LAPOP: Politically tolerant people use social media

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People who talk politics on social media in Latin America and the Caribbean fit a very particular profile, according to research from Vanderbilt University’s Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).

Social media use is “more likely among those who are younger, wealthier and more educated,” according to the Political Social Media Users in the Americas study posted on the LAPOP website. “It is also more likely to be found among urban (versus rural) residents.”

Other traits common among people active politically on social media outlets are ideological polarization – both conservative and liberal – and being supportive of democracy in the abstract.
“Thus, the use of social media for political purposes in the Americas is a positive complement to more conventional forms of democratic political engagement,” writes Jessica Brunelle, an undergraduate research fellow at LAPOP, in the report.

The most active users of social media for political discourse in the Latin America and Caribbean are found in the northern South American country of Suriname, followed by Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic. The least active countries are Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua.

LAPOP develops, implements and analyzes the AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys. Since the 1970s, LAPOP has gathered a treasure-trove of databases containing political perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean. LAPOP data and reports are available to interested researchers at the LAPOP website.

LAPOP was founded by its director Mitchell Seligson, Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University. Its Insights series is co-edited by Seligson, Jonathan Hiskey, associate professor of political science, and Elizabeth Zechmeister, associate professor of political science and associate director of LAPOP.

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