August, 2022 | Ehab Alhosaini
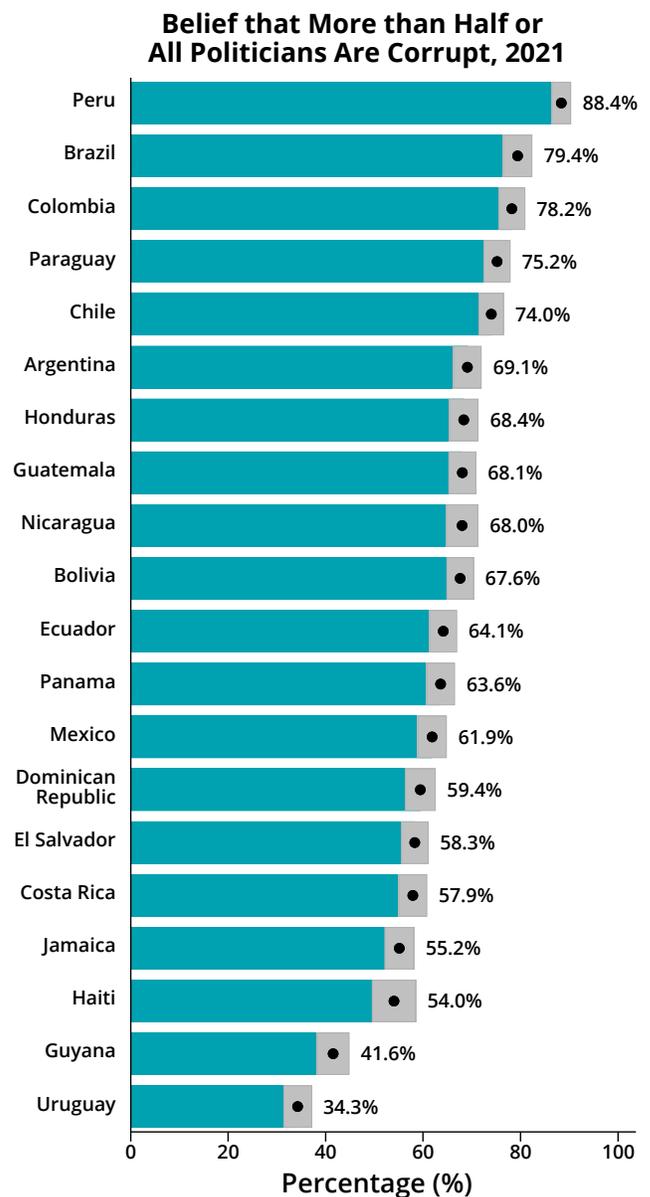
Spotlight on Perceptions of Corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean

Perceptions of corruption in 2021 declined slightly from the 2018/19 peak, with great variation among countries in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region

In most countries, at least half of respondents perceive high political corruption

Since 2016/17, LAPOP's AmericasBarometer has measured perception of corruption among politicians in the LAC region by asking the following question: **EXC7NEW: Thinking of the politicians of [country]... how many of them do you believe are involved in corruption?** In the 2021 survey round, this question was included in 20 LAC countries. Respondents indicated their opinion from 1 to 5, where 1 means "none" and 5 means "all." Here we recode responses into a dichotomous variable, which allows us to estimate the percentage of people that believe more than half or all politicians are corrupt. Specifically, responses were recoded to indicate perceived political corruption by combining responses "4" and "5" into one group, while placing the remaining responses "1" through "3" into a baseline category.
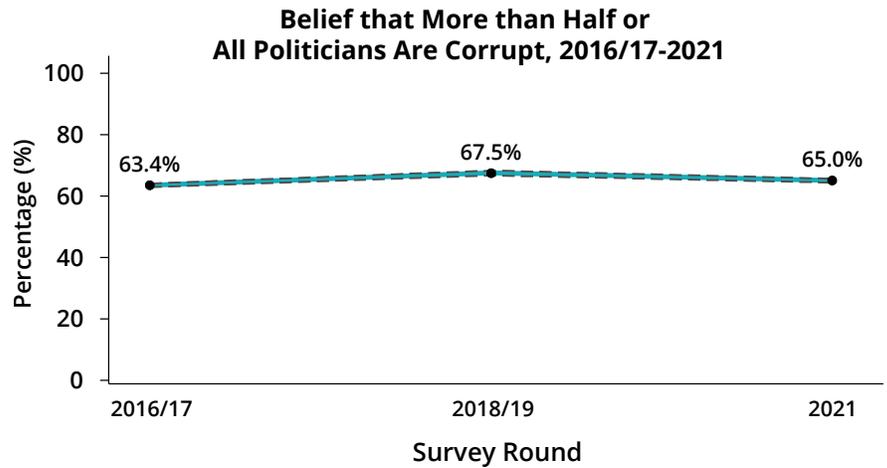
In most countries, over half of individuals believe that most or all politicians are corrupt. Peru has the highest perception of political corruption (88.4%), while Guyana (41.6%) and Uruguay (34.3%) have the lowest.

Belief that More than Half or All Politicians Are Corrupt, 2021

Country	Percentage
Peru	88.4%
Brazil	79.4%
Colombia	78.2%
Paraguay	75.2%
Chile	74.0%
Argentina	69.1%
Honduras	68.4%
Guatemala	68.1%
Nicaragua	68.0%
Bolivia	67.6%
Ecuador	64.1%
Panama	63.6%
Mexico	61.9%
Dominican Republic	59.4%
El Salvador	58.3%
Costa Rica	57.9%
Jamaica	55.2%
Haiti	54.0%
Guyana	41.6%
Uruguay	34.3%

Percentage (%)

■ 95% Confidence Interval (with Design-Effects)

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Perceptions of political corruption remain relatively stable, declining slightly in 2021

The belief that most politicians are corrupt slightly increased between 2016/17 and 2018/2019 from 63.4% to 67.5%. However, in 2021, this rate decreased to 65.0%, signaling a potential reversal to 2016/17 levels.[1]
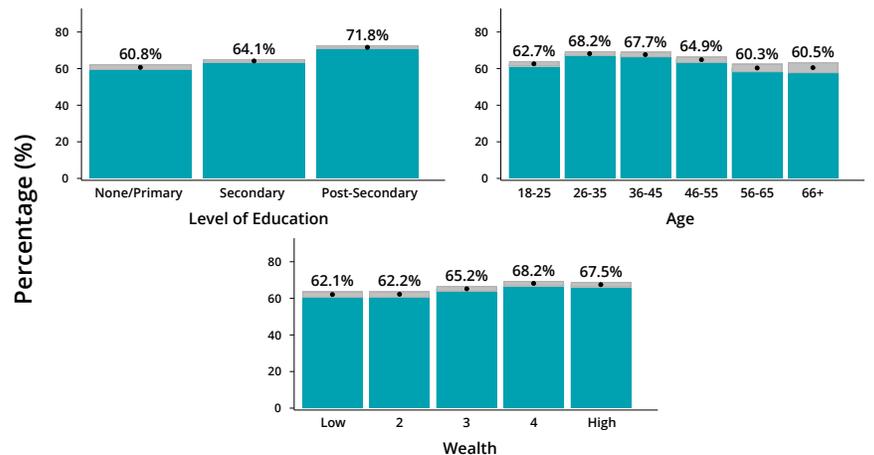
Belief that More than Half or All Politicians Are Corrupt, 2016/17-2021

63.4% 67.5% 65.0%

Percentage (%) — Survey Round: 2016/17, 2018/19, 2021

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

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2016/17-2021; GM_20211108

Perceptions of political corruption are highest among those with post-secondary education, younger individuals, and wealthier groups

What characteristics of individuals predict higher levels of corruption perceptions in the LAC region? Those with at least some post-secondary education (71.8%) are more likely to believe most politicians are corrupt than those with lower levels of education. Younger respondents age 26-45 report a higher belief that politicians are corrupt than older individuals.[2] Finally, the two highest wealth groups are more likely to believe most politicians are corrupt compared to less wealthy individuals. Gender is not a significant predictor of perceptions of political corruption.

Belief that More than Half or All Politicians Are Corrupt, 2021

Level of Education: None/Primary 60.8%, Secondary 64.1%, Post-Secondary 71.8%

Age: 18-25 62.7%, 26-35 68.2%, 36-45 67.7%, 46-55 64.9%, 56-65 60.3%, 66+ 60.5%

Wealth: Low 62.1%, 2 62.2%, 3 65.2%, 4 68.2%, High 67.5%

95% Confidence Interval (with Design-Effects)

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; GM_20211108

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Interested in knowing more about the LAPOP Lab's AmericasBarometer study?
Consult the data and our reports at
www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop.

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

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[1] The number of countries included in the AmericasBarometer has increased since the initial rounds. Our conclusions in over-time analyses do not change if we focus only on the countries surveyed consistently since 2016/17, or if we focus on the countries included in the 2021 round.

[2] The variable for place of residence (ur1new) has been omitted for this round of Spotlight Reports due to a change in survey mode for the 2021 round of the AmericasBarometer.