Spotlight on Satisfaction with Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean

Satisfaction with democracy varies greatly throughout the LAC region, though less than half are satisfied with democracy in most countries.

Since 2004, LAPOP’s AmericasBarometer has measured satisfaction with democracy in the LAC region by asking the following question: PN4. In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in (country)? In the 2021 survey round, this question was included in surveys in 20 LAC countries. Here we code responses into a dichotomous variable, which allows us to estimate the percentage of people in the country that are satisfied with democracy. Specifically, responses were recoded to indicate satisfaction with democracy by combining responses “very satisfied” and “satisfied” into one category, while placing the remaining responses into a baseline category.

Less than half of respondents are satisfied with democracy in most LAC countries, though satisfaction varies greatly across the region. Uruguay and El Salvador report the highest satisfaction with democracy (82.2% and 77.6%, respectively), while Haiti demonstrates the lowest level of satisfaction (10.6%).

Source: © AmericasBarometer, LAPOP, 2021; GM_20211108
In 2021, satisfaction with democracy in the LAC region recovered slightly

Satisfaction with democracy in the LAC region reached its peak in 2010 when over half of respondents (56.7%) indicated that they were satisfied with democracy. Beginning in 2014, this satisfaction faced substantial decline, reaching a record-low level in the 2018/19 survey round (39.5%). In 2021, satisfaction began to recover, increasing by 3.5 percentage points to 43.0%.

Satisfaction with democracy is higher among individuals with lower levels of education, lower levels of wealth, and the oldest and youngest respondents

What characteristics of individuals predict satisfaction with democracy in the LAC region? On average, satisfaction is highest among those with no education or at least some primary-level education (47.5%) and lowest for those with at least some post-secondary education (39.7%). Individuals in the two lowest wealth categories are more likely to report satisfaction than those in the two wealthiest groups. Older individuals age 56-65 and 66+ (43.7% and 47.9%, respectively) are more likely to report satisfaction with democracy, as well as the youngest age group (46.2%). Gender is not a significant predictor of satisfaction with democracy.¹

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¹ 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.

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

The contents of this Spotlight Report are the sole responsibility of the authors and LAPOP and do not necessarily reflect the views of any supporting organization. LAPOP’s AmericasBarometer surveys are supported predominantly by USAID and Vanderbilt University. The 2021 round also had support from IADB, US National Science Foundation (NSF), and academic partners and researchers across the Americas.