The lack of survey data from previous years in Suriname makes it impossible to compare

<sup>12</sup> Non-response to this question was 4.9% in Suriname and 4.7% across the sample as a whole.



**Figure 3. Who is to Blame for the Economic Crisis in Suriname?, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

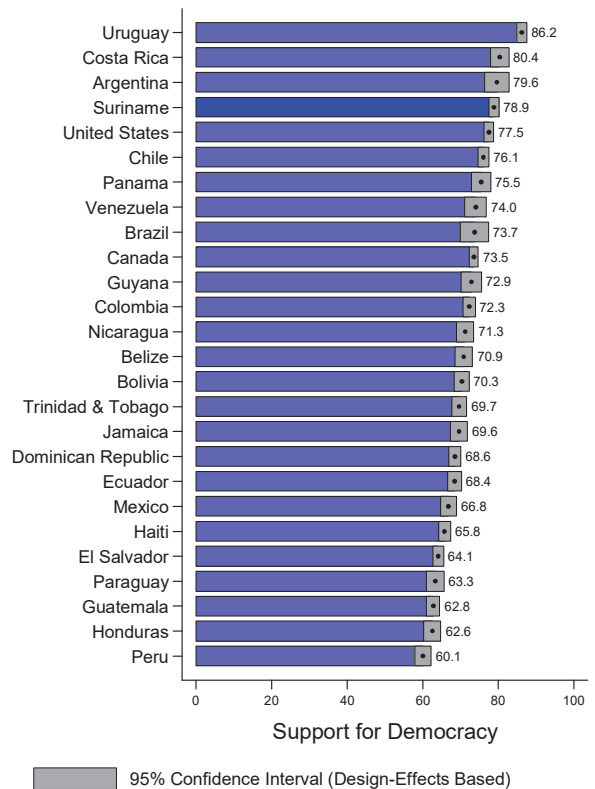
support for democracy in the country across time. Therefore, we do not know if support for democracy has declined since the start of the economic crisis. However, when we do a cross-country comparison, we see that the Surinamese are among the strongest proponents of democracy across the Americas (Figure 4). Suriname ranks fourth in support for democracy, as measured by this item, marginally higher than Chile and the United States.

In order to determine more accurately if there is a relationship between the economic downturn and support for democracy in Suriname, we conduct regression analysis using individual survey responses. We include traditional socioeconomic and demographic control variables: sex, level of education, place of residence and wealth quintiles.<sup>13</sup> We also include satisfaction with President Venetiaan,<sup>14</sup> perceptions of an economic crisis, and

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the wealth indicator, see: Córdova, Abby B. 2009. "Methodological Note: Measuring Relative Wealth using Household Asset Indicators." AmericasBarometer Insights available at: (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>).

<sup>14</sup> This variable is labeled as "current president" in Figure 5 since Venetiaan was the ruling president at the time of the AmericasBarometer surveys in Suriname.

**Figure 4. Support for Democracy across the Americas, 2010**

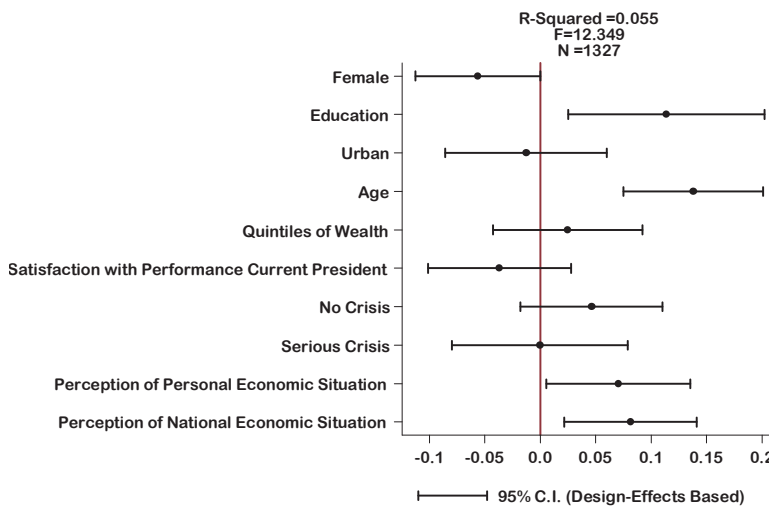


Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

perceptions of the personal and national economic situations.

Figure 5 shows the extent to which these variables predict support for democracy in Suriname. Each variable included in the analysis is listed on the vertical (y) axis. The impact of each of those variables on support for democracy is shown graphically by a dot, which if located to the right of the vertical "0" line indicates a positive effect, and if to the left of the "0" line a negative effect. If the effects are statistically significant, the confidence interval lines stretching to the left and right of each dot do not overlap the vertical "0" line (at  $p < .05$  or better). If the confidence intervals overlap the vertical line, the effects are statistically insignificant. Since coefficients are standardized, the magnitude of each effect indicates its relative strength.

**Figure 5. The Impact of Perceptions and Experiences with the Economic Crisis on Support for Democracy in Suriname, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Figure 5 shows that education is positively correlated with support for democracy. The more educated a person is, the more likely he or she is to support democracy. This result is consistent with previous studies of democracy in the Americas, and once again reinforces the notion that education is one of the most effective ways to build a political culture that is supportive of democracy (Seligson and Smith 2010). Additionally, men and older individuals tend to be more supportive of democracy, which is another result that holds true across the Americas.

Finally, Figure 5 shows that the perception of a serious economic crisis has no significant relationship to Surinamese citizens' support for democracy. However, perceptions of the national economic situation and one's own economic situation do predict support for democracy. Therefore, the crisis may have had an indirect impact on support for democracy by creating negative perceptions of the national and personal economic situations. At the same time, the fact that perceptions of crisis as such had no impact on democratic attitudes may be due to the limited nature of the economic downturn in Suriname.

## Support for Democracy vs. Satisfaction with Democracy

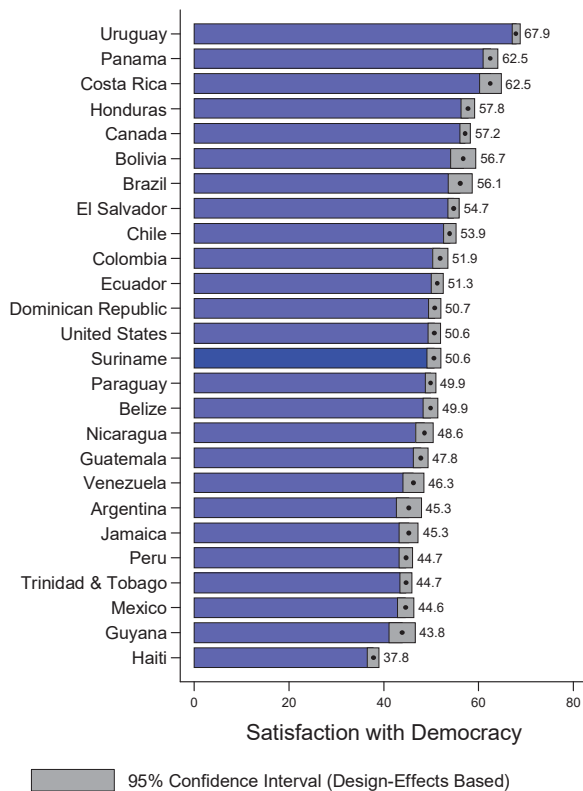
Surinamers show strong support for democracy, but how satisfied are they with this form of government? When we analyze satisfaction with democracy,<sup>15</sup> we immediately recognize a significant difference between these two measures. While Suriname scores 78.9 points on support for democracy, it only scores 50.6 points on satisfaction with democracy. In addition, Figure 6 shows that, in comparison with other countries in the Americas, Suriname falls substantially lower on this item than it does on support for democracy. Suriname sits in 14<sup>th</sup> place out of 26 countries surveyed, compared to fourth place when considering support for democracy.

What accounts for Surinamese citizens' lower levels of satisfaction with democracy? In order to determine what factors correlate with satisfaction, we again conduct regression analysis using individual survey responses. We include the same traditional socioeconomic and demographic variables as above. We also include perceptions of corruption, since citizens identified this as one of the most serious problems facing Suriname. Finally, we include satisfaction with the current president (who at the time was Ronald Venetiaan), perceptions of an economic crisis, and perceptions of the national and personal economic situations.

In Figure 7, we see that sex and age are not significantly correlated with satisfaction with democracy, unlike in the case of support for democracy. Whereas education had a positive

<sup>15</sup> PN4. In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Suriname? (1) Very satisfied (2) Satisfied (3) Dissatisfied (4) Very dissatisfied. Following the LAPOP standard, this variable is recorded on a scale from 0 to 100, where "0" represents "very dissatisfied" and "100" represents "very satisfied." Non-response in Suriname was 3.4%.

**Figure 6. Satisfaction with Democracy across the Americas, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

relationship with *support* for democracy, it has a marginally significant negative correlation with *satisfaction* with democracy. Wealth, in contrast, has a marginally statistically significant positive relationship with satisfaction with Surinamese democracy. Surprisingly, perceptions of one's own economic situation have no significant correlation with democratic satisfaction. Even more surprising is the fact that those who perceive higher levels of corruption show slightly *higher* levels of satisfaction with democracy.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, three factors that are correlated with satisfaction with democracy are perceptions of a serious economic crisis, perceptions of the

<sup>16</sup> This slightly positive relationship appears only in models including both satisfaction with the president and perceptions of corruption. In models of satisfaction with democracy that include only perception of corruption and the socio-economic variables, the relationship is positive but far from statistically significant ( $p=0.86$ ).

national economic situation, and satisfaction with then-President Venetiaan. It is important to note that these three factors likely overlap. For example, perceptions of a serious economic crisis are likely to have a negative impact on one's perception of the national economic situation. Moreover, those who perceived a crisis were more likely to be dissatisfied with then-President Venetiaan, since most people who perceived a crisis blamed his administration for it. That said, in the case of the regression analysis here, we examine each of these three variables while controlling for the others and still find that each exerts its own significant effect.

Overall, satisfaction with democracy is relatively vulnerable to national economic conditions and presidential performance. Though the economic crisis did not appear to directly affect support for democracy in Suriname, the results shown here suggest it had a negative impact on Surinamers' satisfaction with this form of government.

## Conclusions

In this report, we examined Surinamese citizens' perceptions of and experiences with the economic crisis and how their economic evaluations relate to their support for and satisfaction with democracy. First, we found that in mid-2010 the crisis had not had a major impact on Suriname. Almost all Surinamese had retained their jobs and the economy continued to grow, albeit at a slower rate. Understandably then, we found that few Surinamese people perceived a serious economic crisis, though most perceived a mild one. A high percentage of those perceiving a crisis blamed the Venetiaan administration, possibly leading to a decrease in support for the administration's party in the 2010 legislative elections a few months later.

Did perceptions of a crisis cause Surinamers to be less supportive of democracy? Although we could not make a comparison across time due to a lack of data, we found that the Surinamese are

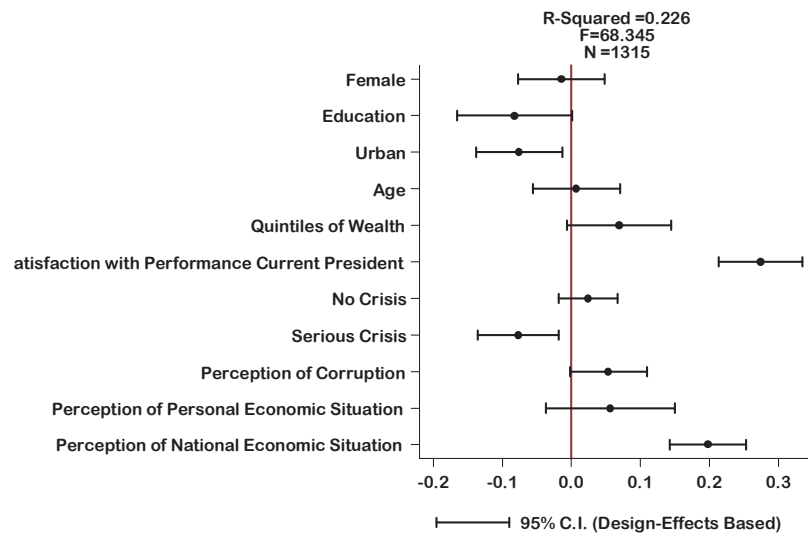
among the most supportive of democracy in the Americas, and their perceptions of a crisis were not directly linked to their support for this form of government. However, such a link was found between general economic perceptions and democratic support. Since perceptions of shocks and crises are strongly related to general perceptions of the economy, the crisis may have had some indirect effects on democratic opinion in Suriname.

Finally, we noted that the Surinamese are only moderately satisfied with democracy, in spite of their robust support for it. Given Suriname's recent transitions from military rule, the salience of corruption as an issue, and other problems, this may be due to a general sentiment that democracy is incomplete. That is, the evidence here suggests that Surinamers strongly support democracy but feel their system falls short of expectations in a number of ways.

To reflect for a minute on the transition from military rule, it is worth noting that scholarship suggests the nature of this transition might be at least partially responsible for the comparatively low levels of satisfaction with democracy in Suriname. Bouterse drafted a new constitution for the nation before forfeiting his authoritarian power. This constitution is still in force today in Suriname. Several scholars have argued that elite bargaining or pacts that result in a transition may negatively impact citizens' perceptions of the resulting democratic system (Hague and Harrop 2004; Posner 1999; Hagopian 1990). Therefore, though citizens show strong support for democracy as an abstract concept, they may be less satisfied with the functioning of Suriname's democratic system.

Since the 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted in the country, much has changed in

**Figure 7. The Impact of Perceptions and Experiences with the Economic Crisis on Satisfaction with Democracy in Suriname, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Suriname. In addition to a change in leadership, the country has experienced a 16 percent devaluation of its currency and significant tax increases (Kuipers 2011). This has led to further "hard times" in Suriname. We hope that future surveys will be able to investigate the changes in public opinion that may have occurred as a result of the events of the past year. Given the results here, we might expect that support for democracy will have remained fairly robust despite these new economic challenges but that satisfaction with democracy may have dropped further.

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## Appendix 1. Predictors of Support for Democracy in Suriname

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Age	0.138*	0.031
Education	0.114*	0.044
Perception of Country's Economic Situation	0.081*	0.029
Perception of Personal Economic Situation	0.070*	0.032
Female	-0.056*	0.028
No Perception of a Crisis	0.046	0.032
Satisfaction with Current President	-0.037	0.032
Quintiles of Wealth	0.025	0.033
Urban	-0.013	0.036
Perception of a Serious Crisis	-0.000	0.039
Constant	0.006	0.033
<i>R-Squared</i>	0.056	
<i>Number of Observations</i>	1,327	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*  $p < 0.05$

## Appendix 2. Predictors of Satisfaction with Democracy in Suriname

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Satisfaction with Current President	0.274*	0.030
Perception of Country's Economic Situation	0.200*	0.027
Education	-0.082	0.041
Perception of a Serious Crisis	-0.076*	0.029
No Perception of a Crisis	0.241	0.021
Urban	-0.075*	0.031
Quintiles of Wealth	0.069	0.037
Perception of Personal Economic Situation	0.056	0.046
Perception of Corruption	0.053	0.027
Female	-0.014	0.031
Age	0.007	0.032
Constant	0.004	0.037
<i>R-Squared</i>	0.226	
<i>Number of Observations</i>	1,315	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*  $p < 0.05$

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

Number 61

## Who is Willing to Pay the Price of Equity? A Report on Public Opinion in Colombia

By Juan Camilo Plata

[juan.c.plata@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:juan.c.plata@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** This *Insights* report explores public opinion in Colombia with respect to who reports willingness to pay additional taxes in order to increase government assistance to the poor. I suggest that three factors underlie preferences over using one's own resources to increase the welfare of the neediest. These are an individual's economic calculus; trust in the system and others; and, ideological beliefs about the role of the state. Using data from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer survey in Colombia, I find that, all else equal, those whose personal economic situations appear comparatively better off, those aged 50 and under, those who are better educated, and those whose economic ideologies align with state intervention express higher support for this kind of proposal.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

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Economic equality may provide some level of immunity against negative social, political, and economic outcomes. We know, for example, that economic inequality has been linked to crime (Fajnzylber, Lederman et al. 2002); political violence (Muller 1985); lower interpersonal trust (Córdova 2008); and economic stagnation (Alesina and Perotti 1996). But, who is willing to pay a personal price, in the form of increased taxes, in order to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources? By taking advantage of a question asked in the Colombia 2010 AmericasBarometer<sup>1</sup> survey, this *Insights* report<sup>2</sup> provides some answers to this question.

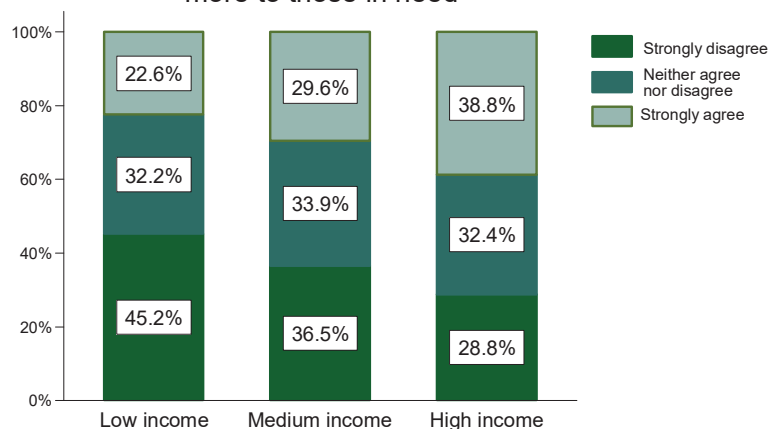
The 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer survey in Colombia included a question that allows insight with respect to attitudes towards policies that presumably would improve equity; the question asks about the degree to which respondents would be willing or unwilling to pay more taxes if the funds were directed toward the poor. Specifically, in this round, 1,506 people in Colombia were asked to respond to the following question (TD5) on a scale from 1 to 7, where “1” means “strongly disagree” and “7” means “strongly agree.”

**TD5:** Would you be willing to pay more taxes if they were used to give more to those in need?<sup>3</sup>

The answers in general are evenly distributed across the scale. But if the respondents are disaggregated into three income categories, a

different pattern emerges. Figure 1 presents the distribution of Colombian respondents to this question, grouping income and stances on the question into three categories each.<sup>4</sup> While the proportion of those who neither agree nor disagree is roughly one-third across the three income categories, the proportion of people agreeing to the proposal is larger among those with high incomes (38.8%) than among low income respondents (22.6%). Conversely, the proportion of respondents in disagreement is smallest among those with high incomes.

Figure 1. Support for additional taxation to give more to those in need



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

In the remainder of the report, I continue to assess the extent to which economic and other factors, including trust and ideology, explain the variation in willingness to pay additional taxes in order to give more to those in need. I will show that economic factors matter, but further discovering what their impact is irrespective to the income level; and, I will show that some other, non-economic factors matter as well.

<sup>1</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>2</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>

The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>

<sup>3</sup> Non-respondents to this particular question are 3% of the sample that participated in the survey.

<sup>4</sup> Respondents indicating 1 and 2 were recoded in this figure as “Strongly disagree”; 3, 4, and 5 as “Neither agree nor disagree”; and, 6 and 7 as “Strongly agree.”

## **Why would someone support paying more taxes to benefit the poor?**

Conventional wisdom supports the idea that increasing taxation meets strong opposition in many circles. Nonetheless, I argue that there is a clear set of characteristics associated with supporting additional taxation. These comprise three different, but complimentary, sets of motivations.

First, one's economic situation should matter; simply put, I expect that those who can better afford to pay extra will be more inclined to do so than those experiencing worse economic situations.<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 shows some evidence in support of this expectation; later, I examine the extent to which other economic factors matter.

Second, trust should matter. Scholarship on tax compliance underscores the importance of trust in the political authorities (Cummings et al. 2006). We might likewise expect that those who trust the system are more willing to invest in its services for redistributive purposes. In addition, the literature on social solidarity states that support for social assistance is nothing but the institutional expression of caring about others (Rodger 2003). Consequently, I test for an effect of interpersonal trust, based on the notion that those with higher levels of social capital and connections, measured in this way, might be more willing to pay the price of redistribution.

Third, ideological stances with respect to the role of the state should matter. Those who believe the state should play a substantial role in

the economy – in particular with respect to redistributive policies – should be more inclined to provide funds, via taxation, for such purposes.

## **A basic profile of those who support taxation to help others**

As a first step in determining the predictors of support for a personal tax increase for the benefit of those in need, I examine a set of standard socioeconomic and demographic variables. First, I examine the effect of income, coded into three categories (low, medium and high).<sup>6</sup> My expectation is that those with greater income will be more inclined to respond affirmatively to a question probing willingness to pay higher taxes for redistributive purposes; this expectation was tested and supported by the evidence in Figure 1, and here I test it with additional variables in the model. Second, I examine the effects of size of town (coded so that higher values mean a larger town/city)<sup>7</sup>, education (coded in four categories: none, primary, secondary, and higher), female, and age (coded in three categories: from 18 to 35 years, from 36 to 50 years and beyond 51 years). Figure 2<sup>8</sup> shows the results for a linear model that analyzes the relationship between these socioeconomic and demographic factors and support for paying more taxes to improve equity.

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<sup>5</sup> A substantial body of scholarship shows that economic crisis affects support for state intervention (Quinn and Shapiro 1991), taxation (Beck, Rainey et al. 1990), and welfare policies (Sihvo and Uusitalo 1995). This line of literature is based on surveys evaluating the coevolution of economic performance and public opinion in the long term, or in particular settings, and I do not examine the implications of this line of literature here.

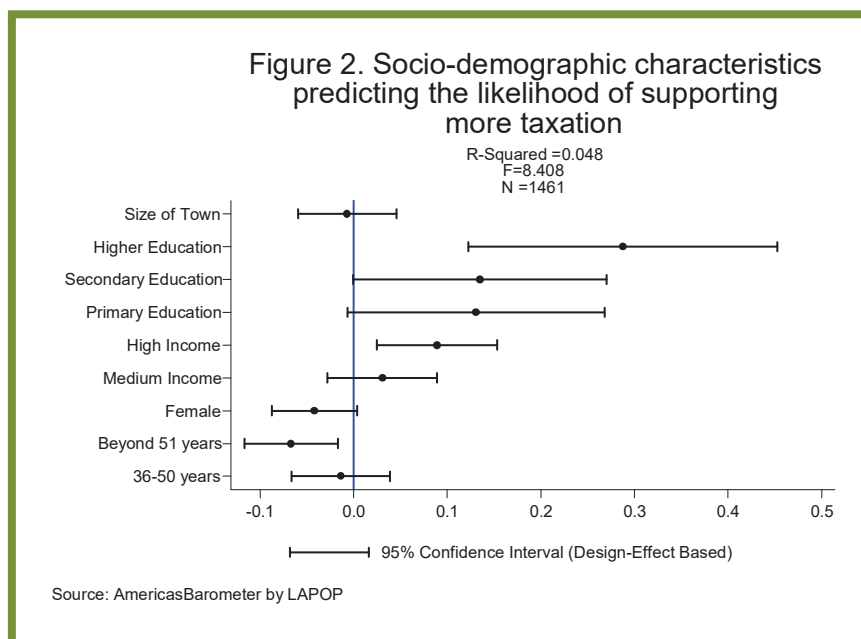
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<sup>6</sup> Low income is defined from \$0 to \$360,000 (in Colombian pesos), medium from \$361,000 to \$1,500,000, and high beyond \$1,500,001. This is based on the respondents' self-reported placement. I use income instead of wealth because I am interested in the extent to which an individual might have additional funds at their disposal. The drawback of income is that ten percent of the respondents to the 2010 survey did not answer the question. In order to avoid case-wise deletion, I recode those missing values to the sample mean on the income variable; the results, though, are the same if I allow them to drop out of the analysis.

<sup>7</sup> I also examined size of town as a series of dummy variables, but found no statistically significant relationship.

<sup>8</sup> For this model I am using the TD5 variable coded on a 7 point scale. All analyses are conducted with STATA v11.

The figure shows the effects of each predictor in the model using standardized coefficients, so that the relative effect of each can be more easily discerned. The estimated effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable is represented by a dot. If the dot and its corresponding bars, which indicate the 95% confidence interval, fall to the left of the 0 line then the relationship is considered both negative and statistically significant; if the dot and bars fall to the right of the 0 line, the relationship is considered positive and statistically significant.



The results in Figure 2 show that compared to those with low income, people who report a high level of income are more supportive of paying additional taxes to assist those in need. Respondents with a medium level of income are marginally more supportive but not statistically different from those with a low income level. This supports the idea that there is an economic calculus involved. For people having higher income, the marginal effect on their pocketbooks of this additional contribution to the tax pool is smaller. The analysis also shows that, when compared to the population with no education, only those with a higher education are significantly more likely to agree to pay more taxes. Applying a more generous significance threshold (a 90% confidence interval), we see that those with at least some education are more inclined than those with none to express willingness to pay an additional tax. The results further show that, compared with respondents between 18 and 35 years of age, only people over 51 years old are significantly less willing to agree. Though the effect is smaller and does not quite reach the 95% significance threshold, we see that women are somewhat less supportive of paying an additional personal tax in order to support economic redistribution. There is no significant effect for size of town.

In short, Colombians who are wealthier and more educated (and to a limited extent, those who are male and under 51 years of age) express greater willingness to pay more taxes for the sake of improving economic equity. Interestingly, of the variables in the model, education has the strongest substantive effect. In the next section, I provide another lens through which to perceive the effect of one's personal economic situation on willingness to pay additional taxes for the sake of equity. In addition, I examine the roles of trust in the system and in other people and of preferences over the role of the state.

## A model of support for taxation as a tool to reduce inequality

An analysis of the extent to which people are willing to pay taxes to support redistribution should take into account self-interest considerations. In the prior analysis I only included people's resource constraints.<sup>9</sup> But

<sup>9</sup> Other tests (not reported) explored the effect of participating in state assistance programs (*Familias en Acción*, SISBEN), perception of an economic crisis, and assessment of the national economy, but I found no significant



their attitudes with respect to the state and other individuals and their ideological leanings with respect to issues of state involvement in redistributive policies are also relevant. In this section, then, I assess an expanded model of the factors that predict willingness to pay additional taxes on behalf of people in need.

Because it is the institution responsible for allocating the funds, I expect that trust in the political system will be positively correlated with the dependent variable. I measure system support with an index based on perception that the state guarantees a fair trial, respect for political institutions, perception that the system protects basic rights, level of pride related to living in the country and the extent of belief that one should support the system.<sup>10</sup> In addition, we might expect that individuals' attitudes towards other individuals affect their willingness to invest in redistribution. I measure attitudes towards others with a standard measure of interpersonal trust.<sup>11</sup> Both the system support and interpersonal trust variables are coded so that higher values indicate more confidence.<sup>12</sup> In addition, I include an index that taps individuals' preferences over the role of the state in the economy and ensuring the well-being of the people.<sup>13</sup>

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relationships. This suggests the calculus made includes considerations related to individual *costs*, not individual or broader *benefits*.

<sup>10</sup> I also tested the effect of trust in the national government (B14), but it was not a significant predictor. The system support measure, by relying on multiple indicators, provides a potentially more robust and general measure of confidence in the political system and therefore I show that result here.

<sup>11</sup> **IT1.** Now, speaking of the people from here, would you say that people in this community are generally very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy, or untrustworthy?

<sup>12</sup> Countries with high levels of trust are those where equality prevails (Rothstein and Uslaner 2006), and trust and equality affect each other. I am focused here on the relationship between trust and opinion about taxation to reduce inequality.

<sup>13</sup> This is an additive index of the answers to the questions ROS1, ROS2, ROS3, ROS4. Initially it ranges from 4 to 28, but it is standardized into a scale from 0 to 100 like every other variable. For the detailed wording, the full questionnaire can

Finally, to expand the analysis of one's individual economic calculus beyond the income measure, I considered a series of evaluations of one's personal economic situation. Specifically, I examine the effects of one's evaluation of one's current situation (IDIO1), one's past situation (IDIO2), and one's future situation (IDIO3).<sup>14</sup> In a series of diagnostic checks, I found that only the latter exerts a significant effect when included on its own or with the others (the other two do not have significant effects even when included without other economic assessments); for the sake of brevity, only that variable is included in the model shown here. I also include a measure of the perceived sufficiency of the resources available to satisfy one's personal needs (Q10D). This allows us to test the predictive power not only of one's objective economic conditions but also of the extent to which a person can assume additional spending.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3 shows the results for the model, which were again calculated using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis. Again, the effects are represented by standardized coefficients (dots) accompanied by 95% confidence intervals (bars). The results support three general conclusions.

First, trust in both the system and individuals matters only to a limited extent, and these effects are not highly reliable. That is, only if we use a 90% confidence interval do we find that

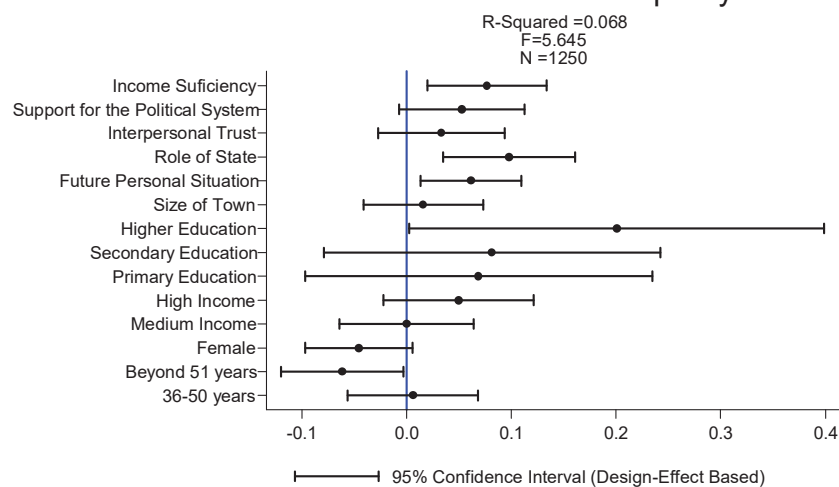
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be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/core-surveys.php>

<sup>14</sup> **IDIO1.** How would you describe your overall economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?. **IDIO2.** Do you think that your economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago? **IDIO3.** Do you think that in 12 months your economic situation will be better than, the same as, or worse than it is now?

<sup>15</sup> **Q10D.** The salary that you receive and total household income: (1) Is good enough for you and you can save from it. (2) Is just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems. (3) Is not enough for you and you are stretched. (4) Is not enough for you and you are having a hard time.

Figure 3. Model of support for taxation as a tool to reduce inequality



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

those who are more supportive of the political system express greater willingness to pay taxes for the purpose of redistribution. Likewise, at the 95% confidence level, trust in others is not associated with willingness to take part in the proposed taxation increase for the sake of equity, but the coefficient is positive as expected.<sup>16</sup>

Second, preferences over the role of the state clearly matter. Those who believe the state should play a greater role in the economy and in guaranteeing social welfare express a higher willingness to put their money where their ideology lies, so to speak. This suggests that economic ideology, measured in this way, affects this opinion.<sup>17</sup>

Third, income as measured in the previous model (Figure 2) is no longer significant, but income sufficiency and future personal

economic assessments are. This suggests that individuals' income is not important in and of itself. What best explains the disposition of the economically better off to support additional taxation is not the absolute income level. Rather, what matters more is the perception that these resources suffice to fulfill one's personal needs, and believing that one's economic situation will improve in the near future. Income matters mostly, it would appear, to the extent that it influences one's ability to meet current needs and to the extent it informs one's personal economic outlook.

Once again, and even after controlling for these additional variables, education remains significant, such that those with the highest levels of education are more disposed toward supporting additional taxation to help those in need. While the coefficient is reduced, the difference between none and higher education remains the strongest predictor in the model.

## Final Remarks

Although social spending has been growing in Colombia since the 1990s, per capita spending is comparatively low (Cepal 2004). Its expansion depends on collecting new resources for which taxation is one possible source. I have shown here that support for redistributive policies, such as willingness to pay additional taxes to benefit the neediest (TD5), is largely conditional on the presence of two out of three motives considered in this report.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that if I drop the variable for trust in the government, I find IT1 to be significant with 90% confidence.

<sup>17</sup> I also tested the effect of an indicator of left-right ideology and found no significant relationship. That result makes sense, given other scholarship suggesting that the left-right dimension does not capture preferences over the role of the state among the citizens, nor the political elites, of Colombia (Zechmeister and Corral N.d.).

<sup>18</sup> This is at least partially in agreement with the findings of Van Oorschot (2002) who finds that Dutch citizens accept paying for welfare because of concurring motives: self-interest, moral obligation and mutual empathy.

First, there is an individual economic calculus based on resource availability. Those perceiving a surplus in their personal economy (Q10D) and having positive prospective evaluations (IDIO3) are more prone to support additional taxation for the presumed sake of increased equity.

Second, beliefs with respect to the extent to which the state should intervene both to reduce inequality and to influence the economy as a whole are highly related to support for additional taxation to help the poor. In addition to those two motives, I examined a third: trust. I found that trust in others and in the political system exert insubstantial to modest effects on the variable examined here.

One might wonder whether these variables, as well as the role of state index increase in significance if we examine only that portion of the sample that reports having sufficient resources; in analyses conducted but not reported here, I found that interpersonal trust and system support, when included together in the full model reported in Figure 3, remain insignificant when the sample is divided (using Q10D) among those who reported having sufficient resources and those who had a surplus to save (N=596) and all others (N=865). Across both sets of individuals, the role of the state variable remains positive and statistically significant, and the coefficient shows little change.

One interesting aspect of the results is that the relevant economic considerations for the issue of redistribution are those pertaining to one's ability to bear the costs, rather than one's consideration of the individual or larger benefits. Variables related to evaluations of the national economy and participation in social welfare programs have no significant effect on willingness to pay additional taxes for redistributive purposes (see footnote 10). Kelly and Enns (2010), discussing their findings and prior scholarship on inequality in the United States, suggest that media frames affect the

extent to which the public favors government programs to decrease inequality. It could be that in Colombia a strong media emphasis on economic individualism runs against citizens' greater willingness to support, at their own expense, anti-poverty and related efforts. Future research might examine this more closely.

The literature has found that economic crises can also stimulate support for redistributive measures (see footnote 5). The evidence I have offered in this report suggests this relationship is not due to the crisis but to its effects. The occurrence of an economic crisis by itself is no guarantee that it will be followed by a supportive attitude toward taxes to help the poor population. It depends on whether the crisis negatively affects one's personal economic situation in absolute and prospective terms, and possibly to a lesser extent, whether it weakens system and interpersonal trust.

In the long run, persistent poverty and inequality may mean lower levels of political engagement, and therefore, the perpetuation of inequality (Solt 2008). Furthermore, while modernization theorists argue that economic development reduces intolerance and promotes democratic attitudes, some scholars suggest that inequality prevents such effects from taking root broadly within a society. That is, if the income gap continues to exist, such growth-related effects on political and social attitudes would only be experienced by the high income class (Andersen and Fetner 2008). In short, understanding among whom and why preferences for anti-poverty and inequality-reducing measures are supported is important for understanding democratic culture and politics.

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## Appendix 1. OLS models explaining the likelihood of supporting additional taxation to give more to those in need

	(1)	(2)
36 to 50 years	-0.0137 (0.026)	0.005 (0.031)
Above 51 years	-0.66 (0.024)**	-0.061 (0.029)**
Female	-0.042 (0.022)*	-0.045 (0.025) *
Medium income	0.030 (0.29)	-0.0001 (0.035)
High income	0.088 (0.031)***	0.049 (0.035)
Primary education	0.130 (0.068)*	0.068 (0.082)
Secondary education	0.134 (0.674)*	0.081 (0.079)
Higher education	0.287 (0.082)***	0.200 (0.098) **
Size of town	-0.007 (0.026)	0.016 (0.028)
Future personal economic condition		0.061 (0.023)**
Income sufficiency		0.076 (0.028)***
Role of state		0.098 (0.031)***
Interpersonal trust		0.033 (0.030)
Support for the political system		0.052 (0.029)*
Constant	-0.002 (0.032)	0.027 (0.034)
Number of observations	1461	1250
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0480	0.0681

\*p≤0.1; \*\* p≤0.05; \*\*\*p≤0.01.

Omitted categories are base categories.

I use standardized coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses.



# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2011

Number 62

## Confidence in the Criminal Justice System in the Americas

*By Stefanie Herrmann, Dillon MacDonald,  
and Robert Tauscher*

*With Matthew L. Layton  
Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** The level of public confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) has important implications for democratic politics. In this report, we use data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey to examine the level of confidence that citizens in 26 countries in the Americas have in their country's criminal justice system. Drawing our hypotheses from existing literature, we test several individual-level factors that may explain confidence in the CJS. This report finds that wealth, education and urban residency are negatively correlated with confidence in the criminal justice system, while age increases confidence in the CJS. As hypothesized, individual and household crime victimization, perceived corruption, and individual perceived insecurity are also negatively correlated with confidence in the CJS. Additionally, we find that attitudes towards the CJS are closely related to attitudes towards other government institutions.

*LAPOP is pleased to note that this report was developed and written by Vanderbilt undergraduate students participating in a Vanderbilt University honors seminar (HNRS 186, taught by Professor E. J. Zechmeister). Biographies of the authors are provided in the report appendix.*

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

*www.AmericasBarometer.org*

The level of public confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) has important implications for democratic politics. Confidence in the CJS can be critical to state legitimacy because the activities of the police and criminal courts are typically perceived as “core functions of the state” (Van de Walle and Raine 2008, p. 4). The effective functioning of the police and courts is also essential to insuring the robust participation of citizens in the criminal justice process. Low levels of confidence in the criminal justice system can feed into cycles of poor performance. For example, when there is low confidence and satisfaction with the justice system, citizens may be less likely to participate in the judicial process as jurors. When citizens do not trust their local police force, they are also less likely to report a crime or serve as witnesses in criminal cases (see Van de Walle and Raine 2008, p. 4). Further, when the CJS is perceived as ineffective, it is more difficult to recruit competent personnel (see Van de Walle and Raine, 2008, p. 4). For all these reasons, it is important to assess public confidence in the CJS.

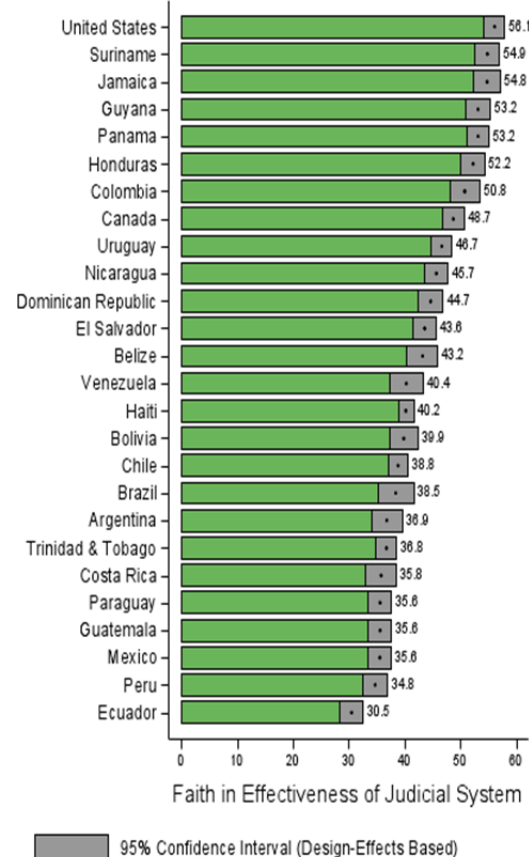
In this *Insights* report, we provide a picture of faith in the criminal justice system in the Americas and assess some factors that predict this attitude using data from the 2010 LAPOP AmericasBarometer survey.<sup>1,2</sup> Specifically, we use responses to the following question to draw conclusions about confidence in the CJS in the Americas:

**AOJ12:** “If you were a victim of a robbery or assault, how much faith do you have that the judicial system would punish the guilty?”

<sup>1</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>2</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>.

**Figure 1. Confidence in the Criminal Justice System across the Americas**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Figure 1 shows mean responses (with confidence intervals) by country to this question, with responses recalibrated from the original four-point scale to a 0-100 scale, where zero indicates no faith (“none”) in the criminal justice system and 100 represents “a lot” of faith in the CJS.<sup>3</sup> In no country is faith in the criminal justice system exceptionally high: mean values are below 60 units on the scale in all 26 countries and only seven countries present average levels above the 50-unit midline. Figure 1 also shows significant variation across countries, with the United States topping the list at 56.1. This result is consistent with the United States’ high score

<sup>3</sup> Non-response to this particular question was 6.47% (weighted) across the sample as a whole. Analysis was conducted using STATA v11.1.

in the *Economist's* democracy index<sup>4</sup> (Kekic 2007); however, interestingly, Canada – which also boasts a high democracy index score<sup>5</sup> -- does not place as high here with a mean score of 48.7. Colombia's high score is interesting in light of the country's difficulties with law and order. Haiti has a comparatively high average confidence in the criminal justice system (40.2 units), which is surprising considering its high corruption victimization level (see Seligson and Smith 2010).<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, several countries with high levels of development fall at the low end of the set of countries, specifically Chile, where faith in the effectiveness of the CJS averages 38.8 units, and Argentina averages 36.9 units. The lowest mean level of confidence in the criminal judicial system is found in Ecuador (30.5 units), a country that has been affected by spillover violence involving FARC and related actors and, as well, a recent clash among the executive leadership, the military, and the police.

In all, while country context appears to matter, there is not an obvious relationship between level of democracy, economic development, or other salient country-level factors, on the one hand, and confidence in the criminal justice system on the other. Therefore, in this report, we focus on individual-level predictors of confidence in the criminal justice system.

*[T]he wealthy are more likely to be victimized by crime, which might translate into skepticism regarding the effectiveness of the judiciary.*

## Socioeconomic and Demographic Factors and Confidence in the Criminal Justice System

We begin by examining how socioeconomic and demographic features affect confidence in the criminal justice system.<sup>7</sup> One might expect wealthy individuals, who may enjoy positions of privilege, to have more confidence that governmental systems will work in their favor. However, we suspect that the wealthy are more likely to be victimized by crime, an attribute that might translate into skepticism regarding the effectiveness of the judiciary (Gaviria and Pages 2002; Maldonado 2011). Similarly, residents of urban areas experience more crime than those living in rural regions, which may explain the higher levels of confidence in criminal justice

that other scholars have found in less populated areas (Gaviria and Pages 2002; Cao and Zhao 2005). Furthermore, some scholars note that the aging process promotes

“conservatism and integration into the institutional order,” a phenomenon that can increase trust in governmental bodies, including the CJS (Cao and Zhao 2005, p. 406; see also Christenson and Laegreid 2005).

With these expectations in mind, we created a regression model that examines the relationship between these factors and faith in judicial effectiveness. We considered wealth<sup>8</sup>, education, age, gender, and an indicator of rural versus urban residence as independent variables. The regression output, shown in Figure 2, displays standardized coefficients for ease of comparison. Statistical significance is represented by 95%

<sup>4</sup> The United States was assigned a Democracy Index score of 8.22 in 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Canada was assigned a Democracy Index score of 9.07 in 2007.

<sup>6</sup> In addition, the US Department of State claims that law and order in Haiti has progressively deteriorated as a result of drug transit (Haiti is one of the four most important countries for drug transit to the US). [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1134.html#crime](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1134.html#crime)

<sup>7</sup> In accord with typical practice for the *Insights* series, we omit Canada and the United States from these and other analyses in this report in order to focus on the Latin American and Caribbean cases.

<sup>8</sup> For more information about the wealth measure see Córdova (2009).

confidence intervals (the horizontal bars) that do not overlap the vertical “0” line. Dots to the left of the line indicate that the variable has negative contribution, while dots to the right imply a positive correlation.

As revealed in Figure 2, those who are wealthier tend to have less faith in the judicial system than their poorer fellow citizens. Interestingly, as we will show later, this effect exists independently of crime victimization rates, implying an alternate explanation could be important to consider. As we expected, age is positively correlated and urban residency is negatively correlated with confidence in the criminal justice system.

Given the work of past scholars<sup>9</sup>, we were surprised to find that increased levels of education *decrease* faith in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. However, in the Latin American context, education may cause citizens to be more critical of the appreciably volatile political establishment; this critical perspective may translate into lower levels of trust in the CJS (Catterberg and Moreno 2006).<sup>10</sup> Finally, we note that gender is not a significant predictor of faith in the judicial system.

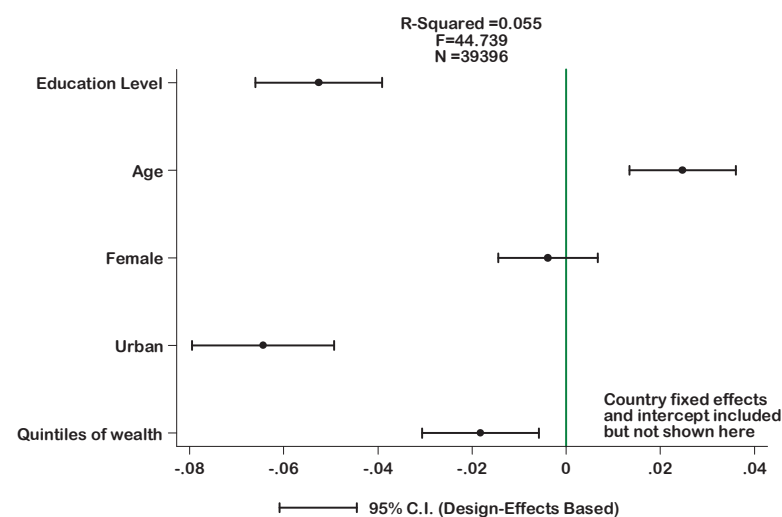
## Attitudes and Experiences as Predictors of Confidence in the Criminal Justice System

Prior research suggests that security and crime victimization play a significant role in shaping perceptions of the criminal justice system. A Canadian study found that the public tends to

<sup>9</sup> A study by Benesh (2006) finds the opposite but was limited to the United States.

<sup>10</sup> Oftentimes, wealth and education are closely correlated, making it difficult to distinguish which, if any, of the two has a significant impact. However, we have found that both variables significantly influence trust in the effectiveness of the judicial system even when we control for the other variable. Therefore, both have an independent and appreciable effect.

**Figure 2. Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics Predicting Confidence in the Criminal Justice System**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

subscribe to a “crime control” model of the CJS, meaning that they believe the primary role of the system is to deter crime (Roberts 2004, 21). It follows that crime victims—or those who otherwise perceive themselves as vulnerable or insecure—will tend to display less confidence in the efficacy of such a system. Scholars have also hypothesized that interaction with the courts challenges prior “idealistic beliefs” about the judiciary (Fossati and Meeker 1997, p. 144). Benesh and Howell (2001) assert that “high-stakes, low-control” court users, such as defendants and victims, will have less confidence in the courts as a result of their experiences. We speculate that this effect is not limited to the victims themselves; it seems likely that *any* experience with crime victimization, whether personal or through a family member, influences perceptions of the CJS. In order to measure this effect, we use self-reported individual and household-level crime victimization, along with a variable that quantifies an individual’s overall “sense of security.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The crime victimization measures are coded “1” if there is a report of any experience(s) and “0” otherwise (based on questions VIC1EXT and VIC1HOGAR). The security



Other studies point to an “all good things go together” effect. Scholars have shown that confidence in the CJS is often tied to confidence in other government institutions (Van de Walle and Raine 2008, pp. 21-22). Some suggest that this is because people hold certain attitudes towards government as a whole, and they often fail to distinguish between different governmental agencies (Olson and Huth 1998, p. 46). Using this framework, we expected to observe a strong correlation between trust in the country’s chief executive and national police force, respectively, and confidence in the CJS.<sup>12</sup>

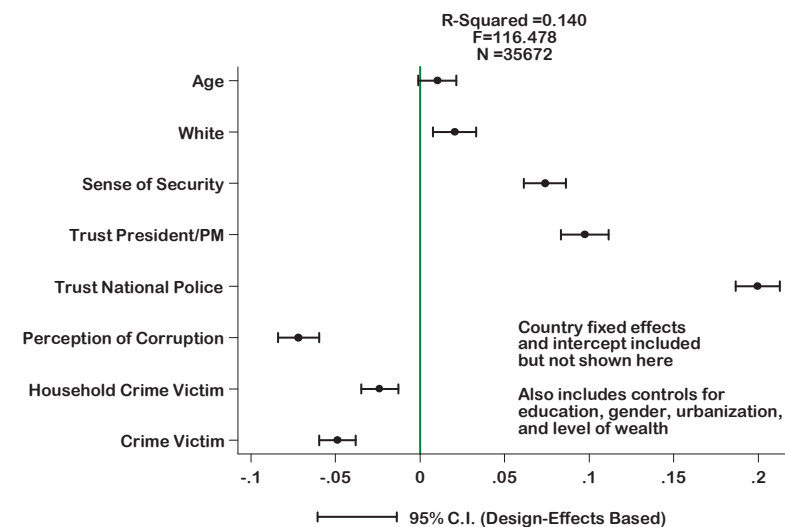
Our review of the literature led us to formulate additional expectations. Given its negative implications for crime-fighting, we expected that perceived corruption would lead to diminished confidence in the CJS. We also suspected that race might play a role in shaping perceptions of the system. The “differential experience” theory suggests that citizens’ perceptions of the courts are shaped by their unique experiences with the system (Sun and Wu 2006, p. 458). Scholars have found that historically marginalized groups tend to show reduced levels of trust in the courts, likely due to actual or perceived differential treatment (Overby et al 2005; Tyler 2005). Using this framework, we predicted that whites (the historically privileged group) would on average display higher trust than other racial and ethnic groups. We test for this relationship using racial self-identification.<sup>13</sup> As an admittedly simplistic approach to the question, in the analysis in

measure is based on the following question: **AOJ11**. 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? It is coded here so that higher values indicate more security.

<sup>12</sup> **B21A**. To what extent do you trust the President [Prime Minister]? **B18**. To what extent do you trust the National Police? Initially asked on 1-7 scales, coded here so that higher values indicate more confidence.

<sup>13</sup> Question ETID asks respondents to self-identify as white, mestizo, indigenous, black, or of another race.

**Figure 3. Regression Analysis of Determinants of Confidence in the Criminal Justice System, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Figure 3, we assess the effect of self-identifying as “white” compared to self-identifying as anything else.

As shown in Figure 3, the results of the statistical analysis support the notion that a person’s sense of security and crime victimization are important predictors of confidence in the criminal justice system. As one might expect, the results indicate that individual-level crime victimization has a stronger impact than household crime victimization, but both variables are significant.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, in analyses we conducted but do not show here, we found that a variable that records crime rates (measured by aggregating self-reports of crime victimization in the survey) by sub-national region also has a significant effect. This suggests that the effect of crime on confidence in the CJS is not limited to mere victimization; overall crime rates in the individual’s region also play an important role.

<sup>14</sup> We also found that an individual’s level of court utilization (variable EXC14) has no statistically significant effect. This corresponds with Benesh and Howells’ (2001) thesis that it is the *nature* of the interaction with the CJS that affects confidence, not simply the extent of such interaction.



The analysis also confirms our expectation that confidence in the criminal justice system is highly correlated with confidence in other governmental institutions. In fact, trust in the police and trust in the executive are the two strongest predictors of confidence in the CJS. We initially suspected that including both trust in the national police and confidence in the CJS might cause problems for the model, as we thought the two variables might capture the same sentiment. However, our robustness checks confirm that the other results we report here hold whether or not trust in the police is included in the model.<sup>15</sup> In other analyses not shown here we found that the inclusion of a variable that records approval of the government's performance in improving security diminishes the effect of the "trust in the president/PM" variable, with no significant effect on the results for the "trust in the national police" variable. This appears somewhat at odds with our "all good things go together" hypothesis and suggests that evaluations of a president's effectiveness in improving security, not his overall performance, translate most clearly into improved confidence in the CJS.

The analysis also supports our secondary expectations. As shown in Figure 3, perceived corruption is a robust predictor of diminished confidence in the CJS. A relationship between self-reported race/ethnicity and confidence in the system exists, as shown in Figure 3, but we note that this relationship is somewhat more complicated than it might appear at first glance. The analysis in Figure 3 shows that self-identification as "white" corresponds to greater confidence in the CJS, compared to all other racial and ethnic self-categorizations. However,

*[C]rime victimization, perceptions of corruption, and feelings of insecurity translate into diminished confidence in the criminal justice system.*

in analyses not shown here, we find that a variable in which the interviewer coded the interviewee's skin tone is not statistically significant. The discrepancy between objective (skin tone) and subjective (self-identification) measures of race is interesting and merits further study. In particular we suspect that the relationship between skin color or race/ethnicity and confidence in the criminal justice system might be one that varies by country, given the vastly different demographic profiles that exist across the Americas.

Interestingly, once we include other variables in the model, the effect of age becomes insignificant (as shown in Figure 3). The other socioeconomic and demographic variables considered earlier (education, wealth, gender, and urban vs. rural) have similar effects across the analyses shown in Figures 2 and 3 (these are not shown in Figure 3 for the sake of brevity; see the Appendix for the full regression results).

## Conclusions

We found that individual and household crime victimization, corruption perceptions, and insecurity translate into diminished confidence in the criminal justice system. Further, it seems that confidence in the CJS is closely tied to confidence in other government institutions. Various socioeconomic and demographic factors matter as well, such as education, wealth, and urban residency.

Our findings have significant public policy implications. Our analysis suggests that the best way to improve confidence in the CJS is to improve the system's performance, in particular in the domain of law and order. Lower crime victimization, heightened anti-corruption measures, and perceived security improvements should translate into greater confidence in the

<sup>15</sup> In other words, exclusion of the trust in the police variable does not significantly impact the effects of the other variables we report on here.

CJS. Because confidence in the CJS is closely tied to confidence in other government institutions and to effective citizen participation in the system (e.g., by witnesses and well-qualified personnel), such steps might improve faith in the overall government, enhance state legitimacy, and ultimately improve a country's democratic performance.

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## Appendix I: Full Regression Results

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Female	-0.005	.0053
Age	0.010	.0057
Urban	-0.029*	.0076
Level of Education	-0.031*	.0069
Quintile of Wealth	-0.013*	.0062
White	0.020*	.0065
Sense of Security	0.074*	.0063
Trust President/PM	0.097*	.0072
Trust National Police	0.200*	.0066
Perception of Corruption	-0.072*	.0062
Household Crime Victim	-0.024*	.0056
Crime Victim	-0.049*	.0055
Mexico	-0.021*	.0070
Guatemala	-0.008	.0074
El Salvador	-0.003	.0063
Honduras	0.032*	.0064
Nicaragua	0.014	.0078
Costa Rica	-0.038*	.0078
Panama	0.040*	.0083
Colombia	0.032*	.0075
Ecuador	-0.076*	.0111
Bolivia	-0.000	.0107
Peru	-0.006	.0075
Paraguay	-0.023*	.0076
Chile	-0.057*	.0075
Brazil	-0.049*	.0112
Venezuela	0.019*	.0088
Argentina	0.010	.0080
Dominican Republic	0.022*	.0074
Haiti	-0.013	.0074
Jamaica	0.091*	.0086
Guyana	0.063*	.0083
Trinidad & Tobago	0.002	.0073
Belize	0.024*	.0086
Suriname	0.048*	.0075
Constant	-0.008	.0070
<i>R-Squared</i>	<i>0.140</i>	
<i>Number of Observations</i>	<i>35,672</i>	
* p<0.05		

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

\*Reference Country: Uruguay

## Appendix II: Author Biographies\*

Stefanie Herrmann has just finished her sophomore year at Vanderbilt University. She is a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program and the Ingram Scholars Program. She is double majoring in French and European Studies and Latin American Studies. She is the founder and president of Vanderbilt Hope, a student-led organization focused on improving the quality of education locally in Nashville and internationally in South India. Stefanie is also a Resident Adviser at the University. After graduation she intends to pursue a career in international diplomacy.

Dillon MacDonald has just finished his junior year at Vanderbilt University and is a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. He is majoring in Political Science with minors in Economics and Financial Economics. After graduation he intends to pursue a career in financial services.

Rob Tauscher has just finished his sophomore year at Vanderbilt University and is a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. He is majoring in Biological Sciences and Spanish and is a member of the Vanderbilt Crew Team. After graduation he plans to attend medical school.

*\*Author names are listed alphabetically. Matthew Layton, a graduate student in Political Science at Vanderbilt University, acted as a technical consultant on this report.*

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

Number 63

## Compulsory Voting and the Decision to Vote

By Arturo Maldonado  
[arturo.maldonado@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:arturo.maldonado@vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** Does compulsory voting alter the rational calculus of voting? According to the rational choice theory of voting, turnout depends on the costs and benefits of voting, the probability of casting the decisive ballot, and individuals' sense of duty. After showing that compulsory voting boosts turnout in Latin America and the Caribbean, this *Insights* report examines the extent to which turnout is associated with the cost and benefits of voting and individuals' sense of duty in countries with voluntary versus compulsory voting laws. Contrary to expectations, the analysis reveals that the factors affecting voting are nearly identical in compulsory and non-compulsory systems. In both types of countries, the wealthy, the politically engaged, the highly educated, and those who are older are more likely to go to the polls, while retired people, housewives, students, and the unemployed are less likely to vote. Finally, the report discusses the consequences of these findings for the debate about implementing compulsory voting laws in countries with voluntary voting, or freeing citizens from the obligation to vote in countries with compulsory voting.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)



**I**s the decision to vote made differently in Latin American and Caribbean countries under compulsory laws than in ones with voluntary voting? In his presidential address to the American Political Science Association, Lijphart (1997) mentioned several benefits to compulsory voting laws. The principal one is that high turnout diminishes what can be a significant threat to representative democracy: the election of officials in competitions with low levels of voter participation, which produces weak popular mandates. He also suggested that compulsory voting levels the playing field by reducing the extent to which turnout is “unequal and socioeconomically biased” (p. 2).

Scholars have shown that electoral turnout is higher in countries with enforced compulsory voting (Norris 2004). However, the question of how compulsory voting affects the decision-making calculus of voting and inequalities in participation remains relatively under-explored. One study examines this topic at the aggregate level (Panagopoulos 2008), while more recently Singh (2011) uses a hierarchical model to examine the topic with a scattered sample of 36 countries around the world, including some Latin American ones. Research focused on Western countries shows, as suggested by Lijphart (1997) that mandatory voting decreases inequality in participation (Mackerras and McAllister 1999; Jackman 2001).

Beyond compulsory voting, Blais (2000) argues that turnout depends on four dimensions related to a rational decision: the benefits of voting, the probability of casting a decisive vote, the cost of voting, and the individual’s sense of duty. In this *Insights* report<sup>1</sup>, I propose to test whether the impact of each factor on voter turnout for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean depends on whether the

country has voluntary or compulsory voting.<sup>2</sup> In the 2010 round of AmericasBarometer, 11 countries out of 24 surveyed have compulsory and regulated voting.<sup>3</sup> So, this sample offers a sort of “natural experiment” to test these claims in a particular region of the world. I divide the analysis in three sections. The first presents information about turnout in Latin America and the Caribbean. The second analyzes the impact of compulsory voting on turnout controlling for demographic variables. It also includes economic and political variables related to the dimensions described by Blais, specifically the cost and benefits of voting and the sense of duty of the voter.<sup>4</sup> Finally, I assess the extent to which the effect of these three factors on the decision to turnout depends on whether the system uses compulsory or voluntary voting.

To examine the role of compulsory/voluntary voting on voter turnout in Latin America and the Caribbean, I will use a question asked in the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer:<sup>5</sup>

**VB2.** Did you vote in the last presidential / general elections?<sup>6</sup>

Respondents could indicate whether they voted or not. It is important to note that this question focuses on the last presidential or parliamentary election, which differs in each country. While in countries such as Chile and Uruguay elections occurred just a few months

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<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* Series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>

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<sup>2</sup> I consider countries that have compulsory but unenforced voting as voluntary; thus this variable is binary.

<sup>3</sup> I exclude the USA and Canada because the emphasis of this *Insights* series is on Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>4</sup> I do not include the probability of casting the decisive ballot into the analysis because I do not have a variable that taps this factor; this is not a large loss, as its influence is comparatively negligible.

<sup>5</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>6</sup> The non-response rate for this question was 1.79%.

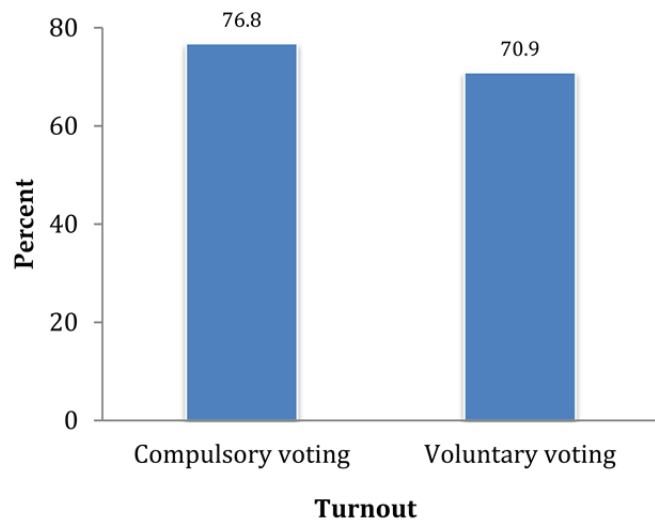
previously, in others such as Peru and Brazil, elections occurred as long ago as 2006.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1 presents the average reported voter turnout in 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. It shows, as expected, that turnout is higher in countries with compulsory voting, but the difference is not as great as typically thought, 5.9%.<sup>8</sup> However, this difference may be affected by one known limitation, namely the overreporting of turnout. Previous research has shown that people in Central America tend to overestimate their voting participation (Seligson et. al. 1995) and the same may happen in the rest of Latin America. Indeed, the average difference between actual and self-reported turnout is only 4.4% in compulsory countries, while it is 12.2% in voluntary countries. That means that the difference in turnout between compulsory and non-compulsory countries is actually higher than the self-reported data suggest.

### Determinants of Turnout: Socio-Demographic Groups, Political Variables, and Compulsory Voting

Following previous research (Powell 1986 and Blais 2000), I test the effect of selected sociodemographic variables on levels of turnout.<sup>9</sup> According to Blais, the cost of voting entails both information costs and the time and money spent going to the poll. So, in addition to the standard variables (gender, education, and age), Blais also includes variables that

**Figure 1. Turnout in Latin American and Caribbean Countries**



capture the retired<sup>10</sup>, housewives, the unemployed, and students.<sup>11</sup> Here, I expect that these groups are less likely to be able to afford the cost of voting. Consequently, I anticipate these variables will have negative coefficients. Further, I also include wealth as a measure related to the cost of voting, since I consider that rich people are more able to bear the cost of getting information and of going to the poll station.

In the same fashion, sense of duty may be gauged by several measures. Here, I use a system support index.<sup>12</sup> I assume that when a person has higher support for the system, he or she is likely to have a more developed sense of duty in electoral terms.<sup>13</sup> Finally, I assess the

<sup>7</sup> The time elapsed since the election might affect overreporting. I replicated the following analyses for the subset of countries with a difference between reported and official turnout lower than 10% and 5% and I find results akin to those presented here.

<sup>8</sup> According to IDEA data, the official turnout in Latin American and Caribbean countries with compulsory voting is 72.4% and in countries with voluntary voting it is 60.6%, giving a difference of 11.8% ([www.idea.int/vt](http://www.idea.int/vt)). See Appendix for details.

<sup>9</sup> All analyses conducted with STATA v11 and results were adjusted for the complex sample design employed.

<sup>10</sup> This variable includes the retired, pensioners, and people who are permanently disabled.

<sup>11</sup> Blais also includes married people and finds a positive and significant effect on turnout. Here, I also include this variable to replicate this analysis.

<sup>12</sup> This is an index based on responses, on a 1-7 scale running from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to five statements regarding support for the courts, support for the political institutions of the country, belief that basic rights are protected, pride in the political system, and support for the political system.

<sup>13</sup> I replicated this analysis using a support for democracy variable as a measure of individuals' sense of duty, and I get similar results.

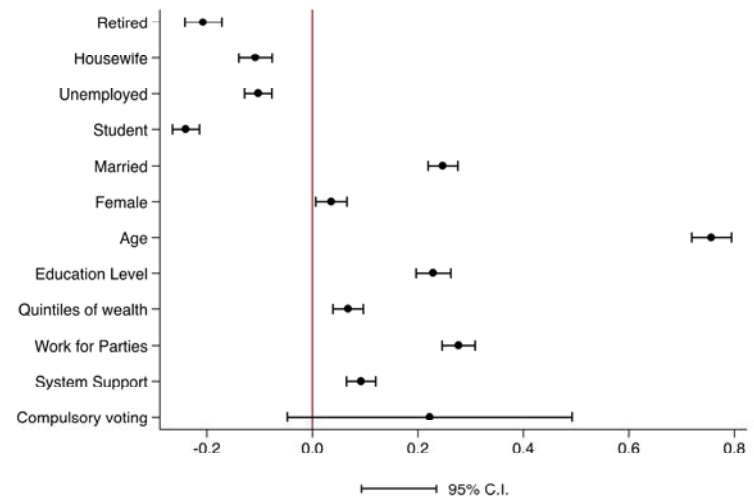
importance of the benefits of voting by including a variable that measures whether a person works for a party.<sup>14</sup> I consider that those who work for a party may benefit to a greater extent if their party wins than those who do not work for a party.

Figure 2 shows the results of a multi-level logistic regression model of self-reported turnout using these variables. The impact of each variable is in the expected direction. The retired, students, housewives, and the unemployed are all less likely to vote. On the contrary, as Blais finds, married people, older people<sup>15</sup>, and the well-educated are more likely to go to the polling station. This indicates that particular social groups face greater barriers to casting a ballot. The more educated segments of the population have more interest and knowledge about politics and probably a higher sense of citizenship that push them to go to vote (Milstein and Green 2010).

Results for wealth, working for a party, and system support are statistically significant and also in the expected direction. Specifically, people with higher system support, who have worked for a party, and who are wealthier are more likely to cast a vote. So, the more the citizen is politically integrated, the more likely he or she is to vote.

I also include an indicator for whether the country has a compulsory voting system.<sup>16</sup> The

**Figure 2. The Impact of Socio-Demographic, Political Variables, and Compulsory Voting on Turnout, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010 and ACE project  
Data from 24 countries; U.S. and Canada excluded

coefficient for this variable is not statistically significant at a 95% level of confidence ( $p$ -value=0.106), but it is in the expected direction and substantively as relevant or more relevant than a number of the individual measures. Thus, people living in countries with compulsory electoral laws are more likely to vote. This result is not surprising, and it is corroborated by research at the aggregate level in Latin America (Fornos et. al. 2004).

Nonetheless, a question remains: to what extent are these opinions and attitudes different in compulsory versus voluntary countries? The next section takes up this question.

## Cross-Country Variation in the Determinants of Turnout

In order to answer this question, I run separate regressions for two groups of countries: those with voluntary voting and those with

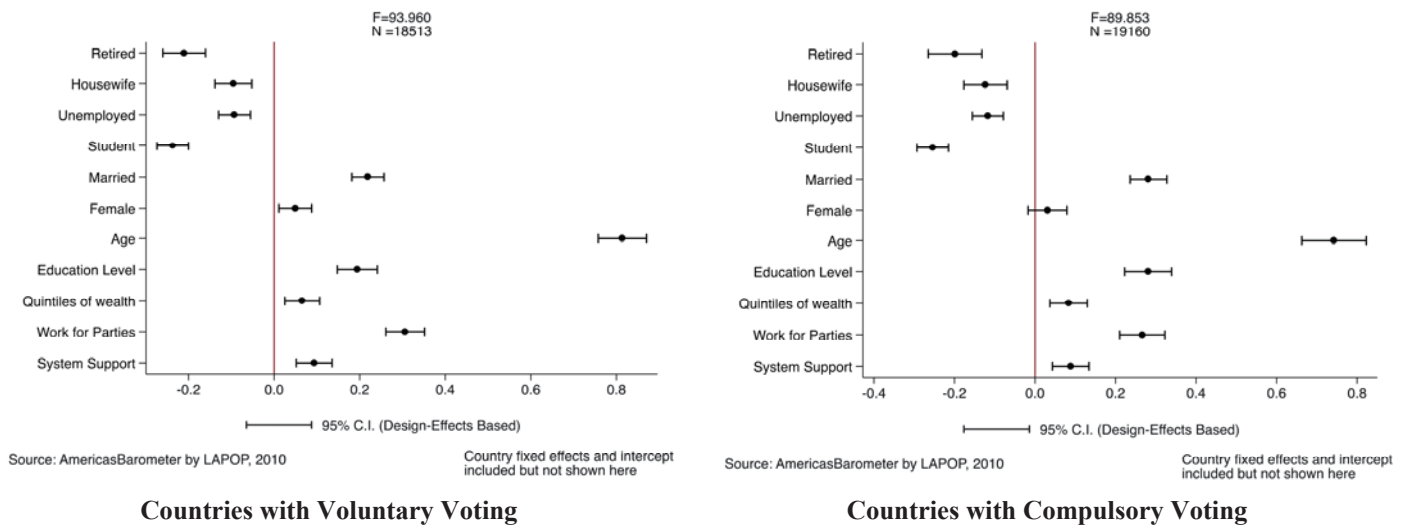
<sup>14</sup> I replicated this analysis using party identification as a measure for benefits of voting, and I get parallel results.

<sup>15</sup> I find a curvilinear pattern that indicates that people in their forties and fifties are most likely to vote, whereas those younger and older have lower probabilities. This pattern is similar to that found by Seligson et. al. (1995) for a survey of six Central American countries. Here, I find the same configuration for a broad sample of 24 countries. Further, I also ran this model including the squared term for age and found a positive and statistically significant coefficient for age and a negative and significant one for age squared, indicating the same curvilinear pattern.

<sup>16</sup> This is a second-level variable, which means that it is a characteristic of a country and not a characteristic of individuals. For that reason, I run a multi-level logistic

model. See the Appendix for details about countries with compulsory vs. voluntary voting and turnout.

**Figure 3. The Impact of Socio-Demographic and Political Variables by Type of Country, 2010**



compulsory voting laws.<sup>17</sup> I expect that the cost of voting, measured by socio-demographic characteristics and wealth, decreases turnout in countries with compulsory voting. But this relationship should be even stronger in countries with voluntary voting. I also expect the same relationship regarding the sense of duty and the benefits of voting; a positive effect in countries with voluntary voting and a smaller effect in countries with compulsory voting.

Figure 3 shows these two logistic regressions, one for each type of country. The results indicate that there are strong similarities between the two models. In both types of countries the coefficients for the retired, housewives, the unemployed and students are negative and statistically significant. Similarly,

variables for married and age present positive and statistically significant coefficients. I expected these effects in countries with voluntary voting, but in countries with compulsory voting I had expected smaller effects than are shown here. I also find, again contrary to my expectation, that wealth is positive, statistically significant, and of relatively equal impact in both types of countries. Lastly, I find that system support is statistically significant and of very similar magnitude in both types of countries. Thus, it appears that the individual's sense of duty, measured by the respondent's support for the system, is associated with the decision to vote regardless of whether voting is voluntary or obligatory.

## Discussion

The study of the effect of compulsory voting on turnout has for the most part been examined at the aggregate level. In this *Insights* report, I seek to contribute to that discussion by focusing on the individual level, examining how this feature affects the relationship between individual attributes and voting behavior. The results indicate surprisingly few

<sup>17</sup> I also ran a multi-level logistic model that includes the second-level variable and interactive terms between this variable and the key independent variables to test whether there are differences in the effects of those variables across these two types of countries. In this model none of the interactive variables is statistically significant at 95% level of confidence. This means, as Figure 3 suggests, that there are no differences in the effects of these variables across countries with compulsory and voluntary voting laws. Given that I find similar results and given the scope of this short report, I do not present results from that complex model here.

differences between citizens living in countries with compulsory versus voluntary voting.

This report also helps us answer an important question: what happens if a country with compulsory voting changes to voluntary voting? Scholars and policymakers have been worried about whether this change would introduce a bias in electoral results favorable to economic and political elites (Lijphart 1997). On the other side, some scholars (Mackerras and McAllister 1999, Jakee and Sun 2006) argue that compulsory voting introduces an electoral advantage for leftist parties and increases the rate of invalid votes.

According to these results, an economic and a political bias exist equally in countries with voluntary and compulsory voting. So, changing from compulsory to voluntary or from voluntary to compulsory voting may not affect how people evaluate whether to vote or not to vote. In conclusion, these results indicate that

the rational calculus is basically the same regardless of whether a country uses compulsory or voluntary voting. Turnout decisions are based on economic calculations and political values. So, a change from compulsory to voluntary voting decreases turnout and may maintain the economic and political biases; in contrast, a change from voluntary to compulsory would theoretically increase turnout, but apparently not eliminate these biases.

Future research should examine the role played by the penalties for not voting in countries with compulsory voting. The rational calculus of voting may depend not only on socioeconomic status, but also on whether one can easily afford the penalty for not voting. It may be easier to afford a fine than the suspension of basic rights. In short, and as always, more work remains to be done but, in the meantime, this *Insights* report adds one more perspective to the literature on turnout and turnout rules.



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## Appendix

Appendix Table 1. Latin American and Caribbean Countries by Official and Reported Turnout and by Type of Election

Country	LAPOP (reported turnout)	IDEA (official turnout)	Diff.	Compulsory / Voluntary
Venezuela	68.6%	76.3%	-7.7%	Compulsory and regulated
Costa Rica	58.0%	64.0%	-6.0%	Compulsory and regulated
Peru	80.0%	83.2%	-3.2%	Compulsory and regulated
Brazil	83.4%	83.6%	-0.1%	Compulsory and regulated
Argentina	75.2%	72.2%	3.0%	Compulsory and regulated
Dominican Republic	76.1%	71.6%	4.5%	Compulsory and regulated
Paraguay	66.8%	45.9%	20.9%	Compulsory and regulated
Honduras	60.9%	60.6%	0.4%	Compulsory and regulated
Uruguay	93.5%	91.8%	1.7%	Compulsory and regulated
Ecuador	92.7%	84.1%	8.6%	Compulsory and regulated
Bolivia	89.2%	63.4%	25.8%	Compulsory and regulated
Suriname	70.5%	53.0%	17.5%	Voluntary
Nicaragua	69.4%	74.2%	-4.8%	Voluntary
Guyana	71.2%	66.4%	4.8%	Voluntary
Haiti	59.4%	47.8%	11.6%	Voluntary
Colombia	60.2%	44.2%	16.1%	Voluntary
Trinidad and Tobago	68.1%	72.5%	-4.4%	Voluntary
Jamaica	57.2%	49.6%	7.6%	Voluntary
Guatemala	69.0%	45.5%	23.5%	Voluntary
Belize	76.4%	73.9%	2.6%	Voluntary
Canada	78.2%	53.6%	24.6%	Voluntary
United States	86.3%	58.2%	28.0%	Voluntary
Panama	81.8%	80.3%	1.5%	Voluntary
Chile	93.7%	63.0%	30.7%	Voluntary
Mexico	71.0%	63.3%	7.8%	Voluntary (no enforcement)
El Salvador	79.3%	63.1%	16.2%	Voluntary (no enforcement)

Appendix Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Model Predicting Voting Turnout in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Compulsory voting	0.222	0.138
System support	0.092**	0.014
Working for party	0.278**	0.016
Wealth	0.068**	0.015
Education	0.230**	0.017
Age	0.757**	0.019
Female	0.036*	0.015
Married	0.248**	0.014
Student	-0.240**	0.013
Unemployed	-0.103**	0.013
Housewife	-0.108**	0.016
Retired	-0.207**	0.018
<i>Number of Observations</i>	37,673	
<i>Number of Countries</i>	24	
<i>Wald Chi2</i>	3,744.16	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Appendix Table 3. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Voting Turnout for Countries with Compulsory and Voluntary Voting, 2010

	Countries with Voluntary Voting		Countries with Compulsory Voting	
	Coefficient	t-value	Coefficient	t-value
System support	0.093*	4.38	0.089*	3.83
Working for party	0.306*	13.27	0.266*	9.32
Wealth	0.066*	3.18	0.083*	3.52
Education	0.195*	8.18	0.281*	9.46
Age	0.814*	28.35	0.743*	18.24
Female	0.050*	2.53	0.031	1.26
Married	0.219*	11.40	0.282*	12.13
Student	-0.237*	-12.62	-0.254	-12.71
Unemployed	-0.093*	-4.88	-0.117*	-5.95
Housewife	-0.095*	-4.32	-0.123*	-4.49
Retired	-0.210*	-8.27	-0.199*	-5.85
<i>Number of Observations</i>	18513		19160	
<i>F</i>	93.96		89.85	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p < .05.

# AmericasBarometer Insights: 2011

Number 64

## Who Seeks to Exit? Security, Connections, and Happiness as Predictors of Migration Intentions in the Americas

By Alex Arnold, Paul Hamilton, and Jimmy Moore  
With Arturo Maldonado  
*Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** Migration patterns have featured prominently on the agendas of politicians, analysts, and researchers for decades. However, current research on the instigating forces of migration relies heavily on theoretical or single-case studies rather than cross-national empirical analyses. For this reason, we use various questions from the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey to investigate why people desire to move away from or stay in their home country. Building upon the existing literature, we analyze people's desire to emigrate from 24 countries in the Americas. The results reveal that happiness is a key factor in a decision to emigrate. In addition, considering the sample as a whole, we find that the most educated individuals are among the most likely to leave. People who have been victimized in the past, who believe the country is struggling economically, who have relatives abroad, and who have weaker ties to home also exhibit a higher inclination to leave. Finally, and perhaps slightly troubling for many countries, the youngest members of society are the most likely to leave of any age group.

*LAPOP is pleased to note that this report was developed and written by Vanderbilt undergraduate students participating in a Vanderbilt University honors seminar (HONS186, taught by Professor E. J. Zechmeister). Biographies of the authors are provided in the report appendix.*

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)



High levels of emigration can exact numerous economic, political, and social costs. For example, emigration can cause brain drain and its consequent economic challenges, disruptions to familial and other social networks, and political conflicts with receiving countries. Indeed, a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries find themselves struggling to retain their citizens and have considered or created various incentives to either keep citizens in the country or to bring them back home (Pellegrino 2000 and 2001; Koser 2010). Policies designed to curb emigration have been debated in a number of countries, including Uruguay, where it was reported that approximately one-fifth of its nationals were living abroad in 2005 (Gotkine 2005). In recent years, many countries within Latin America have found themselves for the first time as major recipients of immigrants, often from other Latin American countries (Orcés 2009, 2010). Given the political salience and relevance of migration to the Americas, it is important to assess this question: To what extent do individuals across the Americas desire to emigrate, and why?

In this *Insights* report, we first seek to describe the desire for emigration among citizens.<sup>1</sup> We then attempt to identify some of the leading sources of this desire; in particular, we highlight the importance of age, security, social connections, and overall happiness to explaining the intention to exit. Our report focuses primarily on this question from the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey<sup>2</sup> by LAPOP:

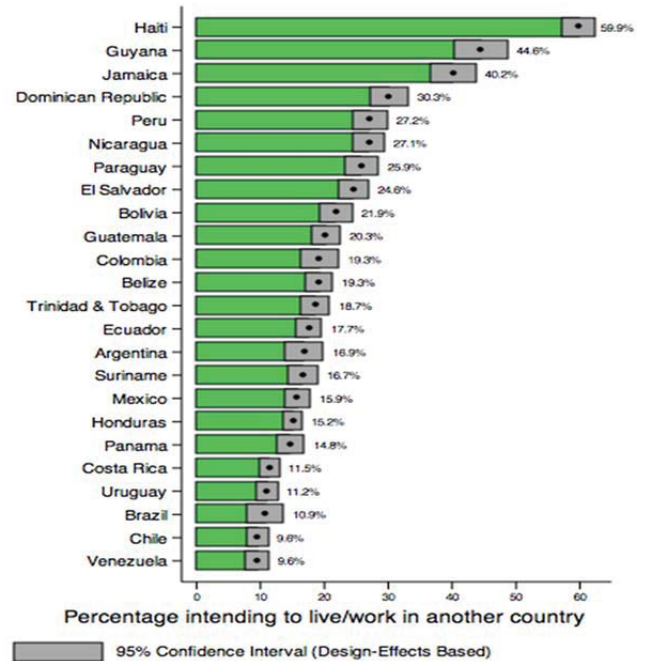
**Q14.** Do you have any intention of going to live or work in another country in the next three years?

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

Figure 1 displays the results to this “yes/no” question across 24 countries in the Americas.<sup>3</sup> The dots on each bar on the graph indicate the percentage of respondents who answered “yes,” with gray areas indicating 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Individuals Indicating a Desire to Emigrate**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

Overall, we see wide variance in the response pattern across countries. Values in the graph range from a low of 9.6% in Venezuela to a high of 59.9% in Haiti, the only country where the percentage of affirmative responses exceeds the 50% mark. The relatively high percentage of Haitians seeking to emigrate is likely due to past migration patterns being exacerbated by the 2010 earthquake, which could have led many citizens to seek opportunities outside of their devastated country (Wasem 2010). The fact that approximately 20% or more of citizens in half

<sup>3</sup> The question was not asked in the United States and Canada. The rate of non-response to this particular question among the sample of survey participants is 3.2%.

the countries surveyed answered in the affirmative is striking. This means that, on average, a fifth of the population desires to leave their home country within the next few years.<sup>4</sup>

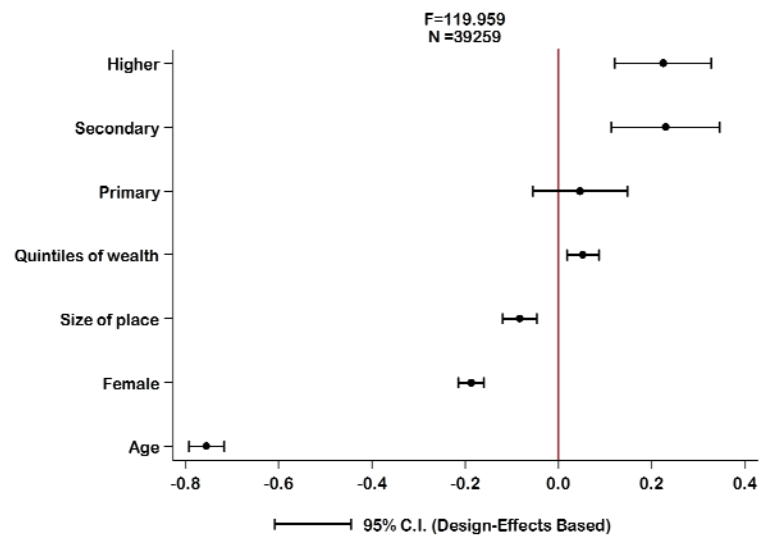
## Socioeconomic and Demographic Factors as Predictors of Intentions to Emigrate

How do factors such as education, wealth, size of the town/city of residence, gender, and age affect nationals' desire to exit their home country? The current literature provides some expectations, which we assess in this section.

First, we expect to see individuals' levels of education predict their intention to move abroad. Much previous research (Levy and Wadycki 1974; Bray 1984; Rumbaut 1995; Durand et al. 2001; Pellegrino 2001) asserts that increased education tends to cause people to be more inclined to migrate from their home countries. Higher-educated people are more likely to possess the knowledge and training needed to succeed abroad and might be more cognizant of concrete opportunities to be found out of the country, due to heightened awareness of world affairs (Levy and Wadycki 1974). This is not always the case; Pellegrino (2001) cites a polarization in U.S. immigrants, with educated workers coming from South America and low-

<sup>4</sup> We note, of course, that the question does not ask whether the individual would consider this move temporary or permanent. Another important consideration when evaluating these results is that the global economy was extremely poor at the time. It is possible that people may have seen less benefit from moving abroad than they might have otherwise. It is beyond the scope of our analyses, however, to determine whether the global recession directly increased, decreased, or kept constant overall preferences to emigrate in 2010 compared to prior years.

**Figure 2. Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics Predicting the Likelihood of Indicating a Desire to Emigrate, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

Country fixed effects and intercept included but not shown here

skill workers from Central America.<sup>5</sup> However, in our analyses of the region as a whole, we expect to find that the more highly educated an individual, the more likely he or she will be to desire to emigrate in the coming three years.

In addition, greater wealth should facilitate one's means to move abroad (Pellegrino 2000; *Economist* 2002). Therefore, we expect wealth to correlate positively with intentions to emigrate.<sup>6</sup> To assess these expectations, and to examine the significance of gender, age, and urban versus rural residence, we ran a logistical regression analysis predicting the likelihood that an individual will express a desire to emigrate. Figure 2 shows the results of this analysis.

In Figure 2, the independent variables included in the analysis are shown along the y-axis. The effect of each variable on our dependent variable

<sup>5</sup> It would be interesting to test whether and how countries vary on the extent to which education matters in emigration. However, this analysis is mostly beyond the scope of this study (but see footnote 9).

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the wealth measure see Córdova (2009).

is shown with a dot. If the dot falls to the right of the vertical “0” line, the variable is positively correlated with expressing an intention to exit. If the dot falls to the left of that line, the variable has a negative effect on the respondent’s desire to emigrate in the next few years. We indicate statistical significance with lines stretching to the left and right of each dot. Only if a line does not cross over the vertical “0” line is the variable’s influence statistically significant (at .05 or better). The relative strength of each variable is indicated by standardized coefficients.

Figure 2 shows that, indeed, education appears to have a statistically significant effect on intent to move abroad.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, primary education does not appear to provide enough of a “push” over having no education to induce someone to want to move abroad. However, at both the secondary and higher levels of education, people appear more likely to want to move abroad. As Levy and Wadycki (1974) suggested, the tools provided by education seem to fuel intentions to move abroad. These tools may include knowledge about foreign areas, skills in specialized tasks, or other general resume-building factors.

*[T]ools provided by  
education seem to fuel  
intentions to move abroad.*

<sup>7</sup> In separate analyses not shown here, we tested whether the effects of education, wealth, and age are curvi-linear (u-shaped) rather than linear. For education, there appears some evidence of a threshold effect, where possessing a secondary education or above leaves one more disposed toward exit compared to those with a primary education or none. The results for wealth were less clear (the results for the dummy variables for each quintile of wealth do not show a clear linear or curvi-linear relationship to desire to emigrate and, in the analyses related to Figure 3 in this report, wealth becomes insignificant once additional variables are included and this result holds whether wealth is measured assuming a linear relationship or as a series of dummy variables). We found clear linear results for a series of age cohort variables (see footnote 8). While some of these results may differ from findings in other scholarship, we caution that it is important to keep in mind that we are examining average effects across all of the Americas (minus the U.S. and Canada) and, per footnotes 5 and 9, we recognize results for these variables may vary across individual countries.

Somewhat surprisingly, higher wealth provides only a small (albeit statistically significant) boost in citizens’ desire to emigrate. We ran the same model with education omitted, and wealth only exhibited a slightly larger effect (closer to 0.1). This leads us to conclude that, all else equal and considering the sample as a whole, skills and knowledge exert a greater influence over one’s intention to leave his or her country than material resources.

The results also show that women (compared to men) as well as those living in larger and more urban areas are less likely to indicate a desire to move abroad. Finally, age has an overwhelmingly strong relationship to a person’s desire to move abroad. Specifically, the older someone is, the less likely they are to want to leave their homeland to move to another country. While we expected a relationship between age and desire to emigrate, we were quite surprised by this correlation, which is far larger than any of the other variables we study here. Below, we explore interpersonal trust as a proxy for social capital, because we believe that high levels of social capital built up over time may drive some, but not all, of the very strong relationship between these two variables.<sup>8</sup> In the same vein, we explore the effect of having children, as another social tie that might increase with age and play a role in keeping older generations in the country.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> We also ran logistical regression tests separating the various age groups to determine if there was any indication of a “U-curve” relationship among the variables. In fact, age shows a consistent linear relationship. The youngest groups show the greatest likelihood to leave, and the oldest age groups show the least desire for emigration.

<sup>9</sup> We also ran separate regression analyses (not shown here) for each country to test if we find the same pattern of results across the individual countries. Basically, we find quite similar results. For instance, age is a statistically significant and negative predictor for each country’s analysis. Education is positively related to desire to emigrate in each country, but this relationship is noticeably quite strong in Chile. Regarding the size of the place variable, we find greater variation across countries; in many cases, the

Beyond these basic variables, the literature indicates that some other individual factors may determine someone's likelihood to leave. Our next section investigates some of these other variables' relationships to intentions to exit.<sup>10</sup>

## High Life Satisfaction, Security, and Strong Social Ties Inhibit the Decision to Leave

We contend that the likelihood of leaving rests to a large degree on citizens' general satisfaction with their current lives. Overall, if citizens are not happy with their current situation, they will take measures to improve their life, which may include searching for benefits in other countries. On the other hand, if citizens are satisfied with their current lifestyle, it seems much more likely that they will not leave the country in the near future. In assessing factors that predict intention to exit, we consider three specific indicators of well-being: security from crime and violence, economic evaluations, and social connections. In addition, we consider the effect of reported life satisfaction on an individual's desire to emigrate.

Crime and violence are both commonly discussed instigators of migration at the individual level; Pellegrino (2001) identifies violence as a key cause of permanent migration. Violence in Colombia is singled out in one article (*Economist* 2002), while Wasem (2010)

mentions lawlessness as a possible reason for emigration from Haiti. We reason that individuals who have recently been victimized by crime may find moving to a country perceived as safer to be an attractive option. We therefore test the effect of crime victimization on intent to exit.

In addition, we expect that the worse the perceived condition of the domestic economy, the more likely a respondent is to want to emigrate. The telling role the home economic situation plays in migration trends is identified in numerous articles (Bray 1984; Massey et. al. 1998; Pellegrino 2000 and 2001; *Economist* 2002; Koser 2010). From these we see that, historically, levels of immigration have varied in accordance with the economic health of the sending and receiving countries. If, for many people, the decision to emigrate is one primarily motivated by a desire for better economic opportunities, then we should find a negative relationship between evaluations of the national economy and one's desire to emigrate.<sup>11</sup>

We also considered social connections as a factor that may influence one's desire to emigrate. There is a fair amount of literature suggesting that people are more likely to migrate to another country if they have strong social ties – meaning high social capital – with people in the foreign country (Massey & España 1987). Migration networks, the links between emigrants and their family and friends still at home, are thought to increase the chance that those left behind will move abroad (Massey & España 1987). Having an established network abroad makes the transition between two countries much easier;

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coefficients are not statistically significant, whereas for the analyses of Guyana, Argentina and Colombia we find significant, negative effects as in Figure 2. Finally, regarding quintiles of wealth, we again find that the results do not reach statistical significance in many countries; wealth seems to exert its strongest and most statistically significant effects in the cases of Panama, Haiti, Guyana, and Trinidad & Tobago.

<sup>10</sup> In the Appendix, Figures 2 and 3 are re-created without responses from Haiti due to its outlier status with regards to percentage of respondents desiring to move abroad. As can be seen, the model stays essentially the same with or without responses from this country, and we are therefore confident that this particular country's responses are not driving the results we present here.

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<sup>11</sup> While we focus on individual evaluations here, we also assessed (in analyses not presented here) the effect of national economic growth in a hierarchical model that included all the other variables included in Figure 3. We find that the individual-level variables are in the same direction and are statistically significant. Further, the second-level variable, based on the country's GDP index, is also statistically significant and the coefficient has a negative sign, indicating that in countries with poor national economic growth, people are more likely to desire to emigrate.



after all, arriving in a new country with no way of navigating the housing market, job market, or social customs would be a significant barrier to ultimately attaining a better standard of living. In addition, having relatives successfully living abroad conveys that there are jobs with higher wages available in that foreign country, and this information is further incentive to emigrate (Massey & España 1987). Thus, we test for the effect of having relatives living abroad and expect to find a positive relationship.

While many have considered the effects of having social connections abroad, there is a dearth of research examining the relationship between domestic social connections and the intent to move to a different country. We expect that the more social connections individuals have within their home communities, the less likely they will be to want to leave. Put differently, if increased social connections abroad lead people to emigrate, then a lack of this social capital at home should leave them more willing to move away. As measures of domestic social connections, we include variables measuring interpersonal trust and whether the respondent has children.

Finally, we consider a measure of overall life satisfaction and happiness. Happiness, considered in terms of life satisfaction, appears in numerous migration-centric studies, but its relationship to emigration is notably complex (Cardenas 2009). Scholars have found country-level happiness to have a U-shaped relationship with emigration rates. Specifically, emigration rates are high for very unhappy countries, comparatively lower for countries with happiness scores in the mid-range, and then higher again for the happiest countries (Polgreen and Simpson 2010). The primary hypothesis put forth by Polgreen and Simpson is that people in happier countries are more optimistic and thus perceive benefits in the opportunities they see abroad; the desire of people in the least happy countries to emigrate is more intuitive. The significant effect of happiness levels has been shown to be robust to

controls for effects of income and other economic welfare measures (Polgreen and Simpson 2010). While this research is focused on aggregate measures of happiness (at the country level), we will examine the relationship between happiness reported at the individual level and desire to emigrate.

To assess expectations yielded by the above discussion, we conducted a new logistic regression analysis, which includes the socioeconomic and demographic variables from the Figure 2 analysis as well as indicators of crime victimization<sup>12</sup>, national economic evaluations<sup>13</sup>, having relatives abroad<sup>14</sup>, having children, interpersonal trust<sup>15</sup>, and overall life satisfaction (“life rating”).<sup>16</sup> The model also included country fixed effects and controls not shown but reported in the Appendix.

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<sup>12</sup> VIC1EXT asks if the respondent has been the victim of any sort of crime in the past twelve months, citing robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, and violent threats as possible manifestations of crime activity. In Figure 3, “no victimization” is the base category.

<sup>13</sup> The SOCT1 variable in Figure 3 measures the respondent's perception of the national economic situation, with possible responses of the economic situation at present being “very good,” “good,” “neither good nor bad,” “bad or very bad.” For analytic purposes, this question is recoded so that higher values mean better evaluations.

<sup>14</sup> This figure is based off question Q10C of the LAPOP survey. The responses – initially given on a scale of 1-4 to indicate how many relatives were living abroad – were recoded to values of either 0 or 1 with 0 indicating that the respondent had no family abroad and 1 signaling the opposite.

<sup>15</sup> We coded “interpersonal trust” (IT1) on a 0 to 1 scale where 0 is no trust and 1 is a very high level. For “having children,” we coded “no children” as 0 and combined all answers involving any number of children as 1.

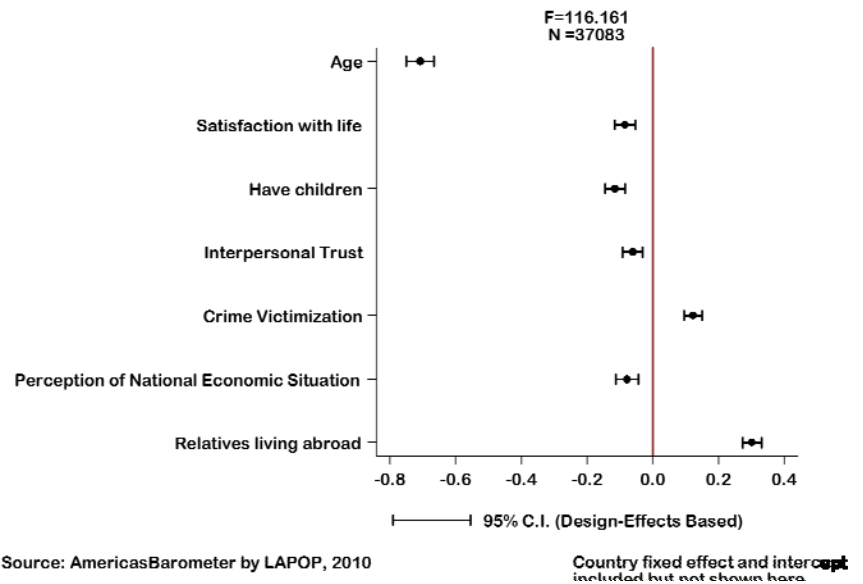
<sup>16</sup> LS3, the first non-demographic question asked in the survey, reads: “To begin, in general how satisfied are you with your life? Would you say that you are: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.” It is coded here so that higher values indicate more satisfaction. As a robustness check, we ran an analysis excluding all factors except those included in Figure 2 and we find that the substantive effect of life satisfaction increases, albeit in only a modest amount, which is suggestive of the idea that life satisfaction partially mediates the effects of some of the other variables included in Figure 3.



Figure 3 presents the results of this logistical regression analysis. As exhibited, experience with crime victimization is significantly and positively correlated with intention to exit the country. We also find that economic perception is significantly and negatively correlated with intention to exit; if a person perceives the national economy to be strong, he or she is less likely to express a desire to leave the country. While this falls in line with our prediction, it is worth noting that the effect is fairly small in size; indeed, there are other variables whose effects overshadow economic perceptions. In exploring the argument about economic conditions mattering from a different perspective, we ran an additional model (not shown here) that included personal economic perceptions along with national economic perception; it exhibited a result of similar strength, again showing that a positive personal economic situation decreases the likelihood of desiring to exit, but other factors play just as large and larger roles.

Figure 3 also shows results for how having relatives living abroad affects respondents' intentions to follow suit. As can be seen, there is a noticeable positive correlation between having relatives abroad and intent to do the same. This result supports our expectation and reinforces a central premise underlying migration network theory. Turning to domestic social connections, Figure 3 indicates that both high interpersonal trust and having children show slight negative correlations with their desire to exit. We therefore believe that social capital does determine in part the decision to emigrate. We also suspect that this finding may explain some of the effect age has on the decision to emigrate. Younger people are less rooted in their hometowns than older people, and thus the decision to emigrate would lead to less of a

**Figure 3. Life Satisfaction, Economic Evaluations, Crime Victimization, and Social Capital Predicting the Likelihood of Indicating a Desire to Emigrate, 2010**



sacrifice in terms of losing personal friendships or leaving behind children.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, as expected, satisfaction with life has a statistically significant and negative effect on intention to exit; higher reported happiness is shown to make Latin American residents less likely to seek to emigrate elsewhere. Admittedly, the effect of the measure is not as large as we expected.<sup>18</sup> It may be that, at the individual level, the effect of happiness on intention to leave takes a U-shape such that very happy and unhappy people are most likely to seek to emigrate, while positions in the middle

<sup>17</sup> Comparing the effects for age across the analyses shown in Figures 2 and 3, we see that the impact of age decreases only slightly when interpersonal trust and having children are included. While these specific factors, then, may alone not be driving the strong effect of age, we nonetheless suspect that deeper social and economic roots among older individuals, possibly in combination with lower propensities to take risks, account for much of the effect we find for age.

<sup>18</sup> It is likely that other variables controlled for in the model, such as perception of economic climate, age, crime victimization, children and interpersonal trust contribute to life satisfaction and, therefore, some of the effect of happiness is captured through these more specific measures in the model (see also footnote 16).

exhibit the greatest disinclination to seek to leave. In this case, the ends of the U-curve may effectively “balance” out the center of the U-curve, masking the effects of either group and leaving just a small negative correlation. Such an effect at the individual level would mirror findings discussed earlier at the country level. Assessing this expectation is beyond the scope of this paper, but we note that it may be a promising line of analysis for future scholarship to consider.

## Conclusions

In this report, we examined various factors that affect whether someone professes a desire to move abroad in the near future. We find that people’s intentions to move abroad are based in experiences and beliefs related to their own life situation, the connections they have, and the situation of their country as a whole. At its core, this research into migration patterns and their causes is founded upon individual happiness. Factors that theoretically would affect life satisfaction, and the general measure of happiness itself, have important effects on an individual’s intention to exit.

On average, our results confirm what much of the research into Latin American public opinion has told us over the last few decades. For example, several sources (Levy and Wadycki 1974; Pellegrino 2001) claim that higher levels of education typically drive people to emigrate, and our results are consistent with this perspective. The literature also identifies wealth as an important predictor, and our results that show that, overall, the poor are less likely to emigrate, are in accord with that research. Interesting to us was the massive effect that age has, an effect that admittedly surpassed what we expected at the outset.

We also examined several other key individual and contextual factors to determine whether

they influence emigration. People who have been victimized previously, who believe the national economy is in poor shape, who have relatives living abroad, and who have weak ties to home are much more likely to express a preference for going abroad. In conclusion, positive life experiences and perceptions matter. The simple truth is that, generally speaking, those who are not happy are more inclined to express a desire to “vote with their feet.”

*[T]hose who are not happy are quite likely to express a desire to “vote with their feet.”*

The most important lessons to take away from this report are the policy implications. If countries

want to avoid losing important human capital with economic, social and political externalities, they must convince individuals that life at home is good or has potential to improve. While economic conditions matter, they are not the only factors at hand. Introducing stronger ties to home by promoting community interaction may convince individuals of the benefits of staying home. In short, building strong and safe communities at the present appears to be an excellent way to develop important bonds that may avoid significant “brain drain” in the future.

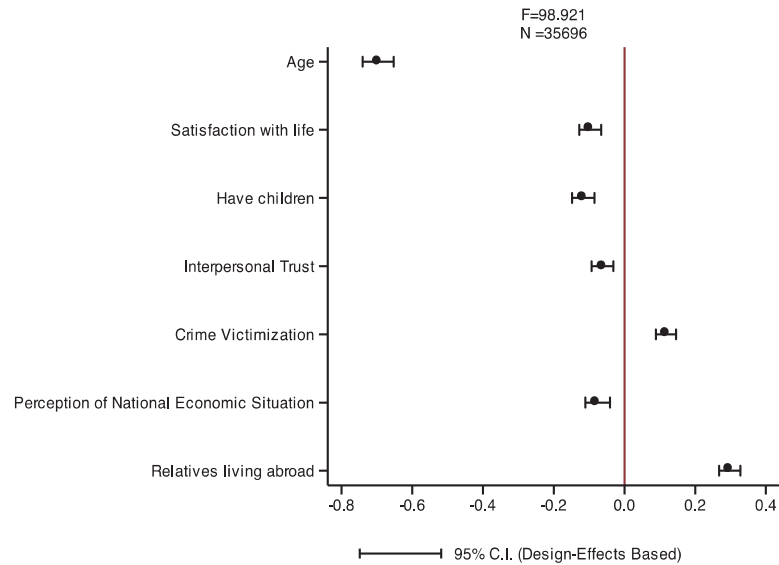
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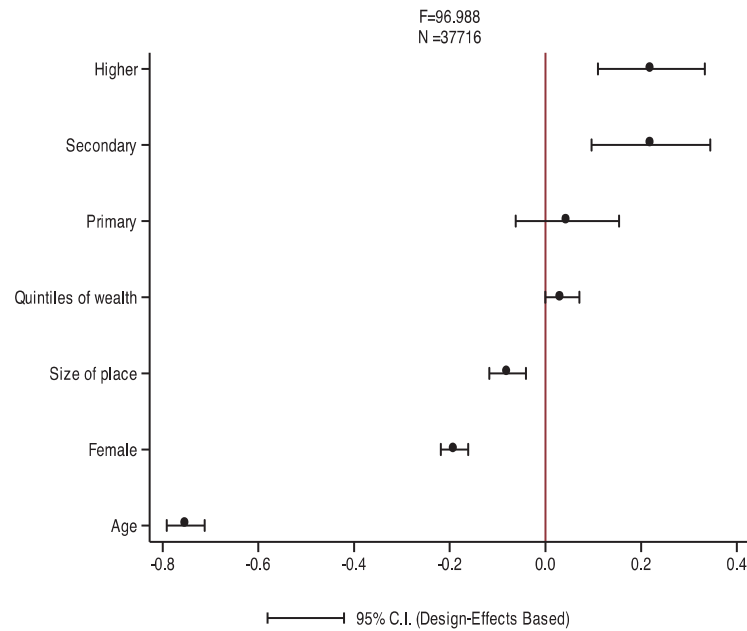
## Appendix A: Analysis

Figure A1. Analysis from Original Figure 3 Excluding Haiti



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

Figure A2. Analysis from Original Figure 2 Excluding Haiti



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

**Table A1. Logistic Model of Desire to Migrate (Design Effect Adjusted)<sup>19</sup>**

Variables	Coefficient	t-value
Relatives Living Abroad	0.303*	20.23
Perception of National Economic Situation	-0.078*	-4.48
Crime Victimization	0.123*	8.69
Interpersonal Trust	-0.061*	-3.91
Have Children	-0.115*	-7.32
Satisfaction with Life	-0.084*	-5.26
Age	-0.708*	-33.02
Female	-0.164*	-10.86
Size of Place	-0.051*	-2.62
Quintiles of Wealth	0.015	0.84
Primary Education	0.024	0.46
Secondary Education	0.188*	3.07
Higher Education	0.175*	3.21
Mexico	0.024	1.04
Guatemala	0.079*	3.48
El Salvador	0.117*	5.53
Honduras	0.013	0.58
Nicaragua	0.113*	5.35
Costa Rica	-0.024	-1.01
Panama	0.026	1.18
Colombia	0.074*	3.11
Ecuador	0.055	1.88
Bolivia	0.155*	3.84
Peru	0.148*	6.82
Paraguay	0.132*	6.07
Chile	-0.053	-1.83
Brazil	-0.024	-0.60
Venezuela	-0.058*	-2.27
Argentina	0.007	0.31
Dominican Republic	0.226*	10.35
Haiti	0.379*	15.97
Jamaica	0.283*	11.30
Guyana	0.323*	13.82
Trinidad and Tobago	0.050*	2.16
Belize	0.069*	3.09
Suriname	-0.004	-0.16
Constant	-1.671*	-77.10
<i>Number of Observations</i>	37,083	
<i>F</i>	116.16	

Note: Coefficients from weighted linear regression are significant at \*p < .05.

<sup>19</sup> Uruguay is the country of reference.



## **Appendix B: Author Biographies\***

**Alexandra Arnold** is a senior at Vanderbilt University and a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. She is double majoring in Economics and Public Health. She is serving as the Executive Director of Nashville Mobile Market, a student-run social enterprise venture that brings a mobile grocery store into lower-income Nashville communities that lack access to healthy and affordable food. She's also a board member of Vanderbilt's Alternative Spring Break service program, which recently sent 440 students on service trips, and teaches a nutrition class to Bhutanese refugees. After graduation, she is staying in Nashville to work for Ascension Health before pursuing a Master's in Economic Development.

**Paul Hamilton** is a senior at Vanderbilt University and a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. He is majoring in Economics and earning a double minor in Spanish and Financial Economics. He is a current member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon where he actively serves on the fraternity's community service committee to organize volunteer projects around the Nashville area. After graduation, he will pursue a Masters of Science in Finance at the Vanderbilt Owen Graduate School of Management.

**Jimmy Moore** is a senior at Vanderbilt University and a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. He is majoring in Political Science and Classical Languages. He is the current President and Team Captain of the Vanderbilt Mock Trial Team. In addition, he is an active member of the Presbyterian Student Fellowship at Vanderbilt and volunteers for various political figures and events. After graduation, he intends to pursue a Juris Doctorate degree.

*\* Author names are listed alphabetically. Arturo Maldonado, a graduate student in Political Science at Vanderbilt University, acted as a technical consultant on this report.*

# AmericasBarometer *Insights*: 2011

Number 65

## Political Efficacy in the Americas

*By Heather Borowski, Rebecca Reed, Lucas Scholl, and David Webb*

*With Margarita Corral*

*Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary:** In this *Insights* report, we present a preliminary look at internal efficacy using a question from the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey, which considers the extent to which constituents believe that they understand the most important political issues within their respective countries. The data reveal moderately low values of internal efficacy across the majority of countries in the region. We draw on extant literature to identify and assess factors that might affect levels of internal efficacy, paying particular attention to political and civic participation and victimization. Our findings suggest that participation is likely to increase this belief; in contrast, we find little support for the hypothesis that victimization is negatively correlated to internal efficacy, a result we suggest warrants further research.

LAPOP is pleased to note that this report was developed and written by Vanderbilt undergraduate students participating in a Vanderbilt University honors seminar (HONS186, taught by Professor E. J. Zechmeister).  
Biographies of the authors are provided in the report appendix.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

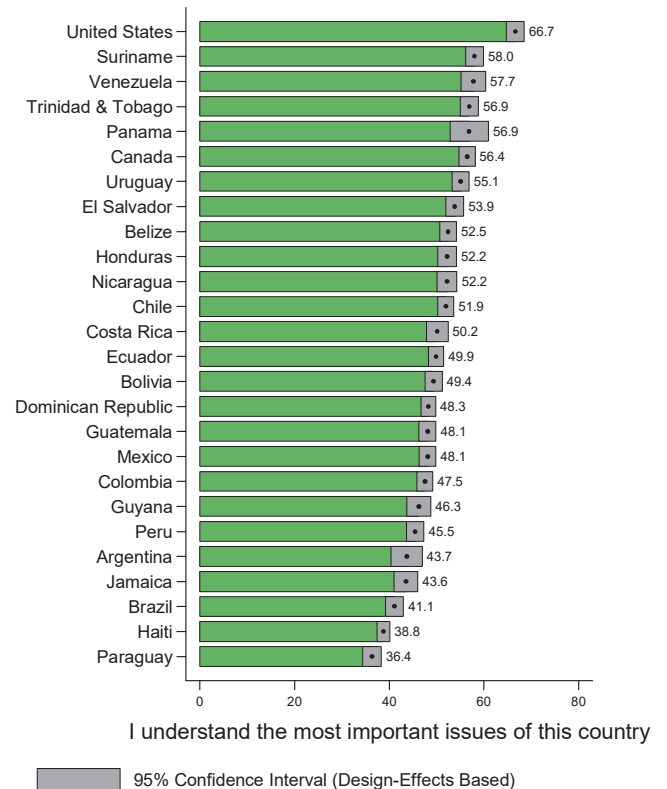
Political efficacy, the extent to which people believe they can exert influence over the political system, is considered crucial to the health of a “participatory democracy” (Pateman 1970). In Almond and Verba’s (1963, p. 253) words, “the sense of ability to participate in politics appears to increase the legitimacy of a system and to lead to political stability.” Scholarship on political efficacy makes a distinction between two basic forms: external (an individual’s belief that government is responsive to his needs) and internal (an individual’s belief that she can effectively participate in politics). Across both measures, we find that levels of political efficacy in the Americas are low. Thus, many in the region do not believe that their governments are responsive, nor do they believe that personally they are adequately equipped to influence government. This is troubling to the extent that it encourages those people to disengage from politics or, at the extreme, leaves them willing to support extrajudicial methods to achieve political ends (Linz and Stepan 1996; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

In this *Insights* report<sup>1</sup>, we assess the state of *internal* efficacy in the Americas. After describing relatively low but varying levels across countries in the Americas, we turn to factors that might predict individual-level differences in internal efficacy. Specifically, we suggest and find support for the notion that participation is positively correlated with feelings of efficacy. We further assess the hypothesis that victimization by crime and corruption is negatively related to efficacy, but here we find less support.<sup>2</sup> We focus on the following question from the 2010

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>

<sup>2</sup> In other analyses, we examined external efficacy using the EFF1 variable and found a significant negative relationship between victimization and external efficacy.

**Figure 1. Average Levels of Internal Political Efficacy in the Americas, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

AmericasBarometer<sup>3</sup> survey by LAPOP, in which 42,490 survey participants from 26 countries were asked to respond on a seven-point agree/disagree scale to the following statement:

**EFF2.** You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 shows mean responses to this statement, which have been recalibrated on a 0-100 scale, where higher values indicate greater

<sup>3</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>4</sup> Non-response was 3.7% for this question across the sample as a whole. The question was asked of only half the sample in the United States and Canada. Analysis was conducted using STATA v10.

internal efficacy. The highest mean level of perceived efficacy is found in the United States, which reports an average value of 66.7. After the United States, Suriname, Venezuela, and Trinidad & Tobago also show comparatively high values, ranging from 58.0 to 57.7 to 56.9, respectively. The majority of other countries fall within the high 40s-50s range; the exceptions are Haiti and Paraguay, with values of 38.8 and 36.4, respectively. When considering the region as a whole, one sees that aside from the U.S. and Paraguay, there is little variance across countries; the great majority fall within a 16.6-point range of one another (57.7 to 41.1). This indicates that a majority of those in the Americas do not express high levels of internal efficacy. As noted in footnote 2, we conducted additional analyses of external efficacy, and we found evidence that a majority of individuals in this region also do not believe that their governments are interested in the opinions of the people. For now, we turn to an exploration of factors that help predict the extent to which an individual reports low or high levels of *internal* political efficacy.

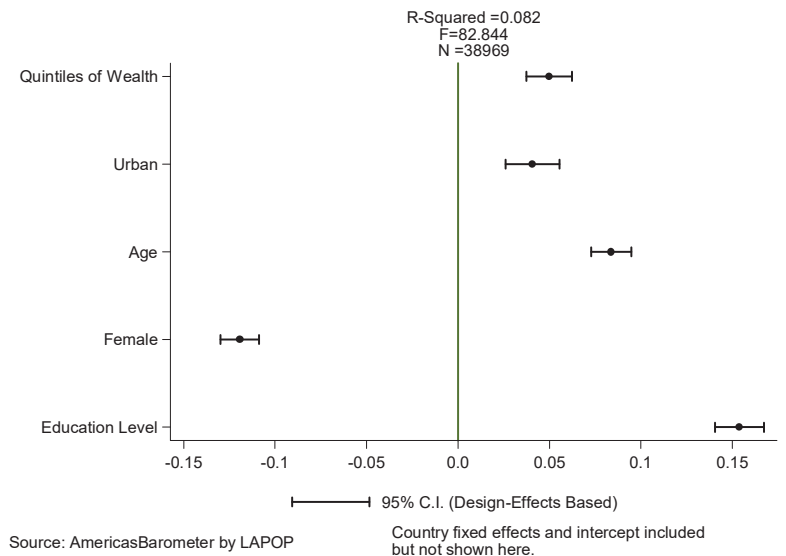
## Individual Characteristics and Belief in Internal Efficacy

Initially, we look at the role certain basic socioeconomic and demographic variables play in predicting individual levels of political efficacy. These variables are wealth<sup>5</sup>, urban versus rural locale, age, gender, and education level. Results of a linear regression analysis predicting levels of internal efficacy with these variables are presented in Figure 2.

When the bar representing the confidence interval of a variable does not overlap the

<sup>5</sup> For more information about the wealth measure see Córdova (2009).

**Figure 2. Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics Predicting Levels of Internal Efficacy, 2010**



vertical “0” line, that variable is statistically significant. All of the variables we examine here are statistically significant, with 95% confidence. Variables with effects on the right side of the “0” line are positively correlated with efficacy, while those on the left side are negatively correlated with internal efficacy. The magnitude of the effects indicates their relative importance, since the coefficients have been standardized.

The results in Figure 2 show that wealth and education have a statistically significant and positive association with efficacy.<sup>6</sup> This means that lower levels of wealth and education

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, in analyses we conducted to examine external efficacy (using the EFF1 variable in the AmericasBarometer survey), we find that wealth and education have negative and significant effects. The results we report for internal efficacy and education are consistent with work by others including Letki (2006), who contend that individuals are affected by a range of socioeconomic factors, most notably education and, in particular, political education. These can have a profound impact on internal efficacy because they influence how capable and thus confident individuals are with respect to understanding the nature of participatory institutions.

predict lower levels of political efficacy. Age also has a positive relationship with an individual's expressed internal political efficacy such that older individuals, in general, have higher internal efficacy. In addition, we find that women report lower levels of internal efficacy compared to men and that those living in urban areas report higher levels compared to those in rural areas.

Although efficacy can be partially explained by these five variables, the consistently low levels of efficacy expressed across the Americas justify further analysis of the topic, with additional variables.

*People who participate in politics become more self-confident ... and thus are more likely to believe that they understand important issues facing their countries.*

## Relating Political Participation to Internal Efficacy

Among the wide range of variables that may be considered relevant to a broader understanding of efficacy, we suggest that participation is especially important. Drawing on extant scholarship, we suggest that participation improves perceptions of internal efficacy.<sup>7</sup> Classic research indicates that individuals who participate in various aspects of civic life gain political competence (Verba 1961; Almond and Verba 1963; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). In general terms, participation builds and nurtures internal political efficacy. Finkel (1987) references classical political theories from Rousseau, which hypothesize that any form of participation leads to greater personal development and an increased belief in political efficacy. People who participate in politics become more self-confident and feel more in

control of their surroundings, and thus are more likely to believe that they understand important issues facing their countries. It is also more likely that they will be participants in the future (that is, it is consistent with existing scholarship to believe that efficacy increases participation), creating a pattern of participation leading to efficacy, and vice versa.

Scholarship by Easton and Dennis (1967) concludes that participatory activities at an early age are likely to imprint norms of efficacy that define individuals' long-term opinions of democratic regimes. Nevertheless, the timing

and nature that participation must take in order to promote such beliefs in efficacy are disputed, as is the extent of their influence (Finkel 1987). Our expectation, generally, is that participation will improve beliefs in internal efficacy across the Latin American and Caribbean region. At the same time, to examine the topic more thoroughly, we consider different types of participation.

Participation is a multifaceted concept that includes conventional (or formal) and unconventional (or informal) behavior. In determining the effect that participation has on efficacy, examining individual voting behavior may not be sufficient. In fact, in examining Mexican-American voters in the 1960s, Buehler (1977) determined that an individual's choice of whether or not to vote did not reliably predict efficacy. Examining vote choice alone in Latin America, in particular, might be misleading given that in some systems the vote is compulsory, to at least some degree. Ultimately, the fact that an individual votes may not mean that s/he believes that s/he is personally efficacious nor that the regime or institutional framework is responsive to him or her; in exploring the effects of various factors on efficacy, Chong and Rogers (2005) failed to

<sup>7</sup> It is also possible that efficacy affects participation. Modeling a complex system, for example, in which participation affects efficacy and, simultaneously, the reverse, is outside the scope of this report; the potential for such relationships to hold, however, should be taken into account when drawing conclusions from the results presented here (see, e.g., Finkel 1987 for more on this topic).



statistically demonstrate that traditional voting was affected by such factors. Although we examine voting, we include additional forms of participation as well.

Non-electoral forms of participation include community involvement, especially within local governments, as well as campaign involvement, protests, and demand making on the government. In examining *collective* efficacy, or "shared beliefs in the power to produce effects by collective action," Bandura (2000, p. 76; 78) found that "those who believe they can accomplish social changes by perseverant collective action, but view the governing systems and officeholders as untrustworthy, favor more confrontive and coercive means of participation outside the traditional political channels." Our contention is that individuals who participate in civic and political groups are likely also to solidify their knowledge of the political process, resulting in an association between collective action and *internal* efficacy as well. Those who attend meetings or protests are likely to be in tune with the most prevalent political issues of the day. Further, research in an industrial factory setting demonstrates that involvement in certain workplace organizations also correlates with increased political efficacy; this also supports the expectation that non-electoral forms of participation may lead to increased efficacy (Elden 1981; Pateman 1970).

In addition to examining the relationship between participation and efficacy, it is also important to assess non-participatory variables that may be relevant. Victimization may affect certain individuals' sense of efficacy. Many studies (Davis & Friedman, 1985; Green, Streeter, and Pomeroy, 2005; Kilpatrick et al. 1985) have shown that victims of crime suffer lasting psychological effects including depression, social anxiety, distrust of members of their community, and low levels of self-esteem. These psychological effects, whether individually or in combination, could have a direct effect on how individuals view their own efficacy. Lowered perceptions of self worth and

a general distrust of others might diminish a person's belief in her capacity to understand, engage in, and catalyze change in government or political entities.

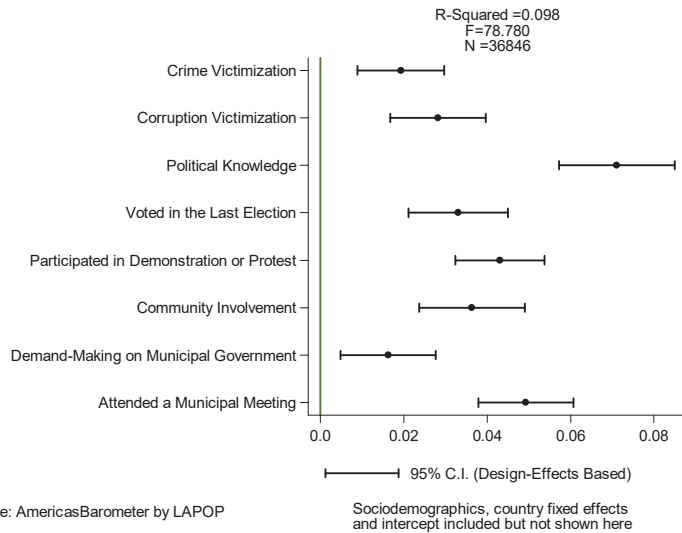
Some scholars have argued that victimization by corruption can decrease efficacy levels because individuals have less confidence in the potential results of their participation. As some scholars have contended, this could be because corruption "diminishes [officials'] bases of authority and [undermines] their legitimacy" (Canache and Allison 2005, p. 92). Further, Ward (1989) argues that corruption has alienating social effects that add to individuals' cynicism about politics and the political process. From a broad survey of scholarship focusing on the relationship between corruption and perceptions of efficacy, we draw the following expectation: corruption lowers perceptions of efficacy (see Della Porta 2000; Schedler et al. 1999; Anderson and Tverdova 2003). *However*, we caution that this may not apply to internal efficacy, as the arguments appear more relevant to external efficacy. Therefore, we test the relationship between corruption victimization and internal efficacy. We also test the relationship between victimization and external efficacy and, while we do not show these analyses, we will make note of them below.

To assess our expectations concerning participation, knowledge, and victimization, we predict internal efficacy with an individual-level linear regression model. Results are presented in Figure 3.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, while we were not certain whether it would be a significant predictor given extant scholarship, we find that voting is a statistically significant and positive variable in the model. In addition, we find that other participatory variables correlate with efficacy. Protest participation, community

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<sup>8</sup> Correlations between participation variables were tested, and the maximum correlation between any two forms of political participation is  $r = .32$ . The measure of political knowledge is an index based on responses to questions GI1, GI3 and GI4, which ask about country-specific institutional structure and leadership.

**Figure 3. Participation, Knowledge, and Victimization as Predictors of Internal Efficacy, 2010**



involvement, demand-making at the municipal level, and attending a municipal meeting are all positively and significantly correlated with internal efficacy.<sup>9</sup>

Building on our findings with respect to education and arguments made by scholars such as Letki (2006), we included an indicator of political knowledge. Figure 3 shows that political knowledge is a strong, positive predictor of internal efficacy, a result that is similar to the relationship between formal education and internal efficacy.

In contrast to our expectations, we find that victimization – both crime and corruption – are positively and significantly correlated with internal efficacy. This result is somewhat puzzling. As a means of exploring the topic in more detail, we assessed the relationship between these variables and *external* efficacy

(using the EFF1 variable in the AmericasBarometer survey) and, in this case, we found the predicted results. Thus, victimization in the Americas, all else equal, correlates positively with internal efficacy but negatively with external efficacy. We suggest that this interesting contradiction, where victims appear to feel more capable of understanding politics but less attended to by government, is worthy of future study.

## Conclusion

As Almond and Verba (1963, p. 230) note, “competence and participation are at the heart of the definition of democracy.” In this brief report, we have attempted to create a basic understanding of the state of efficacy in the Americas and to document, especially, the close and positive connections between various forms of political participation and internal efficacy in the Americas.

Ultimately, our analysis shows that participation broadly speaking, meaning voting but also other forms of engagement, is positively related to feelings of efficacy. These findings support the theoretical perspective noted earlier, which posits that participation leads to stronger perceptions of control, which subsequently encourages participation and beliefs in efficacy in a reciprocal causal relationship (Finkel 1987). Nevertheless, this begs the question: how can governments formally and informally promote participation? Additional research could assess when citizens are most willing to engage in their communities and thus shed light on how to improve internal efficacy, with its positive externalities for democratic politics at the local and national levels. In particular, building on the intellectual foundation established by Easton and Dennis’ (1967) research regarding how children develop values of political efficacy through participatory activities, such efforts might focus on maximizing the civic and

<sup>9</sup> The N for this analysis drops from 38,969 cases to 36,846 due to the high number of missing values in the following variables: vote (789), community involvement (694), attend a municipal meeting (505), and protest (310), demand-making (223) and crime victimization (166). See the appendix for the full set of regression results.

political involvement and knowledge of school-aged children.

While our results with respect to participation affirm arguments and findings from other scholarship, our results with respect to crime and corruption victimization are more puzzling.

Extant scholarship appears to suggest numerous reasons to believe that victimization would harm efficacy. However, we find that the relationship does not hold in our

analyses of internal efficacy. We did, in analyses noted but not shown here, find the expected relationship in analyses of external efficacy. To continue to explore the relationships between victimization and both forms of efficacy, one might examine the relationship between domestic violence and efficacy. It is difficult to elicit honest answers to such a personal question as one regarding domestic violence, yet the psychological effects of spousal abuse might have a tremendous impact on one's perception of one's own political efficacy. Peterson and Franzese (1988) present evidence that spousal abuse severely diminishes an individual's perceived efficacy.<sup>10</sup>

We are not alone in our finding that corruption may not always dissuade individuals from engaging in their system. Kiewiet de Jonge (2009) has studied corruption's effects on actual political participation and found that, contrary to popular belief, corruption actually drives individuals to participate politically. As this finding and the findings we report here are similarly counterintuitive, we recommend researchers continue to investigate this topic closely.

*Voting, protest, community involvement, demand-making at the municipal level, and attending a municipal meeting are all positively and significantly correlated with internal efficacy.*

In this brief report it was not possible to examine all of the many variables that might predict efficacy across the Americas; efficacy is a topic that warrants extensive research, and one which we hope will be considered in greater depth in the future. In the meantime, our hope is that we have created a broad understanding of

perceived internal efficacy in the Americas and indicated various factors that help explain its variance across individuals within the region.

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<sup>10</sup> However, the authors do point out that this result was more pronounced in females. See pg. 288-9.

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## Appendix A

Table 1. Predictors of Internal Efficacy in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010

	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Education	0.154	0.0068	0.1234	0.0073
Female	-0.119	0.0054	-0.1097	0.0057
Age	0.084	0.0056	0.0650	0.0061
Urban	0.041	0.0076	0.0407	0.0076
Quintiles of Wealth	0.050	0.0063	0.0381	0.0065
Crime Victimization			0.0192	0.0053
Corruption Victimization			0.0282	0.0059
Political Knowledge			0.0711	0.0071
Voted in the Last Election			0.0331	0.0061
Protest			0.0431	0.0055
Community Involvement			0.0363	0.0064
Demand-making on Municipal Government			0.0162	0.0058
Attended a Municipal Meeting			0.0493	0.0058
Mexico	-0.034	0.0075	-0.0311	0.0076
Guatemala	-0.021	0.0078	-0.0254	0.0077
El Salvador	0.009	0.0072	0.0027	0.0071
Honduras	0.015	0.0075	0.0121	0.0077
Nicaragua	0.004	0.0085	0.0141	0.0086
Costa Rica	-0.014	0.0083	-0.0143	0.0082
Panama	0.017	0.0115	0.0266	0.0115
Colombia	-0.052	0.0067	-0.0397	0.0068
Ecuador	-0.042	0.0095	-0.0333	0.0095
Bolivia	-0.044	0.0102	-0.0555	0.0103
Peru	-0.068	0.0079	-0.0686	0.0078
Paraguay	-0.105	0.0077	-0.1026	0.0079
Chile	-0.031	0.0080	-0.0065	0.0087
Brazil	-0.099	0.0104	-0.0876	0.0107
Venezuela	0.012	0.0094	0.0234	0.0093
Argentina	-0.065	0.0114	-0.0639	0.0133
Dominican Rep.	-0.027	0.0065	-0.0279	0.0067
Haiti	-0.077	0.0070	-0.0927	0.0075
Jamaica	-0.071	0.0095	-0.0597	0.0098
Guyana	-0.040	0.0099	-0.0377	0.0097
Trinidad & Tobago	0.019	0.0076	0.0321	0.0074
Belize	0.011	0.0073	0.0204	0.0076
Suriname	0.015	0.0080	0.0237	0.0083
Constant	-0.001	0.0070	0.0017	0.0071
<i>R-Squared</i>	0.082		0.098	
<i>Number of Observations</i>	38,969		36,846	

\* p<0.05

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

Country of Reference: Uruguay



## Appendix B: Author Biographies\*

At the time this report was written, Heather Borowski was a senior at Vanderbilt University and a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. She was pursuing a major in Political Science with minors in Corporate Strategy and Leadership and Organization. She was the outgoing Vice President of the Vanderbilt Programming Board as well as a teacher's assistant in Vanderbilt's Managerial Studies program. Her post-graduation plans were to move to Boston to pursue a career in international business.

Rebecca Reed just completed her sophomore year at Vanderbilt University and is part of the College Scholars Program. She is majoring in Anthropology and Classical Civilizations with a minor in Human & Organizational Development. She is Secretary of Model United Nations, and is also interning at the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health. In the future, she plans to study abroad in Cape Town, South Africa and go to graduate school.

Lucas Scholl recently completed his junior year at Vanderbilt University and is a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. He is majoring in Economics and minoring in German Language. He is the outgoing treasurer of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and is the Attorney General of Vanderbilt Student Government. He plans a career in finance or consulting after graduation.

David Webb just completed his junior year at Vanderbilt University and is a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. He is majoring in English and History with a minor in Corporate Strategy. Since his sophomore year, David has served as the undergraduate representative on the English Majors' Association Board and is currently Vice President of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity. He plans to attend law school after graduation.

*\*Author names are listed alphabetically. Margarita Corral, a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at Vanderbilt University, acted as a technical consultant on this report.*

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

Number 66

## Social Assistance Policies and the Presidential Vote in Latin America

*By Matthew L. Layton and Amy Erica Smith*

*matthew.l.layton@vanderbilt.edu / amy.e.smith@vanderbilt.edu*

*Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** In this *Insights* report we use a cross-national analysis of nine Latin American countries to determine what correlations, if any, exist between participation in social assistance programs, including conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs, and support for the incumbent presidential candidate or party. We find that in almost every country examined, social assistance recipients are more likely to vote for the incumbent than non-recipients, even after accounting for social class, economic perceptions, and national context. These results highlight that social programs have political effects in addition to their social and economic effects.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

Over the last two decades, Latin American governments have transformed their social policies (Barrientos and Santibáñez 2009). Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs are one of the more visible innovations. Programs like *Bolsa Família* in Brazil or *Oportunidades* in Mexico generally provide cash assistance for impoverished families on the condition that they keep their children in school and make use of public health services.

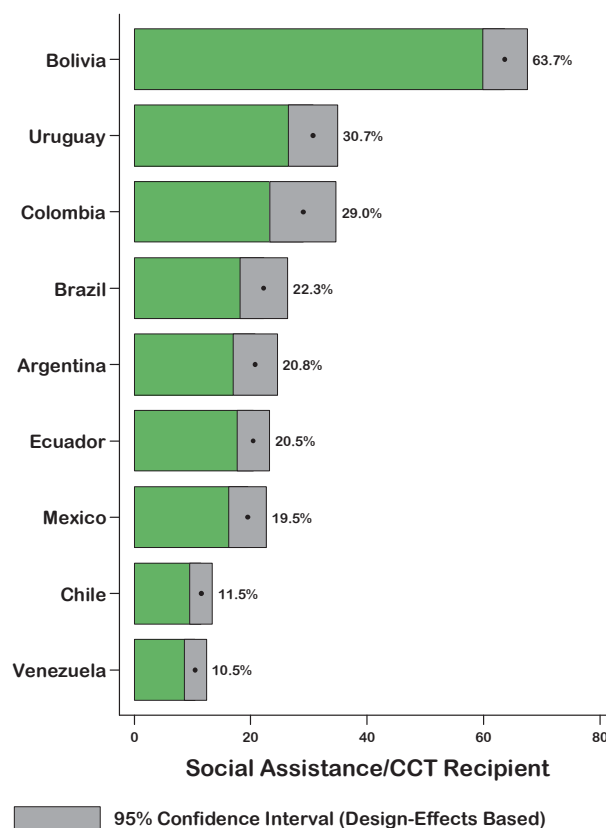
We explore the political effects of CCT and other social assistance programs. CCT program designs arguably streamline the provision of social assistance in ways that reduce or circumvent strategic manipulation by politicians (Fiszbein and Schady 2009). Nevertheless, many scholars have criticized social assistance programs in Latin America as legalized vote-buying schemes implemented with political expediency in mind (Bruhn 1996; Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Diaz-Cayeros 2008; Graham and Kane 1998; Penfold-Becerra 2007; Rocha-Menocal 2001; Schady 2000). A core of literature has built around the effects of participation in CCT programs on presidential electoral outcomes, particularly in Mexico and Brazil (Bohn 2011; Carraro, Araújo Junior, Damé, Monasterio, et al. 2007; Hunter and Power 2007; Licio, Rennó, and Castro 2009; Nicolau and Peixoto 2007; Zucco 2008).<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the spirit of that debate, the purpose here is to use a broader cross-national analysis to determine what correlations, if any, exist between participation in social assistance programs and support for the incumbent presidential candidate or party.

This AmericasBarometer *Insights* report takes advantage of a question from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer asking respondents whether they receive public social assistance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Two other studies assess the relationship between voting and social assistance using the AmericasBarometer (Luna and Zechmeister 2010; Camargo and Rodríguez-Raga 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations

**Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents Receiving Social Assistance in Latin America, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Respondents from nine countries in Latin America answered the following question:

**CCT1.** “Do you or does someone in your household receive monthly assistance in the form of money or goods from the government, for example, from [name of program(s)]?”

A response of “No” was coded as ‘0’, whereas affirmative responses were coded as ‘1’.<sup>3</sup> Figure

Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University. Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>.

<sup>3</sup> Non-response was 1.16% (weighted) across the nine countries. All analyses presented here were conducted using STATA v.11.2. The question also appeared in Peru, but we exclude Peru from the analysis given the lack of meaningful

1 presents the percentage of respondents in each country who receive social assistance (see Appendix A for a list of the programs).

Figure 1 shows that large proportions of the populations in these countries receive government assistance. About 10.5 percent of Venezuelans reported receiving assistance whereas 63.7 percent of Bolivians did so. Most countries analyzed here assist somewhere between 20 and 30 percent of their populations through social programs. These results highlight the wide variation in program coverage across the Americas.

In part the difference in coverage is a function of the programs mentioned in the question. For example, in Bolivia the AmericasBarometer interviewers asked about

*Incumbent presidents may seek to increase their vote share by claiming credit for or politicizing social assistance programs.*

*Bono Juancito Pinto, Renta Dignidad, or Bono Juana Azurduy.* According to the World Bank CCT Program Profile, the *Juancito Pinto* program targets *all* children up to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, providing cash transfers to the students so long as they attend 75% of their classes (Fiszbein and Schady 2009). Clearly, such a universalistic program will have much wider participation than the means-tested programs adopted elsewhere.

Brazil's *Bolsa Família* is exemplary of means-tested CCT programs. According to the most recent legislation enacted by the Brazilian government, recipient families cannot earn more than R\$140 per month in household *per capita* income. Depending on the number and age of the children, families are then eligible to receive between R\$32 and R\$242 monthly. The program requires recipient families to vaccinate children under the age of 7 and keep children ages 6-15 in school for 85% of their classes each month. Sixteen- and seventeen-year old children are required to attend 75% of classes. Moreover, expectant mothers must participate in prenatal treatment. According to government figures,

more than 12 million families currently participate.<sup>4</sup>

The programs examined in Venezuela (*Misión Ribas, Misión Sucre, and Misión Madres del Barrio*) provide yet another view of social assistance in Latin America. The Chávez administration has implemented a broad range of social programs termed Bolivarian Missions, none of them conditional. *Misión Ribas* and *Misión Sucre* aim to help low-income adults complete secondary degrees and access higher education, while *Misión Madres del Barrio* provides cash grants and other services to very low-income women with dependents.

Despite the differences across nations and programs, it is important to assess what the *political* effects of such social

programs may be. This is particularly the case given their potential role in creating linkages between citizens and politicians in democratizing nations (Kitschelt 2000).

## Presidential Voting and Social Assistance: Mechanisms of *Group Interest* and *Self-interest*

This *Insights* report explores whether participation in social assistance programs across Latin America relates to increased support for incumbent presidents in a hypothetical election.

Why might social assistance programs affect presidential voting? Incumbent presidents may seek to increase their vote share by claiming credit for or politicizing social assistance programs. These electoral strategies might play out through several mechanisms at the citizen level. First, not unlike lower income recipients of Social Security in the United States (Campbell 2003), social assistance recipients have a strong

responses on our dependent variable, because there was no viable candidate from the incumbent party.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the program, access the program webpage at <http://www.mds.gov.br/bolsafamilia>

self-interest in maintaining benefits, on which they heavily depend. There may be some uncertainty whether the opposition candidate or party would continue to fund the program; therefore, whether or not such trust is ultimately justified, those who currently receive social assistance will vote for the incumbent at higher levels because they are familiar with that candidate or party's first term behavior (Stokes 2001, 61), including implementing or maintaining the social policy that directly improves their economic condition.

Program beneficiaries may also see government assistance as a kind of group benefit provided to others like themselves. Vote share for the incumbent would then depend on the level of benefits provided in the community. As beneficiaries observe a broader policy impact in their community, the electoral rewards for the incumbent should grow. In this report we focus principally on the former explanation, though see Footnote 16 for an exploration of the latter argument's implications.

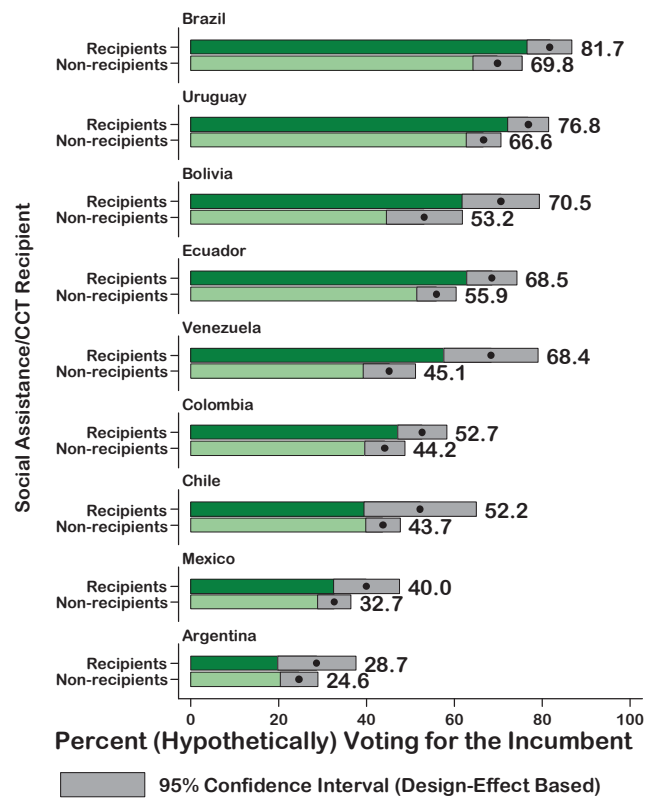
Figure 2 presents preliminary evidence that there are statistically significant differences between social assistance program recipients and non-recipients in a hypothetical vote for the incumbent – at least in some of the countries of Latin America. To assess who respondents would vote for, interviewers asked the following question:

**VB20.** If the next presidential elections were being held this week, what would you do?<sup>5</sup>

Respondents could indicate that they would not vote, they would vote for the incumbent candidate or party, they would vote for a non-

<sup>5</sup> The question for Colombia is COLVB20; for Chile it is CHIVB3A. In Chile, where President Sebastián Piñera had just taken office, the question asked not about a hypothetical future vote, but rather about the actual vote in the recent presidential election. Supporters of Eduardo Frei were coded as voting for the incumbent party. Since those who said they would not vote or would vote blank were coded as missing, non-response across the region was very high: 40.8% (weighted). Still, this is a reasonable reflection of election turnout figures. We therefore feel that responses are a valid indicator of how a true election would play out.

**Figure 2. Percent Who Would Vote for the Incumbent by Social Assistance Status, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

incumbent candidate or party, or they would vote but would leave their ballot blank. The vote percentages for the incumbent shown in Figure 2 are based only on individuals who indicated they would go to the polls and would not vote blank.

Without exception, a higher percentage of social assistance recipients would cast a hypothetical vote for the incumbent than would non-recipients. Pooling all the countries together, there is a statistically significant mean difference between recipients and non-recipients of 15.45 percentage points ( $p < 0.000$ ). Still, there is considerable cross-national variation in the percentage difference. Argentina, for example, has a very narrow and insignificant gap (only 4.1 percentage points;  $p = 0.404$ ) between recipients and non-recipients. Venezuela, by contrast, has the largest gap at 23.3 percentage points ( $p < 0.000$ ).



Although these results are suggestive of a relationship between social assistance and a hypothetical vote for the incumbent, they are not definitive nor do they distinguish between the theoretical causes of such a relationship. The key problem is that, given its nature, social assistance is not randomly distributed in any of these countries. Therefore, these aggregated differences of means may disguise what are the true correlates of incumbent vote based on social class and individual level attitudes.

## Social Assistance as a Determinant of the Presidential Vote

The model of presidential vote choice offered here attempts to isolate the relationship between social assistance receipt and the vote, independent of social class, evaluations of the incumbent president, and national context.

Because social assistance recipients are, by design, from poorer socioeconomic classes, we include controls for level of wealth<sup>6</sup> and level of education. Thus, we isolate the correlations between social class and vote choice from the analysis of the effects of social assistance programs. In addition, many programs (especially CCT programs) target *female* heads of household; this necessitates a control for gender of the survey respondent to ensure that the effects observed are not due to gender. Furthermore, due to suggestions that social assistance programs are biased in favor of rural areas (*Economist* 2010; but see Layton 2010), the model controls for the size of the respondent's area of residence.

It could be argued that, even after controlling for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, there is something about the attitudes of social assistance recipients that would lead them to approve of an incumbent who has supported interventionist social policies. Those who are

predisposed to support public intervention may be more likely to make the effort to enroll in social assistance programs, leading to a spurious relationship between social assistance receipt and support for the incumbent. To alleviate any such concerns the model includes an index of support for interventionist policies.<sup>7</sup> If the relationship between support for the incumbent and receipt of social assistance is driven by such attitudes, then including this measure should diminish or erase the effect of program participation.

Economic factors may also confound the effects of program participation. A large literature highlights economic conditions as a vital predictor of vote choice (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Lewis-Beck 1988). Although social assistance might affect economic evaluations, given its effects on individual and group material conditions, we seek to determine whether the impacts of economic assistance are independent of broader economic perceptions. To this end the model includes a series of variables accounting for a respondent's perception of the current national economic situation<sup>8</sup> and, at the household level, whether the respondent or a family member lost their job in the last two years<sup>9</sup> and whether their household income has decreased in the last two years.<sup>10</sup> The expectation is that any decrease in reported or perceived economic well-being will cause the respondent to have a lower likelihood of voting for the incumbent.

Finally, evaluations of the overall effectiveness of the current government should correlate strongly with support for the incumbent candidate or party. The model captures this

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<sup>6</sup> See Abby Córdova, 2009, "Methodological Note: Measuring Relative Wealth using Household Asset Indicators" for a description of the construction of the wealth index:  
<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0806en.pdf>.

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<sup>7</sup> This index is constructed using the last five questions from the Role of State (ROS) series. These questions ask respondents to indicate on a seven point scale to what extent they agree or disagree that the government is responsible for guaranteeing the well-being of citizens, creating jobs, reducing income inequality, supplying retirement benefits, and providing health care.

<sup>8</sup> Based on responses to question SOCT1. Respondents evaluate the current state of the national economic situation on a five point scale.

<sup>9</sup> Based on responses to questions OCUP1B1 and OCUP1B2.

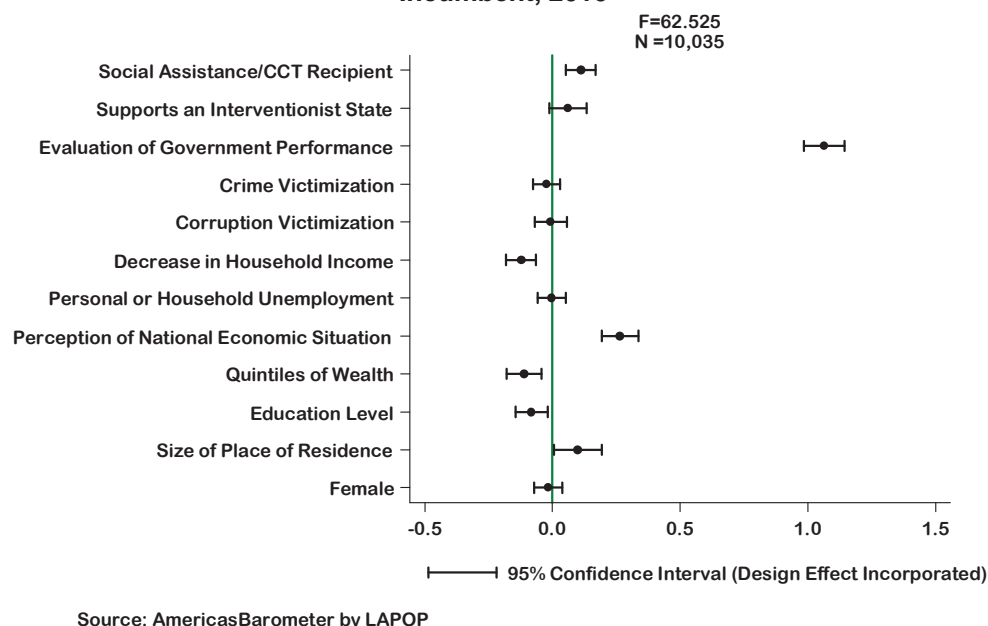
<sup>10</sup> Based on responses to question Q10E.

concept using an indicator for crime victimization,<sup>11</sup> an index of corruption victimization<sup>12</sup> and an index of government effectiveness.<sup>13</sup>

Respondents who have been victimized by crime and corruption in the previous year may well show lower levels of support for the incumbent. More directly, those who perceive the government as more effective overall should be more likely to support the incumbent, all else equal. Of course, receiving social assistance might affect government performance evaluations, reducing the coefficient for beneficiary status. These controls thus provide a conservative test of the impact of social assistance on the vote.

Figure 3 presents the results of a logistic regression model where hypothetical vote for the incumbent (versus voting for the opposition) is the dependent variable.<sup>14</sup> In this figure, the points and horizontal bars represent the coefficient estimates and 95% confidence interval for each variable (design-effects based). The relationship between the variable and vote for the incumbent is statistically significant if the horizontal bar does not cross the vertical line at

**Figure 3. Logistic Regression Results for a Hypothetical Vote for the Incumbent, 2010**



'0.0'. The relationship is positive if the bar falls to the right of the line and negative if it falls to the left. Since coefficients are standardized, their relative magnitude indicates variables' importance.

The key finding from Figure 3 is that there is a significant relationship between participating in a social assistance program and presidential voting, holding all else constant. Program participants are more likely than non-participants to express a hypothetical vote for the incumbent candidate or party.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3 also shows that evaluations of government performance are by far the strongest predictor of vote for the incumbent. Those who see the current government as more effective are more likely to vote for the incumbent candidate or party. Second only to these evaluations, perceptions of the national economy are also an important predictor of the vote. Individuals who perceive a better current

<sup>11</sup> Based on responses to question VIC1EXT.

<sup>12</sup> Based on responses to the EXC series questions 2, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16. These questions ask respondents to indicate whether they were asked to pay a bribe by the police, a public employee, the municipal government, at work, in the courts, for health services, or at school.

<sup>13</sup> This index is constructed using the N series questions 1, 3, 9, 11, and 12. These questions ask respondents to indicate on a seven point scale to what extent they would say that the government fights poverty, protects democratic principles, fights corruption, improves security, and fights unemployment.

<sup>14</sup> The model also includes fixed effects for country which are not shown in the figure (Brazil is the reference country). A table with the full model results is presented in Appendix B.

<sup>15</sup> The magnitude and significance of the variable for social assistance receipt remains unchanged when we introduce a control for the number of children; moreover, there is no evidence of an interactive effect such that social assistance receipt might matter more to those with children at home.

national economic situation are more likely to vote for the incumbent. Neither corruption nor crime victimization, however, are significantly associated with support for the incumbent.

Removing evaluations of government performance from the model also reveals that the correlation between social assistance and the vote appears to be mediated in part by performance evaluations. When the latter variable is removed, the standardized coefficient for social assistance receipt rises by 50%.<sup>16</sup> Thus, part of the bivariate association between social assistance and incumbent voting that we found in Figure 2 is likely due to social assistance recipients concluding that the government is doing a good job.

The only household-level economic variable that is significant is whether the household has lost income in the past two years. Respondents whose household has lost income are less likely to vote for the incumbent.

In addition, socioeconomic class is related to vote for the incumbent. Respondents from higher quintiles of wealth and higher levels of education are both less likely to vote for the incumbent than the less educated or respondents from lower social classes.

Gender, size of the place of residence, support for interventionist policies, and unemployment do not show statistically significant relationships with vote for the incumbent, all else equal.

To aid in interpretation of the effects presented in Figure 3, we estimate the predicted

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<sup>16</sup> A test of the mediated relationship for binary dependent variables (see, e.g., Mackinnon and Dwyer 1993) reveals that 43% of the total effect of social assistance receipt is mediated by performance evaluations, and that the indirect effect is statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Tests were run using the Stata program `binary_mediation`, with bootstrapped standard errors.

probability of voting for the incumbent, based on the logit model results. Once we control for the many differences between social assistance recipients and non-recipients in factors such as social status, economic circumstances, and performance evaluations, the difference between social assistance recipients and non-recipients in incumbent voting drops substantially from the 15.45 percentage points reported in the bivariate analysis in the previous section. The average difference in predicted probability of voting for the incumbent between the two groups is now only 5.5% across all countries. Still, even though the effect of social assistance is reduced, these results should not be dismissed; elections are often won by much smaller margins than this.<sup>17</sup>

*Even after taking into account many confounding factors, social assistance participants are more likely than non-participants to express a hypothetical vote for the incumbent candidate or party.*

## Discussion

With the transformation in social assistance programs in Latin America in recent years, questions have surfaced regarding such programs' political effects. The first and most basic question relates to their effect on vote choice. A substantial new literature has developed on CCTs and other social assistance programs, on the one hand, and the vote, on the other hand, in a few countries in Latin America. However, there has to date been no evidence regarding whether these findings hold when considering the region as a whole.

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<sup>17</sup> Above, we argued that citizens might reward incumbents not only for benefits that they individually receive, but also for programs perceived to benefit the ingroup. To test this argument, we estimated a mixed logit model including all the predictors from Figure 3, plus a measure of the percentage of citizens on social assistance within the sub-national strata (variable *estratopri*), taking into account the complex sample design. The analysis is fragile due to the difficulty of estimating a multilevel logit model with random effects at both the national and strata level. Nonetheless, results appear to indicate that *both* regional levels of social assistance *and* personal receipt are associated with the vote.

The results presented here indicate that in almost every country examined, social assistance recipients are more likely to vote for the incumbent. In multivariate analysis we find that the association is attenuated once we take into account other variables related to social status and evaluations of the incumbents' performance. Nonetheless, even accounting for these confounding and mediating factors, we still find that social assistance receipt has a significant independent association with the vote.

An important puzzle remaining for future research is to understand the variation in the effect of social assistance across countries. Figure 2 shows great heterogeneity in the relationship between assistance and voting for the incumbent. We suspect that this heterogeneity is related to the extent to which the incumbent president plausibly claims credit for social assistance programs; and we further suspect that plausible credit-claiming is associated with the president's ideological orientation. That is, leftist presidents may be able to reap a bigger electoral windfall from the social programs they oversee than rightist presidents.

This report underscores the point that the region's new social assistance programs have become not only important tools of social programming, but also potentially important electoral tools. Moreover, such programs may have other effects on citizenship and political mobilization more broadly. Understanding these effects is a scholarly task that awaits completion.

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## Appendix A

As discussed in the text, item CCT1 asked: “Do you or does someone in your household receive monthly assistance in the form of money or goods from the government, for example, from *[name of program(s)]*?” The following programs were listed in each country:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Programs</i>
Mexico	Oportunidades; PROCAMPO
Colombia	Familias en Acción
Ecuador	Bono de Desarrollo Humano
Bolivia	Bono Juancito Pinto; Renta Dignidad; Bono Juana Azurduy
Chile	Chile Solidario; PASIS; Chile Crece Contigo
Uruguay	Food baskets; family benefits ( <i>asignaciones familiares</i> ); Plan de Emergencia
Brazil	Bolsa Família
Venezuela	Misión Ribas; Misión Sucre; Misión Madres del Barrio
Argentina	Asignación Universal por Hijo; Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar; Plan Familias

## Appendix B

Logit results: Social assistance and performance and demographic variables predicting (hypothetical) vote for the incumbent

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Social Assistance/CCT Recipient	0.111***	0.030
Supports an Interventionist State	0.055+	0.033
Evaluation of Government Performance	1.073***	0.041
Corruption Victimization	-0.007	0.033
Crime Victimization	-0.025	0.028
Income Loss	-0.118***	0.029
Personal or Household Unemployment	-0.004	0.029
Evaluation of the National Economic Situation	0.246***	0.034
Quintiles of Wealth	-0.110**	0.035
Female	-0.016	0.028
Size of Area of Residence	0.088*	0.043
Education	-0.079*	0.031
<i>Country Fixed Effects</i>		
Mexico	-0.4178**	0.050
Colombia	-0.293***	0.050
Ecuador	-0.218***	0.064
Bolivia	-0.161+	0.086
Chile	-0.639***	0.056
Uruguay	-0.236***	0.050
Venezuela	-0.163**	0.052
Argentina	-0.365***	0.054
<i>Constant</i>	0.119*	0.047
<i>Number of observations</i>	10,035	
<i>Design-adjusted Wald Test (probability)</i>	63.86 (0.000)	

Note: Coefficients are standardized, and are significant at \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; +  $p < .10$ . Brazil is the country of reference.

# AmericasBarometer Insights: 2011

Number 67

## Political Tolerance in the Americas: Should Critics Be Allowed to Vote?

*By Michael Edwards, Libby Marden, Judy Wang,  
and Alexandra Zarecky  
With Mariana Rodríguez  
Vanderbilt University*

**Executive Summary.** This AmericasBarometer *Insights* report examines what affects political tolerance, specifically support for the right of regime critics to vote. Our results suggest that those who are wealthier, live in larger cities, are male, and are more educated are more politically tolerant. Furthermore, the fear of the threat of terrorism, even when controlling for crime, negatively affects tolerance and, conversely, support for democracy positively predicts tolerance. Finally, political participation, as measured through voting and participation in protests, is positively related to supporting the right of regime critics to vote.

*LAPOP is pleased to note that this report was developed and written by Vanderbilt undergraduate students participating in a Vanderbilt University honors seminar (HONS186, taught by Professor E. J. Zechmeister). Biographies of the authors are provided in the report appendix.*

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
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What affects political tolerance across the Americas? Basic freedoms related to speech and association help to ensure that, in democratic states, individuals are exposed to different viewpoints, including those that criticize the system of government itself. Tolerance of oppositional political views demonstrates commitment to core democratic values, and scholars have shown that commitment to basic democratic principles can be critical to democratic stability (see, for example, Seligson and Booth 2009). Looking at political tolerance across the region is therefore important from the perspective of high quality and stable democratic politics.

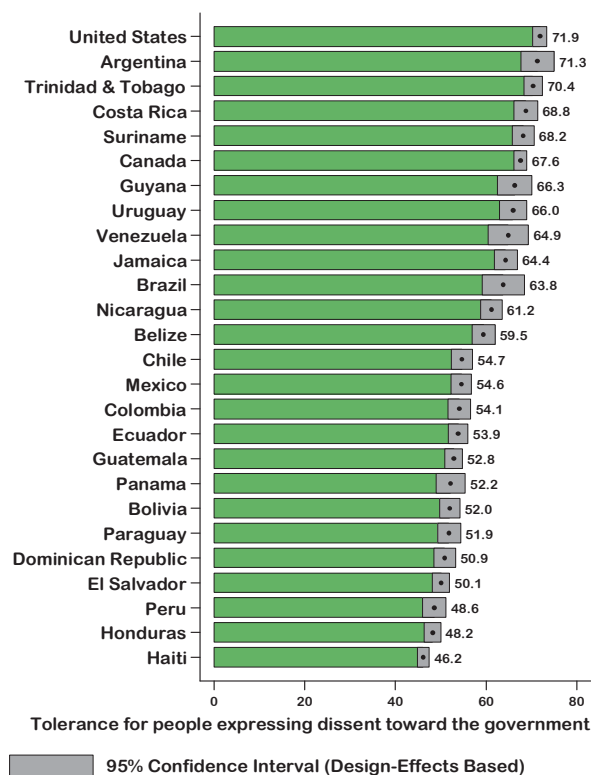
In this report of the AmericasBarometer *Insights* series<sup>1</sup>, we examine one specific manifestation of political tolerance: support for the ability of regime critics to exercise the most fundamental of democratic rights, the right to vote. Drawing on previous research, we propose that political tolerance ought to be influenced by worry about severe security threats, specifically terrorist violence, and related to individuals' own levels of political participation. We also posit that preference for democracy will be positively related to political tolerance. As we show, we find support for this set of expectations.

Data are from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).<sup>2</sup> In this round, a total of 43,990 people from 26 countries were asked the following question on a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" represents "Strongly disapprove" and "10" "Strongly approve":

<sup>1</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>  
The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop>

<sup>2</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

**Figure 1. Average Tolerance for Extending the Right to Vote to Regime Critics**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

**D1.** There are people who only say bad things about the [country] form of government, not just the incumbent government but the system of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people's right to vote?<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 presents, for each country, the mean level of tolerance for extending the right to vote to regime critics, with the variable recalibrated to a 0-100 scale. Except for three countries (Peru, Honduras, and Haiti), the mean level of response is above the midpoint of 50 points. This means that the average citizen in all but these three countries tends to approve of the right of a regime critic to vote. The United States, Argentina, Trinidad & Tobago have the highest levels of tolerance. It may not be

<sup>3</sup> Non-response was 4.7% for this question across the sample as a whole. Analysis was conducted using STATA v11.



surprising that the United States has a relatively high level of tolerance for people who express dissent against the government, given the importance of both political and religious tolerance to the country's founding. At the other end of the list of countries, the lack of tolerance in Haiti may correspond to the extreme difficulties that the country has been facing, particularly after the earthquake in January 2010. The difference in average level of tolerance between the country at the top (United States) and the country at the bottom (Haiti) is 25 points; we interpret this as indicating a moderate amount of variation in mean levels of tolerance across countries. Nonetheless, rather than examine country-level explanations in this report, we focus on individual factors.

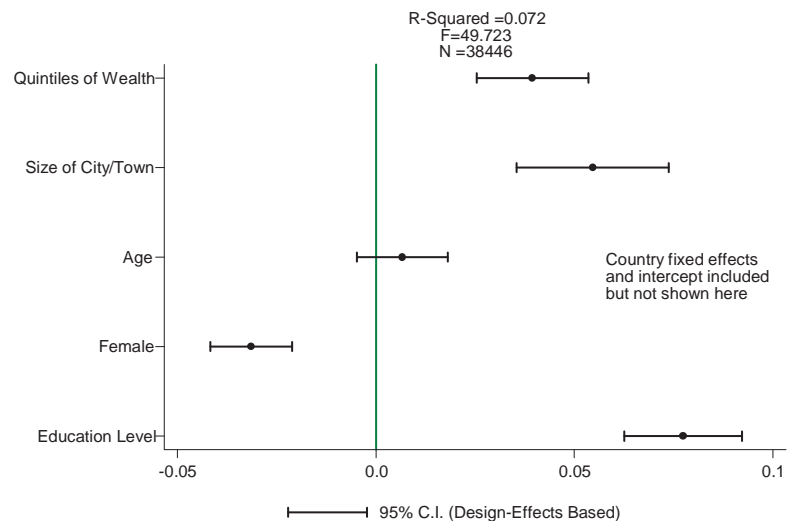
To what extent is an individual's tolerance for extending the right to vote to people expressing dissent for the government explained by his or her characteristics, evaluations, and experiences? The next section begins to take up this question.

## Political Tolerance by Socio-Economic and Demographic Groups

We developed an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis testing the following socio-economic and demographic variables as predictors of political tolerance in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>4</sup>: quintiles of wealth, size of city/town (higher values indicate a larger, more urban area), age (coded in number of years), gender (coded so that female is equal to 1, and male to 0), and education level. To account for country-level variation, we included fixed

<sup>4</sup> We omit the United States and Canada from these analyses, in accord with standard practice for this type of *Insights* series report.

**Figure 2. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics predicting tolerance for the right of regime critics to vote, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

effects for each country. In the linear regression output shown in Figure 2, dots represent the estimated effect of each variable, while the horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals for those effects. We can be at least 95% confident that a given effect is statistically significant if its confidence interval does not cross the vertical axis at 0. Effects to the left of the vertical axis are negative; ones to the right are positive.

Figure 2 shows that four out of the five variables included in this model are statistically significant predictors of political tolerance, as measured by approval or disapproval of the right of regime critics to vote. Specifically, the more educated, the wealthier, those who are male, and those who live in larger cities report more tolerance towards those expressing dissent toward the system of government. At the same time, there is no significant difference between older and younger individuals on this measure of political tolerance.

## **Terrorism Fears, Support for Democracy, and Participation as Predictors of Political Tolerance**

Socio-economic and demographic variables explain some, but far from all of the variation in political tolerance. Thus, in this section we add to this model by considering the predictive power of fear of terrorism, support for democracy, and several measures of political participation.

We expect fear of terrorism to decrease political tolerance, as measured by support for regime critics' right to vote. Previous research in psychology, political science, and public opinion has found a negative correlation between terrorist threat and tolerance. Collective crises bring about emotions such as hopelessness and anxiety, and can cause individuals to cope by expressing more authoritarian attitudes (Zechmeister 2011). These psychological shifts induced by the threat of political violence, in the form of terrorism, may lead individuals to express lower levels of political tolerance, among other factors (e.g., Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Skitka N.d.).

Unfortunately, Latin American countries are not unfamiliar with devastating and shocking incidents of terrorist activity. Groups such as the 'Tupamaros' in Uruguay, the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) in Peru, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have instilled fear of terrorist activity in many places across the Latin American region. In fact, worry about terrorism in 2010 was high across the Americas (Zechmeister, Montalvo, and Merolla 2010).

Consequently, given both its salience and past findings on the topic, we expect to find that fear of terrorism is associated with decreased

tolerance for political opposition, represented by less tolerance for dissidents having the right to vote. The 2010 AmericasBarometer survey included the following question, which we use to capture concerns about terrorism: "How worried are you that there will be a violent attack by terrorists in [country] in the next 12 months?"<sup>5</sup>

Beyond fear of terrorism, we also expect that support for democracy influences tolerance for regime critics' right to vote since political tolerance is a core democratic principal. In fact, past research has documented such a relationship between democratic support and political tolerance (Norris 1999; Klingemann 1999; Sniderman 1975). At the same time, however, political theorists have brought attention to discrepancies between general democratic ideals and specific democratic applications (Sullivan et al. 1982); often there is "slippage"

between what is believed and what is practiced by individuals in a democracy. Therefore, we expect a strong but not perfect correlation between individuals' expressed support for democracy and political tolerance.

Other indicators of individuals' commitment to democratic processes might matter as well. Peffley and Rohrschneider's (2003) study of "democratic activism," or the applied use of civil liberties in the form of political engagement by individuals, is relevant here. On the basis of a 17 country study, the authors conclude that

*Tolerance of oppositional  
political views  
demonstrates commitment  
to core democratic values.*

---

<sup>5</sup> Haiti and Trinidad & Tobago were not included in this model, as this terrorism question was not asked in those countries. Answer categories for question WT1 are: "Haven't thought much about this"; "Not at all worried"; "A little worried"; "Somewhat worried"; and "Very worried." In these analyses, the response "Haven't thought about this" is coded to be the same as "Not at all worried." While scholars (e.g., Merolla and Zechmeister 2009) have demonstrated with experiments that there is a causal pathway from terror threat to tolerance, we cannot rule out the possibility of a reciprocal relationship where levels of tolerance affect concerns about terrorism in the survey data.

there exists a positive relationship between democratic activism and political tolerance. In our analysis, we assess whether there exists a positive relationship between conventional participation (voting) and unconventional participation (protest) and tolerance for the right of regime critics to vote.<sup>6</sup>

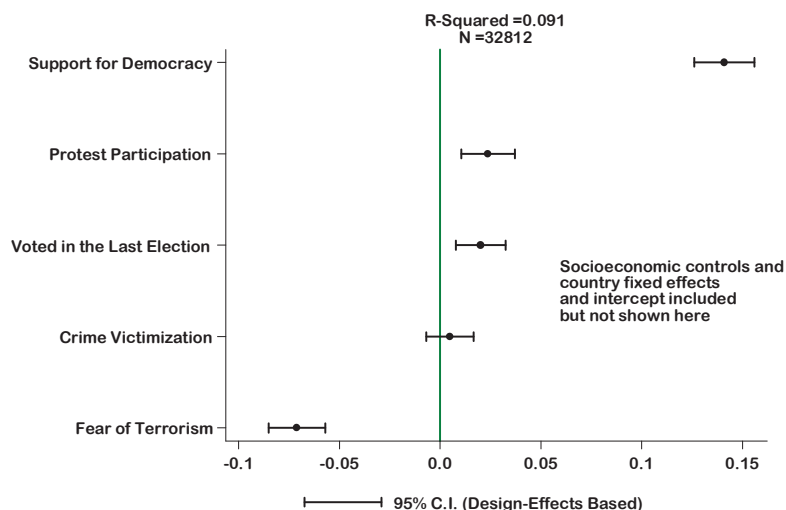
In addition to variables for fear of terrorism, support for democracy and political participation, we include a number of control variables. In order to isolate concern about terrorism, we control for crime victimization, as we would expect that fear of terrorism may be closely associated with crime. We also control for the basic demographic and socioeconomic factors included in the analysis already presented in Figure 2; country fixed effects are also included but not shown in the figure (see Appendix for the full set of results). Our key results are presented in Figure 3.

The regression results are indeed consistent with current research. According to Figure 3, there is a strong negative relationship between fear of terrorism and tolerance, indicating that fear of terrorism is key to predicting an individual's level of political tolerance.

Conversely, support for democracy and political participation have significant positive effects on political tolerance. Those who state that they support democracy express significantly higher levels of political tolerance. This is in line with our expectations that such general democratic values are highly compatible with political

<sup>6</sup> The question wordings for support for democracy and conventional and unconventional participation are as follows: **ING4**. "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree with this statement?" **VB2**. "Did you vote in the last election?" **PROT3**. "Did you participate in a protest in the past 12 months?"

**Figure 3. Regression analysis of the determinants of tolerance for regime critics' right to vote, 2010**



tolerance. With respect to participation, we expected a positive and significant relationship based on the logic that those who actively practice civil liberties designed to influence and reshape politics are more likely to respect and reserve the same rights for others. In accord with this expectation, we find that those who participated in a protest or voted in the last election are more likely to be politically tolerant, though the effects here are weaker than for our other key variables.

## Conclusion

Identifying the factors that affect levels of tolerance for government dissidents is important to politics in the Americas, as tolerance is vital to democratic quality and stability. Intolerance may limit constructive criticisms that could improve political systems. Furthermore, tolerance of the right of regime critics to lawfully participate in politics through the act of voting may foster stability by establishing that the formal democratic arena is available to all.

In this report, we examined several factors that predict tolerance.<sup>7</sup> In general, those who are wealthier, live in more urban areas, are male, and have a higher level of education tend to have higher tolerance for regime critics' right to vote.

Three factors stood out as particularly important in determining citizens' levels of tolerance for regime critics: fear of terrorism, support for democracy, and political participation. Fear of the threat of terrorism negatively affects tolerance. This effect may be explained in two ways. First, experience with terrorist attacks that tend to be justified as acts in protest of the government may lead individuals to associate all types of opinions against government with radical, violent responses such as terrorism. In addition, when personal safety is put in danger, people tend to prioritize safety over civil liberties and freedom of speech (Davis 2007; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). Since terrorist threats directly threaten personal safety, the fear of a terrorist attack could very well increase the willingness of citizens to silence government critics. Given both of these explanations for why fear of terrorism can negatively affect tolerance, we conclude that worry about terrorism is an important factor in determining individuals' level of tolerance.

As expected, support for democracy is a strong, positive predictor of political tolerance. In addition, individual political participation matters. We assessed political participation in two categories: voting and protest activity. Both of these measures of political activity are

significantly and positively related to tolerance. These effects might be due to participation having a transformative effect on how people view democratic politics. That is, the more one participates in the democratic process, the more

likely one is to accept that contrary opinions are a necessary part of democracy, and that these opinions should be accepted and listened to – or, at the least, tolerated. Furthermore, those who are

most engaged in the process of expressing their political views are those who are most compelled to defend the right to do so, even for those who criticize the system of government.

To conclude, in this brief report we hope we shed light on some key factors that predict one facet of political tolerance in the Americas.

*When personal safety is threatened, people tend to prioritize safety over civil liberties and freedom of speech.*

---

<sup>7</sup> We examined a few additional factors not reported here for the sake of brevity. We found that the higher the satisfaction with the current president, the less a person tolerates criticism of the government. On the other hand, interpersonal trust positively predicts tolerance. The more trust people have in their fellow citizens, the more they are willing to tolerate dissenting opinions toward the government. These results are presented in Appendix B.

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## Appendix A: Author Biographies\*

**Michael Edwards** just completed his sophomore year at Vanderbilt University in the College Scholars (Honors) program. He is studying Medicine, Health, and Society and Economics with a pre-med concentration. He is an executive in the Honor Council, Vice President of a non-profit organization called Pearls for Life, and an executive member of Reformed University Fellowship. He also tutors at a local school.

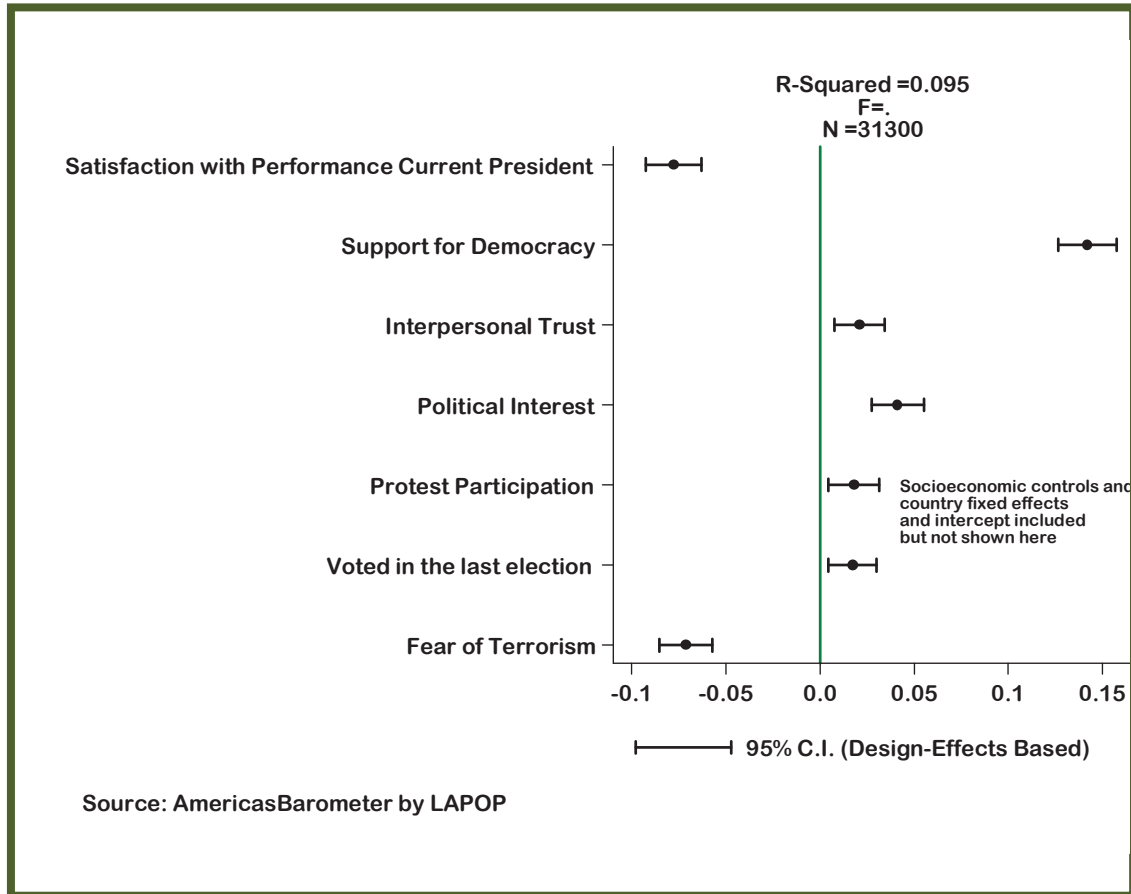
**Libby Marden** recently finished her sophomore year at Vanderbilt University in the College Scholars (Honors) program. She is majoring in Political Science, History, and Communications Studies with a pre-law concentration. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Vanderbilt Political Review*, chairperson for a philanthropic organization benefitting a children's home in Nashville, TN, a mentor for first-year students and Senator for the College of Arts and Sciences. This summer, she has been studying European political economy and economic institutions in London, Brussels, Geneva and Paris.

At the time this report was written, **Judy Wang** was a senior at Vanderbilt University and a member of the College Scholars (Honors) Program. She majored in Economics and Political Science, and she served as a Teaching Assistant for the economic department and a tutor for the athletic department. Since graduation, she has been conducting economic research in Washington, DC.

**Alexandra Zarecky** recently completed her sophomore year at Vanderbilt University studying Economics and Political Science. She is the Vice President of Communications & Membership for Vanderbilt Model Congress and the captain of the moot court team for the Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature. She also teaches local students science experiments. She will be interning with the Hudson Institute conducting political and military research this summer, as well as working with the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability in Chicago.

*\*Author names are listed alphabetically. Mariana Rodríguez, a graduate student in Political Science at Vanderbilt University, acted as a technical consultant on this report.*

## Appendix B: Regression Analysis of the Determinants of Tolerance for Regime Critics' Right to Vote (Alternate Model), 2010



## Appendix C: Predictors of Political Tolerance, 2010

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Fear of Terrorism	-0.072*	0.007
Crime Victimization	0.005	0.006
Voted in Last Election	0.020*	0.006
Protest Participation	0.024*	0.007
Support for Democracy	0.142*	0.008
Quintiles of Wealth	0.036*	0.008
Size of City/Town	0.054*	0.010
Age	-0.015*	0.007
Female	-0.021*	0.006
Education Level	0.054*	0.008
Mexico	-0.035*	0.011
Guatemala	-0.035*	0.010
El Salvador	-0.063*	0.010
Honduras	-0.057*	0.010
Nicaragua	0.000	0.011
Costa Rica	0.046*	0.011
Panama	-0.058*	0.010
Colombia	-0.040*	0.013
Ecuador	-0.058*	0.015
Bolivia	-0.077*	0.014
Peru	-0.069*	0.011
Paraguay	-0.043*	0.012
Chile	-0.073*	0.013
Brazil	0.008	0.019
Venezuela	0.019	0.015
Argentina	0.040*	0.012
Dominican Republic	-0.057*	0.011
Haiti	(omitted)	-
Jamaica	0.020	0.011
Guyana	0.032*	0.015
Trinidad & Tobago	(omitted)	-
Belize	-0.001	0.011
Suriname	0.013	0.011
Constant	-0.008	0.010
<i>R-squared</i>		0.09
<i>Observations</i>		32,812

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*p<0.05, two-tailed.

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

Number 68

## Political Knowledge Levels across the Urban-Rural Divide in Latin America and the Caribbean

By Frederico Batista Pereira  
[frederico.b.pereira@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:frederico.b.pereira@vanderbilt.edu)  
Vanderbilt University

**Executive Summary.** This *Insights* report explores why citizens from some rural areas tend to be less politically knowledgeable than citizens from urban areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. Using data from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys, the report examines to what extent this difference is explained by motivation versus opportunity. Indicators of each of these dimensions are used in the analysis, and the results provide strong support for the hypothesis that it is due to lack of opportunity rather than motivation that citizens from rural areas tend to be less informed about politics than citizens from urban areas. More specifically, differences are best explained by education and access to media at home. Such factors disadvantage rural populations in Latin America and the Caribbean by limiting political knowledge; to the extent that this in turn reduces their political power, this contributes to a vicious circle hampering the ability of those in rural areas to access resources comparable to those living in urban areas.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*

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The knowledge citizens have about political events, politicians, and institutions is an important resource for democratic participation. In general, citizens need to have at least some basic information about political matters in order to be able to hold governments accountable for policy outcomes. Moreover, citizens must have some knowledge about politics in order to form opinions that are to be taken into account by representative governments. Hence, the distribution of this resource, political knowledge, is an important topic in the study of democracy.

Many scholars have provided evidence that this resource is unevenly distributed among citizens (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Neuman, 1986). One aspect of this unequal distribution regards the differences between citizens from urban and rural areas. Especially in Latin America, the striking socioeconomic differences between urban and rural areas are well known, and there is concern about politics in the latter. On the one hand, citizens from rural areas are often viewed as less ideologically sophisticated and as targets for clientelistic offers from powerful elites, often known as “*coronéis*” or “*caudillos*” in Latin America’s rural areas (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Such clientelistic relationships are generally characterized by the exchange of material goods for electoral support, reinforcing asymmetrical power relationships between elites and voters. On the other hand, scholars examine violence and other types of political mobilization among peasants in rural areas (Muller & Seligson, 1987; Seligson, 1996). In both literatures, the extent to which rural citizens are politically knowledgeable and interested appears to play an important role in the nature of rural politics.

This AmericasBarometer *Insights* report will, first, verify the extent to which citizens from rural areas are less knowledgeable about politics. Second, it will examine whether such differences are explained by disparities in opportunities or in motivation to learn about politics. The report looks at three political information questions from the 2010 round of

the AmericasBarometer surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP),<sup>1</sup> in which 40,990 respondents from Latin America and the Caribbean received the following questions:

**GI1.** “What is the name of the current president of the US?”

**GI3.** “How many [provinces/departments/states] does [country] have?”

**GI4.** “How long is the [presidential/prime ministerial] term of office in [country]?”

Incorrect and “does not know” responses were coded as 0, and correct responses were coded as 1. An additive index from 0 to 3 was created and then transformed to range between 0 and 100.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 shows the average score with confidence intervals among citizens of urban and rural areas in each of the 24 countries where these questions were asked.<sup>3</sup>

This figure demonstrates that most of the countries fit the mold with respect to having differences in political knowledge levels, such that these levels are higher among citizens from urban areas. The biggest such differences are of about 20 points in Chile and 17 points in Paraguay (both statistically significant). Differences are not statistically significant in Uruguay, Guyana, Suriname, Argentina, Jamaica, and Venezuela, as shown by the overlap in the bars representing their 95% confidence intervals.

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<sup>1</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University. Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at:

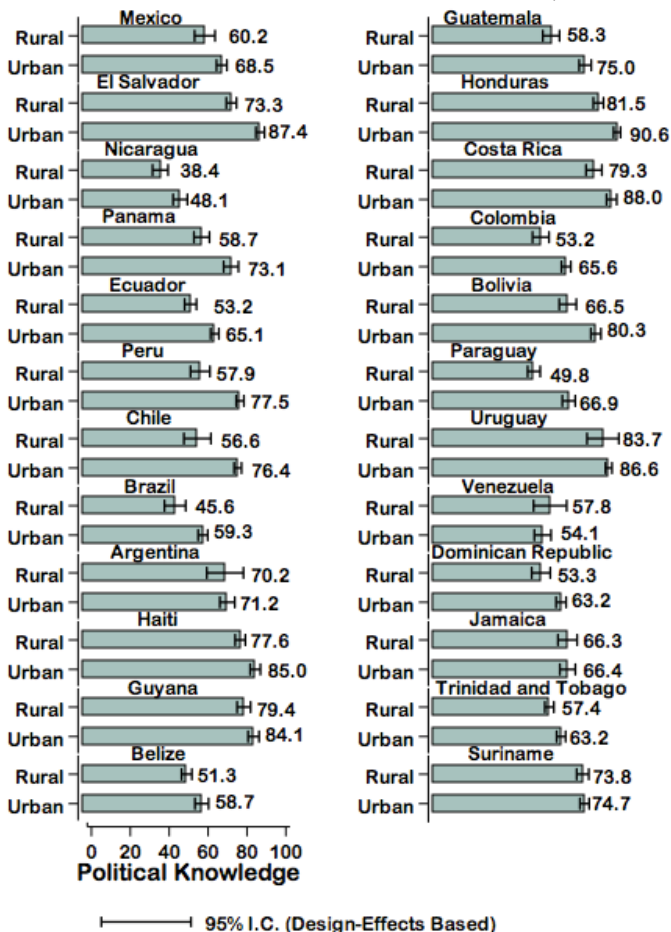
<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Political knowledge items were not administered in the US and Canada. For a comparison of the performance of all citizens in each Latin American and Caribbean country on the political knowledge questions, see AmericasBarometer *Insights* Number 55, which can be found in English at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0855en.pdf> or in Spanish at

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0855es.pdf>  
<sup>3</sup> All analyses presented here were conducted using STATA v11.1.



**Figure 1. Political Knowledge in Urban and Rural Areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2010**



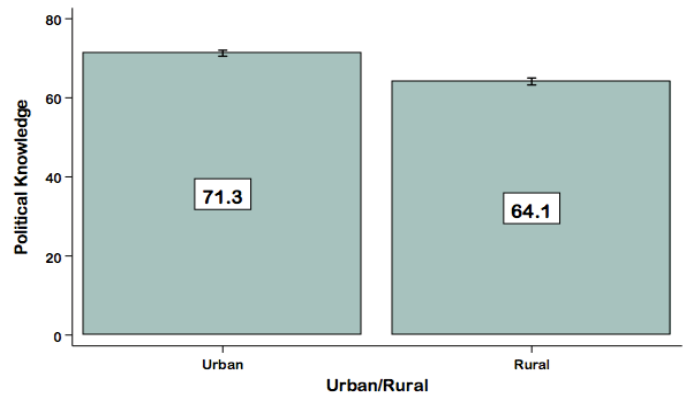
Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Given that the differences between the levels of political knowledge vary across the countries, it seems plausible to check the overall difference for all the countries analyzed. Figure 2 shows that citizens from urban areas score on average almost 7 points higher than citizens from rural areas in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Why are Latin Americans from urban areas, generally speaking, more knowledgeable about politics than ones from rural areas? What individual level factors explain these differences?

The literature examining inequality in political knowledge is premised on the notion that people learn about politics because they have

**Figure 2. Political Knowledge in Urban and Rural Areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, Across All Countries, 2010**



the ability, motivation, and opportunity to do so (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Luskin, 1990; Rennó, 2004). Although ability refers to complex cognitive traits best captured by deeper psychological tests, motivation and opportunity are more easily accessed in survey research.

Using data from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer surveys, the next section tests if the difference in political knowledge between citizens from urban and rural areas in Latin America is due to *motivation* or *opportunity*. In many Latin American countries there are striking differences between citizens from urban and rural areas in both opportunity (the resources to learn about politics) and motivation (their subjective attachment to politics). Citizens from urban areas tend to be wealthier, more educated, and more interested in politics. Which factors cause the rural-urban gap? Are citizens from rural areas less politically knowledgeable because they lack motivation or because they lack opportunity to learn about politics?

## Explaining the difference: *motivation or opportunity?*

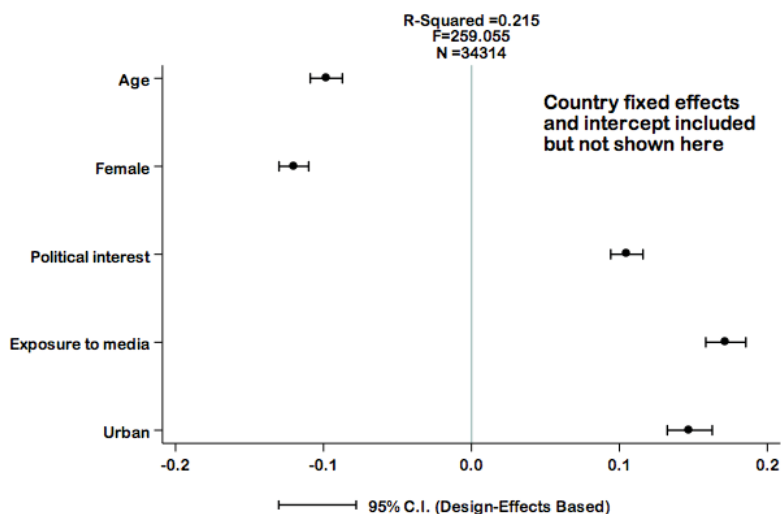
The effect of *motivation* on political knowledge refers to the notion that some individuals have more reason than others to be actively engaged in political learning. Two indicators of *motivation* are used in the present analysis: political interest

and exposure to political information in the media.<sup>4</sup>

The strategy for gauging the role of *motivation* in explaining the differences in the levels of political knowledge between urban and rural areas is to check if the relationship between urban/rural residence and knowledge disappears after controlling for the other factors. A first linear regression model (see results in the Appendix) was run using urban/rural residence as the main independent variable, controlling for age, sex, and a binary variable for each country (except for Honduras, which was the country of reference).<sup>5</sup> The results from this first model, found in the first column of the regression table in the Appendix, confirm the relationship shown in Figure 2.

The results in Figure 3 are from a second linear regression model that also controls for motivational variables. Binary (dummy) variables for countries are included in the analysis but are not shown in the figure. In general, motivational factors have a positive effect on political knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Respondents who are more interested in politics and who have more frequent exposure to political information score higher on political knowledge. However, what is most important in these results is that being from an urban area still has a considerable effect on political knowledge, even when

**Figure 3. Weighted Standardized Effects of Urban/Rural and Motivational Variables on Political Knowledge, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

controlling for motivational factors.<sup>7</sup> This means that differences in motivation to learn about politics account for only a small part of the difference in political knowledge levels between respondents from urban and rural areas.

The next step in the analysis is to assess to what extent differences in *opportunity* explain the unequal levels of political knowledge between urban and rural areas. Opportunity refers to the resources available to individuals. Generally, these resources are external to the individual and do not depend only on the individual's will. Three socioeconomic variables represent opportunity. Income is an index comprising 10 income categories.<sup>8</sup> Education is measured in years of schooling.<sup>9</sup> The variable "access to media at home" is an index that results from counting the positive responses to a battery of questions that asked respondents if they had TV, telephone, cell phone, computer, and Internet access in their houses.<sup>10</sup> The income variable tries to capture to what extent more affluent

<sup>4</sup> The question about political interest (POL1) asked: "How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none?" Item non-response in the question was about 1%. The question about exposure (GI0) was "About how often do you pay attention to the news, whether on TV, the radio, newspapers or the internet?" The responses offered were "Daily", "A few times a week", "A few times a month", "Rarely" and "Never". Item non-response in this question was 0.5%.

<sup>5</sup> The analysis includes only those countries in which there is a knowledge gap in favor of urban areas. However, when I reestimate the models on a sample of all countries, the results are nearly identical.

<sup>6</sup> It is also possible that political knowledge itself increases people's motivations to learn about politics. Although this is an important topic for research, this *Insights* report focuses on motivation as primarily a cause of knowledge.

<sup>7</sup> As can be seen by examining the regression table in the appendix, the standardized coefficient decreases only from 0.17 (model 1) to 0.15 (model 2).

<sup>8</sup> Item non-response in this question (Q10) was 11.3%.

<sup>9</sup> Item non-response in this question (ED) was 0.5%.

<sup>10</sup> Item non-response in this set of questions (r1, r4, r4a, r15, r18) was 0.2%

citizens can access other types media such as the newspaper, magazines, as well as any other possible mechanisms that are not accounted for by the measures of education and “access to media at home.”

Figure 4 displays the results of the third model. In this model opportunity variables are added to the regression. The purpose here is to assess to what extent the effect of urban/rural residence decreases when the differences in opportunity to learn about politics are taken into account, controlling for motivational variables, age and sex.

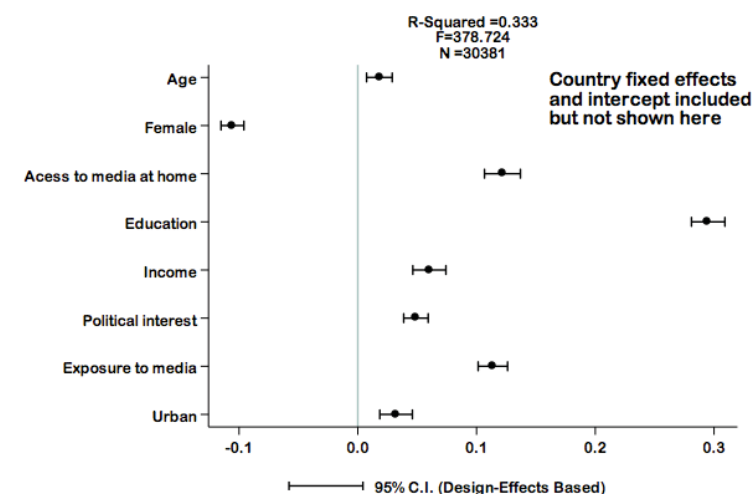
All variables that represent the dimension of opportunity have a positive effect on political knowledge. Education and access to diverse types of media and communications at home have the strongest effects. The result for education corroborates findings from other studies (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Neuman, 1986). Income has a small but statistically significant effect on political knowledge. These results indicate that, like motivation, opportunity is an important condition for citizens to learn about politics.

But the most important result displayed in Figure 4 is the substantial decrease in the coefficient for urban/rural residence. The standardized estimate is still statistically significant, but it decreases from 0.15 in Figure 3 (Appendix Model 2) to 0.03 in Figure 4 (Appendix Model 3). This means that the difference in political knowledge levels between citizens from urban and rural areas is to a great extent due to differences in the opportunity to learn about politics. Education and access to media at home are the most important components of this dimension.

## Discussion

This *Insights* report asked why individuals from rural areas tend to know less about politics than ones from urban areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to some studies, these

**Figure 4. Weighted Standardized Effects of Urban/Rural, Motivational and Opportunity Variables on Political Knowledge, 2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

different levels of political knowledge might be explained by variation in motivation and the opportunity to learn about politics. Following such scholarship, this report tested whether the urban-rural knowledge divide in the region is due to motivation or to opportunity.<sup>11</sup>

The findings from the empirical analysis using the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer survey clearly point in one specific direction. Although motivation and opportunity both have strong effects on political knowledge, only the variables representing opportunity account for the different levels of political knowledge between respondents from urban and rural areas. When these variables were controlled in the analysis, the coefficient for urban/rural residence lost most of its effect on political knowledge.

While opportunity is more important than motivation for understanding why individuals from rural areas know less about politics than individuals from urban areas, two specific variables stood out as the most informative.

<sup>11</sup> It is of course theoretically possible to consider the divide could be driven by both, as these could be considered non-rival influences; however, the results empirically rule out this perspective.

Education and access to media at home had the strongest effects on political knowledge and were also responsible for the reduction in the coefficient of urban/rural residence.<sup>12</sup> Rural areas are at substantial disadvantages both in Latin America and the Caribbean. Many people in rural areas face the tradeoff between continuing in school and joining the labor market to increase family income. Moreover, access to school tends to be scarcer in rural areas than it is in urban areas. Additionally, many people in rural areas lack access to informational media that are increasingly common in urban areas, especially the Internet and cell phones. This inequality in means to learn about politics is an important aspect of political inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, as this report shows with respect to the case of political knowledge.

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<sup>12</sup> The results from an alternative model with just these two variables from the dimension of motivation support this conclusion.

## Appendix. Predictors of Political Knowledge in Latin America

	<b>Model 1:</b>	<b>Model 2:</b>	<b>Model 3:</b>
	Standardized	Standardized	Standardized
	Coefficient	Coefficient	Coefficient
	(Standard	(Standard	(Standard
	Error)	Error)	Error)
Urban versus Rural (Urban = 1, Rural = 0)	0.169* (0.008)	0.148* (0.008)	0.032* (0.007)
Female	-0.141* (0.005)	-0.120* (0.005)	-0.106* (0.005)
Age	-0.096* (0.006)	-0.098* (0.006)	0.018* (0.006)
Exposure to media		0.172* (0.007)	0.114* (0.006)
Political interest		0.105* (0.006)	0.049* (0.005)
Income			0.060* (0.007)
Education			0.295* (0.007)
Access to media at home			0.122* (0.008)
Mexico	-0.140* (0.009)	-0.139* (0.009)	-0.161* (0.009)
Guatemala	-0.119* (0.010)	-0.104* (0.009)	-0.113* (0.009)
El Salvador	-0.031* (0.008)	-0.030* (0.007)	-0.056* (0.008)
Nicaragua	-0.276* (0.010)	-0.268* (0.010)	-0.268* (0.009)
Costa Rica	-0.013 (0.008)	-0.024* (0.008)	-0.048* (0.009)
Panama	-0.124* (0.010)	-0.136* (0.009)	-0.183* (0.011)
Colombia	-0.165* (0.009)	-0.172* (0.008)	-0.209* (0.008)
Ecuador	-0.227* (0.011)	-0.231* (0.010)	-0.296* (0.012)
Bolivia	-0.105 (0.013)	-0.108* (0.013)	-0.150* (0.012)
Peru	-0.098* (0.008)	-0.100* (0.008)	-0.154* (0.009)
Paraguay	-0.172* (0.009)	-0.180* (0.009)	-0.212* (0.009)



Chile	-0.107*	-0.107*	-0.186*
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.010)
Brazil	-0.255*	-0.239*	-0.250*
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Argentina	-0.119*	-0.120*	-0.155*
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Dominican Republic	-0.171*	-0.180*	-0.189*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Haiti	-0.031*	-0.016*	-0.033*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Guyana	-0.017	-0.014	-0.067*
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Trinidad and Tobago	-0.162*	-0.166*	-0.217*
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Belize	-0.195*	-0.191*	-0.208*
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Constant	0.005	0.011	0.014*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)
<i>R-Squared</i>	0.170	0.215	0.333
<i>F-test</i>	190.92	259.05	378.72
<i>Number of Observations</i>	34,847	34,314	30,381
* <i>p</i> <0.05			

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Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \**p*<0.05, two-tailed. Uruguay is the reference country.

# *AmericasBarometer* Insights: 2011

Number 69

## Democracy in Hard Times: Venezuela

By Mariana Rodríguez

[mariana.rodriguez@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:mariana.rodriguez@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University

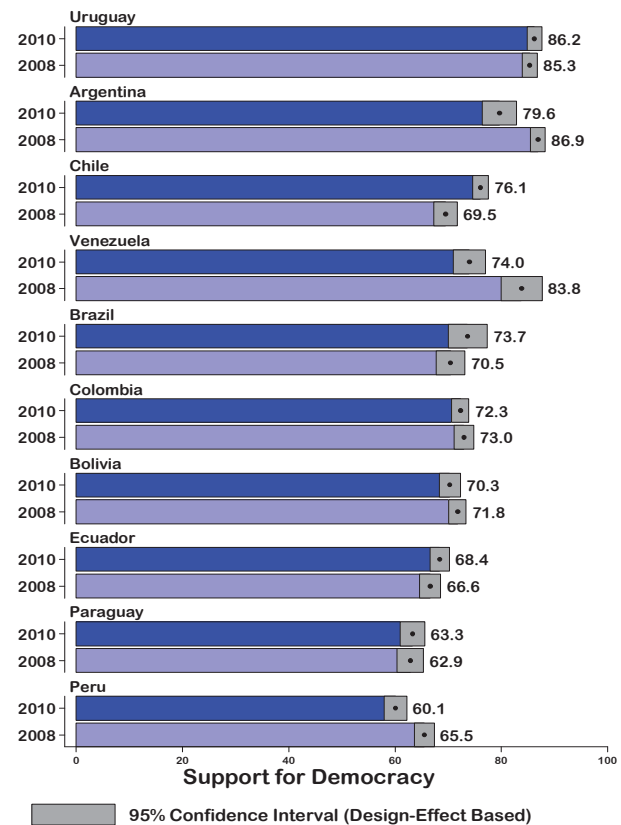
**Executive Summary.** This report is part of an *Insights* subseries which examines the relationship between economic crisis and democratic attitudes within selected countries studied in the 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys. I show, first, that Venezuelans' support for democracy dropped substantially between 2008 and 2010. In addition, most Venezuelans perceived an economic crisis and many had experienced unemployment. However, individual-level analyses show that it is satisfaction with the president's performance *rather than* perceptions of personal and national economic conditions and evaluations of government performance that predicts Venezuelans' democratic attitudes in 2010. This result is discussed from the perspective of President Hugo Chávez's dominant role in politics and, consequently, in shaping public opinion in the country. The report also shows that Venezuelans place most blame for the economic crisis on the President and that citizens' satisfaction with the Chávez administration dropped significantly between 2008 and 2010. Implications for the future of Venezuelan politics and, in particular, Venezuelans' democratic attitudes are discussed.

*The Insights Series is co-edited by Mitchell A. Seligson, Amy Erica Smith, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister with administrative, technical, and intellectual support from the LAPOP group at Vanderbilt.*  
[www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

Venezuela was one of the Latin American countries that experienced acute economic hardships during the global financial crisis of the late 2000s. Moreover, the country's economic crisis not only had obvious financial impacts on the country's economy, but it also seems to have taken a toll on citizens' political attitudes. Venezuela's recent economic crisis was accompanied by a significant decrease in support for democracy. As Figure 1 shows,<sup>1</sup> Venezuelans' average support for a democratic regime dropped by over 10 points (on a 100-point scale) from 83.8 to 74.0 between 2008 and 2010.<sup>2</sup> This decrease in support for democracy was the largest in South America over that same time period. This *Insights* report<sup>3</sup> makes use of the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey<sup>4</sup> in Venezuela to examine individuals' economic perceptions and experiences so as to probe the extent to which there is a direct connection between hard economic times and lower support for democracy in 2010.<sup>5</sup>

Analyses indicate that *rather than* perceptions of hard economic times, what influences Venezuelans' feelings toward democracy in 2010 are their views about President Hugo Chávez. Since many Venezuelans were dissatisfied with President Chávez, it is not surprising to find that dissatisfaction with the performance of the President had a statistically significant, negative

**Figure 1. Average Support for Democracy in South America, 2008-2010**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

impact on support for democracy. Citizen economic evaluations of the economy have *no* direct relationship to support for democracy, which dismisses the possibility that satisfaction with the performance of the President mediates a relationship between economic perceptions and support for democracy. Support for Chávez plays a strong and positive role in determining support for democracy in Venezuela. Not only is this likely due to his super-dominant and visible position as the highest leader of his nation, but it also suggests that many individuals perceive his administration as representing the democratic status quo: those with lower support for Chávez also report lower support for “democracy” as a form of government.

<sup>1</sup> The question wording for the survey item used to create Figure 1 is based on a statement attributed to Churchill: **ING4**. “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?” Response categories are on a 1 to 7 scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, but are converted to a 0 to 100 scale in Figure 1.

<sup>2</sup> This decline is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>3</sup> Prior issues in the *Insights* series can be found at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>. The data on which they are based can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>.

<sup>4</sup> Funding for the 2010 round mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Important sources of support were also the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University.

<sup>5</sup> In 2010, a national sample of 1,500 Venezuelans was interviewed regarding a number of political, social, and economic attitudes.

## What Might Account for the Drop in Support for Democracy?

In this section, I discuss reasons both for and against expecting that Venezuela's recent economic crisis would play a role in the drop in support for democracy among Venezuelans between 2008 and 2010. I then propose an alternative perspective, which posits that the combination of the emergence of Hugo Chávez as a focal point for all things political in Venezuela and increased dissatisfaction with the performance of the President might better account for the loss of faith in democracy among Venezuelans between 2008 and 2010.

Venezuela's status as one of the world's largest oil producing countries sets its economy apart from that of other Latin American countries. However, despite the availability of such a rich natural resource and record-breaking oil prices within the last decade, Venezuela is experiencing one of the worst economic downturns in its recent history. The country's economy has contracted in significant ways over the last five years. GDP growth shrunk from 9.9% in 2006 to 8.2% in 2007 and 4.8% in 2008. The largest drop came between 2008 and 2009 when GDP growth dropped from 4.8% to -3.3%, marking the first instance of negative economic growth since 2003.<sup>6</sup> By 2010 GDP growth was still negative at -1.6%. Venezuela and Haiti were the only two countries in Latin America that experienced a decline in GDP growth in 2010 (ECLAC 2010).

Such troublesome economic conditions could be expected to take a toll on Venezuelans' levels of support for democracy. Research on developing democracies has indicated that government

economic performance can have an important impact on citizens' views about democracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001; Sarsfield 2002; Mattes and Bratton 2007; Guldbrandsten and Skaaning 2010; Seligson and Smith 2010). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that negative economic perceptions and experiences (such as job loss) would have a negative effect on the level of support for democracy among Venezuelans.

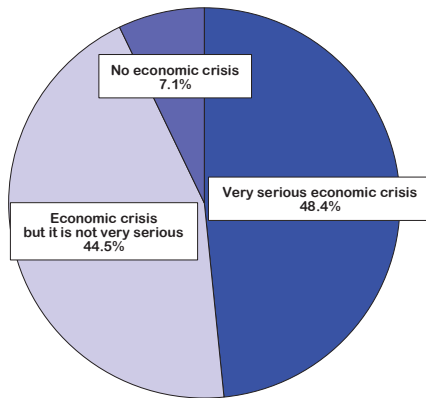
However, given that Venezuelans' support for democracy has been relatively high throughout most of its democratic history (Baloyra and Martz 1979; Baloyra 1986; Myers and O'Connor 1998; Welsch and Carrasquero 1998; Canache 2002; Molina 2004), the recent drop in support for democracy might be better explained by some factor other than the state of the economy. One possible explanation could be related to the importance of Hugo Chávez to the dynamics of Venezuelan political public opinion. As many scholars have shown, Chávez has become a pivotal figure in Venezuelan politics due to his charismatic and populist approach (Zúquete 2008; Hawkins 2010; Merolla and Zechmeister 2011).

Chávez has been seen as largely responsible for the rise and persistence of class politics in recent times (Roberts 2003; Handlin 2008; Heath 2008; Zúquete 2008; Lagorio 2009) as well as growing social and political polarization (Sylvia and Donopolous 2003; Ellner and Hellinger 2003; Cyr 2005; Venanzi 2010 Spanakos 2011). The Chávez era in Venezuelan politics has witnessed a major split between Chavistas and anti-Chavistas, not only in terms of attitudes, such as opinions about social welfare policies, the role of government in the economy, and party identification, but also in terms of voting and protest participation. Therefore, it could be that views about Chávez have grown to affect not only policy attitudes and political behavior, but also how Venezuelans think about democracy.

*[T]he drop in support for democracy between 2008 and 2010 was accompanied by growing dissatisfaction with Chávez.*

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org>. In 2003, GDP growth was -7.8%. However, GDP growth rocketed to 18.3% in 2004 and then dipped but stayed high at 10.3% in 2005.

**Figure 2. Percentage of the Population Who Perceived an Economic Crisis in Venezuela, 2010**



Perception of Magnitude of Economic Crisis

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 by LAPOP

Indeed, authors such as Canache (2007) have argued that Chávez's approach to governance has changed the framework in which Venezuelans understand democracy, particularly regarding concepts of participatory versus representative democracy. Similarly, De Venanzi (2010) argues that Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution has significantly impacted views of democracy.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, scholars have found that levels of satisfaction with democracy can be accurate indicators of how much survey respondents support the incumbent administration (Canache, Mondak, and Seligson 2001).

Thus, it is conceivable that Chávez's lengthy tenure in office and his impact on the political environment have led many Venezuelans to associate "democracy" with the status quo, or the Chávez presidency. Therefore, if Chávez has indeed transformed Venezuelan politics such that citizens link not only their political attitudes but also their attitudes about democracy to their feelings towards Chávez's performance, the recent drop in support for democracy among Venezuelans may be at least partially explained

<sup>7</sup> De Venanzi (2010) and others note differences across the social strata; an analysis by socio-economic sub-group is outside the scope of this short report.

by growing negative feelings toward the President. Indeed, the drop in support for democracy among Venezuelans between 2008 and 2010 was accompanied by growing dissatisfaction with Chávez. According to the AmericasBarometer survey data, satisfaction with Chávez's performance as president dropped from 53.1 in 2008 to 48.4 in 2010, a statistically significant decrease ( $p < 0.05$ ) on a 0-100 scale. Thus, I expect to find a connection at the individual level between satisfaction with the performance of Hugo Chávez and Venezuelans' support for democracy.

## Perceptions and Experiences in Hard Times

A key objective of this *Insights* subseries is to examine the extent to which the recent global economic crisis affected public opinion, in this case in Venezuela. Thus, before examining the predictors of support for democracy, I turn to a brief analysis of the economic crisis in Venezuela.

Using a survey item from the 2010 AmericasBarometer, Figure 2 illustrates how respondents perceived the economic crisis in Venezuela in 2010.<sup>8</sup> It shows that slightly over 48% of respondents perceived a very serious crisis, while nearly 45% of respondents thought there was an economic crisis, but did not think it was very serious. Only 7.2% said that there was not an economic crisis.<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted that although the status of the economy was a major concern for Venezuelans in 2010, the country was also facing an acute public security crisis that was of extremely high

<sup>8</sup> **CRISIS1.** Some say that our country is suffering a very serious economic crisis, others say that we are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, while others say that there isn't any economic crisis. What do you think? (1) We are suffering a very serious economic crisis, (2) We are suffering a crisis but it is not very serious, or, (3) No economic crisis

<sup>9</sup> The rate of non-response to this particular question was 2.6%.

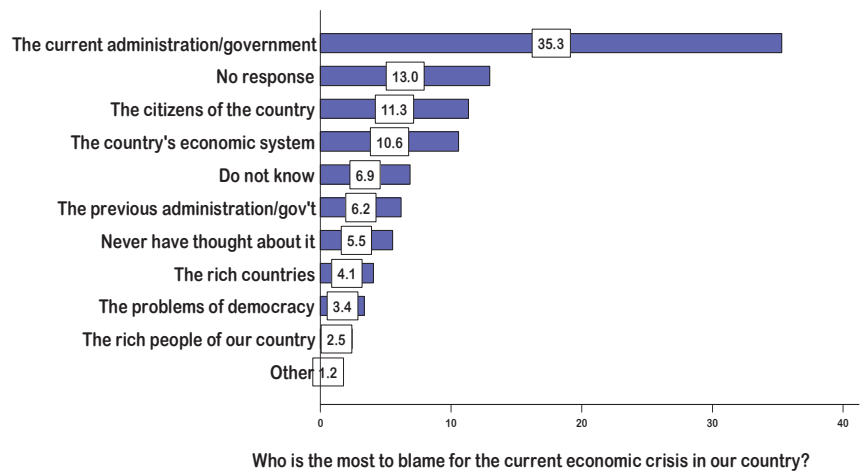


importance to Venezuelans. In fact, data from the 2010 AmericasBarometer indicate that many respondents thought that insecurity, rather than the economy, was the country's most important problem.<sup>10</sup>

Even though Figure 2 shows that Venezuelan respondents were almost evenly split between those who thought the economic crisis was a very serious one or not a very serious one, about 93% of respondents perceived some kind of economic crisis. Whom did Venezuelans blame for these economic conditions? Figure 3 presents the responses of Venezuelans who said that they perceived a crisis.<sup>11</sup>

According to Figure 3, over 1 out of 3 Venezuelans who perceived a crisis blamed the current administration, while 11.3% and 10.6%, respectively, blamed the citizens of the country or the current Venezuelan economic system. Less than 7% of respondents blamed the previous administration. Given President Hugo Chávez's long tenure in office (over 11 years), it makes sense that Venezuelans tend to attribute the country's economic struggles to Chávez's administration rather than previous ones. However, a good number of Venezuelans also blame themselves and the country's current economic system for Venezuela's economic conditions. Surprisingly, in light of the drum beat of criticism by Chávez of imperialism, only

**Figure 3. Who is to Blame for the Economic Crisis in Venezuela?**



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

4.1% of Venezuelans blame the rich countries for the crisis.

Beyond perceptions of economic crisis, we can also examine Venezuelans' economic experiences during the country's current economic crisis. One way of measuring such economic experiences is by using questions related to job loss included in the 2010 AmericasBarometer. Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents reporting unemployment at the time of the survey.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 4 shows that 15% of those interviewed reported losing their job between 2008 and the beginning of 2010 (this includes 6.1% who indicated having found a new job in the same time period). In addition, 16% said that someone else in their household had lost a job. As of 2010, Venezuela's estimated unemployment rate was 12.1%, one of the five highest rates of

<sup>10</sup> 42.3% of respondents said an issue related to security was the most serious problem facing their country, while only 23.2% said an issue related to the economy was the most serious problem.

<sup>11</sup> **CRISIS2.** Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country from among the following: (01) The previous administration, (02) The current administration, (03) Ourselves, the Venezuelans, (04) The rich people of our country, (05) The problems of democracy, (06) The rich countries, (07) The economic system of the country, or, (08) Never have thought about it, (77) Other

<sup>12</sup> **OCUP1B1.** Have you lost your job in the past two years? (1) Yes, you lost your job but found a new one, (2) Yes, you lost your job and have not found a new one, (3) No, did not lose your job, (4) Did not work because you decided not to work or because of disabilities. **OCUP1B2.** Besides you, has anyone in your household lost his or her job in the past two years?

unemployment in Latin America (CIA *World Factbook* 2010).<sup>13</sup>

## Economic Crisis, Presidential Approval, and Support for Democracy in Venezuela

Do evaluations related to the economic crisis predict Venezuelans' attitudes toward democracy in 2010? Or, instead, do attitudes toward President Hugo Chávez prove more consequential?

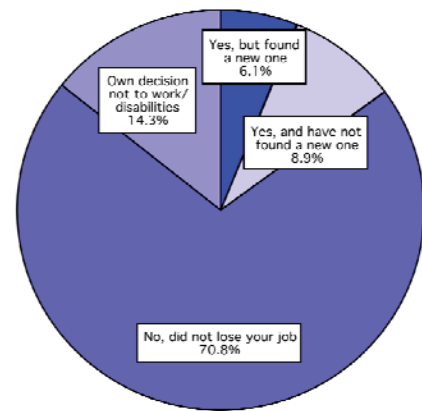
As noted earlier, and as shown in Figure 1, support for democracy in Venezuela fell between 2008 and 2010. Nevertheless, Venezuelans' support for democracy remained higher than in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, where in 2008 the average support for democracy was 70.5 on the 100-point scale and in 2010 it was 70.6, a difference that is both small and statistically insignificant.

To examine whether the changes in Venezuela's average levels of support for democracy are associated with perceptions of economic crisis, I conduct a regression analysis using the 2010 AmericasBarometer data at the individual level. Given that Seligson and Smith (2010) show that in the Americas as a whole perceptions of the economy are related to support for democracy at the individual level, one could expect this relationship to hold among Venezuelans.

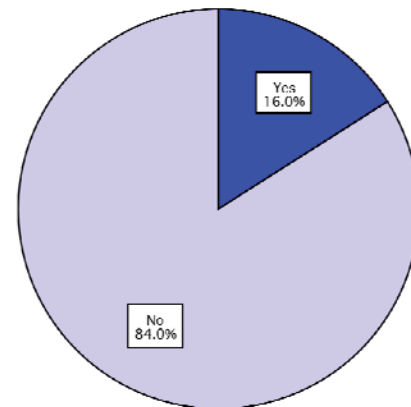
However, Venezuelans' strong support for democracy, even in hard economic times throughout the country's democratic history, calls into question this expectation. Another possible reason for the recent drop in Venezuelans' support for democracy could be increasing negative feelings toward Chávez,

<sup>13</sup> Jamaica (12.9%), Belize (13.1%), Dominican Republic (14.2%), and Haiti are also among the countries with the highest unemployment rates. 75% of the Haitian population is formally unemployed (CIA *World Factbook* 2010).

Figure 4. Job Loss in Venezuela, 2010



Have you lost your job in the past two years?



Has anyone else in your household lost a job in the past two years?

Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 by LAPOP

who has become a pivotal figure for all things political among Venezuelans.

The key explanatory variables are indicators for perceptions of severe and moderate economic crisis; in addition, I include variables reflecting job loss and personal and national economic evaluations. A factor analysis indicated the presence of a single factor (assessed by an eigenvalue over 1.0) among economic measures of negative current and retrospective perceptions of the national and personal economic situations.<sup>14</sup> In the analyses that

<sup>14</sup> These variables are based on the following questions: **SOCT1**. How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? **SOCT2**. Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the

follow, the factor is labeled “Negative General Economic Evaluations.”

I also include measures of satisfaction with the President and with the economic performance of the government.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, given the importance Venezuelans give to the problem of insecurity (as shown above), I include measures of feelings of insecurity, crime victimization, and satisfaction with the government’s handling of crime.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the regression analysis controls for standard socioeconomic and demographic variables: wealth quintiles, education, place of residence (urban vs. rural area), age, and sex (labeled female in the model).<sup>17</sup>

Figure 5 shows the relationship between these variables and support for democracy in Venezuela. Independent variables are displayed on the vertical (y) axis. The estimated effect of each variable is illustrated by a dot. Dots to the right of the vertical “0” line indicate a positive effect, while those to the left indicate a

same as or worse than it was 12 months ago? **IDIO1.** How would you describe your overall economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? **IDIO2.** Do you think that your economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?

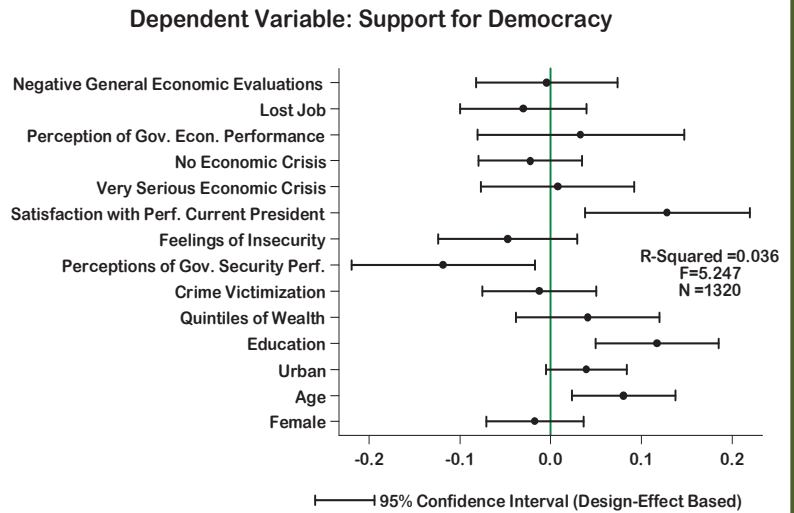
<sup>15</sup> These variables are based on the following questions: **M1.** Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President Hugo Chávez? **N15.** To what extent would you say that the current administration is managing the economy well?

<sup>16</sup> These variables are based on the following questions: **AOJ11.** 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? **VIC1EXT.** 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? **N11.** To what extent would you say the current administration improves citizen safety?

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the wealth indicator, see: Córdova, Abby B. 2009. “Methodological Note: Measuring Relative Wealth using Household Asset Indicators.” *AmericasBarometer Insights*.

(<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php>).

Figure 5. Predicting Support for Democracy in Venezuela, 2010



Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

negative effect. The effect is statistically significant (at  $p < .05$  or better) if the confidence interval lines stretching to the left and right of each dot do not overlap the vertical “0” line. Since coefficients are standardized, the magnitude of each effect indicates its relative strength.

The findings in Figure 5 reveal that more negative evaluations of the economy, perceptions of governmental economic performance, and unemployment experiences have *no significant effect* on support for democracy in Venezuela. These results hold even when including each economic variable individually in the model. These findings indicate that the drop in support for democracy among Venezuelans between 2008 and 2010 cannot be explained by their perceptions and experiences with the country’s economic crisis or by evaluations of their government’s performance in handling the economy. At the individual level, Venezuelans’ support for democracy seems to be resilient in the face of perceived hard economic times. What, then, explains the decline in support for democracy in the country seen in Figure 1?

Beyond the standard control variables of age and education,<sup>18</sup> the only two variables in the model that have a statistically significant relationship with support for democracy are satisfaction with the performance of the current president and perceptions of how well the government is handling security issues. Interestingly, the more respondents feel that the government is improving citizen security, the less support for democracy they exhibit.<sup>19</sup> But, most importantly from the theoretical perspective presented here, the results show that the less satisfied Venezuelans are with the performance of President Chávez, the lower their support for democracy. This is in line with Canache, Mondak, and Seligson's (2001) work on how satisfaction with democracy is affected by support for the incumbent president.

*It is likely that factors beyond economic evaluations drive the relationship between support for Chávez and support for democracy.*

The nature and strength of the effect of satisfaction with Chávez in the analysis indicates that what is driving the decline in support for democracy among Venezuelans between 2008 and 2010 is, at least to some substantial degree, how they feel about Chávez's general performance as president. In short, the results in Figure 5 support the argument that Venezuelans associate their current views of democracy with how they feel about the political status quo of the country; thus, to the extent that they dislike the status

quo (Chávez), they dislike democracy. That is, they dislike the democracy that they are getting from Chávez, not democracy in the abstract.

Beyond political perceptions, the 2010 Venezuela AmericasBarometer survey also shows how Chávez has become a focal point in terms of economic matters. First, as shown in Figure 2, citizens attribute most of the blame for Venezuela's current economic crisis to the Chávez administration. Second, when asked to rate how responsible the president is for the country's economy on a 0-100 scale (100 being the most responsible), Venezuelans indicated an average 84.5 units of responsibility to the President.<sup>20</sup>

The impact of Chávez on how Venezuelans think about democracy speaks to the findings of a previous *Insights* report that showed how national economic perceptions are the key determinants of levels of satisfaction with Chávez's performance as president (Rodríguez 2010). Given this connection, it would be reasonable to suspect that performance evaluations for President Chávez mediate the effects that economic evaluations have on democratic attitudes. That is, perhaps perceptions and experiences related to economic crisis affect support for democracy *indirectly*, by affecting presidential approval, which in turn affects democratic support. While

<sup>18</sup> Figure 5 confirms findings of previous LAPOP studies regarding democratic political culture in that education has a positive effect on support for democracy. Additionally, older citizens display a higher degree of support for democracy.

<sup>19</sup> In a bivariate analysis, the effect of citizens' perceptions of the government's security performance on support for democracy is not statistically significant. Explaining this unexpected finding is beyond the scope of this brief report. However, one possibility is that citizens who believe the government is performing well on public security strongly support "law and order," which at the extreme may lead to lower support for democracy.

<sup>20</sup> For congressmen this score was 69.2, for governors 60.8, for private industries 65.8, for the international economy 73, and for citizens 56.5. The wording for the series of survey items used here is: **RESP0**. To what extent is the president responsible for the country's economy? **RESP1**. To what extent are the legislators of the National Assembly responsible for the country's economy? **RESP2**. To what extent is the governor responsible for the country's economy? **RESP3**. To what extent are private industries responsible for the country's economy? **RESP4**. To what extent do the changes in the international economy influence the country's economy? **RESP5**. To what extent are citizens responsible for the country's economy?

theoretically plausible, it is interesting to note, however, that there is little to no empirical evidence of such a mediating relationship. While negative economic evaluations do reduce satisfaction with the President and negative views of Chávez's performance affect support for democracy, there is no independent and statistically significant association between economic perceptions and support for democracy when presidential approval is excluded from the model, a result which is needed to substantiate a mediating relationship.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, we can conclude that the decline in satisfaction with Chávez between 2008 and 2010 is likely responsible for the drop in levels of support for democracy among Venezuelans between these years. Furthermore, it is likely that factors beyond economic evaluations drive the relationship between support for Chávez and support for democracy.

## Conclusions

This *Insights* report assesses Venezuelans' perceptions and experiences with the country's acute economic crisis and examines whether these factors affect their views about democracy. Indeed, the findings in this report indicate that the economic crisis experienced in Venezuela in recent years has taken a significant political toll.

Although they disagreed on whether the crisis was very serious, the vast majority of Venezuelans perceived some degree of economic crisis and 15% of them had experienced unemployment. Additionally, many attributed the blame for the crisis to the Chávez administration.

A notable drop in support for democracy was observed among Venezuelans between 2008 and 2010. However, in contrast with what has been observed in the Americas as a whole (Seligson and Smith 2010), Venezuelans' perceptions of

economic crisis, experience with unemployment, and general economic evaluations do not significantly predict their support for democracy. Instead, the largest determinant of support for democracy is satisfaction with the current president.

These findings have important implications for the future of Venezuelan democracy. As Booth and Seligson (2009) demonstrate, political legitimacy is a fundamental component of democratic stability. Given Chávez's important role in how Venezuelans view and support democracy, increased dissatisfaction with the President could introduce an element of instability in the political environment. If discontent with Chavez's performance is attributed to the failures of democracy, then support for such a regime, even among a population that has displayed large reservoirs of democratic political culture, may continue to dwindle. However, such a conclusion should be interpreted with caution, as it is up to future research to focus on disentangling how, and, among what types of people, feelings toward Chávez affect feelings toward democracy.

The results in this report suggest a complex relationship between Venezuelans' view of democracy and their political allegiances. In order to understand the nature of Venezuelans' democratic attitudes and their relationship with Chávez's regime, further research is needed to understand how Venezuelans comprehend the term "democracy" and how polarization in public opinion related to Chávez has affected these perceptions as well as Venezuelans' democratic attitudes more broadly.

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix 2 for a figure examining whether economic evaluations have an independent effect on support for democracy.



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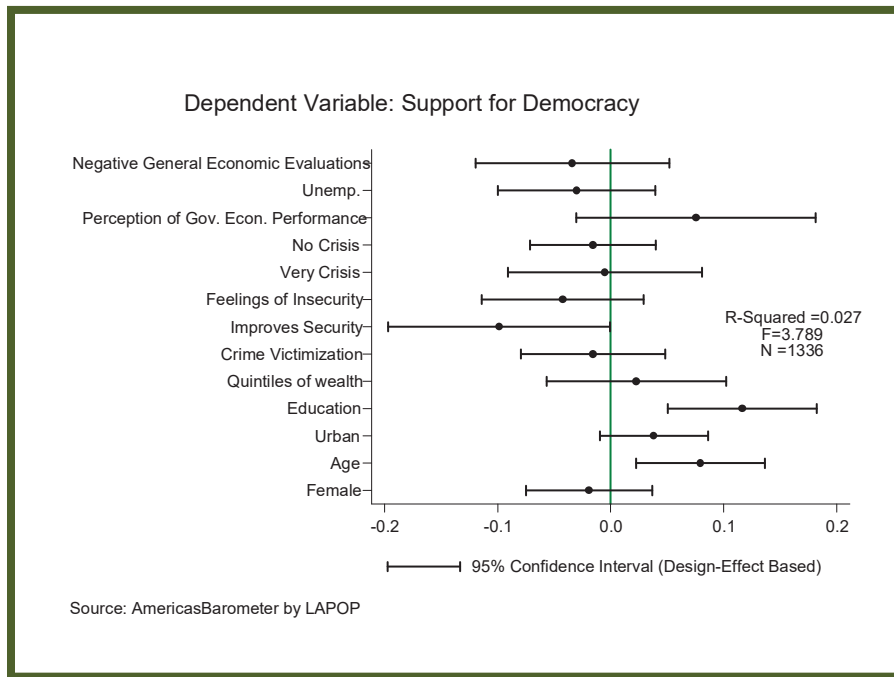
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## Appendix 1: The Impact of Perceptions and Experiences with the Economic Crisis on Support for Democracy in Venezuela, 2010

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Female	-0.018	0.027
Age	0.080*	0.028
Urban	0.039*	0.022
Years of Education	0.117*	0.034
Quintiles of Wealth	0.041	0.039
Crime Victimization	-0.013	0.031
Improves Security	-0.118*	0.050
Feelings of Insecurity	-0.047	0.038
Satisfaction with Perf. Current President	0.130*	0.046
Very Serious Economic Crisis	0.007	0.042
No Economic Crisis	-0.022	0.028
Perception of Gov. Econ. Performance	0.034	0.057
Lost Job	0.030	0.035
Negative General Economic Evaluations	-0.000	0.039
Constant	-0.001	0.048
<i>R-squared</i>	<i>0.04</i>	
<i>Observations</i>	<i>1,320</i>	

Note: Coefficients are statistically significant at \*  $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed.

## Appendix 2: Analysis of Independent Effects of Economic Evaluations on Support for Democracy in Venezuela, 2010







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