

LAPOP's
AmericasBarometer
takes the

Pulse of Democracy in The Bahamas

REPORT EDITORS

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20
23



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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AmericasBarometer
Barómetro de las Américas

Our Mission

LAPOP Lab is a center for excellence in international survey research. Located at Vanderbilt University, our mission is to:

- Produce high-quality public opinion data
- Develop and implement cutting-edge methods
- Build capacity in survey research and analysis
- Generate and disseminate policy-relevant research

The lab is run by experts in survey methodology who innovate approaches to public opinion research. The team is dedicated to collaboration and pedagogy. The lab's work facilitates evidence-based dialogue and policy decisions about a broad range of issues related to democratic governance.

A Letter from USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a proud supporter of the AmericasBarometer, an award-winning project that captures the voice of the people of the Americas. Drawing upon survey data from over 34 nations from North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean, the AmericasBarometer informs discussions over the quality and strength of democracy in the region.

Since 2004, the AmericasBarometer measures attitudes, evaluations, experiences, and behavior in the Americas using national probability samples of voting-age adults. Survey topics include the economy, rule of law, state capacity, trust in institutions, individual values, corruption, security, and more.

USAID relies on the AmericasBarometer to inform strategy development, guide program design, and evaluate the contexts in which we work. The AmericasBarometer alerts policymakers and international assistance agencies to key challenges. Importantly, the project provides citizens with information about democratic values and experiences in their country, over time, and in comparison to other countries.

Chantal Agarwal
Agreement Officer's Representative
Democracy Human Rights and Governance Team
Office of Regional Sustainable Development
Bureau for Latin America & the Caribbean
United States Agency for International Development

While the AmericasBarometer is coordinated by LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University, it is a collaborative international project. LAPOP consults with researchers across the Americas, local survey teams, USAID, and other project supporters at each stage. These rich discussions increase the relevance and validity of questionnaires; improve sample designs; build and maintain state-of-the-art quality control protocols; and support the development and dissemination of data and reports. As a collaborative project, the AmericasBarometer also builds capacity in public opinion research via knowledge transfers to local teams, student participation in the project, and frequent workshops.

USAID has been the largest supporter of the surveys that form the core of the AmericasBarometer. In addition, each round of the project is supported by individuals and institutions. USAID is grateful to that network of supporters, the LAPOP team, their outstanding former and current students, the many experts and institutions across the region that contribute to and engage with the project, the local fieldwork teams, and all those who took the time to respond to the survey.



This report is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this study are the sole responsibility of the authors and LAPOP and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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UNDERSTANDING THE FIGURES IN THIS REPORT

AmericasBarometer data are based on national samples of respondents drawn from each country; naturally, all samples produce results that contain a margin of error. It is important for the reader to understand that each data point (for example, a country's proportion of citizens who support democracy) has a confidence interval, expressed in terms of a range surrounding that point. Many graphs in this study show a 95% confidence interval that takes into account this sampling variability. When two estimated points have confidence intervals that overlap to a large degree, the difference between the two values is typically not statistically significant; conversely, where two confidence intervals do not overlap, the reader can be confident that those differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Estimates for the 2023 AmericasBarometer are based on weighted data where applicable. Due to sampling discrepancies, calibration weights are generated for national surveys in Ecuador, Trinidad & Tobago, The Bahamas, and Brazil by strata based on population distributions for urban/rural population, gender, and age. Weights for Haiti and Nicaragua (telephone surveys) are calculated by estimating baseline probabilities adjusted for eligibility and non-response, then calibrated to the distributions of gender, education, age, and region in the most recent previous face-to-face AmericasBarometer country surveys. Cross-time and cross-country weights are standardized so that each country/year has the same effective sample size. Data for this report are based on the pre-release dataset; analysts may find small differences in point estimates when using publicly released datasets due to ongoing data cleaning and quality control.



COVER ART
'Plagas de jardín' [Garden plagues]
50 x 52 cm, oil on paper, 2020, by Sylvia Fernández

Sylvia Fernández (Lima, 1978) graduated with a gold medal in Fine Arts from Corriente Alterna, in Lima, Peru, in 2002. Her painting explores the abstract boundaries of the mind and body and its relationship with nature, time and memory. <https://www.sylvia-fernandez.com>

Sylvia is represented by **Galería del Paseo** Founded in 1998 in Montevideo, Uruguay—and present as well in Lima, Peru, since 2003—Galería del Paseo promotes young Latin-American artists in the field of contemporary arts. <https://www.galeriadelpaseo.com>

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Introduction

Zhivargo Laing¹

The Bahamas is relatively young, having obtained independence only 50 years ago. It has a largely prosperous, peaceful, and progressive society. Despite its youthfulness and economic fortunes, it faces several complex issues confronted by many developed countries, including a significant level of undocumented immigration, crime and gang-related violence, gender, and sexual-preference tensions, and evolving delicate diplomatic relations with some foreign territories.

The AmericasBarometer provides an excellent opportunity to gauge the perceptions of these issues among the Bahamian population and compare these perceptions to those of other territories within the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region.

The 2023 AmericasBarometer, once again, highlights some complexities regarding these issues. For example, there are growing concerns by the United States regarding the increasing economic involvement of the People's Republic of China in The Bahamas. The problem is that such involvement may lead to undue influence by the communist-Asian power. Yet, the survey shows that more Bahamians find the United States trustworthy compared to China. As another example, while Bahamians prefer male over female leaders, they show a high degree of approval of women's groups to protest and strong disapproval of violence against women.

Other results offer clearer takeaways. According to the 2023 data, Bahamians show a high but lessening intolerance for LGBT and transgender rights relative to most of the region. This intolerance, compared to other nations (with few exceptions), is significant. In terms of insecurity, the survey confirms the uppermost concern among Bahamians about crime and violence broadly in their country, even as most of them believe that they live in safe neighborhoods.

¹ Zhivargo Laing is an economist, former parliamentarian and cabinet minister in The Bahamas. He is presently the Executive Director and Senior Policy Fellow at the Government and Public Policy Institute at the University of The Bahamas.

The 2023 survey also highlights significant differences between young and older Bahamians regarding specific issues. For example, it reveals that younger Bahamians are more likely to intend to emigrate than older Bahamians, and have much higher tolerance and support for immigrants. Young people and people who live in urban areas, according to the survey, are more likely to think that the government plays a role in escalating gang activity in the country. The survey also reveals that young people, men, and people in Grand Bahama are more likely to tolerate domestic violence.

The 2023 AmericasBarometer reveals how perceptions of key issues have changed over time. For example, while in 2023, fewer Bahamians feel safe in their neighborhoods compared to 2014, in both years, the vast majority have felt safe. Troublingly, compared to 2014, in 2023 the number of Bahamians surveyed who express a likelihood of emigrating has more than doubled from 15% to 35%. These observations carry significant implications for self-awareness among the general population and policy prescriptions for present and future government and civic leaders, in particular.

This report is insightful, instructive, and essential reading for the Bahamian population, policymakers, activist groups, and researchers. Its many findings deserve discussion, further inquiry, and public policy consideration. Its recommendations support the continuing efforts to address the issues the survey focused on.

BY THE NUMBERS

1,100
interviewers

2023
AMERICASBAROMETER

41,524
interviews

180
core questions included in
most countries

415
country-specific questions

26
COUNTRIES

Argentina
Belize
Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Grenada
Guatemala
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Suriname
The Bahamas
Trinidad & Tobago
United States
Uruguay

INTERVIEWER TRAINING

24
local firm
trainings

420
training
hours

CAPACITY BUILDING IN SURVEY RESEARCH IN 2023

33 events

600+ hours

1,390 attendees

THE AMERICASBAROMETER SERIES

10 waves of
surveys across
20 years

34 countries

385,000+
interviews

Attitudes about Crime, Security, and Gangs

Luke Plutowski¹

Criminality in The Bahamas presents a complex challenge. Despite its general reputation for safety, the country faces significant violence issues, including a rising murder rate that recently prompted a U.S. travel advisory. Gang-related conflicts are a major contributor to the violence, with recent high-profile incidents further raising public concern. Additionally, The Bahamas' status as a low-tax jurisdiction attracts financial crimes, exemplified by the FTX cryptocurrency scandal.

Understanding public perceptions of security through surveys like the AmericasBarometer is crucial. These studies offer valuable insights that complement official crime statistics, allowing for a deeper analysis of demographic and geographic trends, as well as public attitudes toward crime prevention and justice policies.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Security issues are the most important problem in The Bahamas according to almost half (48%) of the population.
- Reported crime victimization significantly increased from 2014 (10%) to 2023 (14%).
- Nearly nine in ten (87%) Bahamians feel safe in their neighborhood, the highest rate in LAC.
- Reported gang presence has stayed constant or declined since 2014.
- Many Bahamians (45%), especially young people and urban residents, think the government plays a role in inciting gang violence.

While it is generally considered a safe country, rates of violence in The Bahamas are relatively high. According to the Global Organized Crime Index, the country has a criminality score of 3.75, good for 161st in the world, which is tied with Norway and just behind Canada.² However, in 2021, there were 29 intentional homicides per 100,000 people, one of the ten highest murder rates in the world.³

The crime problem has grown worse recently. Amidst a wave of violence that saw 18 murders within the first 24 days of 2024, the U.S. State Department issued an advisory for travelers to “exercise increased caution” in The Bahamas.⁴ Though Bahamian authorities have pushed back against the warnings, they have also stepped up policing in areas where the killings have occurred.⁵ Many of the

slayings that occur within The Bahamas can be attributed to gang-related turf wars and rivalries.⁶ The murder of former Member of Parliament Don Saunders during an armed robbery in March 2024 raised the salience of the violence problem even further.⁷

As a low tax jurisdiction, The Bahamas is also an attractive location for white-collar criminals to carry out financial crimes, including tax evasion, fraud, and money laundering, and cyberattacks.⁸ In a recent high-profile case, FTX, a cryptocurrency exchange based in Nassau, was found to be at the center of a multibillion-dollar fraud scheme.⁹ The Bahamian government faced criticism for not properly regulating the company, allegedly in exchange for a promise to pay the country’s national debt.¹⁰

Public opinion studies are critical for understanding the issue of crime. Unlike official crime statistics, surveys like the AmericasBarometer can allow researchers and leaders to assess perceptions of security, compare metrics across demographic groups and geographic lines, and gauge public sentiment about crime prevention and criminal justice policies.

BAHAMIANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME, BUT MOST FEEL SAFE

The standard opening question of the AmericasBarometer survey is an open-ended icebreaker which asks respondents the top issue in the country. Interviewers place the respondent’s answer into one of several categories. The exact text of the question is:

In your opinion, what is the most serious problem faced by the country?

The response options, and their distributions in the 2023 The Bahamas survey, are shown in **Figure 1.1**. Security issues (answers such as crime, gangs, and violence) were the clear number one answer at almost half (48%). Unemployment and other economic issues (inflation, “the economy,” poverty, etc.) were the top issue for just under one-quarter of Bahamians (24%). “Other” issues (food security, inequality, COVID-19, drugs, the environment, migration, or any other answer that does not fit into the given categories) were the second-most common individual category with 15%.

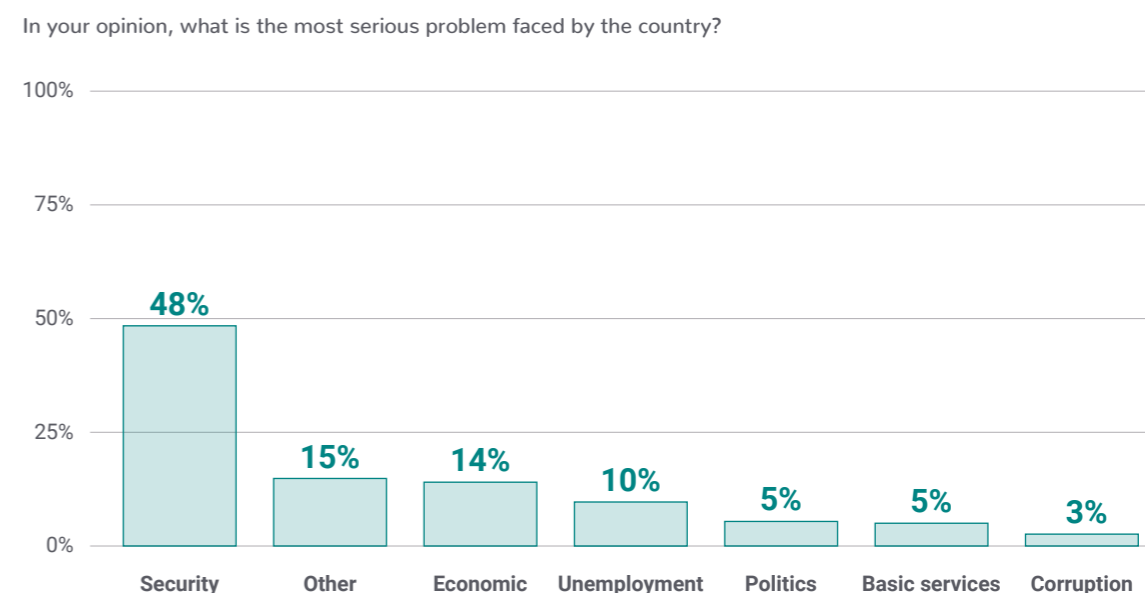
Political issues, basic service issues, and corruption were the top issue for 5% or less of the population.

Crime and security issues are a central focus of the AmericasBarometer questionnaire. One standard question, asked in nearly all countries and years, assesses overall crime victimization:

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?

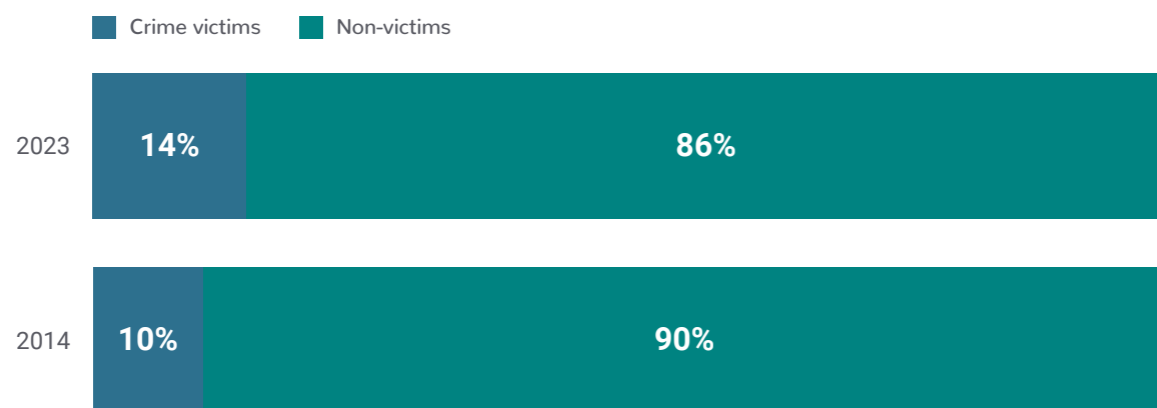
The Bahamas is generally considered a safe country, but it also has a relatively high per capita homicide rate.

Figure 1.1 Security is the main issue of concern for almost half of Bahamian citizens



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 1.2 Crime victimization significantly increased since 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2014-2023

14%
of Bahamians say they were a victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 1.2 shows the percentage of Bahamians who said they were a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months. This question was asked both this year and in 2014. As the graph demonstrates, crime victimization rose from 10% to 14% in 2023, a statistically significant increase. That reflects a region-wide trend: crime victimization across Latin America and the Caribbean was 23% in 2023 compared to 19% in 2014 (22% in 2021).

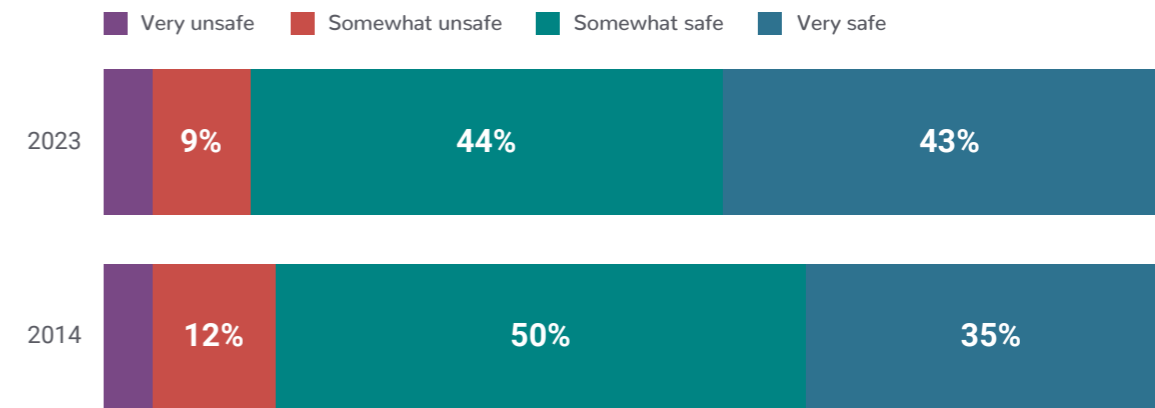
In addition to measuring actual crime victimization, the AmericasBarometer also assesses respondents' feelings of security in their own neighborhoods. Specifically, ask the following question:

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 results of this question from the 2023 and 2014 surveys are shown in **Figure 1.3**. The findings indicate that most people in The Bahamas feel safe in the areas where they live. In 2023, 87% said they feel somewhat or very safe. That is similar to 2014, when 85% said the same. The percentage that said they feel "very safe" significantly increased from 35% to 43%.

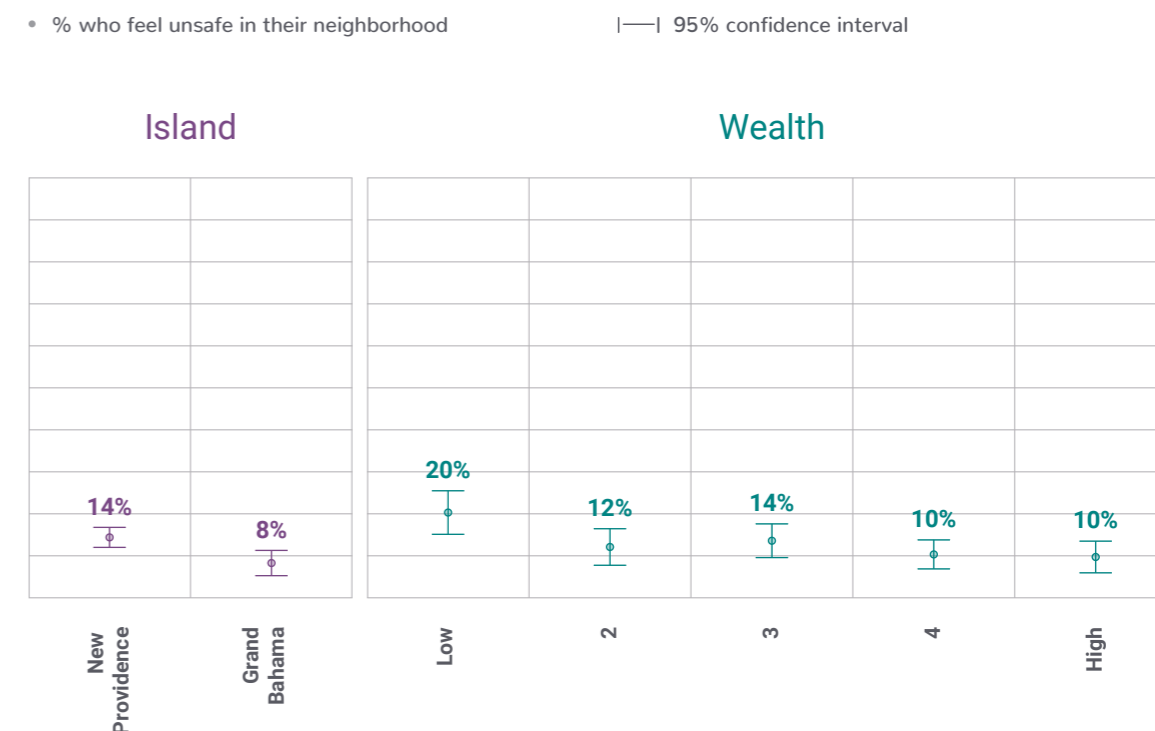
Feelings of security are somewhat higher among certain groups, however. As **Figure 1.4** shows, those who live in New Providence and those with the lowest levels of household wealth are more likely to say they feel unsafe (14% and 20%, respectively). Only one in ten of the wealthiest Bahamians feel unsafe (half the rate of the least wealthy), and less than one in ten (8%) residents of Grand Bahama say the same.¹¹

Figure 1.3 The vast majority of Bahamians continue to feel safe in their neighborhood



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2014-2023

Figure 1.4 Residents of New Providence and the least wealthy are more likely to feel unsafe



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

87%
of Bahamians feel safe in their neighborhood, the highest rate in the LAC region.

To put these results in comparative perspective, **Figure 1.5** shows the percentage who feel safe in their neighborhood and the percentage that were victims of a crime across all countries studied in 2023. The Bahamas ranks the highest in the LAC region on feelings of security. Its rate of 87% is markedly higher than that of its Caribbean neighbors, the Dominican Republic (52%) and Haiti (44%). Notably, the percentage who say that they feel safe in The Bahamas is more than double the rate in the Andean states of Peru (42%), Bolivia (38%), and Ecuador (36%). As the graph illustrates, there is a correlation between feelings of safety and experiences with crime. On crime victimization,

The Bahamas ranks the third lowest in the region, just ahead of El Salvador and Jamaica.

To provide additional context to these results, the 2023 AmericasBarometer questionnaire also asked Bahamians about the relative level of violence. The questionnaire assesses the level of violence in the respondents' neighborhood compared to previous times and compared to other neighborhoods. The full question texts are below.

Do you think that the current level of violence in your neighborhood is higher, about the same, or lower than in other neighborhoods?

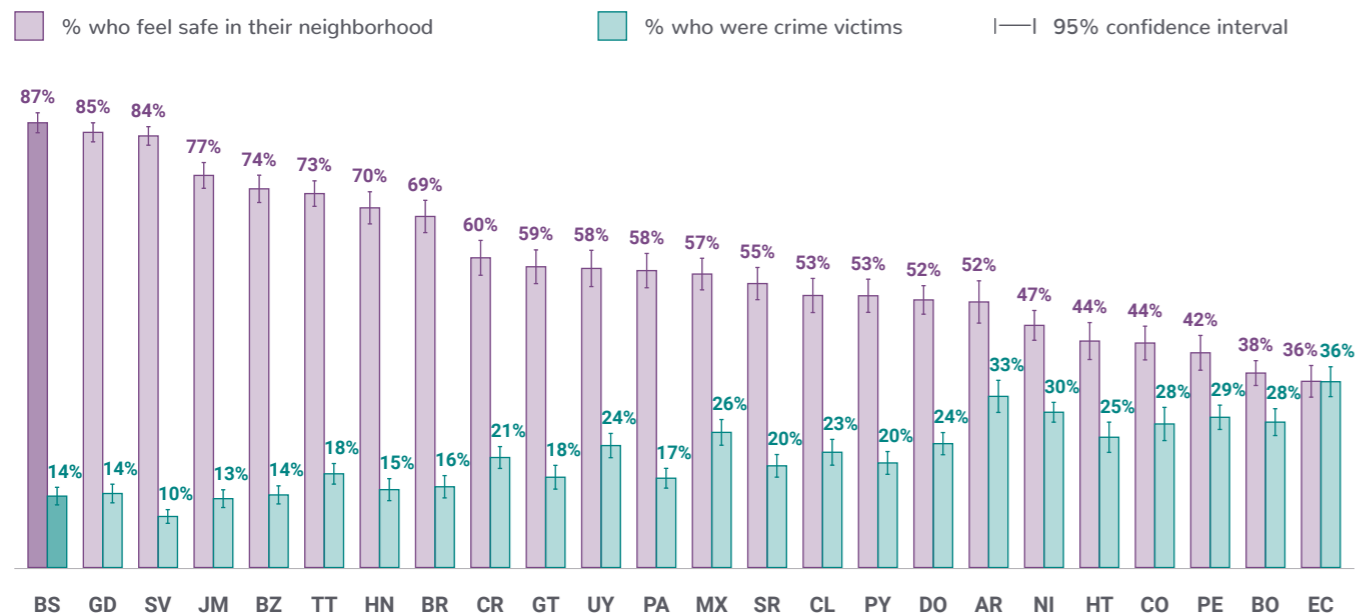
Do you think that the current level of violence in your neighborhood is higher, about the same, or lower than 12 months ago?

In 2023, three-quarters (74%) of the public say the level of violence in their neighborhood is lower than in other neighborhoods. That is an improvement from 2014, when 62% said the same. Further, in 2023, just over half (52%) say that the level of violence in their neighborhood is lower than it was a year ago (same percentage as in 2014).

The results of these questions provide even more reassurance when placed in comparative perspective.

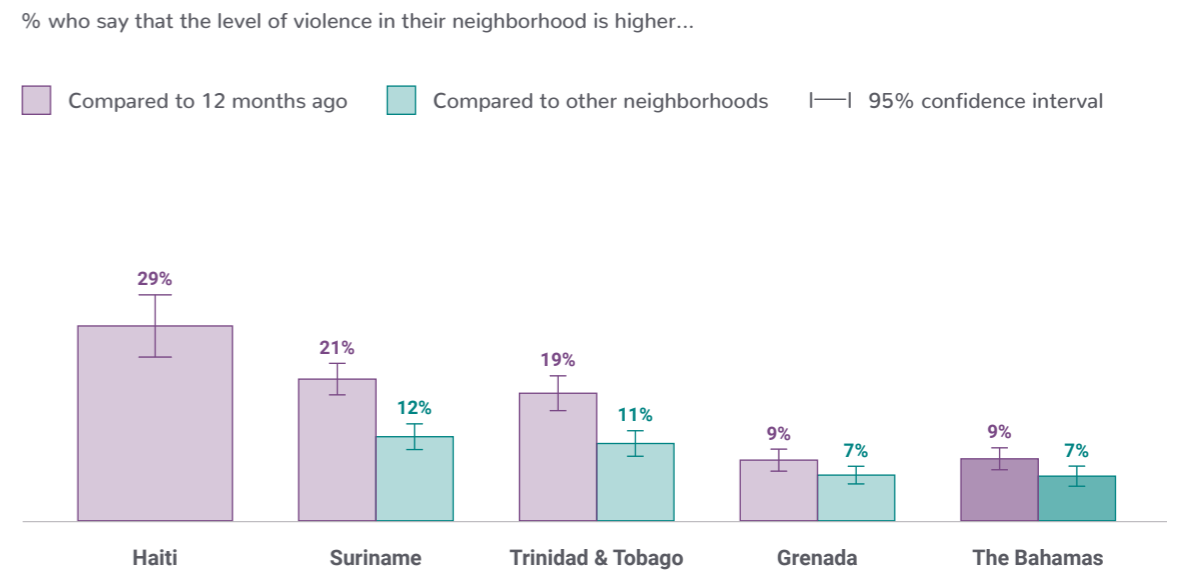
Figure 1.6 shows the percentage who say the level of violence in their neighborhood has increased and the percentage who feel their neighborhood is more dangerous compared to others. Less than 10% of Bahamians said so on both metrics. That is true for Grenada as well. However, in Haiti, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago, more than double the percentage of people said that violence is increasing around them. In general, most people do not feel their neighborhood is particularly dangerous in any country, though the rate is a bit higher in Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

Figure 1.5 According to its citizens, The Bahamas is one of the safest countries in the region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Figure 1.6 Bahamians feel their neighborhoods are relatively safe from violence



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

BAHAMIANS REPORT SOME GANG PRESENCE, BUT THE SITUATION APPEARS TO BE IMPROVING

Organized crime can threaten individual safety and have broader consequences on society as a whole. Even though The Bahamas does not face the level of criminal activity as other Caribbean nations,¹² gangs exist in the country and are responsible for some flare-ups in violence.¹³ Gang activity can make people feel unsafe, diminish economic activity, and fuel substance abuse problems.¹⁴

The AmericasBarometer asks several questions related to gangs. The first set probes the extent of gang presence and activity in the country. The full question texts are below. They ask respondents whether gangs exist in their neighborhood,

to what extent their neighborhood is affected by gangs, whether young people in gangs in their neighborhood is a problem, and whether drug trafficking in the country is a problem.

Is there a criminal gang or gangs in your neighborhood?

To what extent do you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs? Would you say a lot, somewhat, a little or none?

Please, tell me if the following situation is a problem that is very serious, somewhat serious, a little serious, not serious at all, or is not a problem in your neighborhood... Young people or children living here in your neighborhood who are in gangs.

A recent uptick in violence in The Bahamas has been attributed to gang activity. AmericasBarometer data suggests that gangs are prevalent throughout the country, but the situation appears to be improving since 2014, when significantly fewer Bahamians reported crime victimization.

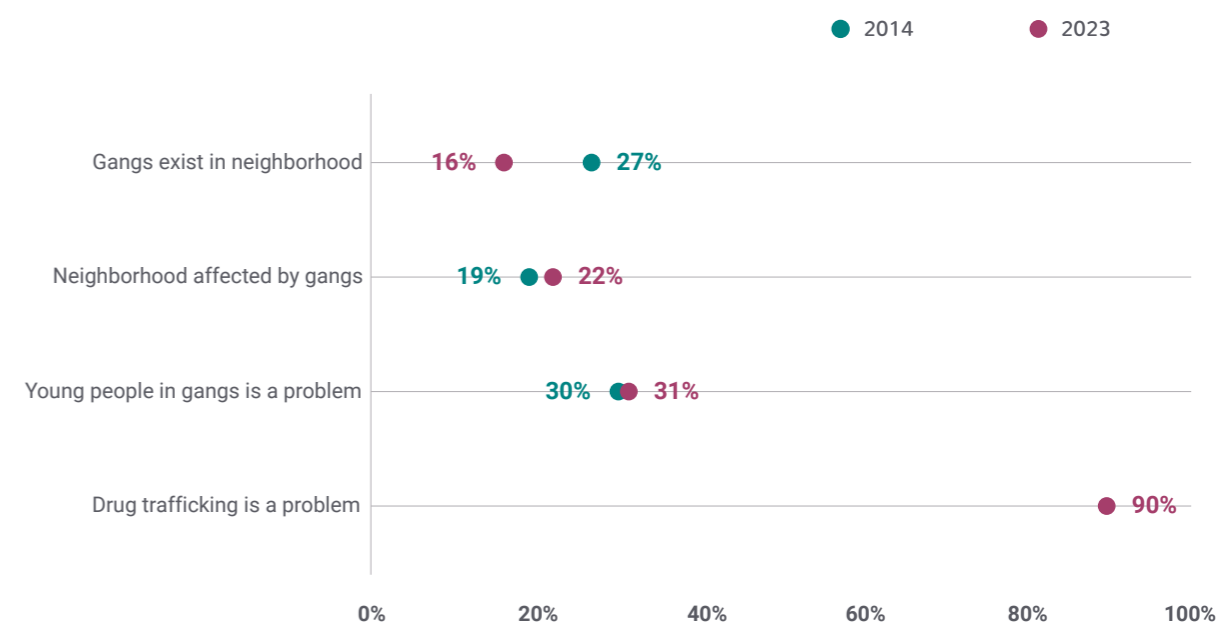
How serious of a problem do you think drug trafficking is in this country? Very serious, somewhat serious, a little serious, not serious at all, not a problem.

The results are shown in **Figure 1.7**, which displays the percentage who say that gangs exist in their neighborhood, that their neighborhood is affected “a lot” or “somewhat” by gangs, and that young people in gangs and drug trafficking are problems that are at least “a little serious.” Where available, the results from 2014 and 2023 are shown.

The data reveal that gangs exist, though the problem may be diminishing. In 2023, just over one in four Bahamians (27%) said that at least one gang exists in their neighborhood. That is an 11-percentage point drop since 2014. Moreover, 22%

said that their neighborhood is at least “somewhat” affected by gang activity, and 31% said that young people in gangs is a problem in their neighborhood. Though those numbers represent a significant minority, they are not significantly different from 2014. Nine in ten (90%) say that drug trafficking is a problem in the country as a whole, including 57% who say it is “very serious”. For comparison, 87% of Trinbagonians and 80% of Surinamese said that drug trafficking is “very serious”. On all four of these measures, The Bahamas ranks third highest out of the four Eastern and Southern Caribbean countries included in this round, above Grenada and below Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago.

Figure 1.7 Reported gang presence has stayed constant or decreased since 2014



Source: AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2014-2023

15% of Bahamians say someone in their neighborhood was recently murdered due to gang violence.

The mere presence of gangs does not necessarily indicate the severity of the problem, as organized crime can vary in its level of sophistication and violence. We delve deeper into the gang issue by asking if respondents know anyone in their neighborhood who was either murdered or injured as a result of gang violence in the previous year. These questions are only asked to those that say their neighborhood is at least “a little” affected by gangs (i.e., those who say “none” to the gang prevalence question—53% of the sample—are not asked the question).

Was anyone murdered in your neighborhood as a result of gang violence within the last 12 months? (1) No (2) One person (3) Two persons (4) Three persons (5) Four or more persons

Was anyone injured in your neighborhood as a result of gang violence within the last 12 months? (1) No (2) One person (3) Two persons (4) Three persons (5) Four or more persons

According to the data, 35% of those who are asked this question report that at least one person was murdered in their neighborhood in the 12 months prior to the survey (8% said four or more), while 32% say a neighbor was injured from gang violence (9% said four or more). Since 53% of people said they had no gangs in their neighborhood and thus were not asked this question, an estimated 15% of Bahamians know someone who was murdered from gang violence within the past year. That is much higher than the same rate in Suriname (7%) and Grenada (2%), though substantially lower than in Trinidad & Tobago (20%).

Gang violence is not spread evenly throughout the country. As shown in **Figure 1.8**, people in New Providence, the nation’s most populous island and home of the capital city of Nassau, are far more likely to report that someone was murdered from gang violence (40%, vs. 10% in Grand Bahama).

MANY BAHAMIANS, ESPECIALLY YOUNG PEOPLE IN CITIES, THINK THE STATE PLAYS A ROLE IN GANG ACTIVITY

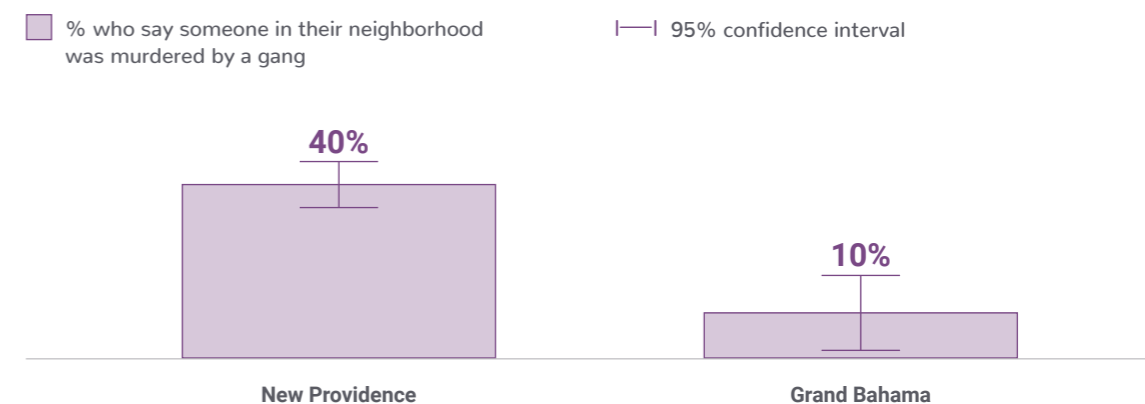
Gangs often emerge in the absence of a strong state. Weak rule of law can enable criminal enterprises to form and grow. In extreme cases, gangs can fulfill duties traditionally performed by the government, either as a way of legitimizing themselves or to establish control over territory or group of people.¹⁵ In some areas of the Dominican Republic, for example, gangs have assumed some functions of the state in providing social services and employment.¹⁶ Elsewhere, in Haiti, militia groups have formed to protect communities from violence and robberies, often with support from the police.¹⁷

The following questions provide insight on attitudes about organized crime by asking if the gangs provide any positive benefits for their communities:

Do gangs help to enforce the law in your neighborhood?

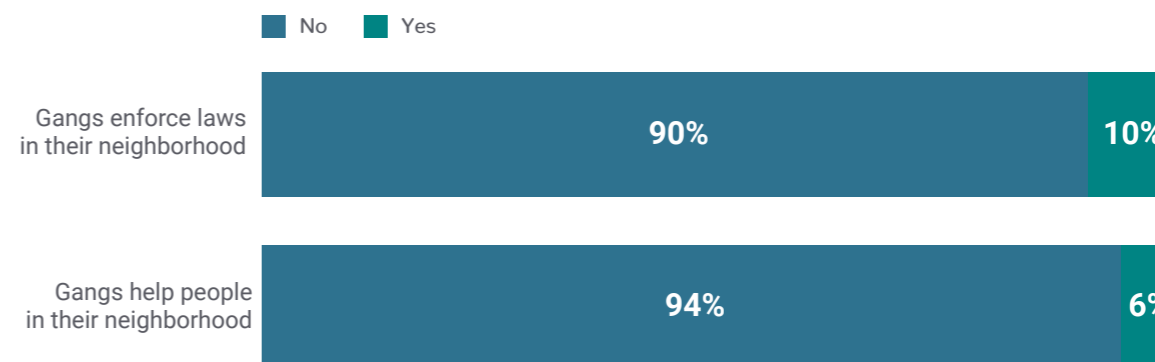
Do gangs help persons in your neighborhood, for example, by providing school supplies for children, providing jobs, etc.?

Figure 1.8 Among those who say there is gang presence in their neighborhood, residents of New Providence are far more likely to report violence



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 1.9 Very few Bahamians think gangs provide benefits to their community



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

In extreme cases, gangs can fulfill duties traditionally performed by the government, like providing social services, employment, or security. Few Bahamians see this situation within their own neighborhoods, but many do say that the government incites gang activity.

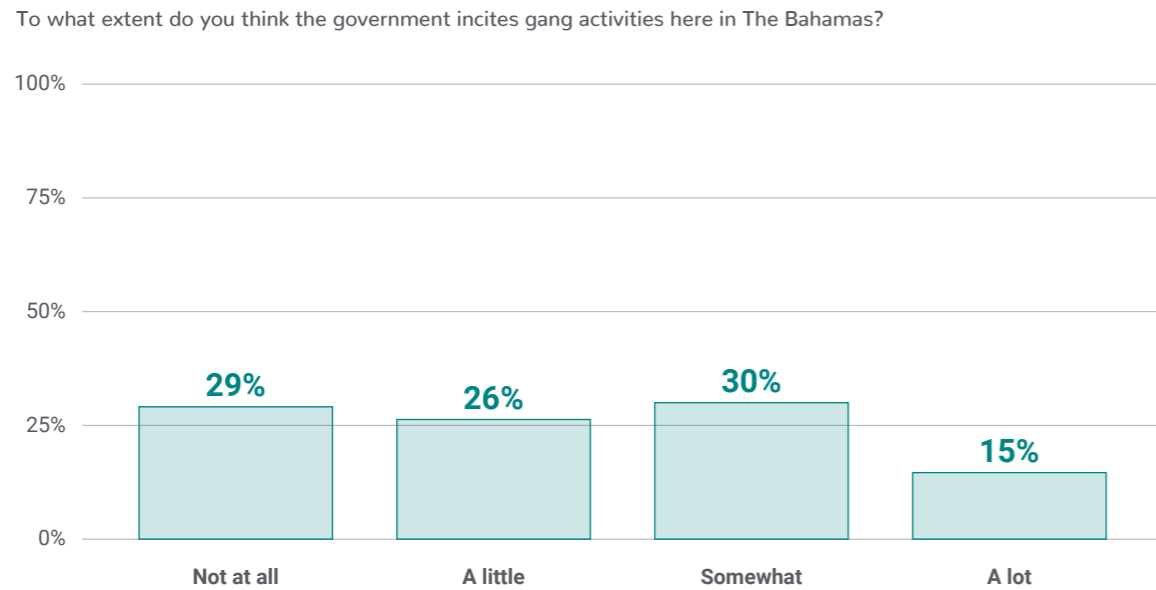
The results are shown in **Figure 1.9**. The overwhelming majority feel that gangs do not help enforce the law (90%) nor do they help people in their neighborhood (94%). In Suriname, for comparison, 30% say that gangs enforce the law, and 14% say that gangs help people.

Opinion is mixed on this question. Nearly half of Bahamians (45%) think that the government incites gang activity “somewhat” or “a lot”, though almost 30% say “not at all”.

To further probe the relationship between gangs and the state, the questionnaire includes another question that has to do with the role that the state plays in gang violence. The full question wording is shown in the subtitle of **Figure 1.10**, which displays the breakdown of responses.

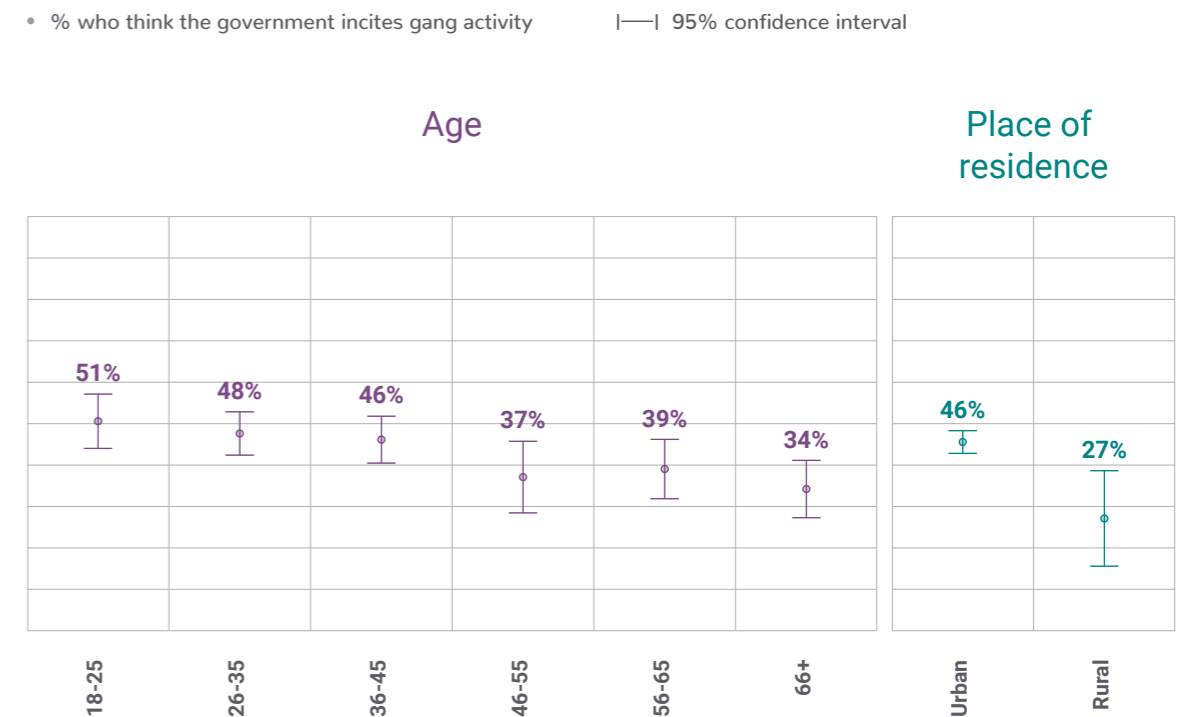
Views of the role of the state in gang activity varies significantly by age and place of residence (**Figure 1.11**). People living in urban areas and those in the youngest age cohort (18-25) are significantly more likely than those 46 or older to say that the government incites gang activity. There were no significant associations across gender, education, wealth, and regional categories.

Figure 1.10 Almost half think the government plays some role in inciting gang activity



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 1.11 Young people and urban residents are more likely to think the government plays a role in gang activity



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Conclusions: Balancing Perceptions and Realities of Bahamians Security Concerns

The results from the AmericasBarometer study paints a complex picture of the security landscape in The Bahamas. On the one hand, security issues are the top issue in the country for many Bahamians, crime victimization has increased over the past decade, and many people, especially in New Providence, say there is gang activity in their neighborhood. On the other hand, comparative analyses show that the country is one of the safest in the region, violence is decreasing, and gang activity has remained stagnant or declined since the last AmericasBarometer survey.

Though the situation is complex, the results are not necessarily contradictory. It is possible that Bahamians largely feel safe in their own neighborhoods, but are concerned about macro-level crime issues, such as gang violence and drug trafficking in concentrated parts of Nassau. Further, even if gang activity has not been worsening, a substantial minority of people still see it around them.

Policymakers, development organizations, activists, and community leaders should adopt programs that directly address the concern that Bahamians express toward security issues. Since the results show that most Bahamians feel safe within their own neighborhood, such programs should be concentrated in areas with highest levels of violence and drug trafficking, like Nassau. A combination of strategies including targeted law enforcement, community policing, and investment in youth development programs will help to address these issues. Further, the government must take seriously their perceived role in perpetuating gang violence by establishing stronger accountability measures for politicians and police who are linked to illegal activity.

Notes

- 1 Luke Plutowski is a Senior Statistician with LAPOP Lab.
- 2 See <https://ocindex.net/rankings?f=rankings&view=List>
- 3 See https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?most_recent_value_desc=true
- 4 Hunter 2024.
- 5 Charles 2024 and Romo 2024.
- 6 See Jones 2022 and Yagoub 2017.
- 7 Dames 2024.
- 8 See <https://ocindex.net/country/bahamas>
- 9 Yaffe-Bellany, Rashbaum and Goldstein 2022.
- 10 Singh 2023.
- 11 The survey also included interviews from the island of Abaco. These are included in the national estimates, but we do not report them out separately because the sample cannot be representative of Abaco.
- 12 See <https://ocindex.net/country/bahamas>
- 13 For example, the uptick in murders in 2017 was linked to gang activity. See Yagoub 2017.
- 14 Fagan 2017; Neanidis, Rana, and Blackburn 2017; Pinotti 2015.
- 15 Bobea 2013.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Hu, Culver, and Contreras 2024.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Sofia Berrospi¹

Less than half are satisfied with democracy in The Bahamas in 2023—higher than the regional average.

The Bahamas is referred to as a “stable democracy” by Freedom House.² Current Prime Minister Philip Davis attended the 2023 Summit for Democracy, addressing issues such as inclusivity and constitutional governance.³ Despite this, in the last nationwide election in 2021, 65% of Bahamians showed up to vote—a historically low voter turnout.⁴

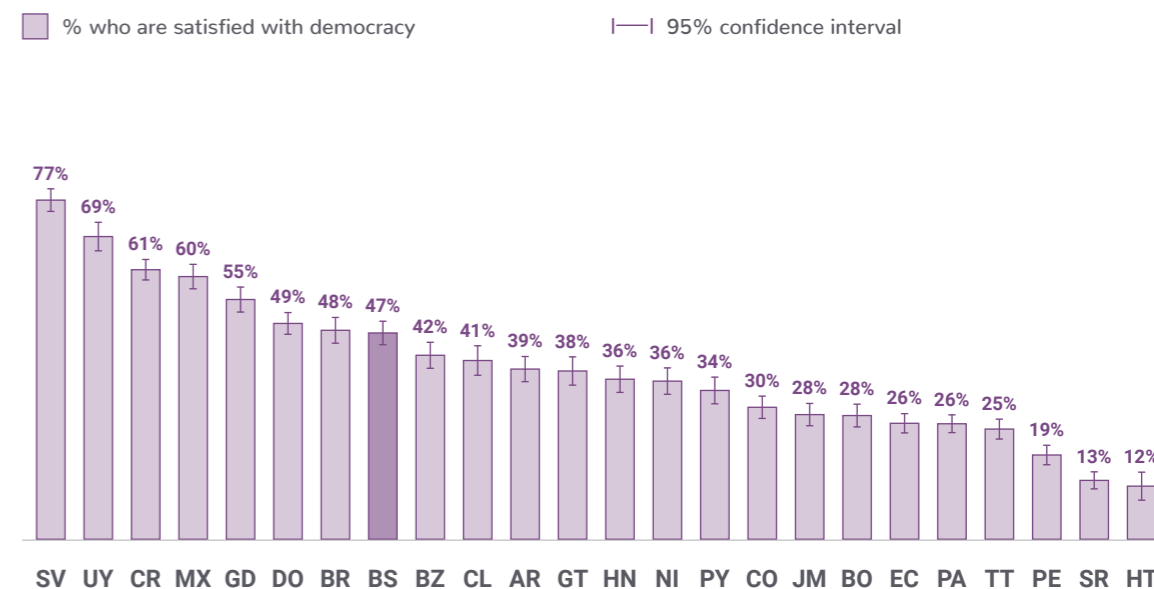
The Bahamas is still impacted by various sociopolitical issues that could impact the way that citizens feel about and engage with democracy. For instance, recent high-profile cases of corruption,⁵ economic issues such as unemployment,

increased crime, continued gender inequality, and the ongoing issue of illegal immigration could lead Bahamians to believe that their system of government is not working. Amid the present challenges, how satisfied are Bahamians with their democracy?

Since 2014, the AmericasBarometer has measured satisfaction with democracy by asking the following question:

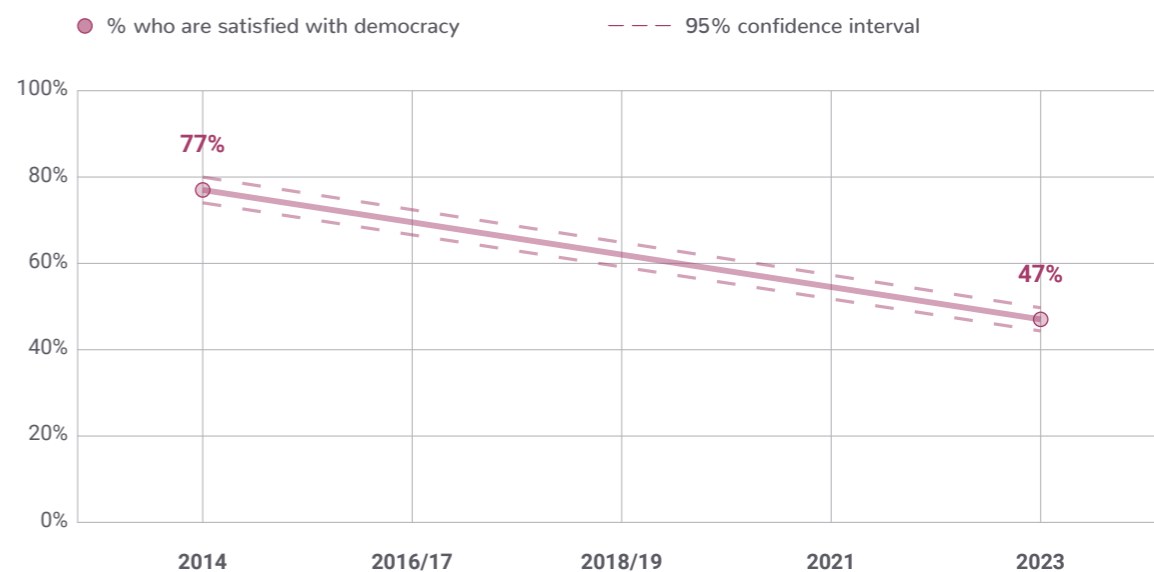
In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in The Bahamas?

Close to half of Bahamians are satisfied with democracy, a rate that is higher than in most of the countries in the region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Bahamians’ satisfaction with democracy decreased significantly between 2014 and 2023



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2014-2023

Compared to most people in the LAC region, Bahamians are relatively satisfied with how their current political system is functioning. However, ongoing issues such as unemployment, inflation, crime, immigration, crime, corruption and inequality may explain why there was a significant drop in satisfaction with democracy in The Bahamas between 2014 and 2023.

Responses are recoded into a dichotomous variable by combining those who responded “very satisfied” and “satisfied” into a “satisfied” category, and “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” into a baseline “dissatisfied” category.

In 2023, 47% of Bahamians are satisfied with democracy. The Bahamas ranks 8th in satisfaction with democracy in the LAC region. In comparison, El Salvador has the highest level of satisfaction with 77% and Haiti has the lowest level, with 12% of the public indicating satisfaction. In 2014, The Bahamas placed 1st in the region, but satisfaction has declined since. Still, it is above the 2023 regional average (40%).

Satisfaction with democracy in The Bahamas decreased between 2014 and 2023, moving from more than three in four Bahamians (77%) to less than half (47%). Current high-profile corruption cases and low voting rates in 2020 may provide a context where Bahamians are not as satisfied with democracy as they once were.

What individual characteristics predict satisfaction with democracy? No sociodemographic variables (wealth, place of residence, age, education, or gender) are significant predictors of satisfaction with democracy in 2023 in The Bahamas.⁶ This signals that satisfaction with democracy is similar across Bahamians of all groups.

Notes

- 1 Sofia Berrospi is a PhD student in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and a LAPOP Lab Affiliated Researcher.
- 2 Freedom House 2023.
- 3 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8vs1J-9zJI>
- 4 Rolle 2021.
- 5 For examples of recent cases, see Loop Caribbean News 2022; McKenzie 2021; Russell 2021.
- 6 I performed a logistic regression with satisfaction with democracy as the dependent variable. Being satisfied with democracy is coded as 1 and being dissatisfied is coded as 0.

Attitudes about Migration

Luke Plutowski

Migration within and from LAC has dramatically increased over recent decades, a trend influenced by a mix of economic hardships, political instability, environmental issues, and security concerns. The Bahamas plays a unique role in this migration narrative as both a major destination for migrants from neighboring countries and a source of emigrants heading to North America. Despite being one of the few Caribbean nations with positive net migration, The Bahamas faces significant emigration, contributing to brain drain and challenges in key sectors like healthcare and education.

The influx of Haitian migrants has become a contentious political issue, with the government promising stricter enforcement and repatriation measures. However, the humanitarian crisis in Haiti complicates these efforts, as Haitian nationals in The Bahamas face discrimination and challenges in accessing public services.

This chapter leverages the AmericasBarometer to explore emigration intentions and attitudes toward immigrants, offering crucial insights into the broader context of migration issues in the region.

MAIN FINDINGS

- **Over one in three Bahamians (35%) say they intend to emigrate in the next three years, a significant increase since 2014 (15%).**
- **Emigration intentions are as high as 63% for those 18-25 years of age.**
- **Crime victims, those who are food insecure, and people who see the Bahamian government as corrupt are more likely to emigrate.**
- **Opinion is roughly evenly split on whether the Bahamian government should offer social services to immigrants, though support declines when respondents are asked about social services for “illegal immigrants.”**
- **Support for providing social services to immigrants is higher among men, young people, those who intend to emigrate themselves, people who trust foreign governments, and those who support equality for gay people.**

Migration from and within LAC has boomed in recent years. In 2020, over 25 million migrants from the LAC region left for the United States and Canada, up from 10 million in 1990.¹ Meanwhile, the number of migrants living in LAC doubled between 2010 and 2022, from 8.3 million to 16.3 million, with much of the migration taking place within the region.² Economic, political, environmental and security challenges have contributed to soaring emigration flows from countries like Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Ecuador.³

The Bahamas in many ways lies at the intersection of the migration debate, as it is both a favored destination for migrants from neighbors like Haiti and Cuba⁴ and also a source of migrants to North America, especially in the enduring wake of Hurricane Dorian.⁵ Due to these dueling phenomena, net migration (the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants) has remained around just 1000 or less over the past several years.⁶ Though The Bahamas is one of the few countries in the Caribbean with net positive migration, its emigration flows are high in global terms.⁷ Brain drain poses a challenge to the nation’s development, as talented students and skilled professionals depart for better opportunities elsewhere, leaving gaps in key sectors such as healthcare and education.⁸

Meanwhile, immigration from Haiti has become a hot-button political issue in The Bahamas as more and more migrants arrive at the island nation’s shores.⁹

Prime Minister Philip Davis promised in 2023 to step up enforcement and repatriation of Haitian migrants, adding that “The Bahamas is for Bahamians.”¹⁰ A 2006 survey by the International Organization for Migration and the College of The Bahamas found that Haitian nationals living in The Bahamas use a disproportionate share of public healthcare and educational services and are not well integrated into Bahamian society.¹¹ Concerns over the economic and national security implications of illegal immigration are counterbalanced by the growing humanitarian crisis resulting from gang violence and political turbulence in Haiti. Walking back a plan to evict Haitian migrants from shantytowns in The Bahamas, Prime Minister Davis also noted that “there is no sense responding to a crisis to create another crisis.”¹²

Studies show that people of Haitian descent, even those born in The Bahamas who are not Haitian nationals, face significant discrimination and prejudice in The Bahamas.¹³ Further, critics have alleged that Bahamian authorities have deliberately ignored or even profited from human smuggling between the Caribbean and the United States via Bahamian islands.¹⁴

The AmericasBarometer survey includes questions related to migration. This chapter assesses emigration intentions and attitudes toward immigrants. The results add greater context to discussions around both issues.

EMIGRATION INTENTIONS HAVE INCREASED

The first question on migration assesses respondent’s intentions to leave the country:

Do you have any intention of going to live or work in another country in the next three years?

Figure 2.1 shows the breakdown of results from 2023 and 2014. In the most recent survey, 35% of Bahamians said they intend to emigrate in the next three years. That is a 20-percentage point increase since the last time the question was asked in 2014, when the rate was just 15%.

Is this rate high compared to other countries in the LAC region, which have been discussed more when it comes to emigration? **Figure 2.2** shows the cross-country comparison of emigration intentions. The Bahamas sits near the middle, with a ranking of 11th out of 24 countries studied in 2023. As one might expect, Haiti has by far the highest rate, with 79% of Haitians intending to leave the country. Other countries with high-profile emigration situations like Nicaragua, Peru, Ecuador, and Honduras also have higher rates than The Bahamas. However, the country sits ahead of others with a greater reputation for a source of migrants such as Colombia and Mexico.

35%

of Bahamians say they intend to leave the country in the next three years.

An important caveat in interpreting these results is that, perhaps owing to their relatively small size and proximity to other nations, islands tend to have relatively high migration rates. For example, besides war-torn countries like Syria, Ukraine, and South Sudan, the countries with the highest net migration rates in 2023 include the Cayman Islands, Aruba, Ireland, and Cyprus.¹⁵

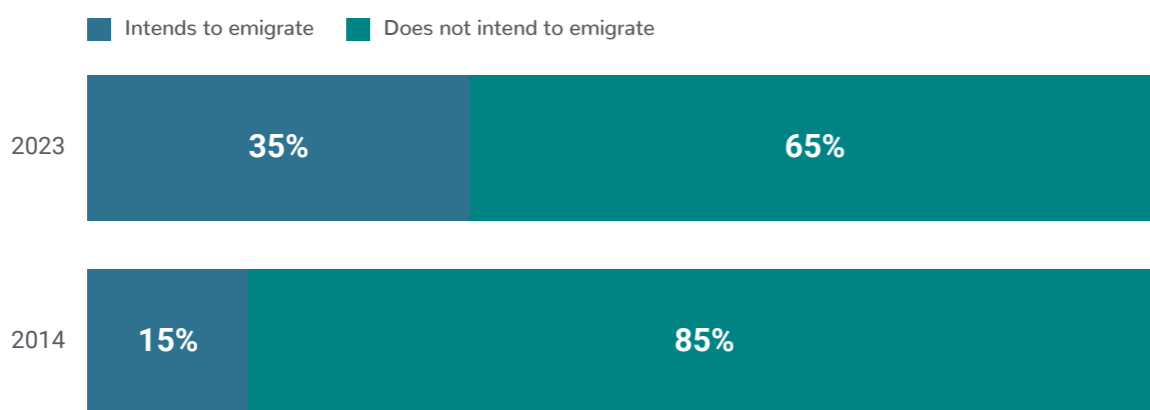
Thus, what seems like a high rate of emigration may not be particularly alarming, not only because the absolute number of people is quite small, but because migration is a more typical part of life in small nations. When comparing just the seven Caribbean countries included

the 2023 AmericasBarometer, The Bahamas has the second-lowest rate, just ahead of Trinidad & Tobago (and behind Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, Dominican Republic, and Grenada).

What types of people are more likely to emigrate? We begin by assessing the demographic profiles of emigrants. More specifically, we evaluate whether intention to emigrate varies by gender, age, educational attainment, level of household wealth, place of residence (urban vs. rural), and home island (New Providence vs. Grand Bahama).

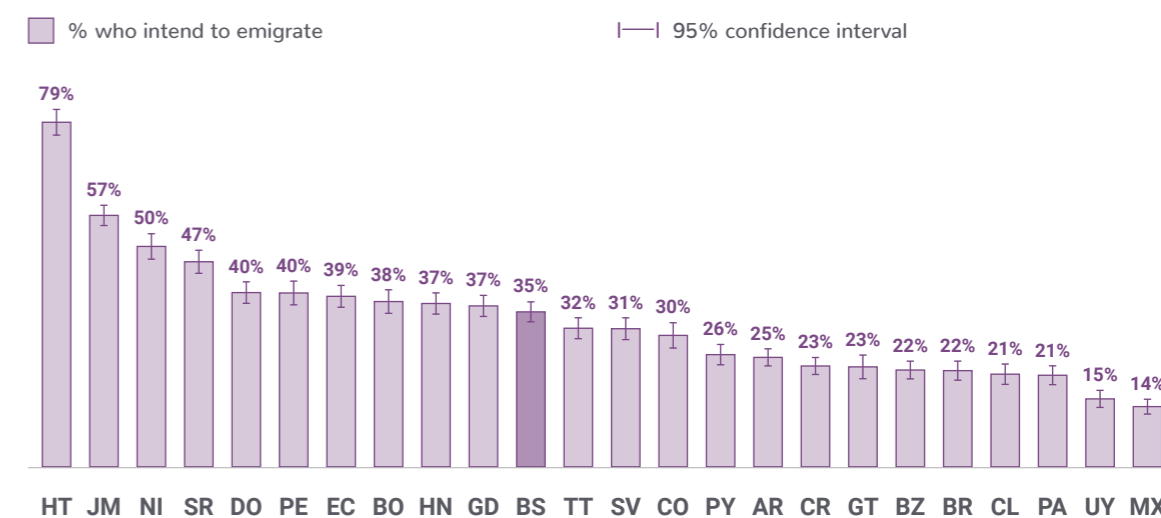
The data reveal that age has a significant relationship with intention to emigrate.

Figure 2.1 Emigration intentions among Bahamians have more than doubled since 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2014-2023

Figure 2.2 The Bahamas has an average level of emigration intentions compared to the rest of the LAC region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

63%
of those
18-25 years
of age say
they intend
to leave the
country.

Strikingly, 63% of those 18-25 years of age say they intend to leave the country soon, compared to just 5% of people who are 66 or older (Figure 2.3). Again, it is important to note that it is common for Bahamians to travel internationally for study or work, as educational or career opportunities may be limited, if only because of the size of the country.¹⁶ Thus, although the gap in age groups is notable, the results do not necessarily indicate a mass exodus of younger generations. However, given the vast size of the difference between age cohorts, the age dynamics of the emigration issue are worthy of notice and further study.

To probe into the potential drivers of emigration from The Bahamas, we may also examine emigration intentions across a selection of substantive variables. Previous research has found that crime and insecurity play a strong role in the decision to leave one's country.¹⁷ Food insecurity also predicts greater desire to migrate.¹⁸ Finally, migration data from 115 origin countries suggests that increased corruption contributes to a higher emigration rate among high-skilled migrants, leading to brain drain.¹⁹ With the AmericasBarometer data, we can assess whether emigration intentions vary according to these variables by analyzing the following questions:

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?

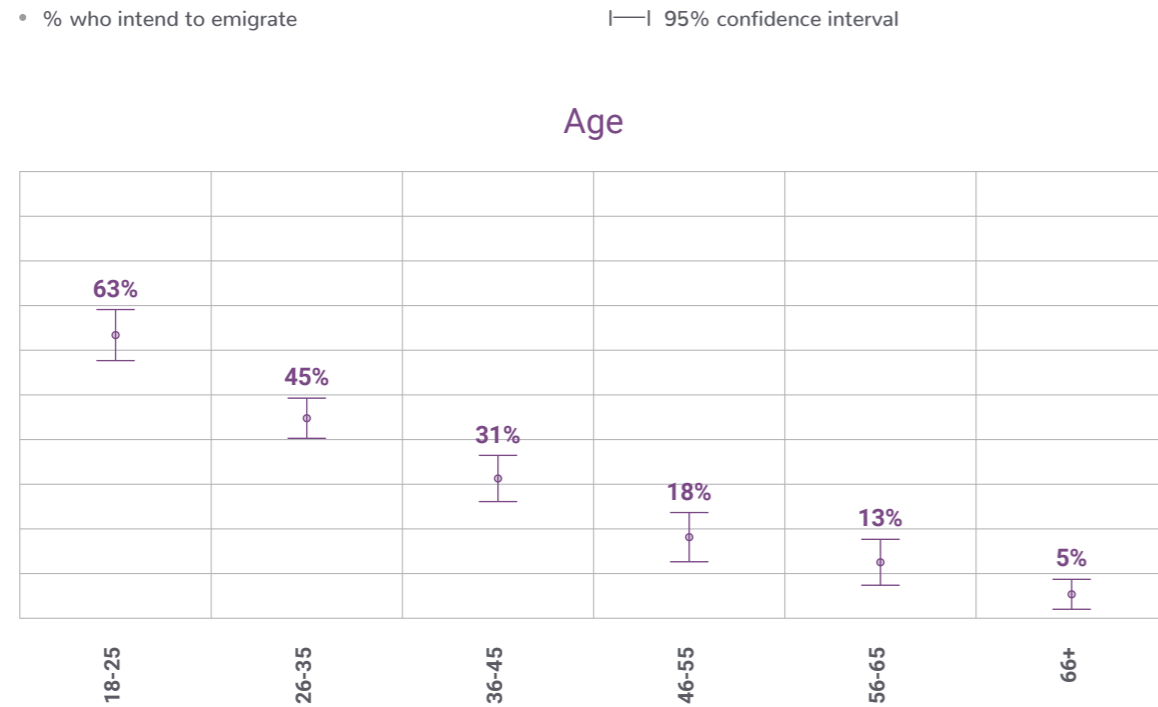
In the past three months, because of a lack of money or other resources, did your household ever run out of food?

Thinking of the politicians of The Bahamas... how many of them do you believe are involved in corruption? None/less than half of them/half of them/more than half of them/all

The data reveal a significant association between each of these variables and intention to emigrate. Figure 2.4 shows the rate of intention to emigrate by each response category to these questions. Crime victims have a significantly higher rate of emigration intentions compared to non-victims (56% vs. 32%). Additionally, people who ran out food in the past three months are 11-percentage points more likely to say they plan to leave the country (43%) compared to those who are food secure (32%).

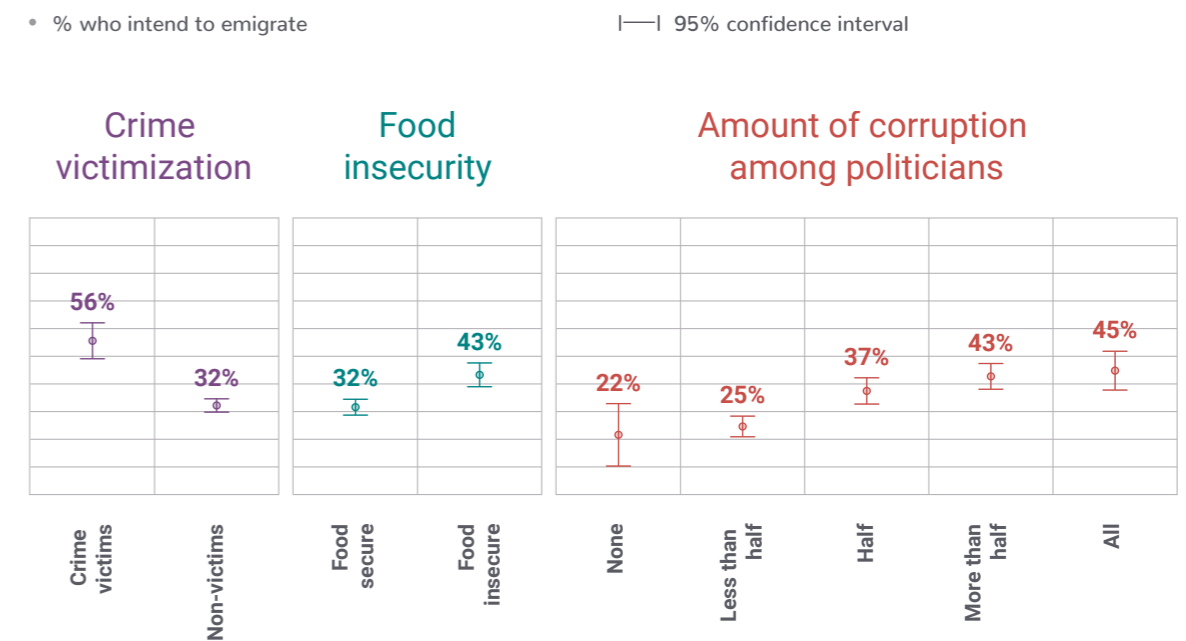
Finally, emigration intentions rise with perceptions of corruption. Among people who say "less than half" of politicians are corrupt in The Bahamas, one in four (25%)

Figure 2.3 Young Bahamians are much more likely to emigrate than their older counterparts



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 2.4 Intentions to emigrate are higher among crime victims, those who are food insecure, and those who perceive most politicians as corrupt



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

intend to migrate. In contrast, 45% of those who think “all” politicians are corrupt say the same. These results hold when controlling for gender, age, education, wealth, place of residence, and home island.

BAHAMIANS ARE SPLIT ON SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL SERVICES TO IMMIGRANTS

The other side of the migration question in The Bahamas is attitudes toward incoming migrants. A controversial topic is whether and to what extent the Bahamian government should provide assistance

to immigrants. To gauge attitudes about this topic, the AmericasBarometer questionnaire asks the following question to half the respondents:

To what extent do you agree that the Bahamian government should offer social services, like health assistance, education, housing to immigrants who come to live or work in The Bahamas? Do you... Strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree

The other half of respondents answer the same question, except with the word “illegal” added before immigrants:

54%
of the public disagree that the government should provide social assistance to illegal immigrants.

To what extent do you agree that the Bahamian government should offer social services, like health assistance, education, housing to illegal immigrants who come to live or work in The Bahamas? Do you... Strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree

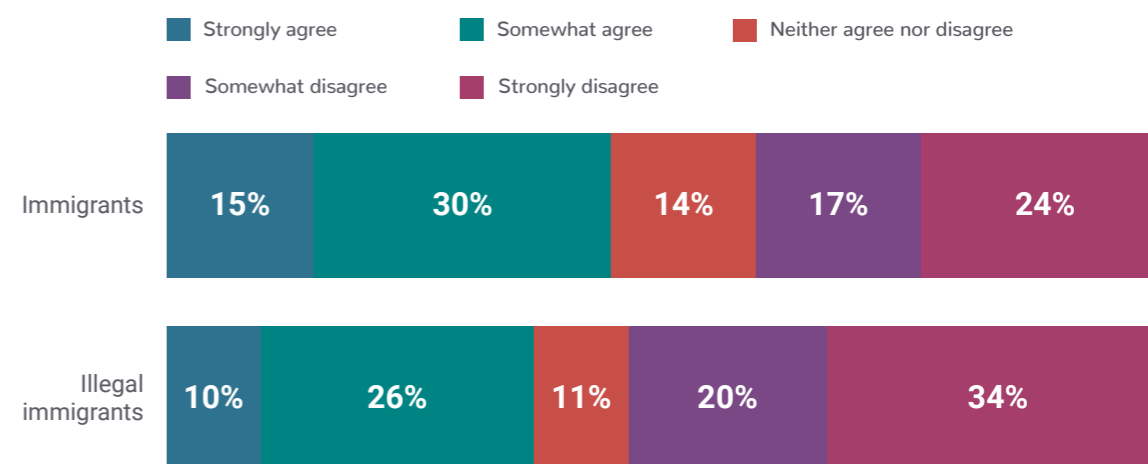
This small variation helps to gauge whether the type of migrant matters for determining public opinion about immigration. The first question assesses general attitudes about immigrants, while the latter allows us to consider if it is the illicit and unregulated aspect of recent migration into The Bahamas that people find objectionable.

The distribution of responses to these questions is shown in **Figure 2.5**. The results reveal that opinion is mixed on whether the government should provide social services for immigrants in The Bahamas. While 45% agree with this idea, 41% disagree and 14% are neutral. Opinion is stronger on the “disagree” side: 24% strongly disagree, compared to 15% who strongly agree. Those who are asked about “illegal immigrants” are more opposed to providing social services. One in three (34%) strongly disagree, and a majority (54%) are opposed. In contrast, 36% agree that the immigrants should receive health assistance, education, and housing.

AmericasBarometer data illustrate how controversial the topic of immigration is in The Bahamas. Nearly an equal number of people agree and disagree that the government should provide social services to immigrants.

Figure 2.5 Bahamians are evenly split on whether immigrants should receive social assistance, but more are against “illegal immigrants” receiving such benefits

To what extent do you agree that the Bahamian government should offer social services, like health assistance, education, housing to [immigrants/illegal immigrants] who come to live or work in The Bahamas?



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

45%
say the government should provide social assistance to immigrants, the lowest rate in the region.

The first question (“immigrants” only) was asked in several countries in the 2023 AmericasBarometer. **Figure 2.6** shows the percentage of people in each country who agree that the government should provide social services to immigrants. The Bahamas exhibits the lowest level of support for such programs in the region. Average support is 58%, and it reaches as high as 72% in Brazil. The Bahamas is 12-percentage points lower than Trinidad & Tobago, the other Caribbean country in which the question was asked.

Certain types of Bahamians are more likely to support assistance for immigrants. Specifically, gender and age matter. As shown in **Figure 2.7**, men are more likely to say that the government should provide social services for immigrants (this analysis combines responses from both the “immigrant” and the “illegal immigrant” questions). Also, at 61%, people who are 18-25 years old are significantly more likely to support social services for immigrants, which is 23-percentage points higher than any other group, and

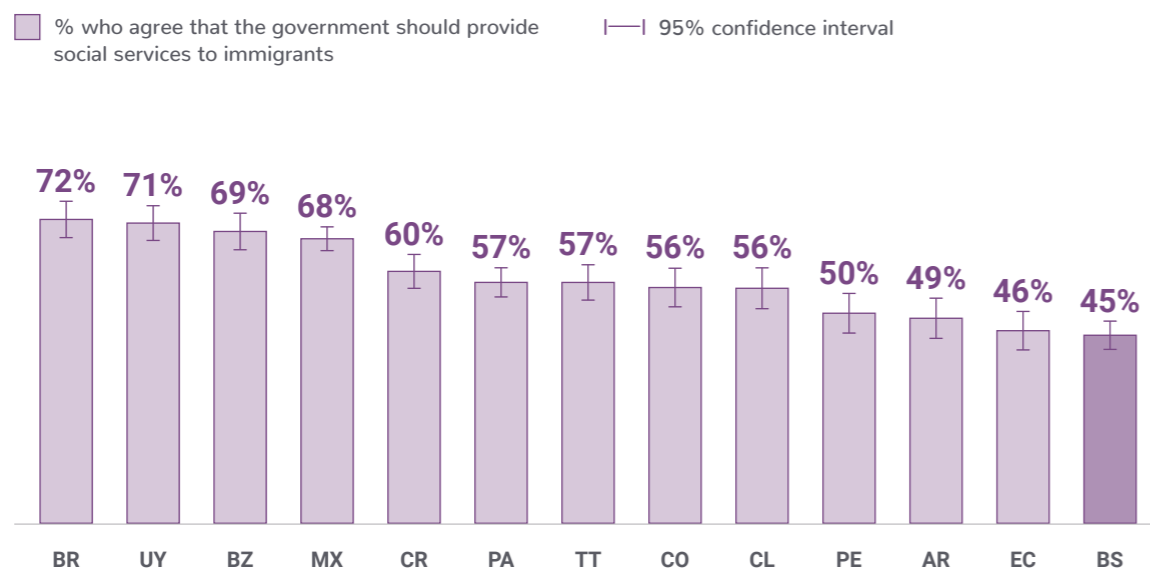
more than double the rate of 46-55 year olds (24%). Wealth, education, place of residence, and home island are unrelated to attitudes toward social services for immigrants.

One source of negative attitudes toward immigrants is fear of the unknown.²⁰ Survey questions, like those included in the AmericasBarometer, are general in nature, leaving respondents to imagine their own version of a hypothetical immigrant. Respondents who picture a

stranger from a far-away country might be more skeptical of immigration and less likely to support social services for immigrants. On the other hand, people who have experience with immigration and exhibit greater tolerance to others who are not like them might be more inclined to allowing social services.

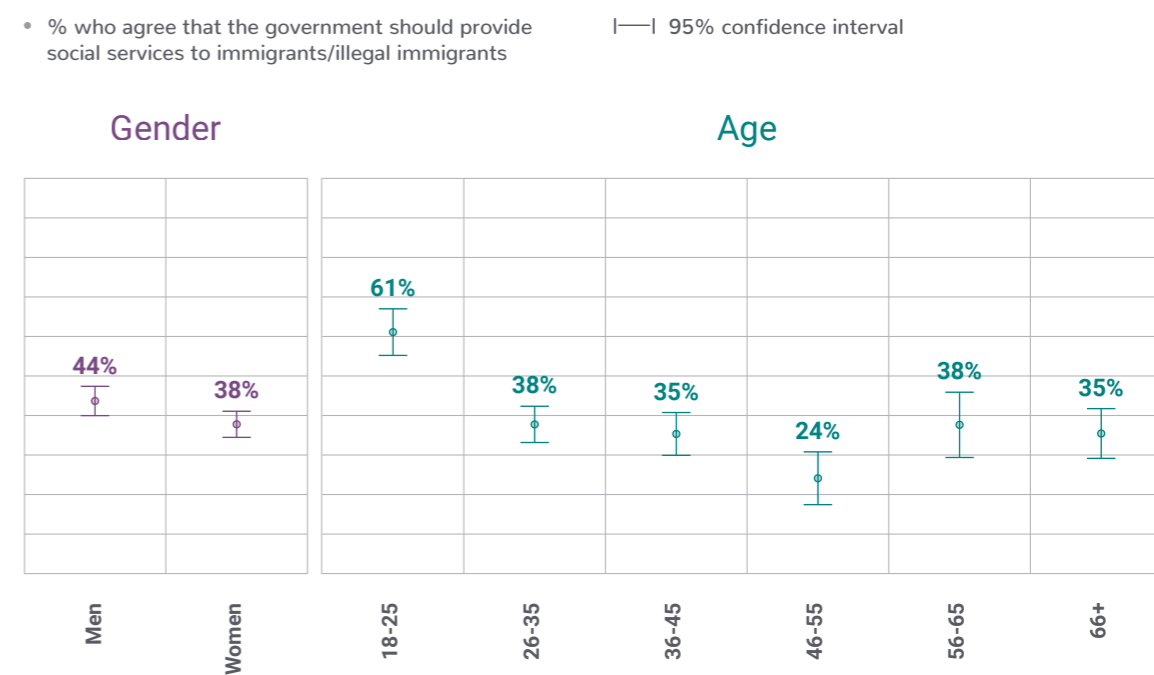
To assess this possibility, we examine the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and a selection of other attitudinal metrics from the

Figure 2.6 Among the countries surveyed, The Bahamas has the lowest support for providing social services to immigrants



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Figure 2.7 Men and young Bahamians are most likely to agree that the government should provide social services to immigrants



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

61%
of Bahamians
who are
18-25 years
old agree the
government
should provide
services to
immigrants.

AmericasBarometer. First, we analyze immigration attitudes by the previously shown question on intention to emigrate. The hypothesis is that people who themselves intend to emigrate will be more sympathetic to other migrants, as they understand the complexity and challenges surrounding migration to another country. Next, we assess whether immigration attitudes correlate with belief in the trustworthiness of the governments of foreign powers including China, Russia, and the United States. People who are more skeptical of other governments might be more hostile to immigrants coming from other countries. Finally, we

compare support for social services for immigrants to support for the right of gay people to run for office. Those who are tolerant of LGBT individuals may also be more accepting of immigrants, another vulnerable group, leading them to support the provision of social services to incoming migrants.

Figure 2.8 shows the percentage who agree that the government should provide social services for immigrants across all these variables. As expected, people who intend to migrate themselves are more supportive of services for immigrants (48% vs. 37% for non-

emigrants). Furthermore, those who say the governments of China and Russia are at least “somewhat” trustworthy are more accepting of immigrants compared to those who say those governments are “not at all” or “a little” trustworthy. This is consistent with the theory that skepticism toward foreign powers is tied to fear of foreign people coming into The Bahamas.

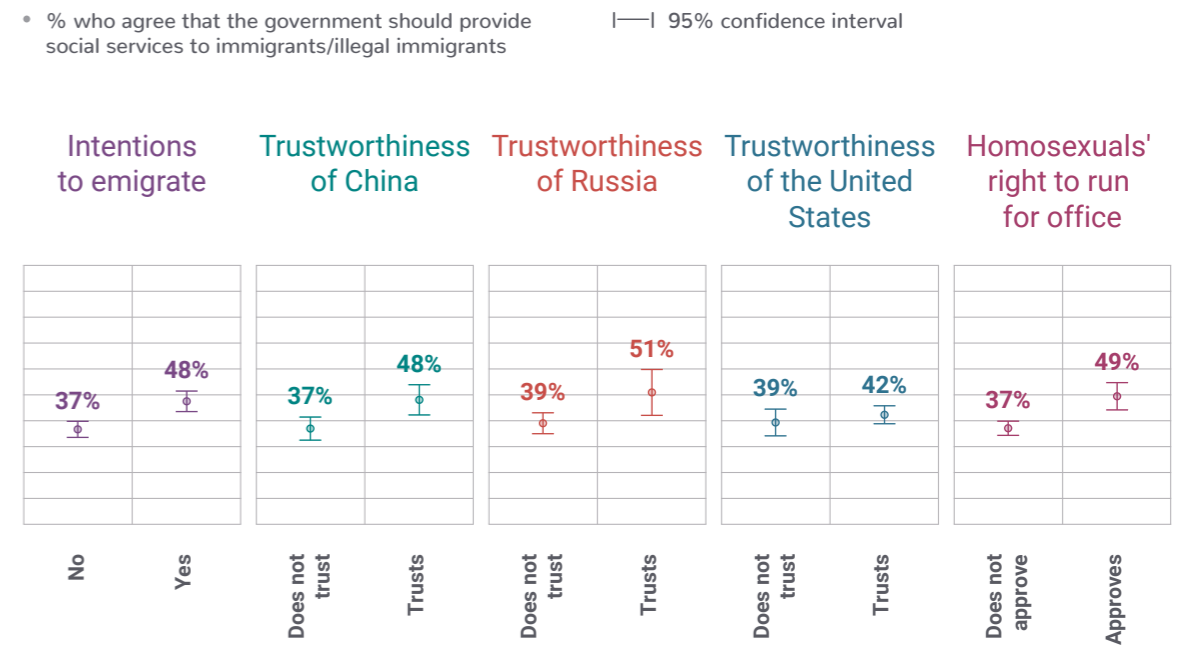
However, there is no statistically significant difference when it comes to trust in the U.S. government. Following the theory, this null result may happen because the U.S. government is more familiar to residents of The Bahamas, so

Bahamians do not connect their view of the United States with their image of a hypothetical immigrant.

Finally, tolerance toward minorities is connected with tolerance toward immigrants. People who are supportive of the right of gay people to run for office are 12-percentage points more likely to say they support social services for immigrants. All the significant results hold when controlling for gender, age, education, wealth, place of residence, and home island.

One source of negative attitudes toward immigrants is fear of the unknown. Bahamians who intend to migrate, who trust foreign governments, and who exhibit tolerance toward LGBT individuals are more likely to support providing social services to immigrants.

Figure 2.8 Bahamians who intend to emigrate, trust foreign governments, and approve of gay rights are more likely to support social services for immigrants



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Conclusions: Migration is a Central Issue in The Bahamas

The 2023 AmericasBarometer reveals important dynamics on the issue of migration in The Bahamas. On the one hand, emigration intentions have risen substantially over the past decade, and now more than a third of Bahamians, including 63% of 18–25-year-olds, say they plan to leave the country in the next three years. Despite this increase, Bahamians are not particularly welcoming to incoming migrants. Less than half (45%) of the public agrees that the government should offer social services to immigrants. Though this represents more than those who disagree with the same policy (41%), it is the lowest rate of support among the 13 countries in which the question was asked. Only 36% say the government should allow “illegal immigrants” to access social services.

The Bahamas has a strong history of economic, cultural, and touristic exchange with other countries, particularly those in the Caribbean.²¹ Yet, the rate of emigration seems to be accelerating, risking problems like brain drain.

The results indicate that policymakers and activists interested in stemming the outflow of Bahamian citizens should pay attention to systemic issues which may drive emigration, including crime victimization, food insecurity, and corruption. Further, given the vast disparity in emigration intentions by age, leaders should pay special attention to issues faced by young people in The Bahamas to ensure those who leave for educational and economic opportunities abroad eventually return to their home country.

At the same time, Bahamians are growing concerned about the rising number of migrants arriving at the country’s shores from Haiti and Cuba. Policymakers face the difficult task of crafting migration policy in a way that adequately addresses economic and security concerns but also avoids being overly draconian, discriminatory, or expensive. Messaging around such policy is perhaps an even bigger challenge. The government must reassure the public that it is committed to upholding the rule of law with respect to illegal immigration and enacting just social policies and preventing xenophobia against legal migrants and naturalized citizens.

Notes

- 1 See <https://www.iom.int/americas-and-caribbean-0>
- 2 Selee 2023.
- 3 Hiskey and Rodríguez 2023.
- 4 Ward 2022.
- 5 Lorenzi and Batalova 2022; Schoichet 2019.
- 6 See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.NETM?locations=BS>
- 7 Jaupart 2023.
- 8 Mckenzie 2023.
- 9 See <https://apnews.com/article/politics-political-and-civil-unrest-caribbean-florida-bahamas-d96a81df5527107b490fc0216d158844>
- 10 Charles 2023.
- 11 Piñeiro 2006.
- 12 Charles 2023.
- 13 See <https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230518165729/https://www.refworld.org/docid/4feae6c82.html>
- 14 Schmidt, Villegas, and Dormido 2023.
- 15 See <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/net-migration-rate/country-comparison/>
- 16 For instance, in 2018, around 4,000 Bahamian students were studying abroad (see <https://tradingeconomics.com/bahamas/total-outbound-internationally-mobile-tertiary-students-studying-abroad-all-countries-both-sexes-number-wb-data.html>). By comparison, enrollment at the University of The Bahamas, the larger of the two universities in The Bahamas which offer bachelor’s degrees, was 4,400 in fall 2018 (see <https://www.ub.edu.bs/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Presidents-Annual-Report-2018-2019-final-compressed.pdf>)
- 17 Cutrona, Rosen, and Lindquist 2023.
- 18 Sadiddin et al. 2019.
- 19 Cooray and Schneider 2016.
- 20 Resnick 2017.
- 21 See <https://www.immigration.gov.bs/about-us/history/>

Most feel prepared for weather-related events in The Bahamas.

The Bahamas is vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes and storms. In 2019, for example, Hurricane Dorian left severe consequences, including 70 deaths, 282 missing people, and a \$3.4 billion cost in physical damages and income losses.¹

To mitigate the effects of such events, several policies have been developed. In 2019, the government formed the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management, and Reconstruction, followed by a recovery policy and plan in 2020.² In 2022, the government enacted the Disaster Risk Management Act.³ More recently, the Inter-

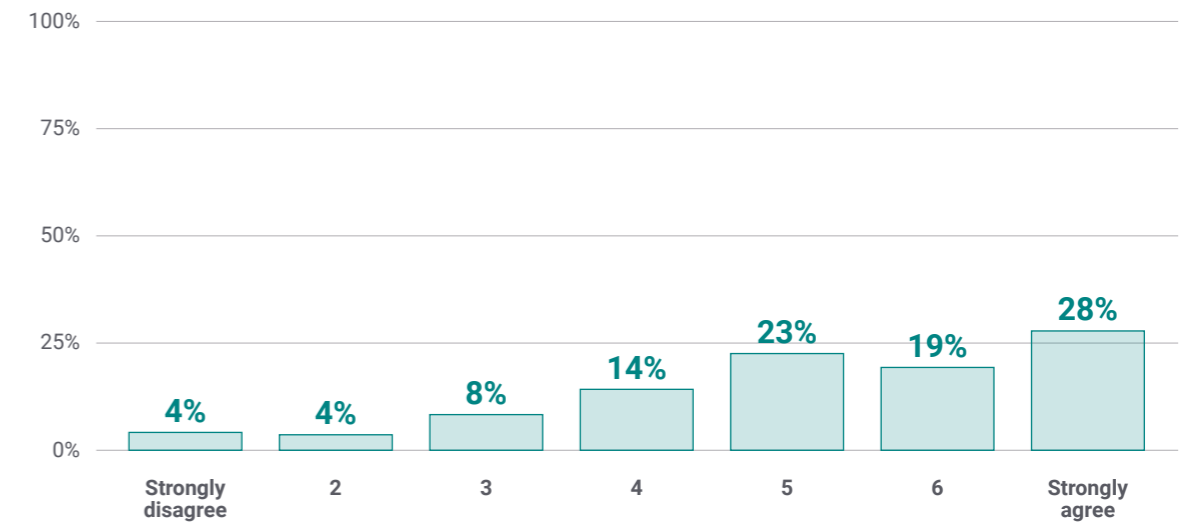
American Development Bank approved a \$160 million loan to enhance disaster risk management in the country.⁴ Given all these actions and the nation's vulnerability to disaster, how prepared do Bahamians feel for weather-related events?

The 2023 AmericasBarometer measures disaster preparedness with the following question:

Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: You feel prepared for weather-related events.

The majority of Bahamians feel prepared for weather-related events

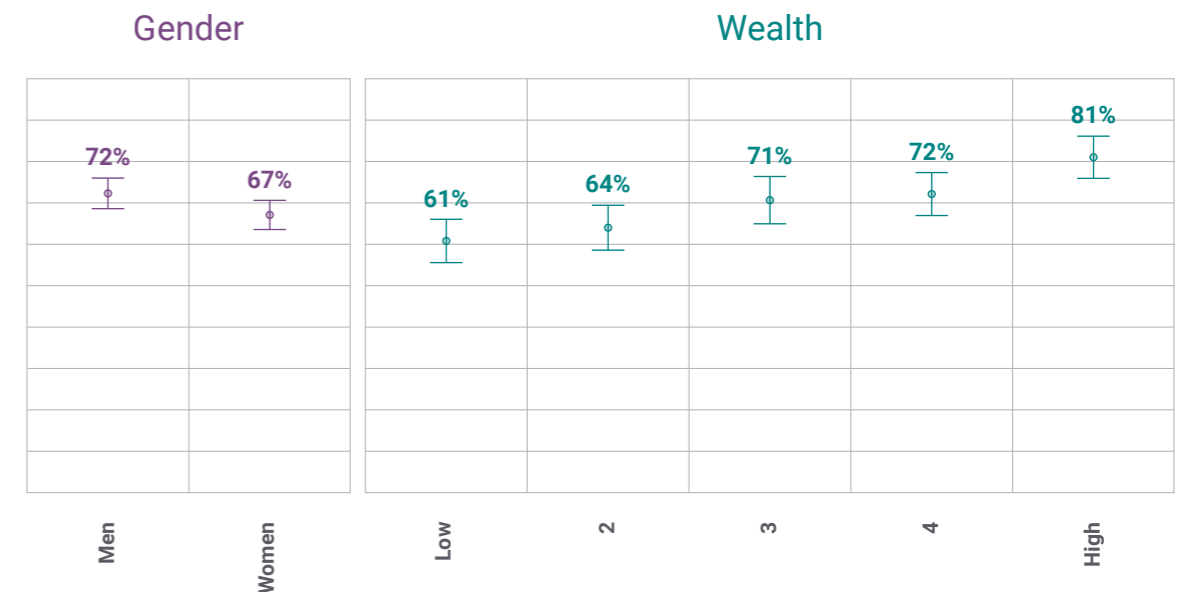
You feel prepared for weather related events. How much do you agree with this statement?



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Men and wealthy Bahamians are more likely to feel prepared for weather-related events

• % who feel prepared for disasters |—| 95% confidence interval



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

In 2023, most Bahamians feel prepared for weather-related events. Seven in ten (70%) agree that they are prepared, responding 5-7 on the answer scale. More than one in four (28%) strongly agree that they are prepared, which was the most common answer.

What are the individual characteristics that predict disaster preparedness? On

average, men (72%) feel more prepared than women (67%).⁵ Those with higher levels of wealth feel more prepared than those with lower levels of wealth. Age, place of residence, and education are not statistically significant predictors of preparedness for weather-related events.⁶ While most of Bahamians feel prepared for a natural disaster, some groups clearly feel less prepared.

Notes

- 1 Zegarra et al. 2020.
- 2 Inter-American Development Bank 2023.
- 3 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2022.
- 4 Inter-American Development Bank 2023.
- 5 In The Bahamas in 2023, there were not enough cases to report out on those who responded, “neither man nor woman,” “don’t know,” or “no response.” Since these categories are exclusive, I do not collapse categories. In The Bahamas in 2023, 0.13% of respondents identified as a gender other than man or woman, 1.27% said they did not know, and 1.01% gave no response.
- 6 I performed a logistic regression with disaster preparedness as the dependent variable. Here, I recode responses into a dichotomous measure where 5 to 7 are coded into an “prepared” category. Feeling prepared is coded as 1 and not feeling prepared is coded as 0. The sociodemographic variables included in the model are place of residence, gender, age, education, and wealth. All else equal, gender, wealth, and education are significant at the 5% level. Education is not shown in the figure because results did not follow a linear pattern.

Hurricane Dorian illustrated the extreme threat that increasingly-common natural disasters pose for The Bahamas. Most Bahamians feel prepared for weather-related events, but the data show that certain groups, such as women and less wealthy individuals, are more vulnerable. As the archipelago prepares strategies for disaster prevention, the government must consider and ensure equity in security for all citizens.

Gender Discrimination, Intimate Partner Violence, and Support for Equal Rights

Luke Plutowski

The Bahamas grapples with gender discrimination, intimate partner violence, and bias against women and LGBT individuals. Despite achieving slightly above the regional average in women's equality according to the World Bank, the nation lacks comprehensive legislation on key issues like domestic violence and equal pay.

Women's political representation is low, with no female prime ministers since independence and minimal presence in parliament. Violence against women remains a critical issue, exacerbated during the pandemic, with rising cases of domestic and sexual violence. The LGBT community faces significant discrimination and violence, with no legal recognition for same-sex unions or protections against discrimination.

The 2023 AmericasBarometer survey highlights public attitudes toward gender issues, providing essential data for shaping policies to combat violence and discrimination, and promote gender equality and LGBT rights.

MAIN FINDINGS

- **Three in ten (30%) Bahamians, including 42% of men, think that men make better political leaders than women.**
- **More than one in ten (12%) believe that male politicians are better at managing the economy, the fourth highest rate in the region.**
- **One in three (33%) says they would either approve or at least understand if a man hit his wife if she is unfaithful.**
- **One in four (26%) Bahamian women says they have been discriminated against due to their gender.**
- **One in five (21%) disapproves of the right of feminist groups to protest.**
- **Although support for gay rights has significantly increased since 2014, The Bahamas ranks last in the region in support for same-sex marriage (12%).**

30%
of Bahamians agree that men make better political leaders than women.

Like most countries in the world, The Bahamas faces issues with gender discrimination, intimate partner violence, and bias toward women and LGBT people.¹ According to the World Bank’s Women, Business, and Law study in 2023, The Bahamas holds an overall score of 81.3 out of 100 on an index of women’s equality, slightly above the average for the LAC region.² According to the report, the country lacks proper legislation on domestic violence, sexual harassment, childcare, and equal pay.³

42%
of men say that men make better political leaders.

Women are underrepresented in politics. The Bahamas has never had a female prime minister since independence in 1973, and just one of its ten deputy prime ministers has been a woman (Cynthia Pratt, 2002-2007). Women make up just 18% of the parliament today.⁴ Former representative Loretta Butler-Turner, calling for greater gender balance in politics, noted that the biggest hurdle to overcome in achieving equality is the idea that “men are the only ones that can actually hold such a position.”⁵

Violence against women remains a serious problem.⁶ One in four women in The Bahamas have been a victim of abuse.⁷ Cases of domestic violence rose significantly during the pandemic, and reports have only increased since.⁸ Sexual violence is on the rise as well, with a “startling” number of cases reported in 2022.⁹

At the same time, gender and sexual minorities (i.e., the LGBT+ community) face significant challenges including discrimination, inequality, violence, and hate crimes.¹⁰ Though same-sex relationships were decriminalized in

1991, The Bahamas does not recognize same-sex unions, nor are there any laws addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.¹¹

The 2023 AmericasBarometer survey assesses attitudes about a variety of gender issues. Surveys like this serve as a crucial tool for policymakers, advocacy groups, and researchers to gauge public sentiment and identify areas of concern or progress regarding gender equality and LGBT rights. The results can highlight prevailing stereotypes, biases, and barriers faced by women and gender minorities, which helps to inform policies and programs aimed at preventing violence and discrimination in the future.

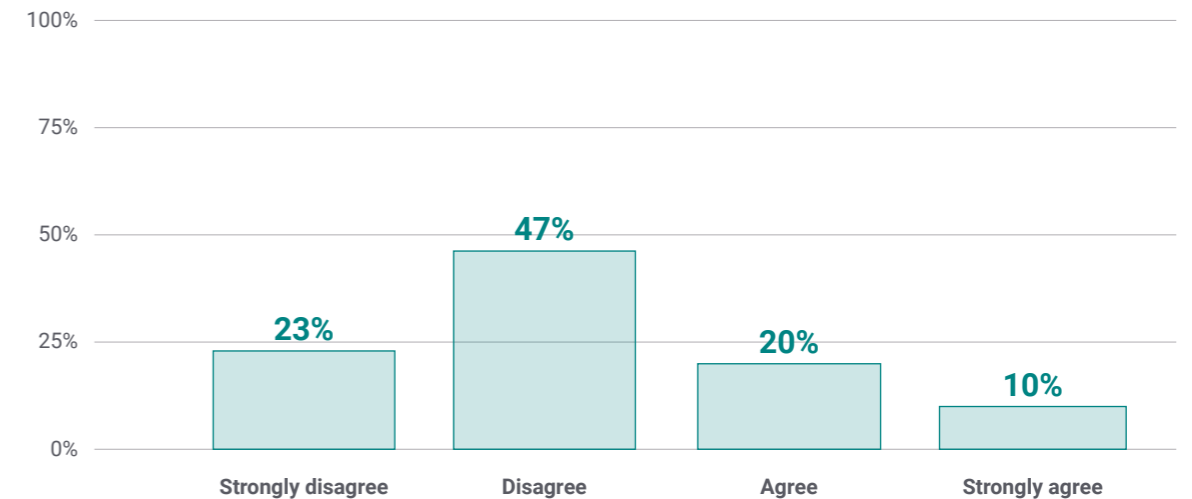
A SIGNIFICANT MINORITY EXPRESS A PREFERENCE FOR MALE POLITICIANS IN THE BAHAMAS

The 2023 AmericasBarometer questionnaire includes a set of question gauging attitudes about men and women in political leadership. The first question assesses preference for men over women in politics. The full question text and the breakdown of results for this question are shown in **Figure 3.1**. Nearly one in three (30%) Bahamians say they agree that men are better political leaders than women, with one in ten (10%) strongly agreeing. Just under one-quarter (23%) of the public strongly disagrees.

Figure 3.2 shows the percentage of the public that agrees or strongly agrees with this statement across 23 countries studied in the 2023 AmericasBarometer. The rates of agreement ranged from 41% (Dominican Republic) to 18% (Suriname).

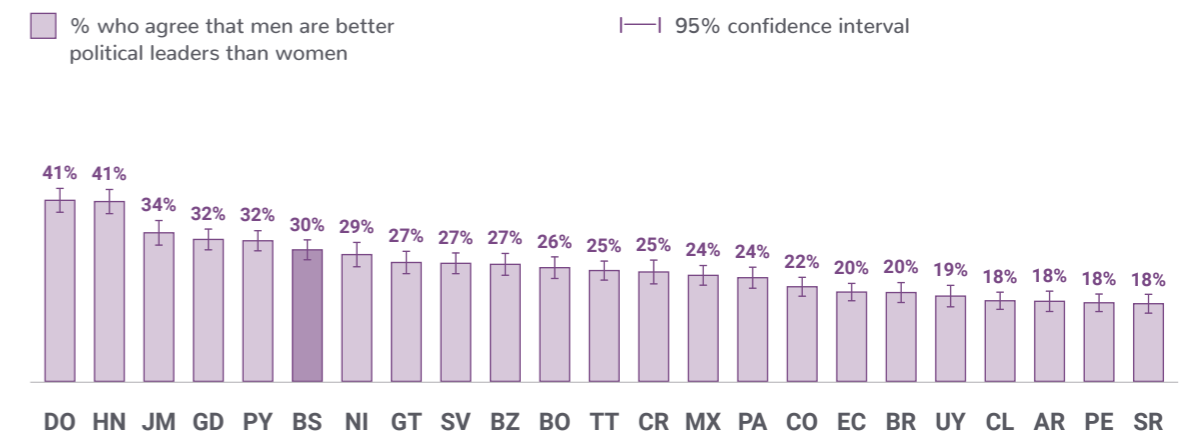
Figure 3.1 Almost one in three Bahamians thinks men are better political leaders than women

Some say that in general men are better political leaders than women. Do you...?



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 3.2 Bahamans is among the countries with the highest percentage of people who think men make better political leaders than women



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

As the figure demonstrates, The Bahamas is significantly above the regional median of 25% (Trinidad & Tobago), though still lower than its Caribbean neighbors Grenada (32%) and Jamaica (34%).

What types of individuals are more likely to say they prefer male leaders? Further analysis of the data reveals that, perhaps unsurprisingly, men are more likely to say that men are better leaders than women. The extent of the gap is a bit more surprising. As **Figure 3.3** demonstrates, more than two in five men (42%) agree with the statement, compared to 18% of women who say the same. In other words, men are more than twice as likely to say

that men are better political leaders. Attitudes about male vs. female politicians are not significantly associated with any other common demographic features of the respondents, including age, education, wealth, place of residence, or home island.

The AmericasBarometer included two additional questions on attitudes about gender among politicians. These aim to probe more deeply into the differences that respondents perceive between men and women. The full texts are below.

Who do you think would be more corrupt as a politician: a man or a woman, or are both the same?

22%
of Bahamian citizens say that men are more corrupt than women.

If a politician is responsible for running the national economy, who would do a better job, a man, or a woman or does it not matter?

Figure 3.4 shows the percentage in each country who say that men are more corrupt (purple) and are more capable of managing the economy (teal). Three general findings are noteworthy. First, most people in all countries said “it does not matter” for both questions; across the region, 78% said men and women are equally corrupt, and 75% said it does not matter whether a man or a woman runs the economy. Second, even though a significant minority see men as better political leaders (as

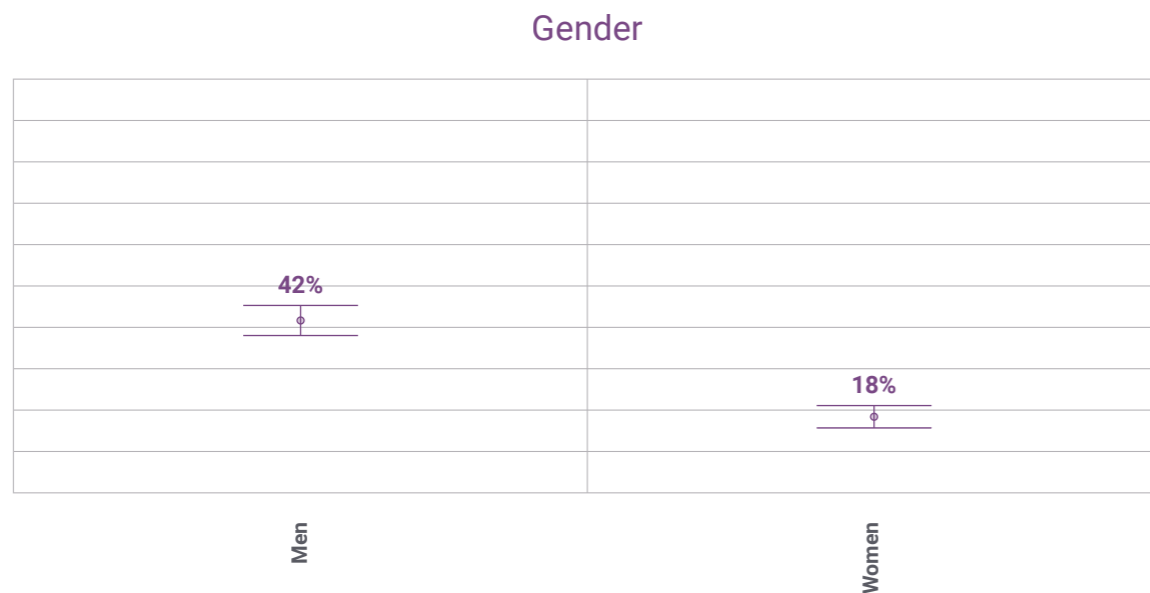
shown in **Figure 3.2**), many people also see men as more corrupt than women (**Figure 3.4**). Third, the percentage who see men as more capable at managing the economy is much lower than the percentage who agree that men are better political leaders. For example, in the Dominican Republic, 41% see men as better politicians than women (**Figure 3.2**), but 40% also say that men are more corrupt and only 21% say men are more capable of managing the economy.

The results shown in **Figure 3.4** seem to be in opposition with those in **Figure 3.2**. They suggest that some people see men as more corrupt and no more capable than women, but they still prefer male

Figure 3.3 Compared to women, Bahamian men are much more likely to say that men make better political leaders

• % who agree that men are better political leaders than women

—| 95% confidence interval



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

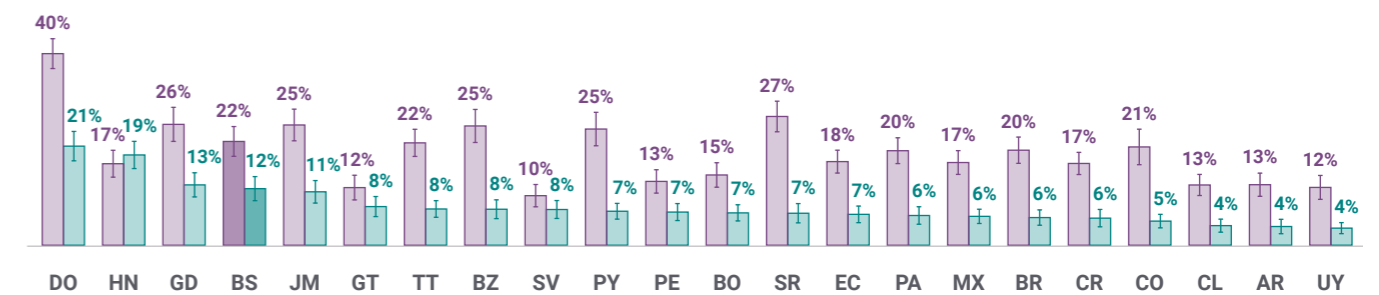
Figure 3.4 Over one in ten Bahamians say men are more capable of managing the economy than women, the fourth highest rate in the region

% who say men are more...

■ Corrupt

■ Capable of managing economy

—| 95% confidence interval



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

politicians to female ones. The reasons for this contrast are unclear, though it may have to do with the qualities that voters associate with good political leadership. For example, respondents may regard men as more charismatic, decisive and strong, but not more technically skilled or honest.

In The Bahamas, 22% of people say that men are more corrupt than women, compared to just 3% who say that women are more corrupt (75% say it does not matter). That ranks 7th out of 22 countries in which the question was asked. When it comes to running the economy, 12% believe men are more capable, and the same percentage say that women are more capable (76% say it does not matter). The Bahamas has the fourth-highest rank of all countries in the percentage who say that men are more capable than women.

FEW BAHAMIANS APPROVE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, THOUGH SOME WOULD UNDERSTAND

We next consider two questions related to tolerance for intimate partner violence, a prevalent issue in The Bahamas. The survey asks respondents whether they would approve or understand if a husband hit his wife under different circumstances.

Now I am going to read some situations in which some people think that it is justified that the husband hits his wife/partner, and I will ask your opinion...

His wife neglects the household chores. Would you approve of the husband hitting his wife, or would you not approve but understand, or would you neither approve nor understand?

33%
of Bahamians would understand or approve of a husband hitting his wife if she was unfaithful.

His wife is unfaithful. Would you approve of the husband hitting his wife, or would you not approve but understand, or would you neither approve nor understand?

The distribution of responses to each question is shown in **Figure 3.5**. When it comes to neglecting chores, the vast majority (80%) would neither approve nor understand, and 19% would not approve but would understand. Tolerance is higher in the case where the wife is unfaithful: 30% would understand domestic violence in that case, and 2% would approve of it.

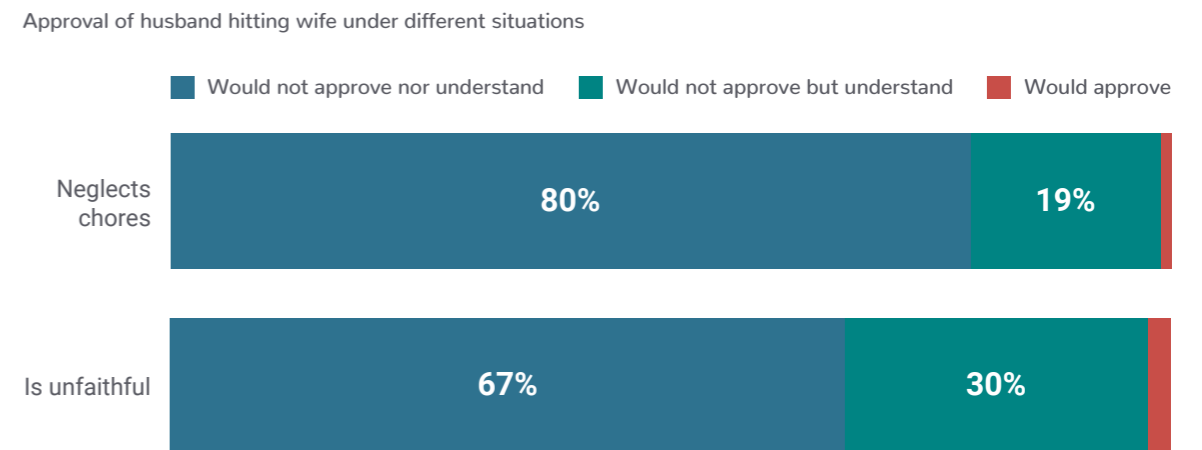
The cross-time and cross-country data can help contextualize these results. The same questions were asked in The Bahamas in 2014. There was no meaningful change in the results on the “neglects chores” question. However, the percentage who

would approve or understand in the case of infidelity dropped from 37% to 33% between 2014 and 2023, a significant decrease.

This pair of questions was asked in 13 countries included in the 2023 AmericasBarometer. Answers vary significantly by country; between 6% (Chile) and 52% (Suriname) of people would approve of or understand the husband hitting his wife in the case of neglecting chores. On both metrics, The Bahamas sits near the regional average. One in five (20%) Bahamians would approve or understand if the wife neglects chores compared to the average of 23%, while the country is just above average in the infidelity case (33% in The Bahamas vs. 29% region-wide).

Across the LAC region and within The Bahamas, some see men as more corrupt and no more capable than women at managing the economy, but they still prefer men over women in leadership positions. This contrast could have to do with gender-based stereotypes of politicians which hold men as more charismatic, decisive and strong, though not more technically skilled or honest.

Figure 3.5 Bahamians are relatively more understanding of domestic violence if a wife is unfaithful



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

42%
of men would understand or approve of a husband hitting his wife if she was unfaithful.

Attitudes toward domestic violence vary quite considerably across demographic groups. **Figure 3.6** shows the percentage who do not approve nor understand a husband hitting his wife if she is unfaithful across gender, age, and region cohorts. Women are much less tolerant of violence compared to men (76% vs. 58%). Young people are also much more likely to understand or approve of domestic violence compared to older individuals; only 56% of those 18-25 say that would not approve or understand, compared to at least 69% among all other age groups. Finally, people who live in New Providence are 7 percentage points more likely to condemn domestic violence compared to

people from Grand Bahama (69% vs. 62%). There is no significant variation along socioeconomic status (education and wealth) or urban or rural residence.

ONE-QUARTER OF BAHAMIAN WOMEN HAVE FACED GENDER DISCRIMINATION

The 2023 AmericasBarometer questionnaire includes items on gender and racial discrimination. The questions ask how often respondents have felt they were poorly treated based on their identity over the past five years. We consider the gender/sex question here:

And thinking about the last five years, have you ever felt discriminated against, or have you been badly or unjustly treated: Because of your gender or sex? Many times, sometimes, a few times, never

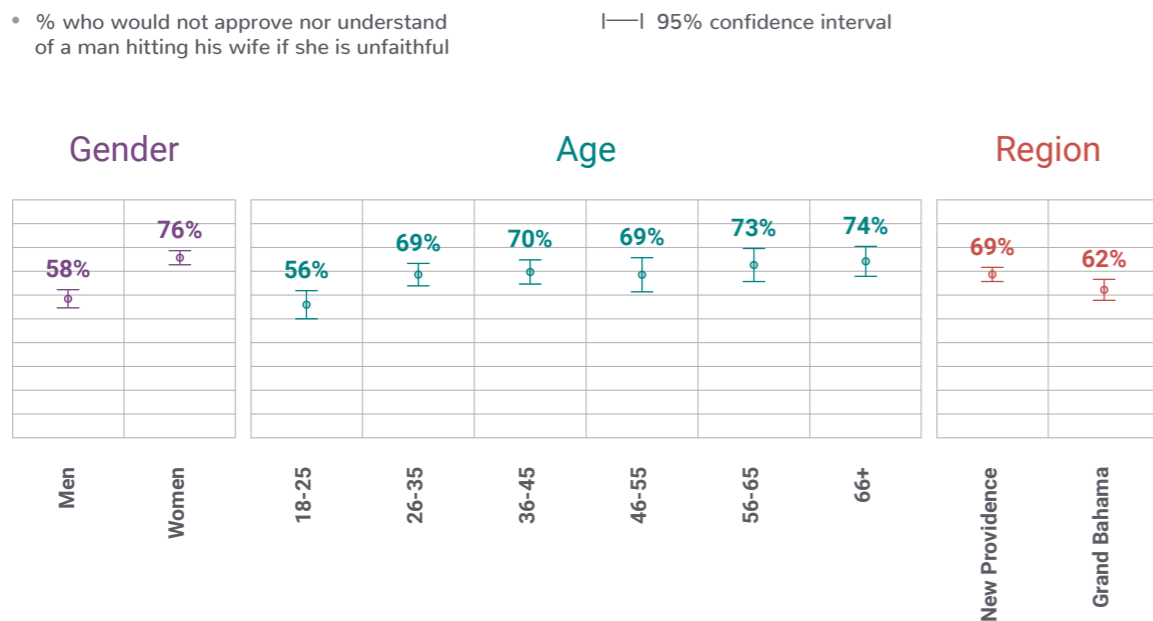
Overall, 21% of Bahamians say they have been discriminated against based on their gender over the past five years. That includes 11% who say it happened just a few times, 7% who say sometimes, and 4% who say many times. Women are more likely to say they have experienced prejudice than men. As **Figure 3.7** shows, one in four women (26%) have been treated differently at least once,

compared to under one-fifth of men (17%). Experiences with gender discrimination do not vary by age, education, wealth, place of residence, or home island.

THERE IS HIGH SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND LOW SUPPORT FOR THE RIGHTS OF GENDER AND SEXUAL MINORITIES

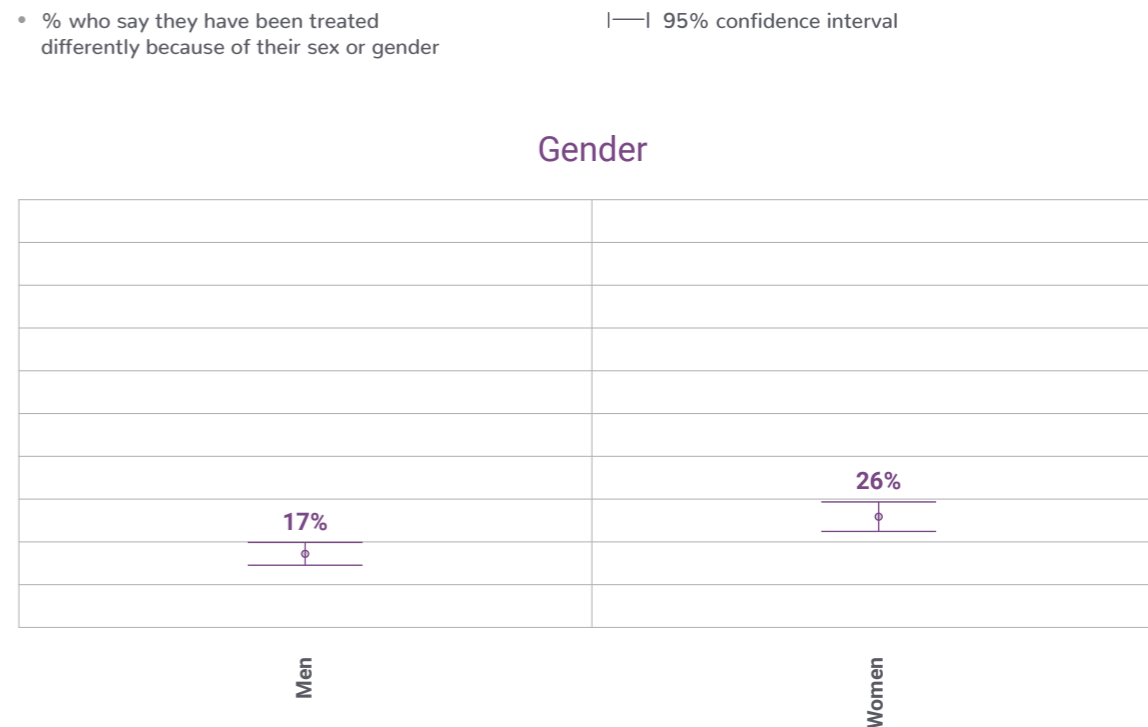
Next, we assess attitudes toward the rights of women and gender and sexual minorities. These items are included on a module of questions related to the rights of various minority groups, including government critics and protestors.

Figure 3.6 Men, young people, and residents of Grand Bahama are more likely to tolerate domestic violence



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 3.7 One in four Bahamian women has felt discriminated based on their gender



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Support for the right to protest for women’s groups is relatively high in The Bahamas. The country ranks 2nd and 8th of 23 countries on the approval for the right of women’s groups and feminist groups to protest, respectively.

is a strong level of approval for women’s rights groups. Four in five (79%) say they approve of their right to protest, including 46% of people who approve in the strongest terms (an answer of 10 on the 1-10 scale). When asked about “feminist groups,” support is substantially lower, with only 55% expressing approval. Disapproval for feminist groups (21%) is 13 percentage points higher than for women’s rights groups (8%), and, notably, the percentage that chose strong disapproval (an answer of 1) is four times higher for feminist groups (12% vs. 3%). In both cases, support for the rights of these groups in The Bahamas is relatively high compared to other countries. The Bahamas ranks 2nd and 8th of 23 countries on the approval for the right of women’s groups and feminist groups to protest, respectively.

Next, the AmericasBarometer asked a series of questions related to gender and sexual minorities, which includes gay, bisexual, non-binary, and transgender people. The first two questions form part of the core AmericasBarometer questionnaire. Respondents are asked to what extent they approve of the right of gay individuals to run for office and to marry. Both questions have a response scale ranging from 1 (strong disapprove) to 10 (strongly approve).

And now, changing the topic and thinking of homosexuals, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of homosexuals being permitted to run for public office?

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

Figure 3.9 displays the percentage of Bahamians who approve of the right of gay individuals to run for office (purple) and marry (teal), as indicated by an answer of 7 to 10 on the 1-10 scale. As the graph

One pair of questions asks about approval of the right of women’s groups to participate in protests. The question is experimental. Half the respondents were asked about “women’s rights groups,” while the other half were asked about “feminist groups.” Both questions have a response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 10 (strongly approve).

Please tell me how strongly you would approve or disapprove...

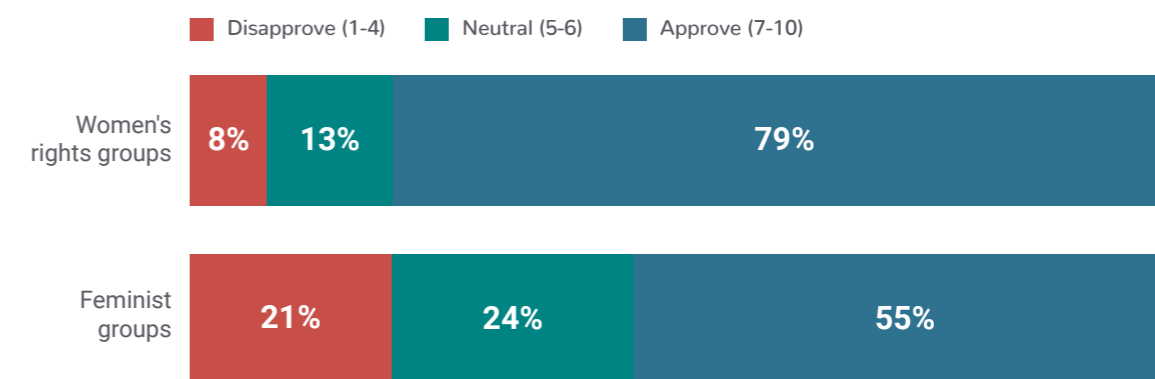
Of the right of women’s rights groups to participate in protests. How much do you approve or disapprove?

Of the right of feminist groups to participate in protests. How much do you approve or disapprove?

Figure 3.8 shows the indicated disapproval (an answer of 1-4), neutrality (5-6), or approval (7-10) to each question. There

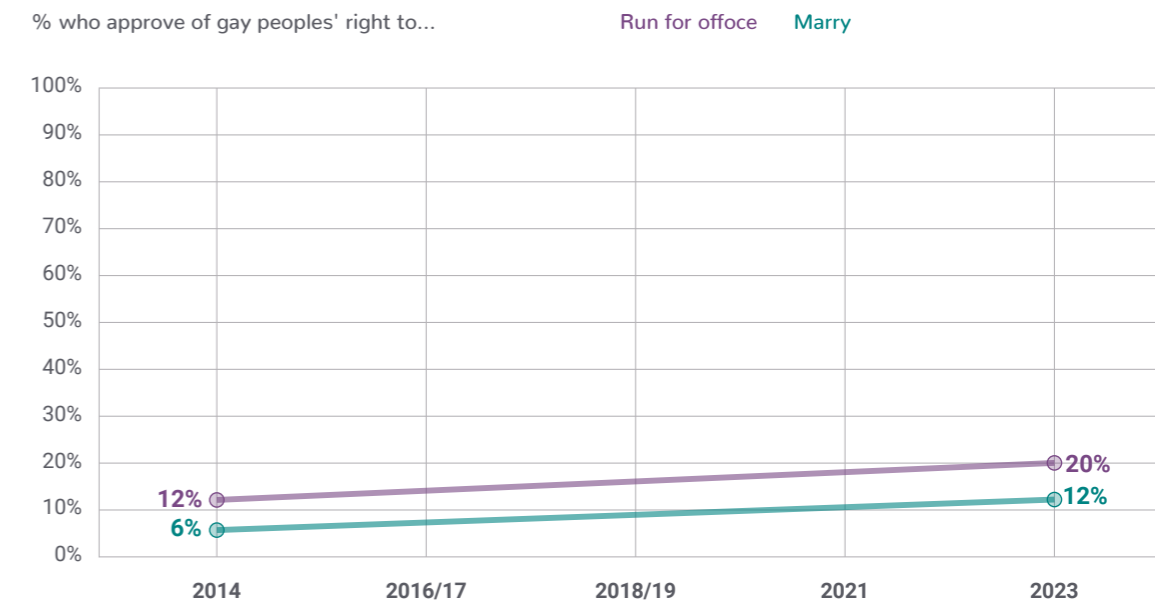
Figure 3.8 Bahamians are largely supportive of women’s rights groups’ right to protest, but less so for feminist groups

Please tell me how strongly you would approve or disapprove of the right of [...] to participate in protests?



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Figure 3.9 Support for gay rights rose significantly since 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2014-2023

shows, support is quite low. In 2023, one in five (20%) citizens support gay people being permitted to run for office, while just 12% support same-sex marriage. Both are significant increases from 2014, when 12% supported the right to run for office and 6% supported the right to marry.

Approval of gay rights is quite low in The Bahamas relative to other countries. As **Figure 3.10** demonstrates, Bahamians support same-sex marriage at a lower rate than all other countries in the LAC region. Likewise, the island country is one of the lowest in its approval of gay individuals running for office. Only Grenada (17%) and Jamaica (14%) have lower support. These

results stand in sharp contrast to the relatively high support among Bahamians for the rights of women's rights groups.

A new set of questions in the 2023 AmericasBarometer gauges general support for the rights of LGBT individuals. The questionnaire includes two items which ask the extent of approval for "sexual minorities" (e.g., gay, lesbian, and bisexual) and "gender minorities" (e.g., non-binary and transgender) having the same rights as other Bahamians. The respondents are randomly assigned to answer one question or the other. The response scale ranges from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 10 (strongly approve).

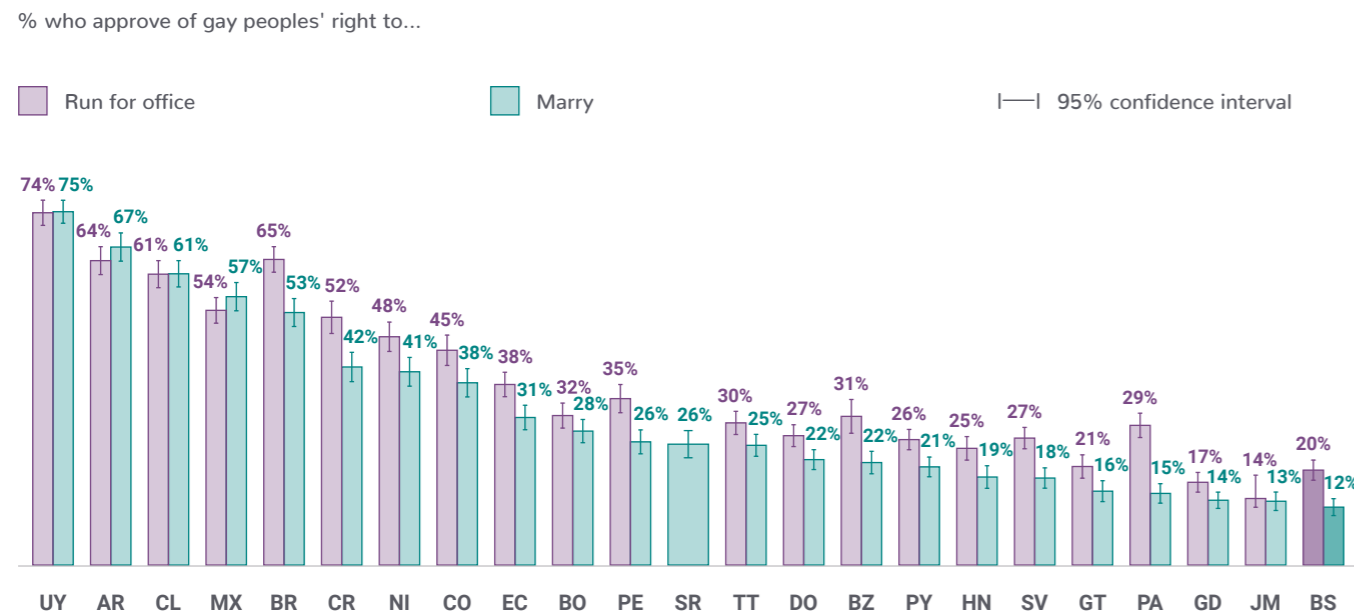
35% of Bahamians say lesbian, gay, and bisexual people should have the same rights as most Bahamians.

How strongly do you approve or disapprove of people from sexual minorities, such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc., having the same rights as the majority of Bahamians?

How strongly do you approve or disapprove of people from gender minorities, such as non-binary, transgender, etc., having the same rights as the majority of Bahamians?

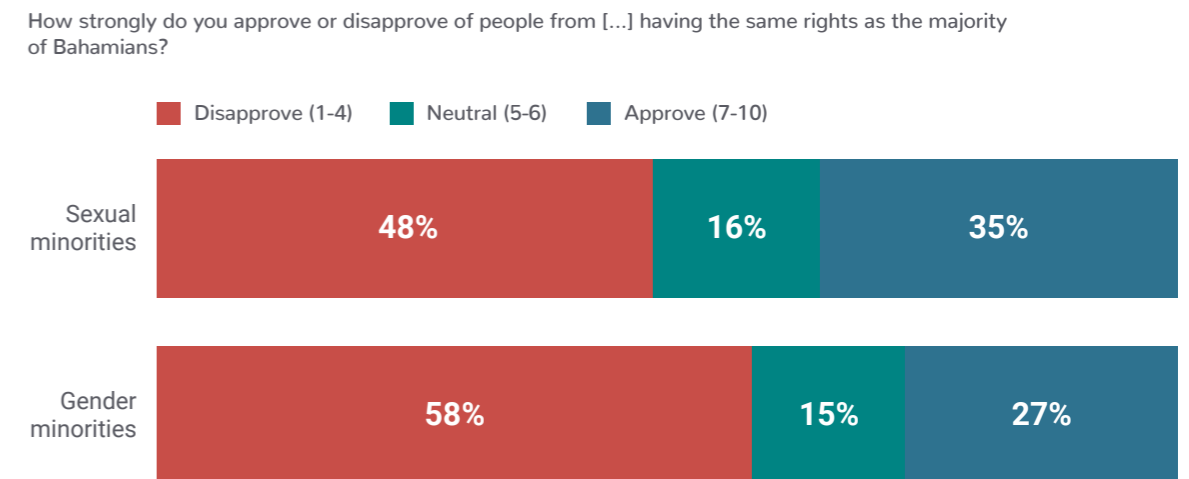
believes gay and bisexual individuals should not have the same rights as most Bahamians, and 58% say the same for non-binary and transgender people. For gender minorities, 44% of people indicated the strongest level of disapproval (an answer of 1), which is more than the total amount of people who answered between 5 and 10 (41%). Compared to other countries, The Bahamas ranks quite low on these metrics. Average support for rights of sexual minorities is 52% across the LAC region, while it is 49% for gender minorities. Only Grenada and Jamaica have lower approval for equal rights for gender minorities at 26% and 24%, respectively.

Figure 3.10 The Bahamas has the lowest support for same-sex marriage in the region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Figure 3.11 Only a minority of Bahamians support equal rights for sexual and gender minorities, and support is particularly low for the latter



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Conclusions

This chapter describes the experiences and attitudes of Bahamian citizens on a range of gender issues. While the majority believes in gender equality in politics, around one in three express a preference for men to women in leadership positions. Likewise, very few people in The Bahamas express approval for intimate partner violence, but many, especially men and young people, say they would understand if one partner was unfaithful. Finally, Bahamians are quite supportive of women's rights groups, but they are relatively intolerant toward people from gender and sexual minority groups (i.e., LGBT).

Together, the results suggest that Bahamians express support for equality on gender matters, but there are some areas for improvement. For example, the overwhelming majority approve of the right to protest for women's rights and disapprove of intimate partner violence. However, over one in five Bahamians report having been personally discriminated against due to their gender.

Furthermore, relative to other countries, Bahamians are more likely to prefer male leaders to female ones, and they are much less tolerant toward gender and sexual minorities.

There are both legal and cultural barriers to equality. Politicians and activists should work to implement policies that address gaps in or absence of laws dealing with gender discrimination,¹² human rights for LGBT individuals¹³ and domestic violence.¹⁴ At the same time, societal attitudes must advance toward equality to eliminate intolerance and everyday discrimination against women and minority groups.

Notes

- 1 See https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2023-04/JS1_UPR43_BHS_E_Main.pdf
- 2 See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b60c615b-09e7-46e4-84c1-bd5f4ab88903/content>
- 3 See <https://wbl.worldbank.org/content/dam/documents/wbl/2024/pilot/WBL24-2-0-Bahamas-the.pdf>
- 4 See <https://www.ipu.org/parliament/BS>
- 5 Russell 2021b.
- 6 Curry 2016.
- 7 Thompson 2024.
- 8 Scott 2023a; Scott 2023b.
- 9 See <https://caribbean.loopnews.com/content/police-startled-prevalence-sexual-violence-bahamas>
- 10 Malta et al. 2019.
- 11 See <https://www.equaldex.com/region/bahamas>
- 12 Maura 2022.
- 13 Russell 2021a.
- 14 See <https://www.thebahamasguide.com/expert-says-domestic-violence-is-criminal/>

Sofia Berrospi

A slight majority of Bahamians trust the United States and express uncertainty about the trustworthiness of China.

The Bahamas has been active in its foreign relations in recent years. It holds friendly diplomatic relations with the United States, which has aided the archipelago on a wide range of issues such as energy security, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ U.S. assistance to The Bahamas totaled \$10.3 million in 2020 and \$2.5 million in 2021.²

Meanwhile, The Bahamas also maintains strong diplomatic ties to China. In 2019 and 2021, the two countries signed two different \$12 million agreements, which could help The Bahamas further develop its infrastructure.³ Given recent developments in the relationship between these countries, it is essential to gauge public trust in these powers.

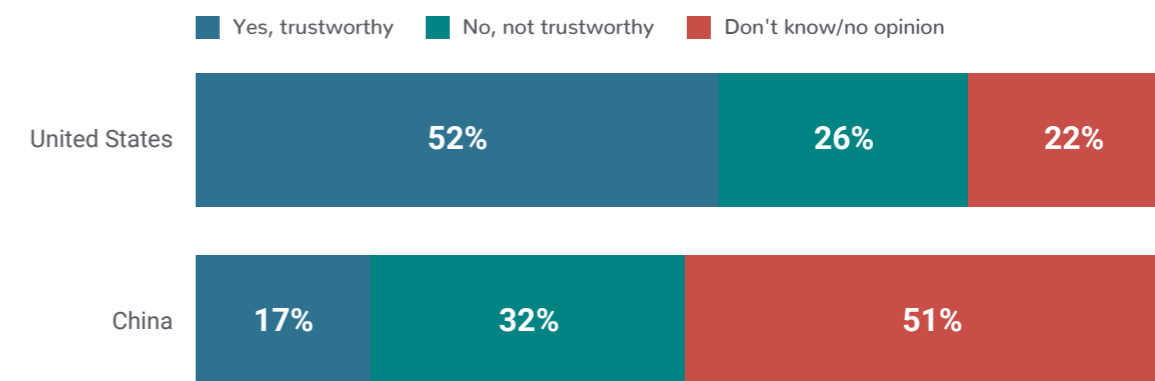
The 2023 AmericasBarometer measures trust foreign governments with the following questions:

The government of [the United States/ China]. In your opinion, is it very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy, or not at all trustworthy, or do you not have an opinion?

More Bahamians trust the government of the United States than the government of China. In fact, a slight majority (52%) of Bahamians find the United States somewhat trustworthy or very trustworthy, relative to 17% for China. On the other hand, one in four (26%) find the United States not trustworthy. For China, this proportion is almost one-third (32%). A slight majority (51%) do not know or do not have an opinion of China, meaning that many Bahamians have yet to make up their mind on the trustworthiness of the superpower.

The differences between trust in the United States and trust in China are large, with a majority expressing trust in the United States but not having an opinion on the trustworthiness of China. The closer and longer-lasting bilateral relations with the United States, in contrast to China, may help explain the gap in the percentage who have no opinion.⁴ Other factors, including the influence of western media, the tension between communism in China and The Bahamas' financial services sector, and economic interdependence may explain why Bahamians are relatively more trusting of the United States versus China.

In 2023, more Bahamians trust the United States better than China



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer The Bahamas 2023

Notes

- 1 See <https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/bahamas/>
- 2 See <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10666>
- 3 See <https://ewnews.com/bahamas-government-signs-12m-economic-and-technical-agreement-with-china>
- 4 The Bahamas established diplomatic relations with the United States and China in 1973 and 1997, respectively. See Shen 2009.

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TECHNICAL INFORMATION FOR THE 2023 AMERICASBAROMETER IN THE BAHAMAS

This survey was carried out between March 13 and July 19, 2023, as part of LAPOP's 2023 AmericasBarometer. It is a follow up to LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey in The Bahamas in 2014. The 2023 survey fieldwork was carried out by Public Domain on behalf of LAPOP. Key funding came from Vanderbilt University, USAID, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Questionnaire pretesting took place from January 24 to January 26, 2023, and interviewer training took place from February 13 to 15, 2023. Pilot surveys were conducted from February 28 to March 2, 2023. A full copy of the 2023 AmericasBarometer questionnaire for The Bahamas can be found at LAPOP's website at www.LapopSurveys.org.

The project used a national probability sample design of voting-age adults, with a total N of 1,577 people involving face-to-face interviews conducted in English. In the 2023 round, LAPOP used the SurveyToGo© (STG) software, running on Android tablets and phones, to conduct 100% of the interviews.

The survey used a complex sample design, including stratification and clustering. The sample was developed by LAPOP, using a multi-stage probability design, and was stratified by the three most populated islands of the country: New Providence, Grand Bahama, and Abaco. The sample is representative of New Providence and Grand Bahama. Logistical challenges associated with reaching the remaining islands led us to exclude them from the sample; therefore, the sample cannot be considered nationally representative. However, the three main islands contain 90% of the population of The Bahamas. Each stratum was further sub-stratified by size of municipality¹ and by urban and rural areas within municipalities. Respondents were selected in clusters of six in urban and rural areas. Reported statistics or statistical analyses should be adjusted for the design effect due to the complex design of the sample.²

The sample frame used for the sample is the 2019 electoral districts. The sample consists of 125 primary sampling units and 249 secondary sampling units (sampling points) across the Grand Bahama, New Providence, and Abaco. A total of 1,476 respondents were surveyed in urban areas and 101 in rural areas. The estimated margin of error for the survey is ± 2.45 . However, we recommend computing the margin of error for each variable considering the design effects. The final sample achieved in the survey is weighted.

For more details on the methodology used in The Bahamas, see the complete technical report at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/bahamas.php>.

¹ The sample design includes three different strata of municipalities classified according to their size: (1) small municipalities with less than 3,000 inhabitants, (2) medium-sized municipalities with between 3,000 and 10,000 inhabitants, and (3) large municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants.

² For more information visit <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-designs.php>

AMERICASBAROMETER DATA AND REPORTS AT A GLANCE

DATA

The AmericasBarometer datasets feature a common core set of questions that have been asked from 2004 to present day. In addition, LAPOP has datasets that date back to the 1970s. Data files are free and publicly available for download.



Users can also access AmericasBarometer data through our Data Playground. This data analysis tool is free and interactive. It is particularly useful for those individuals unfamiliar with advanced statistical software programs. Data Playground users can analyze AmericasBarometer data through tabulations of a single variable, cross-country comparisons on a map, and cross-tabulations of two variables.



REPORTS

LAPOP produces numerous reports on the AmericasBarometer and other projects. Our goal is to provide analysis and evidence for scholars and practitioners on public opinion and democratic governance.

Insights reports are short briefs produced by students, network affiliates, our researchers, and our faculty. The series is used by journalists, policymakers, and scholars.



Standard Insights engage social science research and AmericasBarometer data to develop and assess theories regarding links between public opinion and democracy.

Topical Insights use project data to provide evidence and context on a current event.

Methodological Insights offer windows into our cutting-edge approaches, report on our innovations, and engage scholars who work at the survey research frontier.

Global Insights introduce findings from LAPOP-affiliated research outside the Americas.

Spotlights present quick snapshots of AmericasBarometer questions across countries, time, and subgroups.



Subscribe to receive reports from the *Insights* series for free here.



Country reports are book length, contain more extensive analyses, and are organized thematically to address findings relevant to democratic governance, strengthening, and stability. They include a focus on topics that stakeholders, especially USAID Missions, identify as important in the local context.

The following AmericasBarometer datasets (■) and reports* (●) are available for free download on our website (www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop):

	2004	2006	2008	2010
Regional	●	●	●	●
Mexico	●	●	●	●
Guatemala	●	●	●	●
El Salvador	●	●	●	●
Honduras	●	●	●	●
Nicaragua	●	●	●	●
Costa Rica	●	●	●	●
Panama	●	●	●	●
Colombia	●	●	●	●
Ecuador	●	●	●	●
Bolivia	●	●	●	●
Peru		●	●	●
Paraguay		●	●	●
Chile		●		●
Uruguay			●	●
Brazil				●
Venezuela		●	●	
Argentina				●
Dominican Republic	●	●	●	●
Haiti		●	●	●
Jamaica		●	●	●
Guyana		●	●	
Trinidad & Tobago				●
Belize				
Suriname				
The Bahamas				
Barbados				
Grenada				
St. Lucia				
Dominica				
Antigua and Barbuda				
St. Vincent and the Grenadines				
St. Kitts and Nevis				
United States		■	■	■
Canada		■	■	■

*2023 AmericasBarometer country reports will be available in early 2024.

	2012	2014	2016/17	2018/19	2021	2023
Regional	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mexico	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guatemala	●	●	●	●	●	●
El Salvador	●	●	●	●	●	●
Honduras	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nicaragua	●	●	●	●	●	●
Costa Rica	●	●	●	●	●	●
Panama	●	●	●	●	●	●
Colombia	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ecuador	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bolivia	●	●	●	●	●	●
Peru	●	●	●	●	●	●
Paraguay	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chile	●	●				
Uruguay	●					
Brazil						
Venezuela						
Argentina	●					
Dominican Republic	●	●		●	●	●
Haiti	●	●				●
Jamaica	●	●	●	●	●	●
Guyana						
Trinidad & Tobago						●
Belize						●
Suriname	●					●
The Bahamas						●
Barbados						
Grenada						●
St. Lucia						
Dominica						
Antigua and Barbuda						
St. Vincent and the Grenadines						
St. Kitts and Nevis						
United States			■	■	■	■
Canada			■	■	■	■

SURVEY METHODOLOGY FOR THE 2023 AMERICASBAROMETER

The AmericasBarometer is a multinational, multiregional, and multicultural (3MC) public opinion survey of democratic values and behaviors of voting-age citizens and permanent residents in the Western Hemisphere.

Respondents are selected through national probability samples in Latin America and the Caribbean, and through nonprobability panels in the United States and Canada. The project uses a standardized core questionnaire and country-specific modules to collect data via face-to-face household surveys, except in Haiti and Nicaragua, where the project uses computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), and in the United States and Canada, where the project uses self-administered Web surveys. The per-country average sample size of 1,512 respondents enables national and subnational estimations of key population variables.

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QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The AmericasBarometer survey instruments consist of a core questionnaire and country-specific modules that measure attitudes regarding, experiences with, and behaviors within political, economic, and social systems. The core questionnaire is a set of structured items that permit valid comparisons across time and space. Country-specific modules measure opinion on context-specific sociopolitical phenomena. As in every round, new questions are designed through workshops with input from country experts and leading scholars in the field. While the average face-to-face questionnaire includes 152 questions and lasts 45 minutes, the average CATI questionnaire includes 77 questions and lasts 20 minutes. The main questionnaire topics in 2023 are democratic values, system support, the rule of law, gender, and migration intentions.

COGNITIVE PRETESTS

The core questionnaire and country-specific modules are thoroughly pretested with a three-stage iterative cognitive interviewing process. First, LAPOP cognitive interviewers carry out a handful of in-depth tests of new modules to develop early drafts of questionnaire items. Second, LAPOP extensively trains research assistants and consultants to conduct cognitive interviews of the full core questionnaire in selected countries from different regions of the Americas to ensure context variation. Third, a similar process is carried out in all countries for each country-customized questionnaire. For the 2023 AmericasBarometer, local survey institutions recruited pre-test participants, and, in some cases, a small incentive was offered for their participation. Most cognitive interviews were conducted remotely using video or phone calls.

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SAMPLING

LAPOP uses a stratified, multistage, and clustered sampling strategy to draw national probability samples in countries where the survey is administered face-to-face. LAPOP-trained enumerators interview any eligible respondent available at the time of the survey. A single respondent is selected in each household and no revisits are required. In face-to-face studies, LAPOP uses “frequency matching,” a technique that ensures that the samples achieved mirror the national distributions of age and gender in the sampling frame. Frequency matching is implemented at the cluster level. In countries where the survey is conducted via CATI, LAPOP uses random-digit dialing (RDD) of mobile phones. In cases of unanswered calls, each number selected into the sample is called at least five times before it is discarded.

WEIGHTS

The 2023 AmericasBarometer sample design strategy in face-to-face studies produce self-weighted observations, with a few exceptions. Datasets in Ecuador, Trinidad & Tobago, The Bahamas, and Brazil use calibration weights to compensate for sample size deviations. LAPOP computes these weights using population distributions by strata for urban and rural population, gender, and age. Weights for Haiti and Nicaragua (CATI) are calculated by estimating baseline probabilities adjusted for eligibility and non-response, then calibrated to the 2018/19 AmericasBarometer country samples on gender, education, age, and region. Cross-time and cross-country weights are standardized so that each country/year has the same effective sample size.

INTERVIEWER, SUPERVISOR, AND AUDITOR TRAINING

In the 2023 AmericasBarometer is designed as an opportunity for fieldwork personnel to grow their knowledge base and to standardize data collection and monitoring practices. Training workshops include an in-person component, where LAPOP-trained fieldwork personnel instruct interviewers and quality control auditors on logistics, security protocols, and fieldwork monitoring; a virtual component, where LAPOP representatives review the full questionnaire and country samples with each team; a set of pre-recorded training videos that review best practices in survey research, ethical principles, and operations with the data collection platform; and a full pilot of the survey, where fieldwork personnel practice what they have learned before launching the actual survey. Training sessions typically last two full days and all trainings conclude with a learning assessment that interviewers have to pass (>80% correct answers) in order to be certified to work on the project.

QUALITY CONTROL

The 2023 AmericasBarometer uses LAPOP’s Fieldwork Algorithm for LAPOP Control over survey Operations and Norms (FALCON). FALCON collects multiple types of paradata, including voice recordings and interviewer images, question and questionnaire timing, and interviewer performance indicators. These paradata indicators are monitored daily during data collection so that any corrections or cancellations resulting from a failure to meet quality control standards are made while fieldwork is in progress. Final datasets include high-quality interviews only. Each technical report for an AmericasBarometer survey summarizes the results of this process.

Acknowledgements

The AmericasBarometer emerges from collaborations among hundreds of individuals involved in its design and implementation. We thank all the members of the public who generously shared their beliefs and experiences with our survey teams. We are also grateful to our dedicated partner survey organizations and fieldwork teams across the region.

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Implementing our project across the Western Hemisphere is possible thanks to support from additional partners, including researchers at Duke University, Environics Institute, the Inter-American Development Bank, and University of California, Berkeley. We are grateful for their collaboration.

The LAPOP Lab team devoted tens of thousands of hours to the design, implementation, and dissemination of the 2023 AmericasBarometer. For this round, these exceptional individuals are, in alphabetical order, Rubí Arana, Fernanda Boidi, Oscar Castorena, Sebastián Larrea, Boyoon Lee, Arturo Maldonado, Daniel Montalvo, Luke Plutowski, Georgina Pizzolitto, Camilo Plata, Eli Rau, Mariana Rodríguez, Valerie Schweizer-Robinson, Laura Sellers, and Carole Wilson. We are also very grateful to Laura Kramer and Mary McNamee for project administration and coordination.

One way LAPOP achieves its mission of knowledge transfer and capacity building is by involving students in all aspects of the AmericasBarometer. While they gain experience with cutting-edge survey methodologies, they also contribute to the project's success. At the graduate level, the project benefited from engaging the Vanderbilt political science comparative politics graduate student community in various discussions and activities; these students are Sofia Berrospi, Lucas Borba, Shashwat Dhar, Guilherme Fasolin, Margaret Frost, Martin Gou, Facundo Salles Kobilanski, Preeti Nambiar, Emily Noh, Mariana Ramírez, Sofía Rivera, and Alexander Tripp. This round also benefited from the involvement of undergraduate students, including Daniel Ardity, Danni Chacon, Ade Forrest, Audrey Heffernan, Jazmín Los, Adin McGurk, Marco Navarro Stanic, Tomás Majeovsky, Chase Mandell, Krishna Podishetti, Allie Rounds, William Royster, Hedid Rojas Salinas, Samuel Schulman, Carson Viggiano, Evan Wilkerson, and Stanley Zhao.

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It would not have been possible to produce the 2023 AmericasBarometer without the efforts of all these institutions and individuals, and we are deeply grateful to all of them. We also thank all those who engage with the project's data and reports for contributing to LAPOP's core objective: provide a critical and reliable tool for assessing the public's experiences with democratic governance across the hemisphere.

Noam Lupu
Liz Zechmeister
Nashville, Tennessee
November 2023

The AmericasBarometer is carried out by LAPOP Lab, a center for excellence in international survey research based at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. LAPOP has deep connections to the Latin America and Caribbean region, established during more than five decades of public opinion research. The AmericasBarometer is possible due to the activities and support of a network that spans the Americas. To complete each round, LAPOP partners with individuals, survey firms, universities, development organizations, and others in up to 34 countries within the Western Hemisphere.

Project efforts are informed by LAPOP's mission: to produce objective, non-partisan, and scientifically sound studies of public opinion; to innovate improvements in survey research; to disseminate project findings; and, to build capacity.

The AmericasBarometer project receives generous support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Vanderbilt University. Other institutions that have contributed recently to multiple rounds of the project include Environics Institute, Florida International University, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Over the years, the project has benefited from grants from the United States National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development in Brazil (CNPq), the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, and numerous academic institutions across the Americas.

The 2023 AmericasBarometer was carried out via face-to-face interviews in 22 Latin American and Caribbean countries, phone surveys in Haiti and Nicaragua, and online surveys in Canada and the United States.

All samples are designed to be nationally representative of voting-age adults. In all, more than 41,524 individuals were interviewed in this latest round of the survey. The complete 2004-2023 AmericasBarometer dataset contains responses from over 385,000 people across the region. Common core modules, standardized techniques, and rigorous quality control procedures permit valid comparisons across individuals, certain subnational areas, countries, regions, and time. AmericasBarometer data and reports are available for free download from the project website: www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop. Individuals can also use that website to query the data via an interactive Data Playground. Datasets from the project also can be accessed via "data repositories" and subscribing institutions across the Americas.

Through such open access practices and an extensive network of collaborators, LAPOP works to contribute to the pursuit of excellence in public opinion research and ongoing discussions over how programs and policies related to democratic governance can improve the quality of life for individuals in the Americas and beyond.

LAPOP's AmericasBarometer takes the
Pulse of Democracy in The Bahamas

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