

20
23

LAPOP's
AmericasBarometer
takes the

Pulse of Democracy in Trinidad & Tobago

REPORT EDITORS

André Vincent Henry

Mariana Rodríguez

Valerie Schweizer-Robinson



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

V VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY

LAPOP

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.



LAPOP

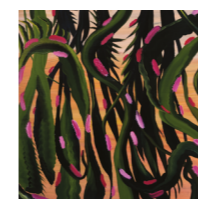
This report is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this study are the sole responsibility of the authors and LAPOP and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Please cite this report as follows:
Henry, André V., Mariana Rodríguez, and Valerie Schweizer-Robinson (Eds). 2024. LAPOP's AmericasBarometer takes the Pulse of Democracy in Trinidad & Tobago 2023. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

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 Alternativa, 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>

Contents

002	INTRODUCTION
004	BY THE NUMBERS
	Chapter 1
006	RISING CRIME
	Chapter 2
028	A RECOVERING ECONOMY IS NOT FELT BY ALL TRINBAGONIANS
	Chapter 3
046	LOW TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AND DISSATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY
066	References
070	Technical Information for the 2023 AmericasBarometer in Trinidad & Tobago
072	AmericasBarometer Data and Reports at a Glance
076	Survey Methodology for the 2023 AmericasBarometer

Spotlights

024	Intentions to Emigrate
042	Food Insecurity
062	Perceptions of Corruption

Introduction

André Vincent Henry¹

This report covers prevailing issues faced by Trinbagonian society in 2023. Ranging from rising crime victimization and heightened insecurity to economic challenges and perceptions of democracy, the 2023 AmericasBarometer data illustrate growing concerns across Trinidad & Tobago.

The first chapter focuses on citizen security, which has become the most significant concern for much of the population. In 1999, the number of murders was 91; by 2022, it had risen to 609, decreasing slightly in 2023. Because of the finality of the act, the murder rate is the most resonant indicator of crime. It contributes most significantly to the sense of citizen security or the lack thereof. The chapter points to the continuing rise in gang violence and even the effect of the splintering of gangs. The Trinidad & Tobago Police Service (TTPS) notes that there is a decline in other categories of serious crime and that there has been a reduction in incidents that result in murders. Still, there has been an increase in the body count. TTPS notes that this results from using

more automatic and high-caliber weapons. It is, therefore, unsurprising that there is an increase in feelings of insecurity.

The second chapter examines perceptions of the economy. It notes that a vast majority of Trinbagonians believe the country's economy is worse off than it was a year ago. After the crash in oil prices in 2008 (when the price of oil declined from \$181.00 to \$65.00 per barrel in less than a year), the country started a slow recovery. This recovery was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The data show that even as the economy recovers, those in lower socio-economic positions have the most negative evaluations of their own and their country's economy. The data suggest that a significant percentage of the population

also has concerns about food and water. From a purely capability perspective, food and water security are not necessarily from a lack of resources and may be more a reflection of inefficiencies in delivering public goods. The case of the water distribution system bears this out. The spotlight on food insecurity also refers to the need for more targeted policies to address this issue.

Moreover, public policy in Trinidad & Tobago has always had a very strong welfare component, starting with the first oil boom in the 1970s. As a result, government budgets always have a very high percentage of transfers and subsidies. Due to the strained economic circumstances, these transfers and subsidies have been reduced. These and other related factors have fueled a debate about fairness and equity in society, especially among those who feel disadvantaged and marginalized.

The final chapter examines satisfaction with democracy in Trinidad & Tobago. The report notes that only one-quarter of Trinbagonians express satisfaction with democracy and that support for the political system has declined since 2014. It notes that the country has a stable tradition of electoral politics, with elections taking place on schedule, even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not surprising as confidence in a system is based on its ability to produce public goods and services that satisfy the citizens. As the study demonstrates the shortcomings in the delivery of public goods and services, especially citizen security and utilities such as regular water supply, this reduces trust and confidence in the system.

The politics of the country could explain part of the failure to meet citizen's expectations. Politics is divided along sharp racial lines, with the two main political parties having their base among the South Asian and African-descended racial groups

¹ André Vincent Henry is the Director of Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies in Trinidad & Tobago.

between which the country is almost equally divided. In this environment, the ability to find consensus on the challenging problems of socio-economic development has been very poor.

Moreover, in this contestation, state institutions have been negatively affected as accusations of bias have been made against them. This includes the Election and Boundaries Commission (EBC), which manages the country's elections. Both of the two main political parties have accused the EBC of bias at some point in time. The spotlight on corruption perceptions in this report shows that two in five Trinbagonians think most politicians are corrupt. Undoubtedly, such accusations and public opinion reduce the credibility of institutions, processes, and politicians alike.

Prevailing concerns regarding security, the economy, and politics likely contribute to increased intentions to emigrate. Trinbagonians' intentions to leave have tripled since 2014. Individuals who have encountered crime victimization and those with diminished support for democracy are particularly inclined to consider leaving.

These findings underscore a growing sense of apprehension in Trinidad & Tobago in 2023. Heightened insecurity and economic anxieties among the public, coupled with diminished trust in key political institutions and waning satisfaction with democracy, portray a sobering outlook for the country's governance. However, despite these challenges, few Trinbagonians endorse authoritarian alternatives, and a majority remain optimistic about their future in the country. Addressing the interconnected structural issues of insecurity, victimization, and economic challenges presents an opportunity to enhance public sentiment and foster a more positive outlook for the country's future.

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

Rising Crime

Adam Wolsky¹

In April 2023, Trinidad & Tobago hosted a regional symposium on crime with the theme of “Violence as a Public Health Issue – The Crime Challenge,” in which Prime Minister Keith Rowley stated, “Violence is threatening to destroy our paradise in the Caribbean Sea.”² Crime is an issue that has been of great concern across the Caribbean, and Trinidad & Tobago is no exception to this. The country’s official statistics show an increase in the homicide rate from 29 per 100,000 people in 2020 to 44 per 100,000 people in 2022—one of the highest rates in the world.³

Organized crime has also been an issue for some time. Larger, more established gangs are responsible for many high crimes like shootings and

kidnappings, as well as drug, arms, and human trafficking. Smaller gangs have increasingly been cited for various crimes.⁴ Additionally, the country has been significantly affected by the global drug trade. The Global Organized Crime Index describes Trinidad & Tobago as a key destination for heroin and cocaine from Venezuela and Guyana, while northern port Chaguaramas is a major location for cocaine traveling to Europe.⁵

This chapter delves into the complex security challenges facing Trinidad & Tobago, covering various aspects of crime and its societal ramifications. It addresses concerns such as crime rates, gang influence, and perceptions of safety and democracy.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Most Trinbagonians (58%) point to security issues as the most serious problem in the country.
- Crime victimization nearly doubled from 2014 (10%) to 2023 (18%). Crime victimization is more common among those who have more education, are younger, and less wealthy individuals.
- Despite high crime victimization, only 27% of Trinbagonians feel somewhat or very unsafe in their neighborhood. Urban residents are more likely to feel unsafe in their neighborhoods compared to rural residents.
- Over half of Trinbagonians believe that gangs affect their neighborhood at least a little—a 32-percentage point increase since 2014. Among those who live in neighborhoods that are affected at least a little by gangs, 40% say at least one person was murdered in their neighborhood in the last year.
- Those who say gangs affect their neighborhood a lot are more likely to say gangs provide law enforcement and services.
- Satisfaction with democracy is lower among those who feel their neighborhood is unsafe and those who report gang presence. In addition, those who are victims of crime and perceive their neighborhood as unsafe are less likely to trust the national and local governments.

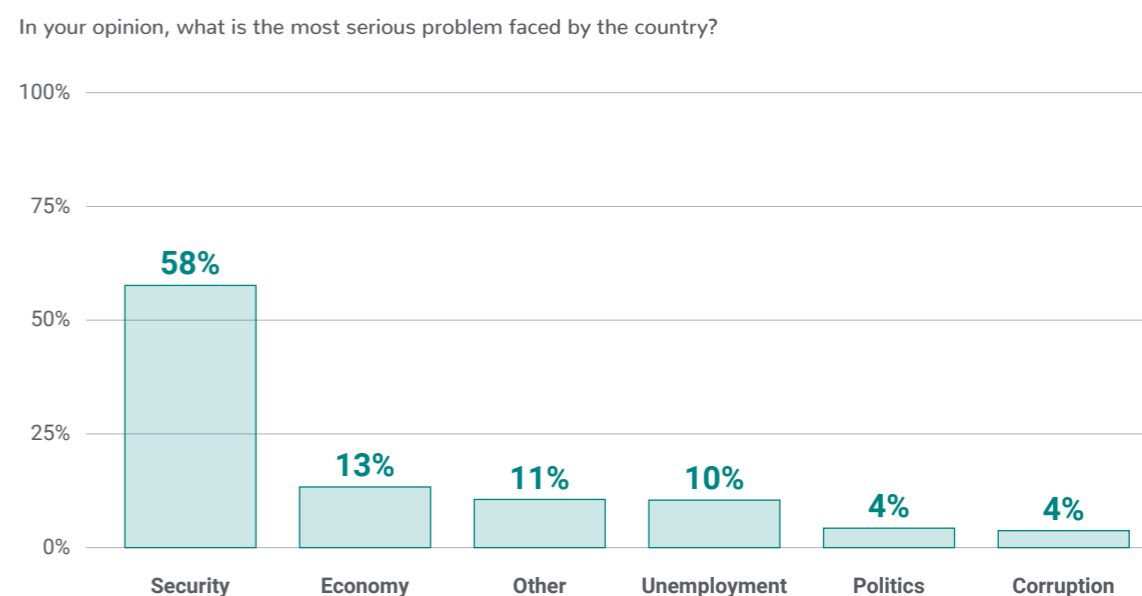
CONCERNS ABOUT SECURITY DOMINATE PUBLIC OPINION AND EXPERIENCES WITH CRIME INCREASED

A majority of Trinbagonians point to security issues as the most serious problem in the country, compared to less than one in four who mention economic issues and unemployment combined and less than one in ten who mention political and corruption issues (Figure 1.1).⁶ There are no major differences in citing security issues as the most serious problem among those with different education levels, those who live in urban or rural areas, or different age groups. Those in the highest two wealth categories are about 11-percentage points more likely to say that security issues are the

country’s biggest problem compared to the lowest category. Notably, 62% of women mention security issues as the biggest problem compared to 53% of men. Trinbagonian women have been the target of serious violence in recent years, which may account for some of the differences between men and women. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, women took to the streets to protest a string of murders, rapes, and brutal beatings in defiance of restrictions on gatherings.⁷

Security issues are clearly at the top of mind for Trinbagonians, but how much of the public are actual victims of crime? The AmericasBarometer asks a question that assesses an individual’s direct experience with a wide variety of crimes.

Figure 1.1 Security dominates all others as Trinidad & Tobago’s most serious problem



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

18% of Trinbagonians say they were a victim of a crime. 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?

More Trinbagonians (over 66%) said crime was the most serious problem facing the nation in the 2014 AmericasBarometer compared to 2023 survey. Yet, as **Figure 1.2** shows, nearly twice as many Trinbagonians reported experiencing crime victimization in the past 12 months in 2023 (18%) compared to 2014 (10%). There are no significant differences in

victimization between women and men despite higher concern among women for security issues. However, more educated, younger, and less wealthy individuals are more likely to experience crime victimization than less educated, older, and wealthier individuals.⁸ Although wealthier individuals are more likely to say crime is the country's biggest problem, they are less likely to be crime victims than the least wealthy. Trinbagonians are far less likely to be victims of crime compared to Ecuadorians, Argentines, and Nicaraguans but somewhat more likely than Caribbean neighbors Grenada, The Bahamas, and Jamaica.

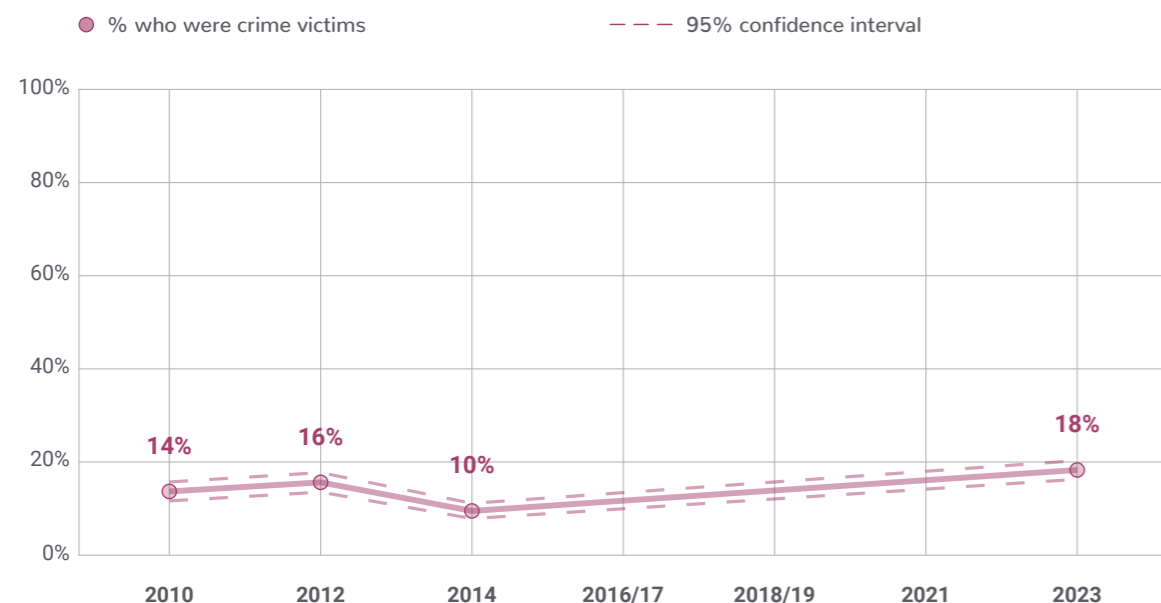
Beyond direct experiences with crime victimization, individuals may experience insecurity in their neighborhood for a myriad of reasons including being a victim of crime and the presence of drugs and gangs, among other factors.⁹

To examine individuals' perceptions of insecurity at the neighborhood level, the AmericasBarometer asks 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?

Despite widespread concern about security throughout the country, it appears that nearly three-fourths of Trinbagonians believe their neighborhood is somewhat or very safe. Less than 10% of the population feels very unsafe in their neighborhood (**Figure 1.3**). Perceptions of neighborhood insecurity had previously dropped from 21% to 12% between 2010 and 2014, but there has been an over 15-percentage point increase between 2014 to 2023 among Trinbagonians who believe their neighborhood is unsafe. Despite the increase, Trinidad & Tobago has one of the lowest perceptions of neighborhood insecurity in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region (**Figure 1.4**).

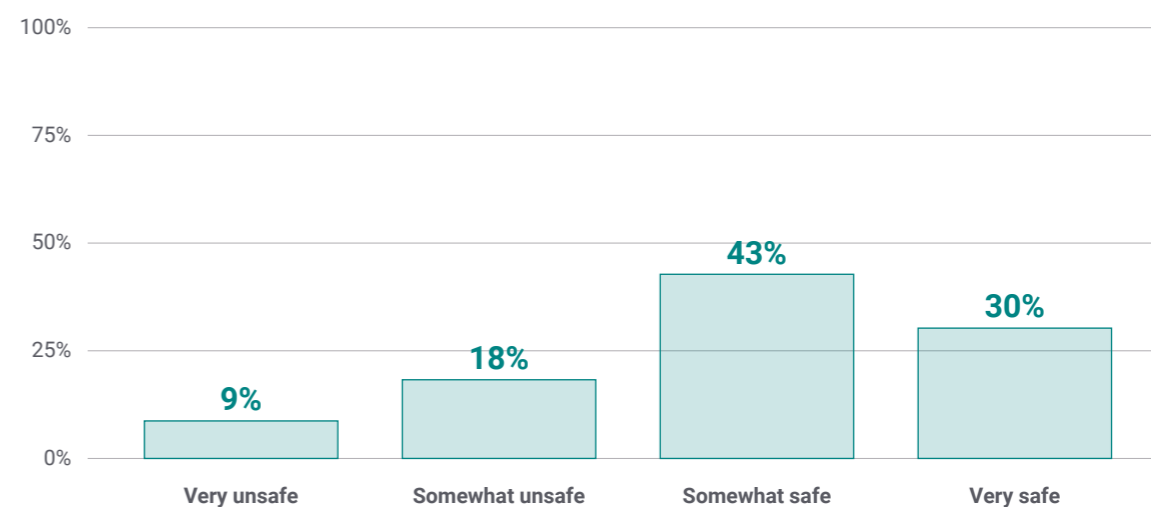
Figure 1.2 Crime victimization in Trinidad & Tobago nearly doubled from 2014 to 2023



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

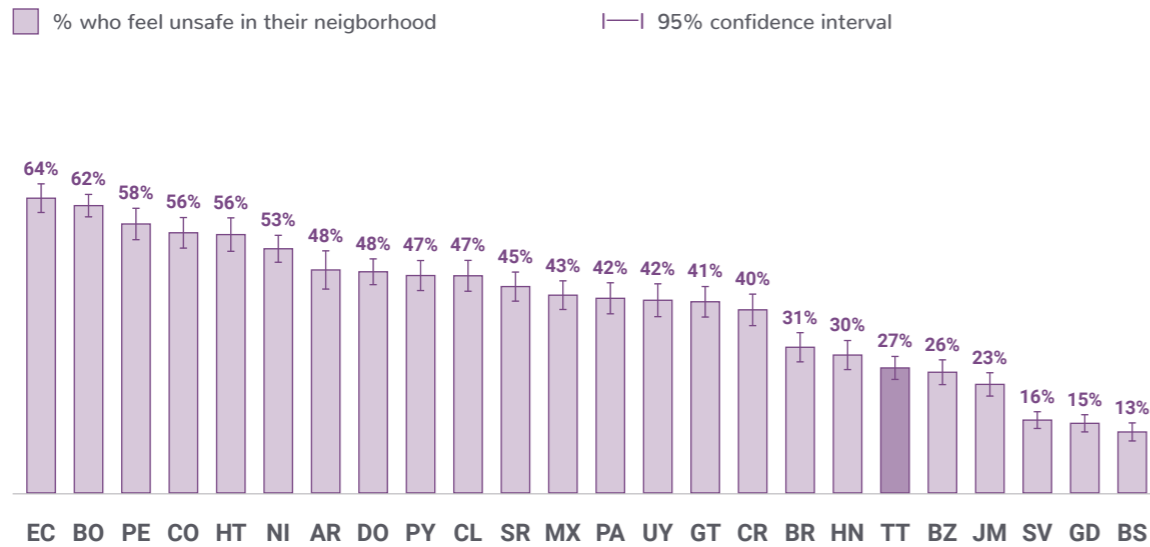
Figure 1.3 Close to a quarter of Trinbagonians feel unsafe in their neighborhood

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?



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Figure 1.4 Perceptions of neighborhood insecurity in Trinidad & Tobago are among the lowest in the region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Despite an increase in perceptions of neighborhood insecurity, few believe their own neighborhood is more violent than others, nor do many believe that neighborhood violence has increased in the 12 months prior to the survey.

27%
of Trinbagonians say they feel unsafe in their neighborhood, a significant increase since 2014.

Interestingly, in the first six months of 2023, there were fewer overall crimes compared to 2014 according to the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service.¹⁰ However, murders have been more prevalent in 2022 and 2023 compared to previous years. This increase in murders, a statistic that the media tends to focus on, affects the public's sense of fear.¹¹ These violent crimes may be one factor in the rise in perceptions of neighborhood insecurity between 2014 and 2023. Those who live in urban neighborhoods are about 10-percentage points more likely to say they feel somewhat or very unsafe in their

neighborhood, but there are no significant differences by gender, age, education, or wealth.

The 2023 AmericasBarometer includes items that assess the level of violence compared to other neighborhoods in the country and if the level of violence in their neighborhood has changed over the past 12 months. The questions are:

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?

Despite an increase in perceptions of neighborhood insecurity, few believe their own neighborhood is more violent than others, nor do many believe that neighborhood violence has increased over the past 12 months. Only 11% of Trinbagonians perceive that violence in their own neighborhood is higher than in other neighborhoods in 2023, an uptick of 5 percentage points since 2014.

Nevertheless, a similar proportion perceive that violence in their own neighborhood is lower than in other neighborhoods in 2023 (67%) compared to 2014 (71%). Younger, less educated, and urban citizens are more likely to perceive their own neighborhood as more violent than others. Despite a 9-percentage point increase since 2014, fewer than one in five Trinbagonians believe violence is higher in their neighborhood in the past 12 months in 2023. Those who live in urban neighborhoods are more likely to perceive an uptick in violence over the past 12 months compared to their rural counterparts.

OVER HALF SAY THERE IS SOME GANG PRESENCE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD, UP SIGNIFICANTLY FROM 2014

What can explain the increase in perceptions of insecurity at the neighborhood level as well as the increase in experience with crime from 2014 to 2023? Gun violence and gun deaths have been on the rise in recent decades,¹² which could contribute to feelings of insecurity. Increasingly, violent gangs are likely a contributing factor to the rise in insecurity from 2014 to 2023. Experts have suggested that gangs in Trinidad & Tobago have become more violent in recent years

because of three main reasons: gang splintering is leading to violence between rival gangs, gang leaders who are acting as community leaders at the local level are profiting from a variety of activities and winning public works contracts, and gangs have had increasing access to guns.¹³

To measure how an individual's neighborhood is affected by gangs and direct presence of gangs in the neighborhood, the AmericasBarometer asks the following questions:

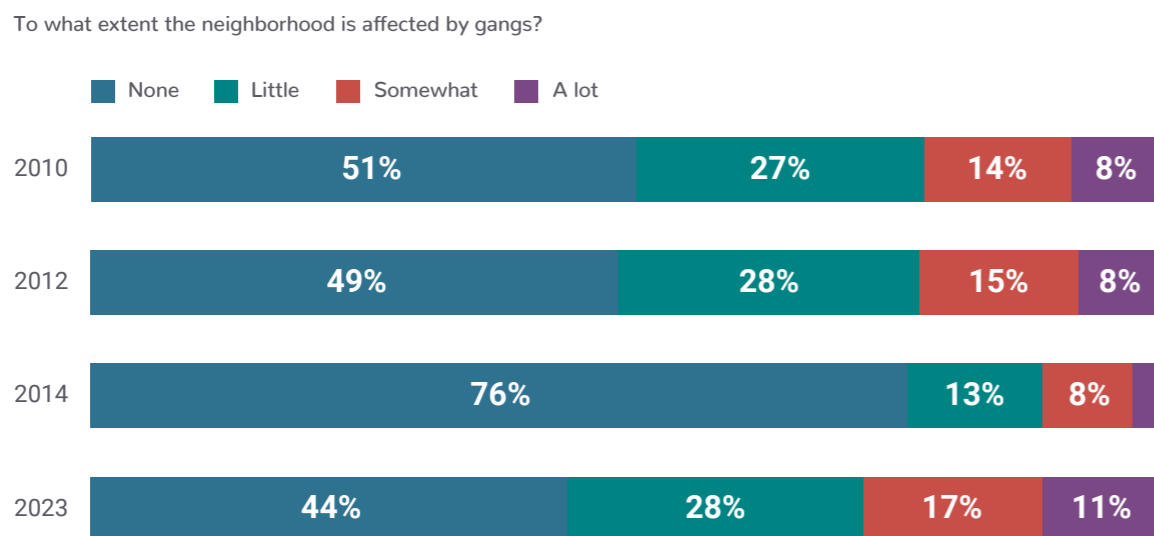
To what extent do you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs? Would you say a lot, somewhat, a little or none?

Increasing gang violence is likely a contributing factor to the rise in feelings of insecurity from 2014 to 2023.

Is there a criminal gang or gangs in your neighborhood?

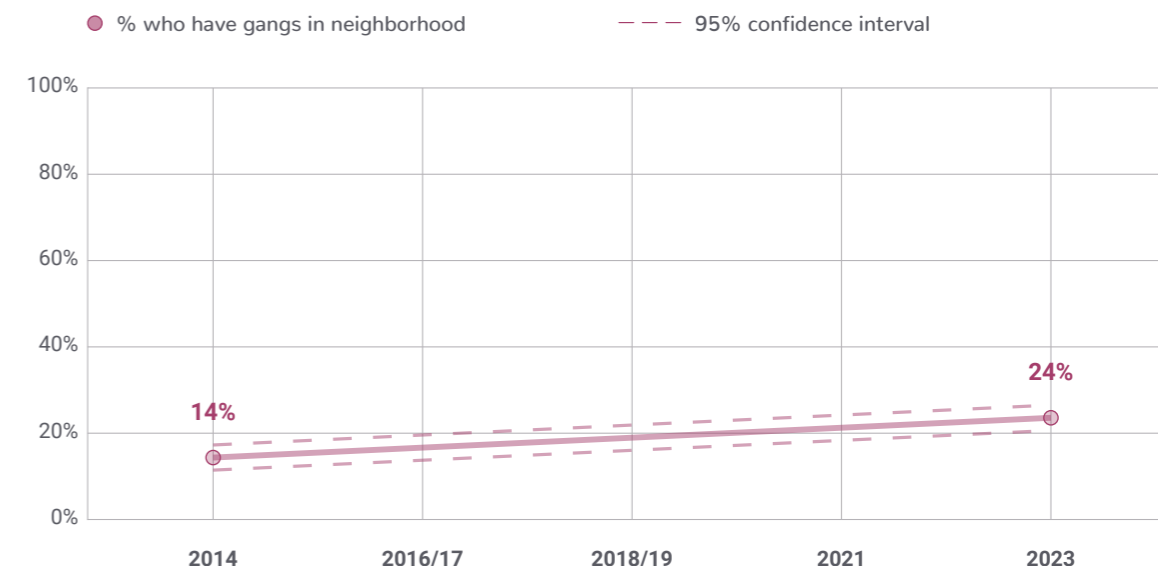
In 2023, 56% of the public say that there is at least a little gang presence in their neighborhoods, compared to only 24% in 2014 (Figure 1.5). Although less than one in four reports that there are criminal gangs in their neighborhood—up from less than 15% in 2014—this suggests that gang presence is felt even when gangs are not active within the neighborhood itself (Figure 1.6). Moreover, 17% of the public said they did not know or refused to answer the question, which may suggest an even higher percentage of the public living in neighborhoods with gang presence.

Figure 1.5 A majority of Trinbagonians say their neighborhood is affected at least a little in 2023, an increase from previous survey rounds



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

Figure 1.6 More Trinbagonians say there are criminal gangs in their neighborhoods in 2023 compared to 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2014-2023

24% of Trinbagonians say a criminal gang exists in their neighborhood.

Younger and urban individuals are more likely to both report that their neighborhood is affected by gangs as well as the direct presence of gangs in their neighborhood (Figure 1.7). Recall that younger individuals and those in urban environments are more likely to be victims of crime and perceive that their neighborhood is more insecure than others—this may be partially due to the presence and activity of criminal gangs. Indeed, compared to those who do not say their neighborhood is affected or has gang presence, those who say their neighborhood is affected by gangs at least a little as well as those who report gangs in their neighborhood are far more likely to say their neighborhood is unsafe and are more likely to be victims of crime.

MANY REPORT HIGH LEVELS OF VIOLENCE FROM GANGS, THOUGH A QUARTER ALSO SAY THAT GANGS HELP ENFORCE LAWS

The AmericasBarometer asks those who live in areas that are at least somewhat affected by gangs the following questions about violence and the provision of goods and law enforcement:

Was anyone murdered in your neighborhood as a result of gang violence within the last 12 months? No/One person/Two persons/Three persons/Four or more persons

Was anyone injured in your neighborhood as a result of gang violence within the last 12 months? No/One person/Two persons/Three persons/Four or more persons

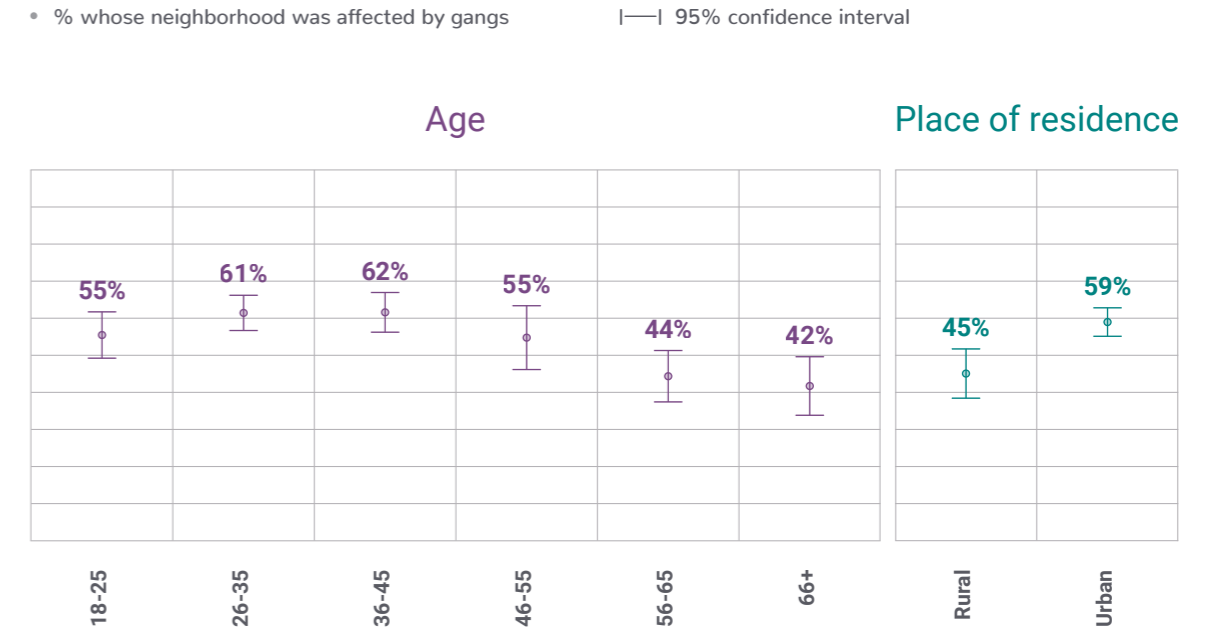
Do gangs help to enforce the law in your neighborhood?

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

Although the majority of the public who live in neighborhoods that are affected by gangs do not report homicides or injuries in their neighborhood, more than one-third do. Over 10% of those who live in neighborhoods affected by crime and violence report more than four deaths or injuries in the past 12 months (Figure 1.8). Among those who live in neighborhoods that are affected by gangs a lot, over 71% say that at least one person was killed in the past 12 months, compared to only 24% of those who had just “a little” gang violence in their neighborhood. The differences between those who experienced injuries in their neighborhood were similarly high.

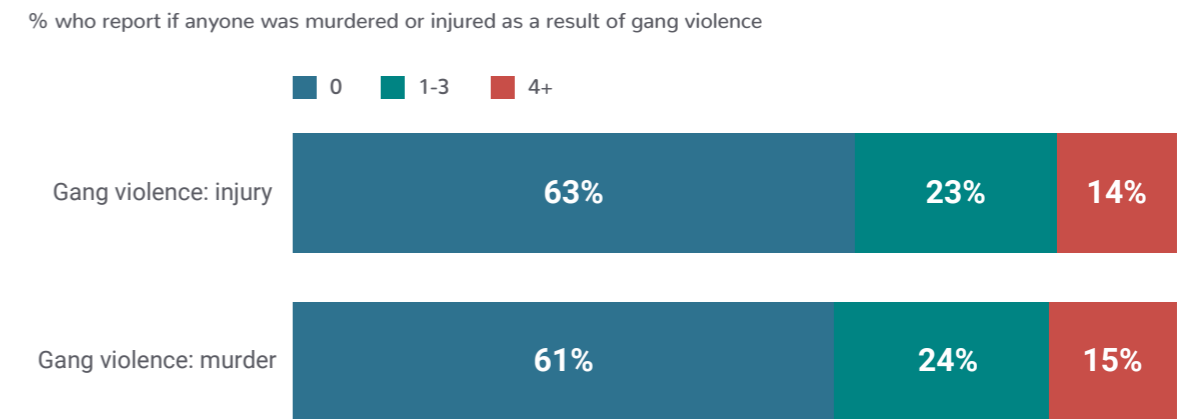
Young people and those living in urban areas report higher crime victimization and perceptions of insecurity, which may be due to their higher exposure to criminal gangs.

Figure 1.7 Younger and urban residents of Trinidad & Tobago are more likely to say that gangs affect their neighborhoods compared to older and rural adults



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Figure 1.8 Nearly 40% of those who live in neighborhoods affected by gangs report that a person was murdered or injured in the past 12 months



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

25%
of those in areas with “a lot” of gangs say gangs help enforce the law.

Few Trinbagonians believe that gangs enforce the laws in their neighborhoods or that gangs are helpful for the provision of goods and jobs. Only around one in five of those who live in neighborhoods with a little or some gang violence say that gangs enforce laws or provide services for the neighborhood. However, as **Figure 1.9** shows, those who say that gangs affect their neighborhood a lot are far more likely to say that gangs enforce the laws and provide services to the neighborhood.

While gangs in the country are hardly viewed as benevolent, it is notable that those who perceive more gang activity also believe gangs are doing more good than bad. Moreover, around 11% of those asked about gangs enforcing laws, and 16% of those asked about the helpfulness of the neighborhood, said they did not know or did not respond to the question, suggesting that this was a sensitive question and may be subject to social desirability bias.

DRUG TRAFFICKING IS A VERY SERIOUS CONCERN

Local gangs in Trinidad & Tobago are a serious source of crime and violence, but the international drug trade, particularly of cocaine, has also had significant influence from foreign actors.¹⁴ Drug trafficking news routinely reaches the headlines in local news sources.¹⁵ Opposition politicians criticize the government, suggesting that “drug lords are taking over Trinidad & Tobago.”¹⁶ To assess how Trinbagonians evaluate the drug trafficking problem, the AmericasBarometer asks the following question:

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

High concern about drug trafficking is nearly universal in the country with 87% saying that the problem is very serious. There are no statistical differences between urban and rural, women and men, and those with different educational levels. Those who are young are slightly less likely to say that the drug trafficking problem is somewhat or very serious than the oldest cohorts, yet the substantive difference is relatively small (around 90% compared to 98%).

PERCEPTIONS OF INSECURITY AND GANG PRESENCE ARE LINKED TO LOWER SUPPORT FOR AND SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY

How do experiences with crime, insecurity in one’s neighborhood, and the presence of gangs affect attitudes toward democracy and the national government?

Experiences with crime, feelings of neighborhood insecurity, and gang presence may undermine support for the concept of democracy, satisfaction with the democratic system, and confidence in the national government because it reflects the failure of a democratically elected government to keep citizens safe. The AmericasBarometer asks the following questions to assess attitudes about democracy and confidence in the national government:

Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?¹⁷

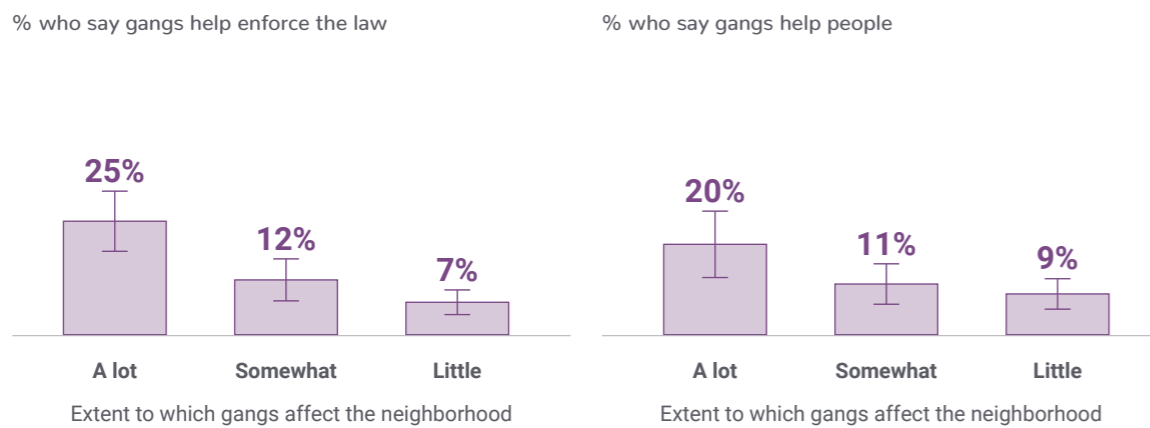
In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Trinidad & Tobago?

How much do you trust the national government to do what is right? A lot/Somewhat/A little/Not at all¹⁸

There are no significant differences in support for democracy between crime victims and non-victims, those who believe that their neighborhood is unsafe, and those who report that there are gangs in their neighborhood. It appears that feelings of insecurity and experiences with crime are not associated with how people feel about democracy in the abstract.¹⁹

A mere 25% of the public in Trinidad & Tobago say they are satisfied or very satisfied with democracy. Despite this already low baseline satisfaction of democracy, those who feel their neighborhood is unsafe are over 14-percentage points less likely to say they are satisfied with democracy compared

Figure 1.9 Trinbagonians who live in neighborhoods where gangs affect the neighborhood a lot are more likely to report gangs enforce laws or provide services



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

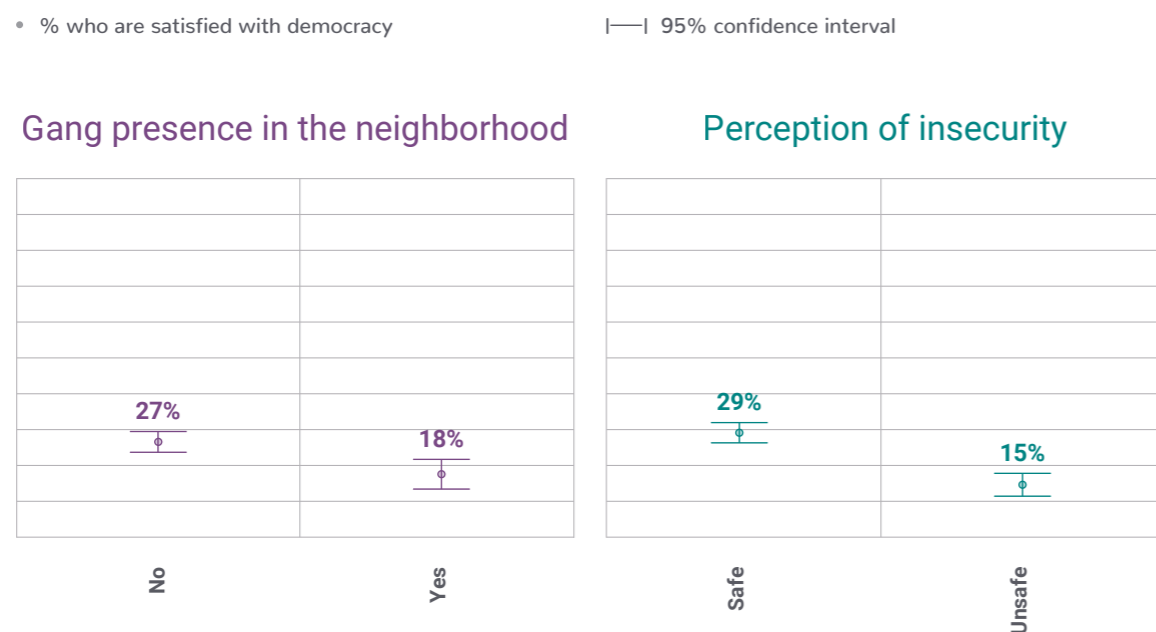
Feelings of insecurity and experiences with crime are not associated with how people feel about democracy in the abstract, but they do lessen satisfaction with democracy and trust in government.

to those who say their neighborhood is at least somewhat safe. Those who report gangs are present are 9-percentage points less likely to say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the way that democracy works in Trinidad & Tobago. Victims of crime are less likely to be satisfied with democracy, but results are substantively less large and are only marginally significant at the bivariate level.

to do what is right. Crime victims are 11-percentage points less likely and those who say their neighborhood is unsafe or very unsafe are 14-percentage points less likely to say that they trust in the national government. Trust in local government, at less than 20% of the population, is also undermined by crime victimization and perceptions of an unsafe neighborhood. On the other hand, there are no differences in trust in either the national nor local government between those who report gang presence in their neighborhood and those who do not.

Finally, those who are victims of crime and who feel their neighborhood is unsafe are less likely to trust the national government

Figure 1.10 Those who report gang presence in their neighborhood and those who feel their neighborhood is unsafe are less satisfied with democracy



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Figure 1.11 Trinbagonians who were victims of crime and those who feel their neighborhood is unsafe have less trust in the national government



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Conclusions

Overall, the security situation appears to be detrimental to satisfaction with democracy and confidence in the national government. Although the security situation was less than perfect in 2014, when the AmericasBarometer last surveyed in Trinidad & Tobago, over three in five Trinbagonians said they were satisfied with democracy compared to 25% in 2023. Interestingly, crime victimization, feelings of insecurity, and gang presence do not undermine support for democracy.

Support for democracy has dropped in Trinidad & Tobago, but a majority still prefer democracy over other forms of government. Victims of crime, those who perceive their neighborhood to be unsafe, and those who report gangs in their neighborhood may not connect their experiences with their attitudes toward democracy as a political system.

Although reports have suggested that women have been particularly victimized and they do appear to express more concern about security issues than men, women and men do not differ significantly in crime victimization, perceptions of neighborhood insecurity, gang presence in the neighborhood, or gang violence. Younger individuals and those who live in urban areas are more affected by gangs and violence compared to their older, rural counterparts. Continued high levels of insecurity and gang presence may wreak havoc on democratic stability as the younger and urban populations that make up a majority of the country are disproportionately affected by security issues.

Notes

- 1 Adam Wolsky is a Senior Research Specialist in the Department of Sociology at Princeton University. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Vanderbilt University.
- 2 *Jamaica Observer* 2023.
- 3 Trinidad & Tobago Police Service 2023.
- 4 Bruzual 2023.
- 5 Appleby 2022.
- 6 Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago are in a statistical tie in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region on indicating security issues as the most serious problem that the country faces. The Caribbean region is not uniform in having security issues top of mind—The Bahamas also has a high rate of mentioning security issues but fewer than one in ten in Grenada mention security issues as the country’s most serious problem.
- 7 Brabant 2021.
- 8 The results in this chapter that discuss the relationship between dependent variables of interest with socioeconomic and demographic variables come from multivariate regression models including gender, age, urban/rural residence, wealth, and education.
- 9 Cruz 2009. Analysis from Cruz 2009 confirmed for Trinidad & Tobago in 2023 by running an OLS regression predicting neighborhood insecurity with crime victimization, gang presence, and gang activity as predictors. Results hold when controlling for wealth, age, gender, education, and place of residence.
- 10 Trinidad & Tobago Police Service 2023.
- 11 John-Lall 2022.
- 12 Wallace, Nurse-Carrington, and Harry 2021.
- 13 Den Held 2022.
- 14 Global Organized Crime Index 2023.
- 15 Loop News 2022a; Loop News 2022b.
- 16 Fraser 2022.
- 17 Responses were given on a 1 “strongly disagree to 7 “strongly agree” scale. The analyses in this report focus on the percentage of Trinbagonians who responded 5-7.
- 18 The analyses in this report focus on the percentage of Trinbagonians who responded “somewhat” or “a lot.”
- 19 The results in this section are from a series of multivariate regression models with crime victimization, perceptions of neighborhood insecurity, and gang presence controlling for standard socioeconomic and demographic variables including gender, age, urban/rural residence, wealth, and education. Although bivariate relationships may be significant, the relationships shown in the figures are statistically significant controlling for the aforementioned socioeconomic and demographic variables.

From 2014 to 2023, intentions to emigrate have nearly tripled in Trinidad & Tobago.

Trinidad & Tobago is an increasingly important hub for intra-Caribbean migration. However, it has struggled to retain the human capital that it generates, as many skilled workers migrate in search of better opportunities to maximize the return on their skills.² This report explores this problem, as the AmericasBarometer 2023 data registers the highest proportion of Trinbagonians intending to emigrate in the series.

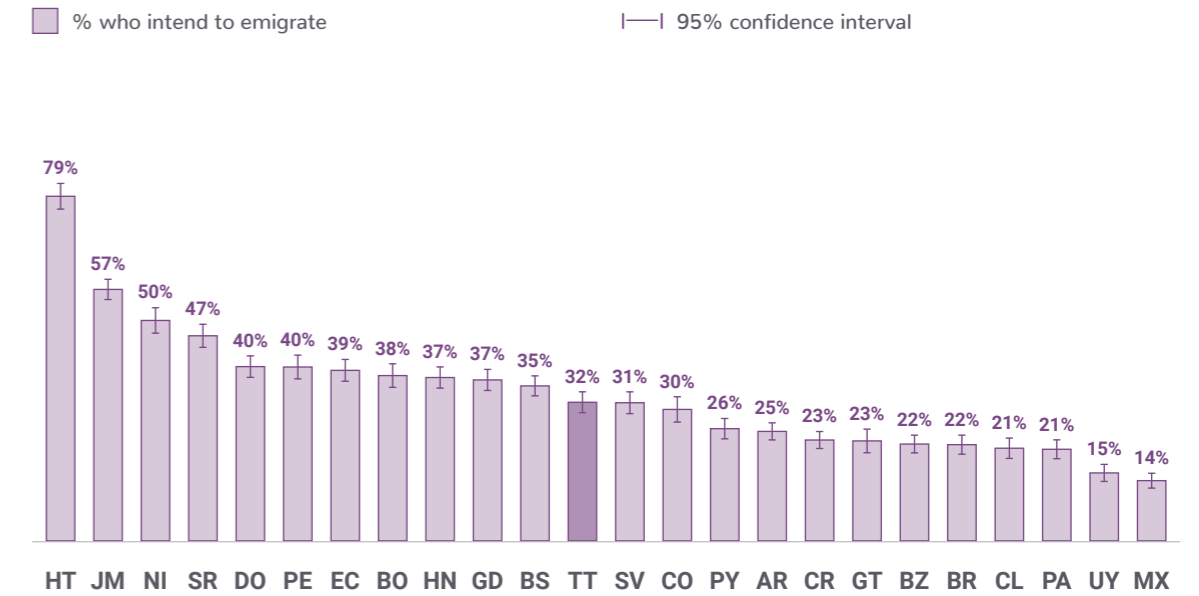
Since 2010, the AmericasBarometer has measured intentions to emigrate with the following question:

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

One in three Trinbagonians (32%) intend to emigrate in the next three years. This is similar to the regional average (33%). Many of Trinidad & Tobago's Caribbean neighbors have significantly higher levels of emigration intentions, including Haiti (79%), Jamaica (57%), Suriname (47%), Grenada (37%), and The Bahamas (35%).

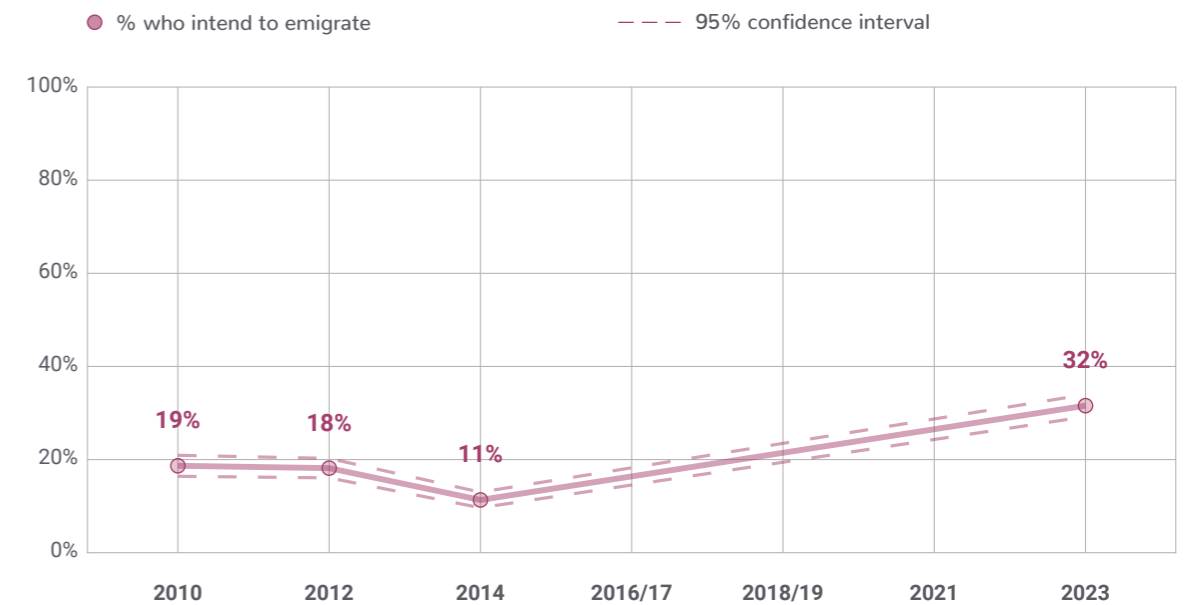
Intentions to emigrate reach their highest point in 2023 (32%). These intentions fell to their lowest point in 2014 (11%) after hovering around 18% in 2010 and 2012. As the Venezuelan migrant crisis has spilled into the Caribbean and the COVID-19 pandemic led to job loss and other economic issues, intentions to emigrate have nearly tripled in Trinidad & Tobago between 2014 and 2023.³

Almost one in three intend to emigrate from Trinidad & Tobago, similar to the regional average but lower than other Caribbean countries like Haiti and Jamaica



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Emigration intentions among Trinbagonians reach their highest level



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

Almost a third of Trinbagonians look elsewhere for better economic opportunities and livelihoods.

What characteristics predict intentions to emigrate from Trinidad & Tobago? On average, intentions to emigrate are highest among men, younger individuals (18-25 years old), and more highly educated individuals.^{4,5} Wealth and place of residence are not significant predictors of intentions to emigrate.

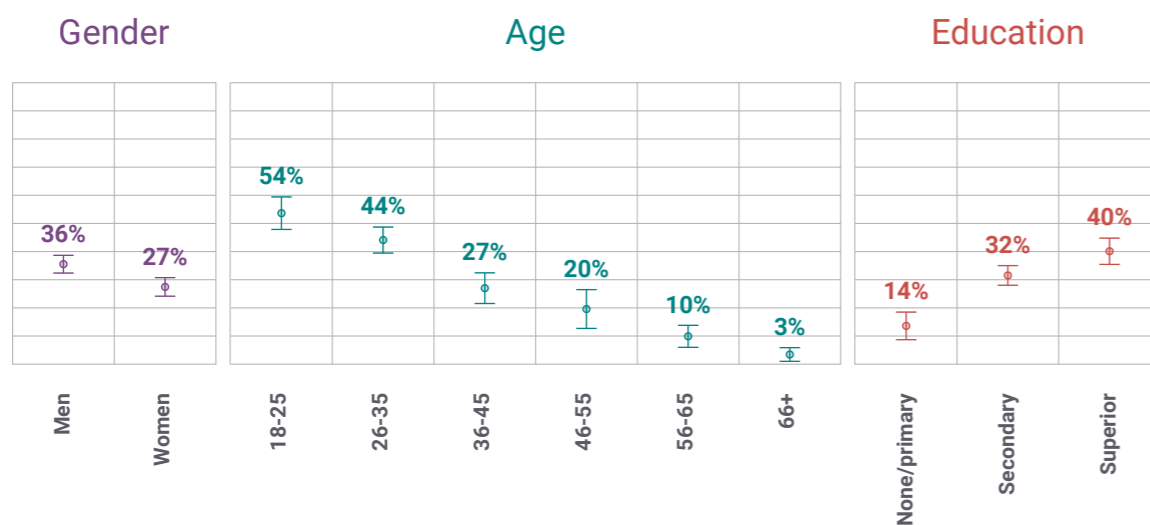
Intentions to emigrate peaked in 2023 in Trinidad & Tobago, as nearly one in three (32%) report that they want to leave in the next three years. This analysis suggests that men, youth, and those with higher levels of education are the primary groups intending to emigrate. High-skilled workers may lack sufficient incentives to stay, seeing greater opportunities to pursue their trades and obtain better economic outcomes elsewhere.

Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the migrant crisis in Haiti and Venezuela has spilled over into Trinidad & Tobago, with around one in three Trinbagonians now expressing an intention to leave their country in the next three years.

Men, younger, and higher educated Trinbagonians are more likely to intend to emigrate

• % who intend to emigrate

— 95% confidence interval



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Notes

- Alexander Tripp is a PhD candidate at Vanderbilt University. He specializes in Latin American political behavior and public opinion, particularly in the context of immigration.
- International Organization for Migration 2020.
- Comisión Económica para América Latina n.d.
- I performed a logistic regression where the dependent variable is coded as 1 if a respondent intends to emigrate in the next three years and 0 if not. I include sociodemographic predictors in the model—gender (women vs men/other), age cohorts, wealth, place of residence (urban vs rural), and education (none/primary vs secondary vs superior).
- In Trinidad & Tobago 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, we do not collapse categories. In Trinidad & Tobago in 2023, 0.06% of respondents identified as a gender other than man or woman, 0.06% indicated “do not know,” and 0.24% did not answer.

A Recovering Economy is not Felt by all Trinbagonians

Adam Wolsky

Trinidad & Tobago faced profound economic challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by disruptions to its tourism and oil industries. While signs of recovery emerge, the nation grapples with persistent hurdles such as fluctuating GDP growth and inflation rates. Navigating unemployment and crime amid external market volatility further complicates its path to economic stability.

Insights from the AmericasBarometer survey shed light on citizens' perceptions of the economy and their outlook. Additionally, we explore issues of food and water insecurity, uncovering their implications for satisfaction with and support for democratic governance. Through this analysis, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of Trinidad & Tobago's economic challenges and their socio-political ramifications.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Nearly three in four Trinbagonians think the country's economy has worsened in the past twelve months. This is an over 30-percentage point increase since the country was last surveyed in 2014.
- However, one in two believes that their own economic situation has worsened in the past twelve months. Those with lower levels of education and wealth are more likely to report that their own economic situation has worsened.
- A majority of Trinbagonians are somewhat or very hopeful for the future. Nevertheless, those with less education and less wealth are less likely to say they are hopeful for the future.
- Around 35% of Trinbagonians say their household ran out of food, and about one in four said they worried about running out of water in the past three months. Food and water insecurity are more common among those with primary education or less and the lowest levels of wealth.
- Perceptions of a worsening national and personal economic situation as well as experiences with food insecurity reduce satisfaction and support for democracy. The negative relationships between support and satisfaction with democracy are strongest among those who have a negative outlook on the national economy.

72% TRINIDAD & TOBAGO'S ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

think the national economy has worsened in the 12 months prior to the survey.

In 2020 and 2021, countries throughout the Caribbean region experienced large drops in their GDP as the COVID-19 pandemic had all but curtailed the region's tourism industry, one of the biggest drivers of economic growth. Trinidad & Tobago was hit even harder because of declines in the oil and gas industry—a trend already in motion for years beforehand but was exacerbated by the pandemic in 2020.¹ By 2023, GDP growth began to recover in Trinidad & Tobago, reaching over three percent. However, even before the outbreak of COVID-19, the country had struggled with low GDP growth, with negative growth rates between 2016-2018.

Despite negative and low growth in the mid to late 2010s, inflation began to ease between 2014-2020. Yet, by 2022, inflation returned to nearly the same level as in 2014 (6%) as Trinidad & Tobago experienced a 5-percentage point rise since 2020. While the country recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, Trinidad & Tobago experienced a combination of high inflation with low and negative levels of growth. Although growth is now positive, the country has not fully made up for the losses from 2020 and 2021.² Unemployment appears to be relatively low at about 5% in the third quarter of 2022.³ Nevertheless, around 11% of the public indicate they are looking for a job in the AmericasBarometer survey in 2023, which may suggest official unemployment statistics are masking the actual percentage of job seekers.

The Central Bank suggested that the economic situation in the country would improve in 2023.⁴ The return of Trinidad & Tobago's famous Carnival celebration also

provided a small but much-needed boost to the economy.⁵ Yet, increased crime led the U.S. State Department to issue a travel advisory in 2022 recommending that Americans avoid traveling in many regions of the country, including the country's capital.⁶ The recovery of Trinidad & Tobago's economy thus remains precarious as crime may undermine the recovery of the tourism industry, and the country is vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets for oil and gas industries.

NEGATIVE ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS HAVE REACHED RECORD HIGHS

Although security issues are the top concern of most Trinbagonians, economic issues (13%) and unemployment (10%) are the second and third most mentioned problems. Men, the younger population, wealthier, and rural individuals are more likely to mention economic issues than women, older, less wealthy, and urban individuals.⁷

Even though security issues are of bigger concern to Trinbagonians than economic issues, the public in Trinidad & Tobago does not have a positive outlook on their country's economic situation. The AmericasBarometer uses the following question to tap into attitudes about the country's economic situation:

Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago?

A mere 9% of Trinbagonians say the economy has improved over the past 12 months and nearly three in four say it has worsened. Views of the economy have

gotten significantly more negative since 2014 (Figure 2.1), when less than 40% said the economy had worsened and 18% said the economy had improved. Men, those with higher education, those with more wealth, and older individuals are somewhat less likely to say the economic situation of the country worsened over the past twelve months. In 2023, a far greater proportion of the public in Trinidad & Tobago perceive the national economy as worsening compared to other Caribbean countries like The Bahamas and Grenada, but perceptions are not as sour as Argentina or Suriname (Figure 2.2).

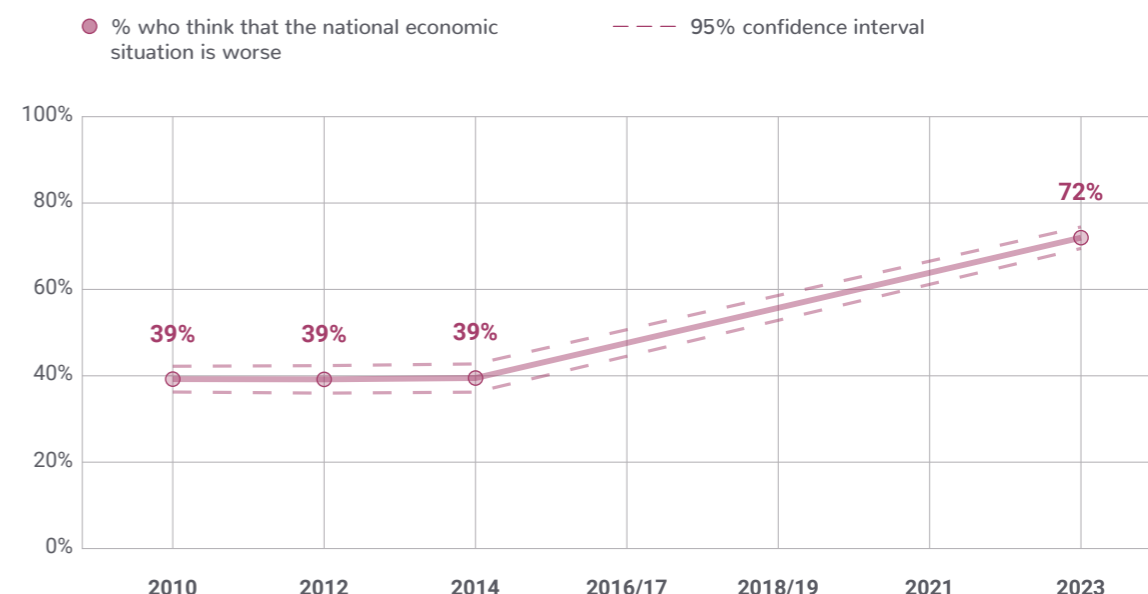
Individuals may differentiate between evaluations of their own pocketbooks versus how the country is doing.

The AmericasBarometer uses the following question to tap individuals' perceptions of their own economic situation:

Do you think that your economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?

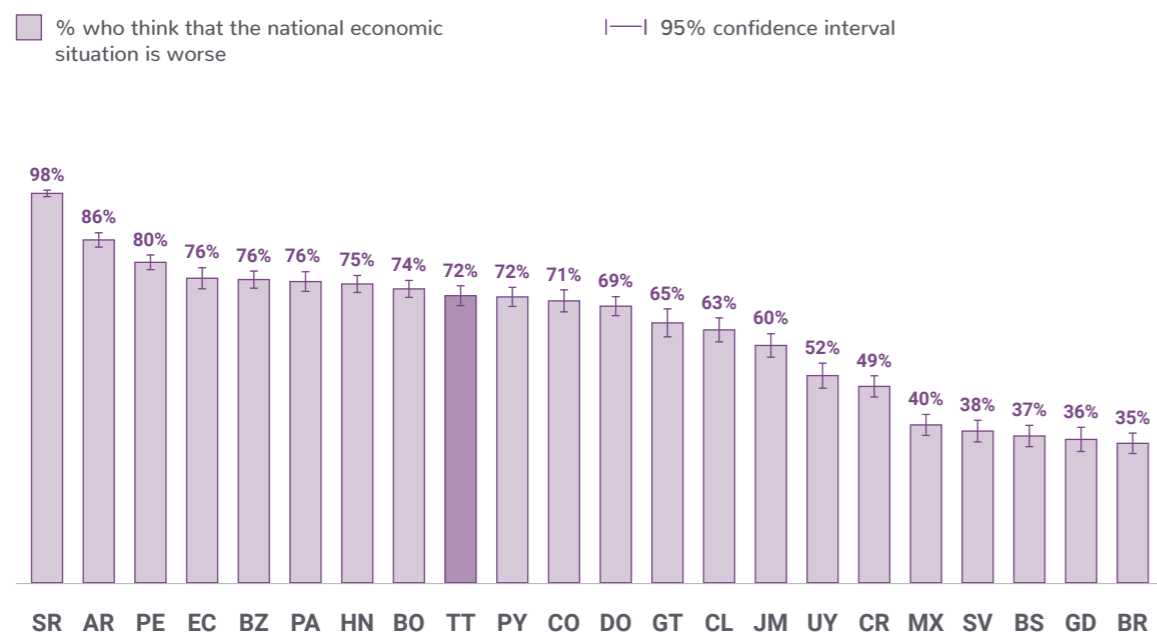
The Trinbagonian public is less negative about their own economic evaluations compared to the outlook of the country. Nevertheless, one in two Trinbagonians say their own economic status has worsened, a 28-percentage point increase since 2014 (Figure 2.3). Furthermore, only 17% of citizens say that their personal economic situation has improved over the past twelve months. In 2010 and 2012, at least 30% believed their economic

Figure 2.1 There has been an over 30-percentage point jump in those who say that Trinidad & Tobago's economy has worsened between 2014 and 2023



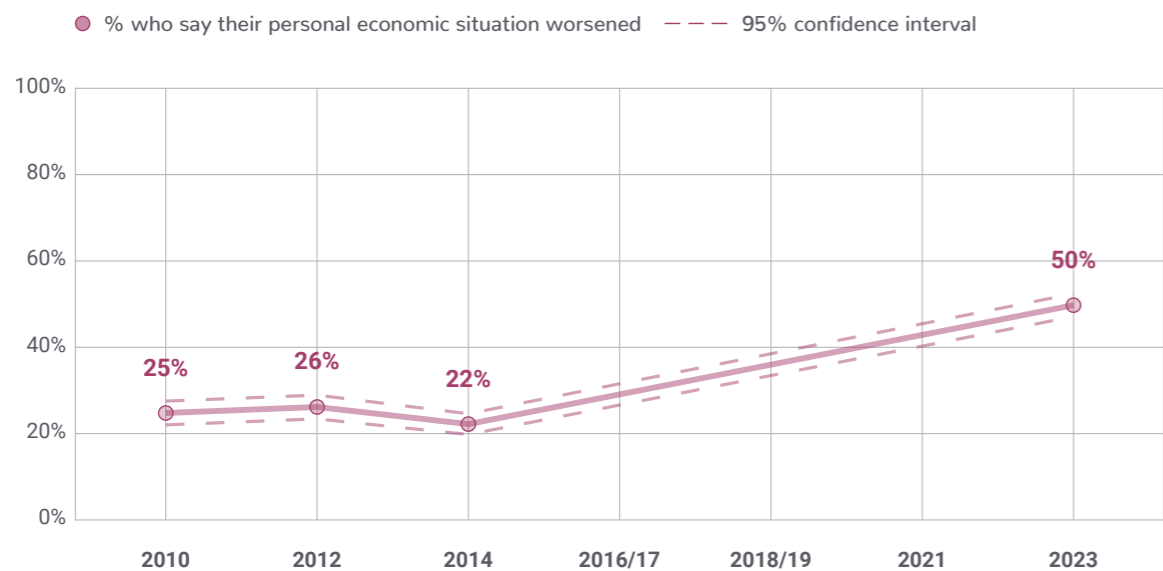
Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

Figure 2.2 Trinidad & Tobago's negative evaluations of the national economy are worse than in most countries in the region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Figure 2.3 Negative evaluations of Trinbagonians' personal economic situation have increased, more than doubling since 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

50%
of Trinbagonians think their personal economic situation has worsened.

situation had improved over the previous 12 months. Those in other countries in the region are far less negative about their personal economic situation—only 25% of Bahamians and 33% of Grenadians say that their personal economic situation had worsened over the past twelve months in 2023 (Figure 2.4).

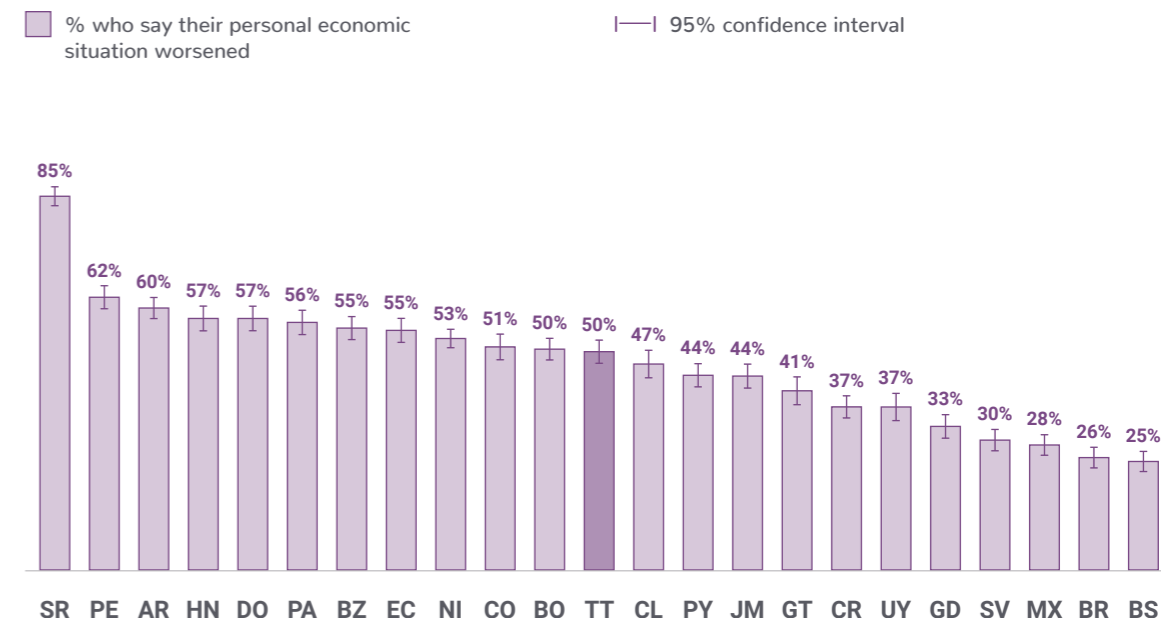
education. This suggests that those with the fewest resources may be feeling the impacts of inflation more and are less likely to experience the benefits of Trinidad & Tobago's economic recovery.⁸

In Trinidad & Tobago, there are no significant differences between younger and older individuals, men and women, and urban and rural individuals in perceiving a worsening personal economic situation. Those with less wealth and less education are far more likely to say their personal economic situation has worsened compared to wealthier individuals and those with higher

DESPITE NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY, MOST FEEL HOPEFUL FOR THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE

It appears that current evaluations of the economy are negative, however, Trinbagonians may have a different outlook on the country's future. The AmericasBarometer asks the following question about perceptions of the future of the country:

Figure 2.4 Personal economic evaluations are worse in Trinidad & Tobago than in Caribbean neighbors Grenada and The Bahamas



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

And, thinking of the future... How much do you think that there is a good future for you and your family here in Trinidad & Tobago? Very/Somewhat/A little/Not at all

A majority of Trinbagonians feel hope for the future of the country (Figure 2.5), but not all groups are equally likely to say they are somewhat or very hopeful for the future. Younger and urban individuals are somewhat less hopeful for the future compared to older and urban individuals. However, those with primary education or less are nearly 20 percentage points less likely to say they feel hopeful for the future compared to those with a post-secondary education. Similarly, those who are the least wealthy are over 16 percentage points less likely to express hopefulness for the future compared to the wealthiest. Hope for the future is also associated with

individual and country-level assessments of the economy—those with perceptions of a worsening economy are far less likely to say they are hopeful for the future compared to those with neutral or positive economic evaluations. This suggests that those who already have economic and human capital are the most positive about the future of the country.

TWO-THIRDS BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD INTERVENE TO REDUCE INCOME INEQUALITY

One reason why Trinbagonians may be less than sanguine about their own pocketbooks and the future of the country is that few receive government assistance in the form of money, food, or products

13%
of Trinbagonians receive regular assistance from the government.

or from conditional cash transfers/food cards. The AmericasBarometer asks the following questions to assess how many Trinbagonians receive goods or money from the government:

Do you or someone in your household receive regular assistance in the form of money, food, or products from the government, not including pensions?

Now, talking specifically about the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Program (TCCTP)/food card, are you or someone in your house a beneficiary of this program?

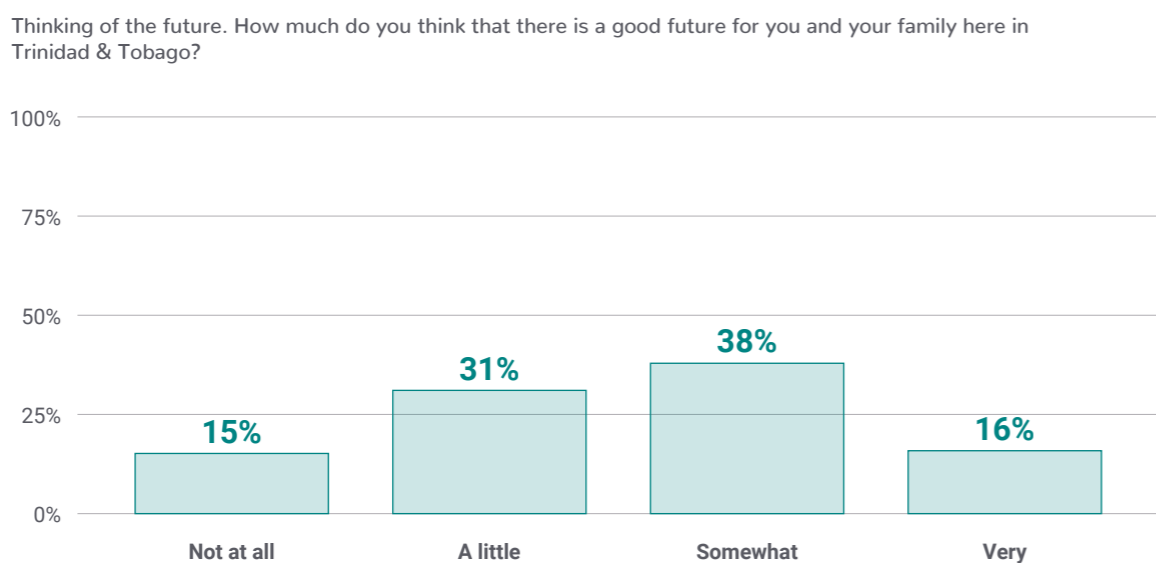
Only 13% of Trinbagonians receive assistance from the government in some form—10% saying they received money, food, or products, and 7% saying they are a

TCCTP/food card beneficiary. Those under 65 and those who are the least wealthy are more likely to report being a beneficiary of these programs. Compared to other countries this is relatively low—over 20% of Dominicans and Bahamians receive government assistance and at least 20% of those in eight countries in the region receive conditional cash transfers.

Do people want the government to play a more active role in offering goods and money? The AmericasBarometer asks the following question related to government policies on reducing income inequality:⁹

The government of Trinidad & Tobago should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Figure 2.5 Most Trinbagonians feel somewhat or very hopeful for the future, but around 15% say they have no hope at all



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

While relatively few Trinbagonians receive government assistance, over two thirds agree that the government should implement stronger policies to reduce income inequality.

35%
of Trinbagonians
ran out of food
in three months
prior to the
survey.

Even though a low proportion of the population receives government benefits, Trinbagonians want the government to play a more active role in providing benefits. Although there has been a 12-percentage point drop since 2010, in 2023, over two-thirds of Trinbagonians agree that the government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality. Trinidad & Tobago has a similar proportion of support for inequality reduction to Caribbean neighbors Jamaica, The Bahamas, and Grenada, but much less than Costa Rica and Panama where around four in five express support for government intervention. Younger Trinbagonians and women are more likely to support government policies reducing income inequality than older individuals and men. Interestingly, there are no differences when looking at wealth, suggesting that even the wealthiest Trinbagonians value a more equal distribution of resources in society.

AmericasBarometer asks the following question:

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

Food insecurity afflicts 35% of the Trinbagonian population, far less than the 52% regionwide figure from the WFP survey. Nevertheless, this has been an over 18-percentage point rise in food insecurity in Trinidad & Tobago since 2012. Among those who said they had not experienced food insecurity in the past three months, less than 4% said they had experienced it in the past year.¹¹ The oldest Trinbagonians are far less likely to experience food insecurity compared to those 65 and under, but the most striking differences in food insecurity are between those who have the least wealth and the most wealth—a 45-percentage point gap. Three in five in the lowest wealth category have experienced food insecurity compared to only around 15% in the wealthiest group. Trinidad & Tobago’s level of food insecurity is significantly lower than its Caribbean neighbors Haiti and Jamaica, but far higher than Chile and Brazil (**Figure 2.6**).

In addition to challenges with food insecurity, seven countries in the Caribbean including Trinidad & Tobago are some of the most water-stressed in the world, with a heavy dependence on rainwater as the main source of fresh water.¹² Trinidad & Tobago is not officially classified as water-scarce by the United Nations, but the country only has one water utility: the Water and Sewage Authority (WASA). WASA does not have sufficient capacity to meet the country’s water needs and is inefficient in its water use and supply system. Thus, many may

experience water insecurity not because the country lacks rainwater, but because of issues with WASA.¹³ To assess water insecurity, the AmericasBarometer asked the following questions:

In the last three months, did you or anyone else in your household worry that you did not have enough drinking water to meet all your household needs?

And in the last three months, how often did you or someone else in your household worry that you did not have enough drinking water to meet all your household needs? Rarely/Sometimes/Frequently/Always

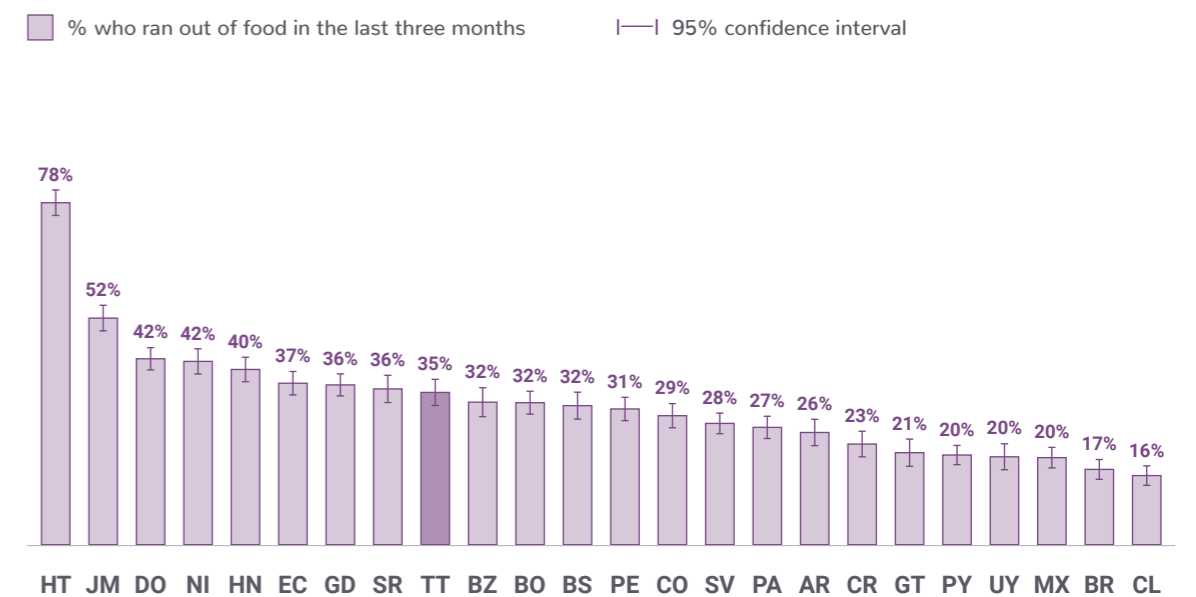
Given the importance of water to life, it is striking that over 24% of Trinbagonians are worried that they do not have enough water for their household. Among those who are concerned about water needs, around 38% are worried frequently or always about their lack of water. Like food insecurity, worry about water insecurity is felt most strongly among those with the lowest levels of education and wealth. In addition, the oldest group of Trinbagonians is far less likely to experience water insecurity than those under 65. Despite the higher proportion of Trinbagonians who are satisfied with water services compared with any other services, only 20% of those who are water insecure are satisfied with water services compared to 63% of those who are not.

24%
worry they
do not have
enough water
for their
household.

OVER ONE-THIRD EXPERIENCED FOOD INSECURITY AND NEARLY ONE-QUARTER WORRY ABOUT WATER INSECURITY

In a survey conducted in May 2023 by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Caribbean Community, a majority (52%) of those in the English-speaking Caribbean reported experiencing food insecurity in the previous three months. Despite this high prevalence of food insecurity, this is a 10-percentage point decrease compared to the previous survey by the same organization conducted in August 2022. Perceptions that food prices were high in the past three months were nearly universal, and these high prices have been in part due to climate shocks.¹⁰ To assess food insecurity in the country, the

Figure 2.6 Food insecurity is worse for Trinidad & Tobago’s Caribbean neighbors Haiti and Jamaica



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

15%

of those who have experienced food insecurity are satisfied with democracy.

POOR ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS AND FOOD INSECURITY REDUCE SATISFACTION WITH AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

of those who have experienced food insecurity are satisfied with democracy.

Compared to previous waves of the AmericasBarometer, economic evaluations both at the country and personal levels have worsened, and food insecurity affects a greater proportion of the population. Previous research suggests that satisfaction with democracy may be undermined by poor evaluations of the economy, but there is less consistent evidence about the relationship between support for democracy and economic assessments.¹⁴ The relationship between food insecurity and democratic attitudes

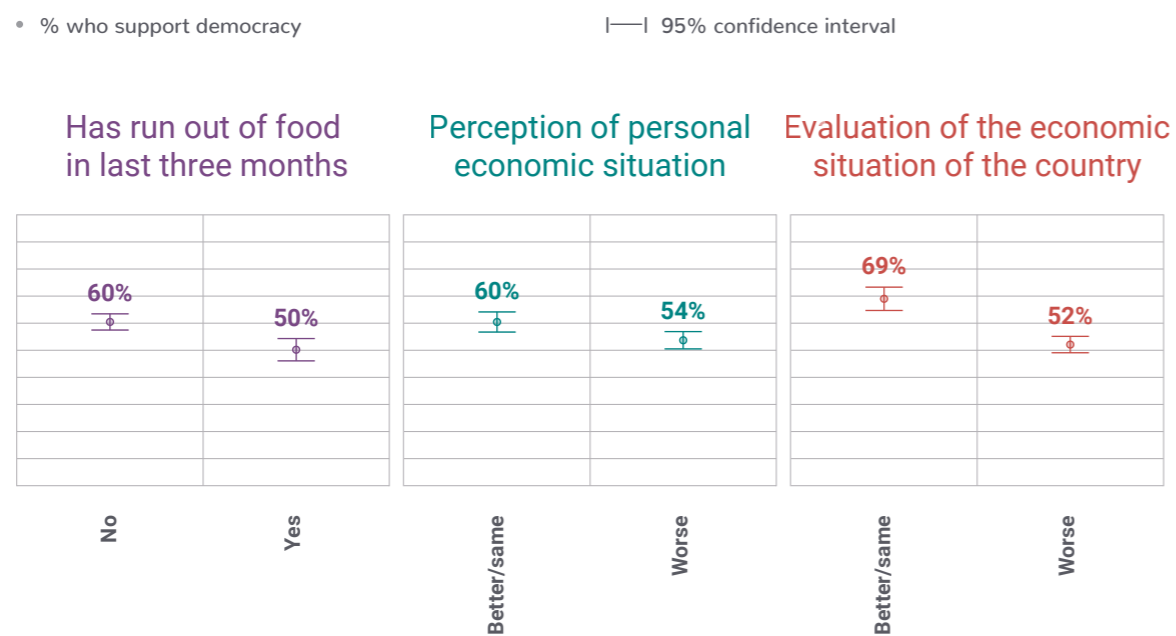
is underexplored, but it may be expected that if a democracy cannot provide food for its citizens, those citizens will have poor attitudes toward democracy.

Poor economic evaluations of one's economic situation, as well as food insecurity, reduce support for democracy by 14 and 10 percentage points, respectively (Figure 2.7). However, perceiving the country's economic situation as worsening has an even stronger relationship with support for democracy. Those who perceive the economy is better or the same as twelve months ago are 17 percentage points more likely to support democracy over other forms of government.¹⁵

Poor economic evaluations and food insecurity significantly reduce support for democracy, with support decreasing by 14 and 10 percentage points, respectively.

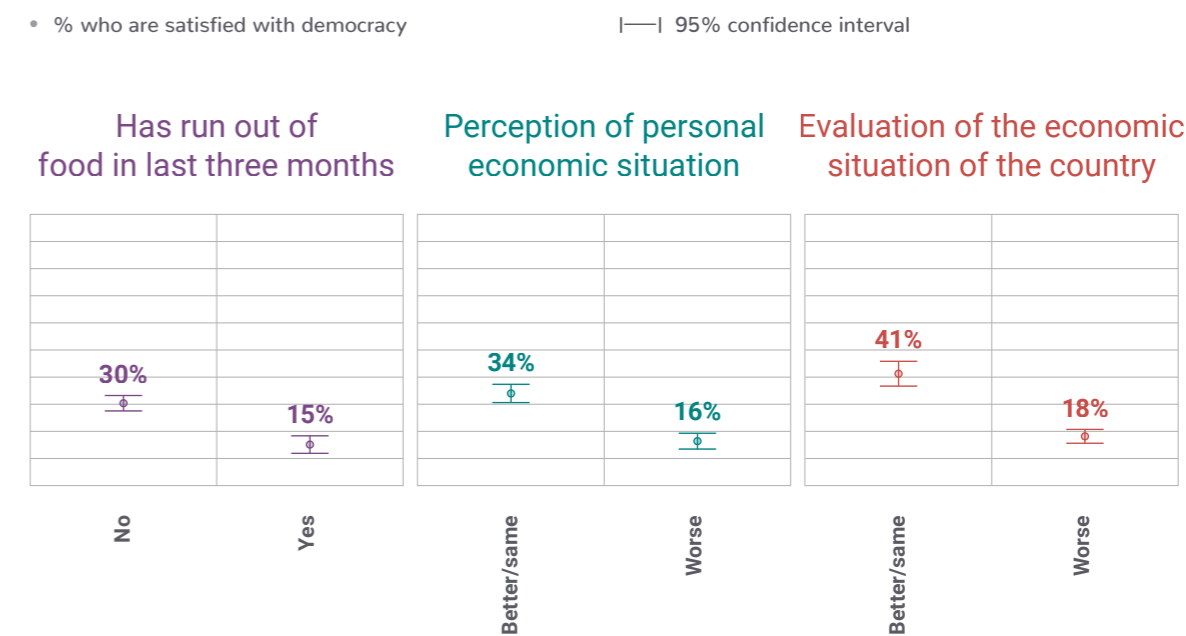
When the economy is not working well, citizens may tie this to a failure of democracy. Those who believe their country's or their economic situation is improving or is the same compared to 12 months ago are 23 and 18 percentage points more likely to say they are satisfied with democracy compared to those who perceive the economic situation has worsened the past 12 months, respectively (Figure 2.8). Only 15% of those who have faced a food shortage in the past three months are satisfied with democracy, compared to 30% who have not. Although satisfaction with democracy is quite low in Trinidad & Tobago, perceiving a declining economic situation as well as experiencing food insecurity reduces satisfaction with democracy even further.

Figure 2.7 Poor economic evaluations and food insecurity are associated with lower support for democracy in Trinidad & Tobago



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Figure 2.8 Poor economic evaluations and food insecurity are also associated with less satisfaction with democracy in Trinidad & Tobago



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Conclusions

Evaluations of the country's economy has the strongest relationship to support for democracy and satisfaction with the way democracy works. This suggests that a strong economy may not only increase trust in the government and improve satisfaction with democracy, but it may also bolster attitudes about democracy as a preferential form of government over others. If the vast majority of Trinidad & Tobago's citizens continue to evaluate the country's economy as worsening, the public may feel even less satisfied with democracy, and support for democracy as a concept may drop below most of the region.

Notes

- 1 Martin and Folkerts 2021.
- 2 International Monetary Fund 2023.
- 3 Douglas 2023.
- 4 CMC News 2023.
- 5 Newsday Reporter 2023.
- 6 Chee Hing 2022.
- 7 Differences across sociodemographic characteristics discussed in this chapter are confirmed with a multivariate regression model that includes gender, age, level of education, level of wealth, and place of residence (urban vs rural).
- 8 Daily Express 2023.
- 9 Responses were given on a 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree" scale. The analyses here focus on the percentage of Trinbagonians who responded 5-7.
- 10 Phagoo 2023.
- 11 Only those who said they had not experienced food insecurity in the past three months were asked if they had experienced food insecurity in the past year.
- 12 *Caribbean Today* 2023.
- 13 Regulated Industries Commission 2023.
- 14 Bratton and Mattes 2001; Cordero and Simón 2016; Fernandez and Kuenzi 2010.
- 15 The results in this section are from a series of a multivariate regression models with economic evaluations at the country and personal levels as well as food insecurity controlling for standard socioeconomic and demographic variables including gender, age, urban/rural residence, wealth, and education. The bivariate relationships are statistically significant and remain significant when controlling for the socioeconomic and demographic variables.

While Trinbagonians are more concerned about security issues in the country, they still perceive poor economic conditions for themselves and the country. These poor economic evaluations are tied to worsening opinions on democracy.

Over a third of Trinbagonians say they are food insecure.

Food insecurity among households continues to be a pressing socioeconomic issue in Trinidad & Tobago, with over a third of adults experiencing food insecurity in 2023. A major contributor to widespread food insecurity was the COVID-19 pandemic, which undoubtedly posed severe economic challenges for both governments and households.² The social and economic impediments inflicted by the pandemic continue to have a residual impact, including on levels of food insecurity.³

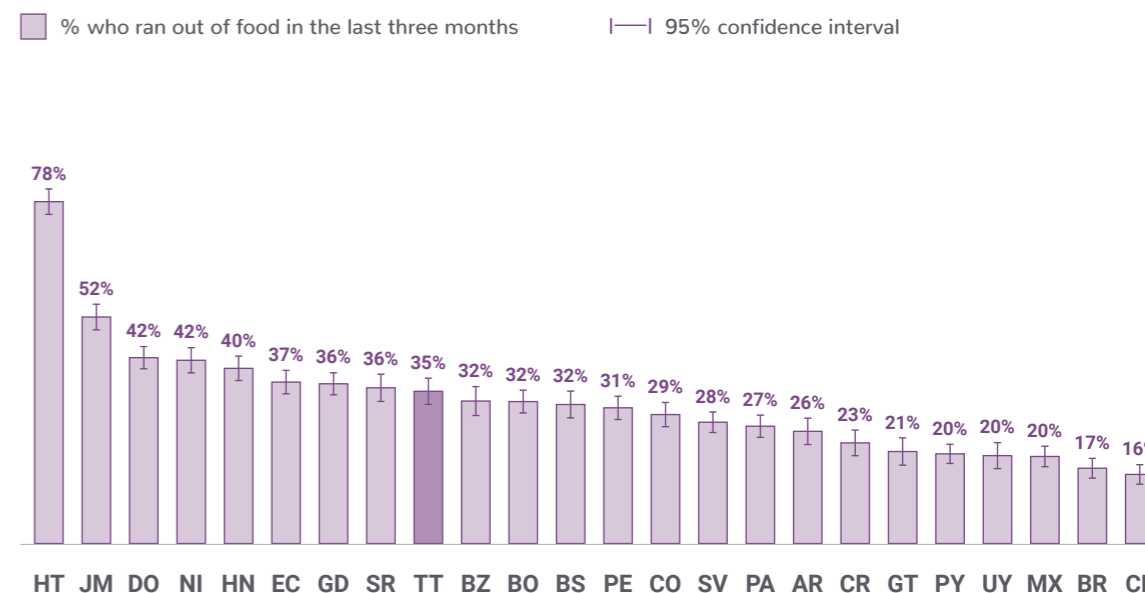
The AmericasBarometer measures experiences with food insecurity with the following question:

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

In 2023, more than a third (35%) of adults in Trinidad & Tobago faced food shortages at some point in the three months prior to the survey. Out of 24 countries surveyed in 2023, Trinidad & Tobago ranks 9th in food insecurity and is at a similar level as the average of the region (32%). Caribbean countries that have higher levels of food insecurity than Trinidad & Tobago include Haiti (78%), Jamaica (52%), Grenada (36%), and Suriname (36%).

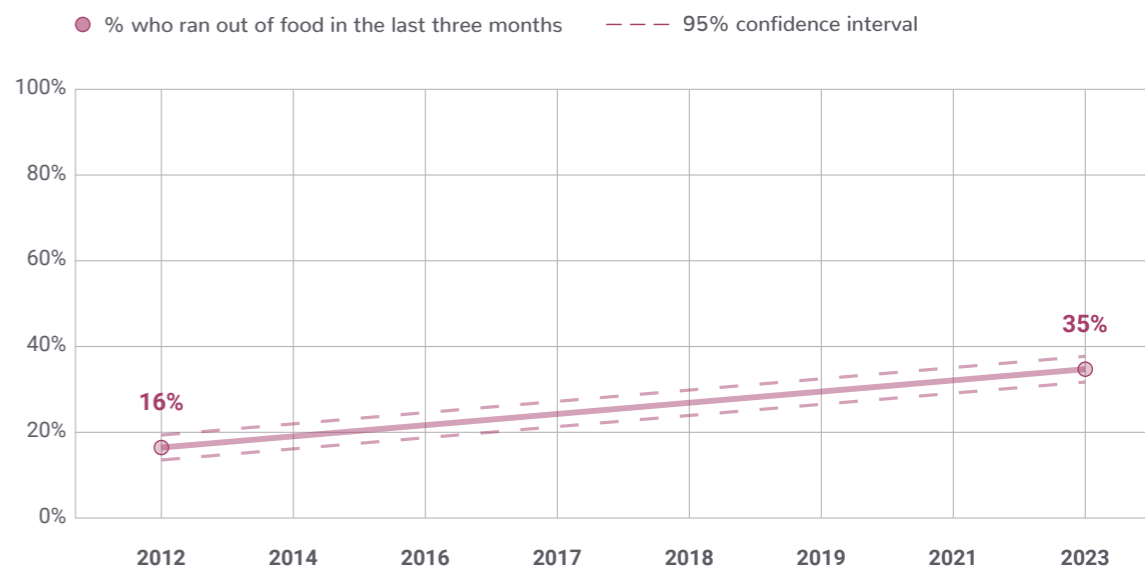
The percentage of Trinbagonians who experienced food insecurity increased by 19 percentage points between 2012 and 2023. During this period, the island country faced numerous economic challenges, which subsequently reduced the quality of life of its inhabitants. The fall in the country's production of natural gas and oil and its subsequent decrease in earnings

Over a third of Trinbagonians are food insecure, a rate similar to the LAC regional average



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

The rate of food insecurity in Trinidad & Tobago more than doubled between 2012 and 2023



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2012-2023

has inflicted significant limitations on economic growth.⁵ This further constrained the kinds of government-sponsored programs and projects that could provide for the welfare of Trinbagonians.⁵

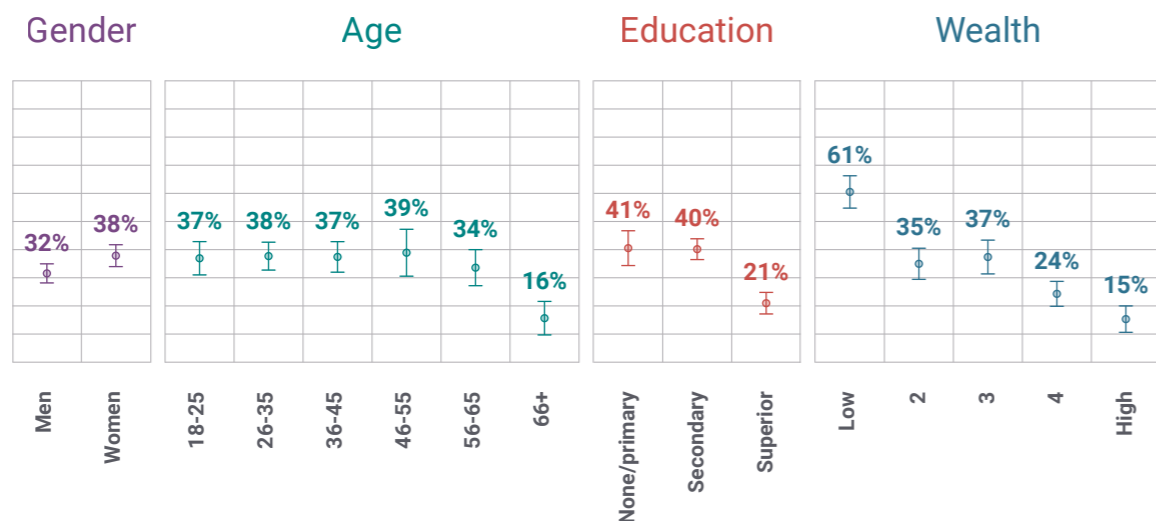
What individual characteristics predict the likelihood of food insecurity among Trinbagonians in 2023?⁶ On average, more women experience food insecurity compared to men (38% and 32%, respectively).⁷ The oldest age group (66 and older) has the lowest rate of food insecurity compared to other age groups. Those with no, primary, or secondary education have higher levels of food

insecurity than those with a superior education. Finally, the wealthier people are, the less likely they are to face food insecurity.

Overall, in 2023, over one third of Trinbagonians experience food insecurity, an increase from 2012. Trinbagonians belonging to the most vulnerable socioeconomic groups have a higher likelihood of experiencing food insecurity. Alleviating food insecurity remains a challenge in Trinidad & Tobago. Solutions will require policymaking that targets the improvement of socioeconomic inequalities.

Food insecurity in Trinidad & Tobago is more likely among women, younger and middle-aged people, those with lower levels of education, and the least wealthy

• % who ran out of food in the last three months |—| 95% confidence interval



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Notes

- 1 Stanley Zhao was an undergraduate research assistant at the LAPOP Lab in 2023. He is currently a fourth-year student at Vanderbilt University studying Public Policy and Economics.
- 2 FAO, IFAD, PAHO, UNICEF, and WFP 2021.
- 3 World Food Programme 2023.
- 4 Krauss 2023.
- 5 See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/trinidadandtobago/overview>
- 6 I performed a logistic regression where the dependent variable is coded as 1 if a respondent is food insecure and 0 if not. I include sociodemographic predictors in the model—gender (women vs men/other), age cohorts, wealth, place of residence (urban vs rural), and education (none/primary vs secondary vs superior).
- 7 In 2023, there were insufficient cases in Trinidad & Tobago to report out respondents who identified as “neither man nor woman” and respondents who indicated “no response” or “don’t know” at any level of confidence. Since these categories are exclusive, we do not collapse categories. In Trinidad & Tobago in 2023, 0.06% of respondents identified as a gender other than man or woman, 0.06% indicated “do not know,” and 0.24% did not answer.

Low Trust in Institutions and Dissatisfaction with Democracy

Adam Wolsky

Trinidad & Tobago's democracy faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 outbreak. In their 2022 report, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project downgraded the Caribbean nation from a liberal democracy to an electoral democracy, primarily due to drops in transparent laws, predictable enforcement, and access to justice for women.¹

Despite the weakening of democracy during the pandemic, Freedom House's most recent report in 2023 gives the country a rating as *free*—a rating they have enjoyed since 2005—with high scores for free and fair elections and freedom of speech and assembly. Yet, Freedom House scores the country lower in safeguards against corruption and issues regarding the rule of law, similar to the weak spots cited by V-Dem.² This chapter will demonstrate that high scores in democracy indices do not reflect attitudes toward democracy and institutions from the results of the 2023 AmericasBarometer survey.

Prime Minister Rowley vowed not to delay elections back in May

2020,³ unlike many countries, due to the public health emergency.⁴ The incumbent prime minister won a second term in August 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that shut down travel to the country and resulted in only eight deaths within a population of 1.3 million at the time.⁵ The elections were considered free and fair but turnout was relatively low at 58%, down nearly 9 percentage points from the previous election. Moreover, there were no international election observers because they could not afford the 14-day quarantine required at the time.

Rowley inherited a difficult economic situation, a tourism sector shut down by the pandemic, and an influx of migrants due to the worsening economic and human rights situation in Venezuela. The 2023 AmericasBarometer survey shows that only 23% of Trinbagonians approve of Rowley—versus 35% who disapprove. This disapproval of Rowley is part of a greater malaise with democracy and institutions among the Trinbagonian public.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Only one quarter of Trinbagonians are satisfied with democracy. This represents the lowest level of satisfaction in democracy since the AmericasBarometer began surveying there in 2010.
- Support for the political system has declined significantly since 2014. Only 20% of Trinbagonians believe that basic rights are protected and fewer than one in four believe that courts guarantee a free trial.
- Trust in political leaders and all governing institutions—the prime minister, the parliament, and the local government—is less than 25%. Only 10% of Trinbagonians have a lot of trust in the national government to do what is right.
- Three in ten Trinbagonians trust their elections, the second highest support for an institution after the Defence Force.
- Despite declining support for democracy and satisfaction with democracy, few Trinbagonians prefer illiberal alternatives. Fewer than one in five support closing parliament in a crisis, less than 25% support limiting the voice of the opposition, and fewer than one in three support direct democracy over representative democracy.

THERE HAVE BEEN STRIKING DROPS IN BOTH SUPPORT FOR AND SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY

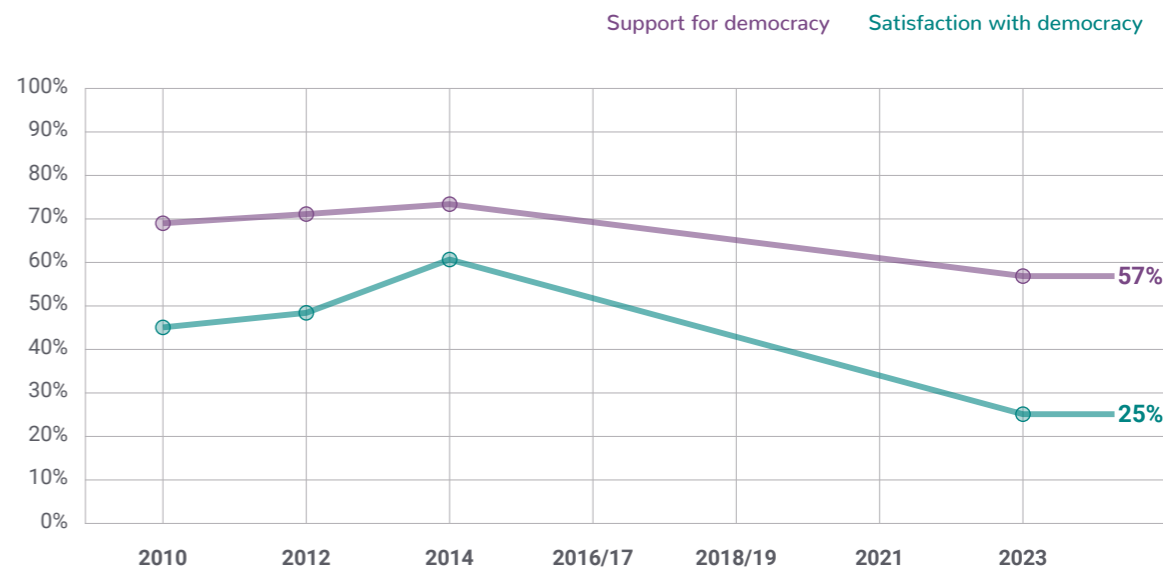
Democracy indices consider Trinidad & Tobago’s democracy to be robust, but do Trinbagonians believe that democracy is the best form of government? Moreover, how does the public evaluate the performance of their own democracy?

Despite a drastic drop in support for democracy in the last decade, in 2023 most Trinbagonians believe that democracy is better than any other form of government (Figure 3.1). Still, over 40% either disagree or feel neutral

about democracy. Between 2010 and 2014, support for democracy reached around 70% and subsequently fell by 17 percentage points. There has been a 11-percentage point increase (from 11% to 22%) in those who disagree that democracy is the best form of government. Even more notably, satisfaction with democracy has dropped 36 percentage points from 61% to 25% between 2014 and 2023 (Figure 3.1).

Over 20% of Trinbagonians say they are very dissatisfied with democracy in 2023, compared to just over 8% in 2014. Trinidad & Tobago finds itself near the bottom in the LAC region for satisfaction with democracy. Although their Caribbean

Figure 3.1 Support for and satisfaction with democracy among Trinbagonians fell sharply since their last measurement in 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

25% of Trinbagonians are satisfied with democracy, one of the lowest levels in the region.

neighbors Jamaica, Suriname, and Haiti also have a low level of satisfaction with democracy, Trinidad & Tobago is far below El Salvador and Uruguay as well as the Caribbean nation of Grenada (Figure 3.2).

Both support for and satisfaction with democracy are the highest among the same demographic and socioeconomic groups.⁸ Trinidad & Tobago's most educated citizens support and are more satisfied with democracy than those who are less educated. The least wealthy have the lowest support for democracy—fewer than 50% agree that democracy is the best form of government—and only around 16% are satisfied with democracy. Most notably, younger Trinbagonians

are less likely to support democracy and have lower satisfaction with democracy than older individuals, which may be an ominous sign for the future of democracy in the country.

THE PUBLIC HAS LOW SUPPORT FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Trinbagonians are less supportive of democracy and are far more likely to say they are dissatisfied with democracy in 2023 compared to the results of the 2014 AmericasBarometer. Trinbagonians may become less supportive of the concept of democracy and more dissatisfied with how democracy functions when they lose

confidence in their political system and institutions. The AmericasBarometer asks the following five questions to assess system support:⁹

To what extent do you think the courts in Trinidad & Tobago guarantee a fair trial?

To what extent do you respect the political institutions of Trinidad & Tobago?

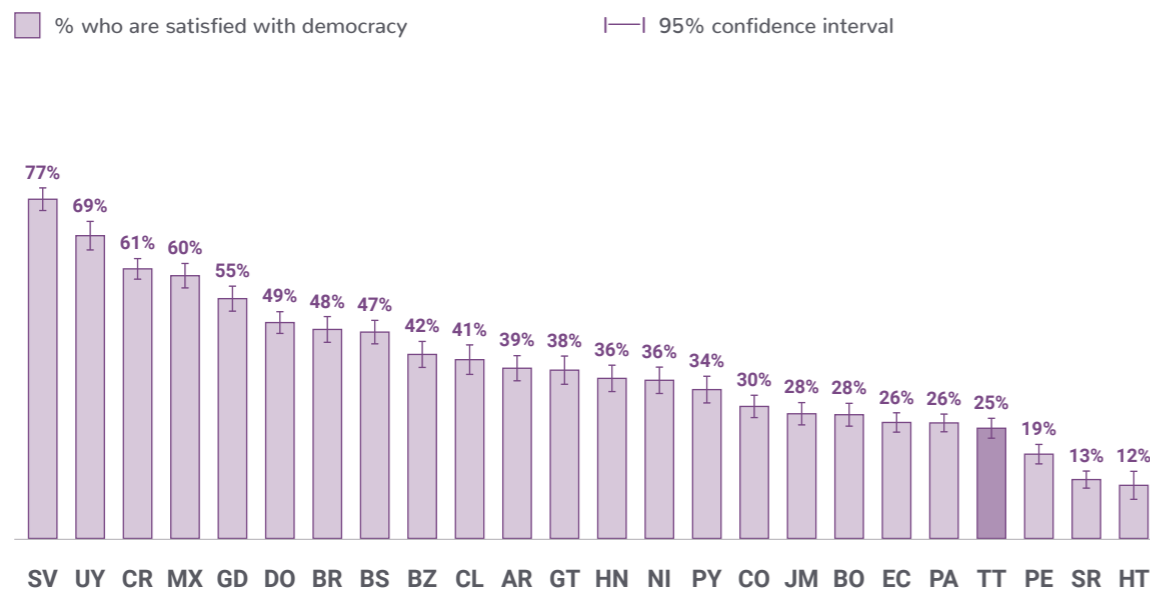
To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of Trinidad & Tobago?

To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of Trinidad & Tobago?

To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of Trinidad & Tobago?

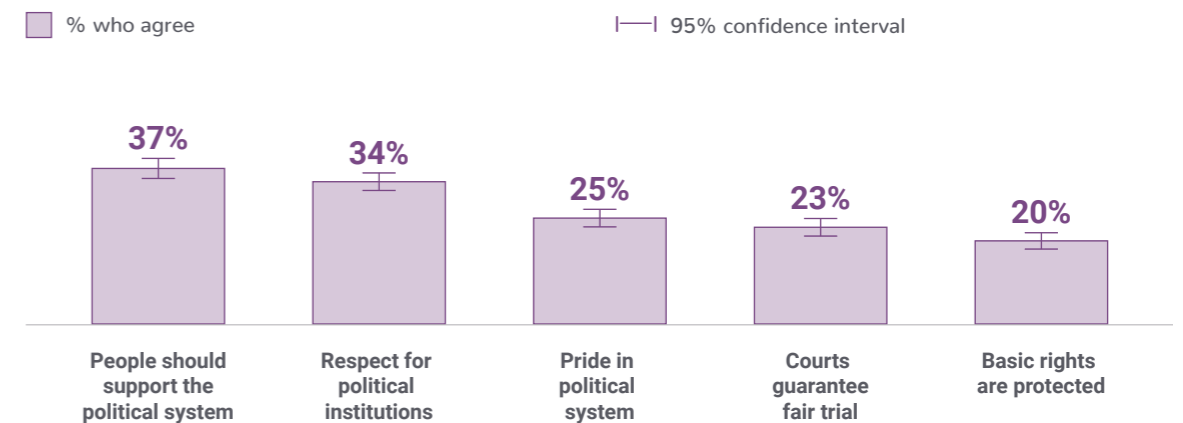
Not only was system support in Trinidad & Tobago low in 2014, but each component has declined from 2014 to 2023. In 2023, fewer than 25% of Trinbagonians believe that the courts guarantee a fair trial and 20% believe basic rights are protected compared to 40% and 38% in 2014, respectively (Figure 3.3). This suggests that the public has low levels of confidence in the judicial system, which is consistent with the fact that 72% of Trinbagonians have little or no trust that the judicial system will punish the guilty if they are a victim of a crime. Only

Figure 3.2 Satisfaction with democracy in Trinidad & Tobago is among the lowest in the region



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Figure 3.3 System support components have all experienced a drop since 2014



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

14%
of Trinbagonians
have trust in
political parties.

about one third of the public has respect for political institutions in general, even less than those who say that people should support the political system. Only around one in four citizens feel pride in the political system. Each of these components has decreased by at least 10 percentage points since 2014, suggesting an overall discontent with the political system.

THE DEFENCE FORCE HAS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF TRUST, WHILE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE THE LOWEST

Overall support for the political system and institutions may be low, but there may be variation in confidence in particular institutions. The AmericasBarometer asks a battery of questions about trust in the following institutions:¹⁰

To what extent do you trust the Trinidad & Tobago Defence Force?

To what extent do you trust the Parliament?

To what extent do you trust the Trinidad & Tobago Police?

To what extent do you trust the political parties?

To what extent do you trust the Prime Minister?

To what extent do you trust the local government?

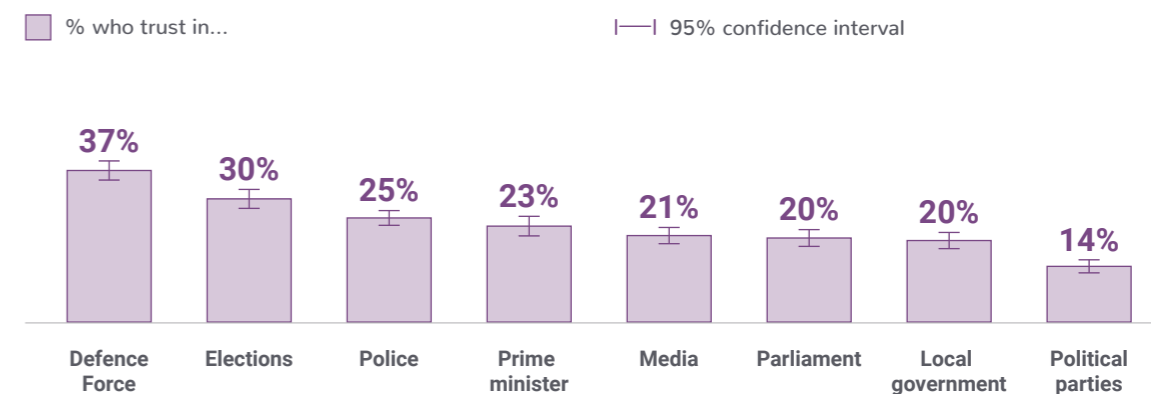
To what extent do you trust the mass media?

To what extent do you trust elections in this country?

Figure 3.4 shows that although no institution instills trust among most of the population, some institutions are more trusted than others. Trust in the Defence Force is highest with 37% saying they trust this institution, but there has been an over 9-percentage point drop in trust since 2014. Elections are the institution with the second highest level of trust, but they have also witnessed a reduction in trust compared to the last time this question was asked in 2012.¹¹ The last general election in Trinidad & Tobago occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and had a relatively low level of turnout, which may be related to the low absolute level of trust in elections. Trust in the police is in third place with only 25%, around a 5-percentage point decrease since 2014. The low absolute levels of trust in the police may be due in part to high levels of crime. Indeed, Trinbagonians who are victims of crime are less likely to trust the police, a finding consistent with research across the LAC region.¹²

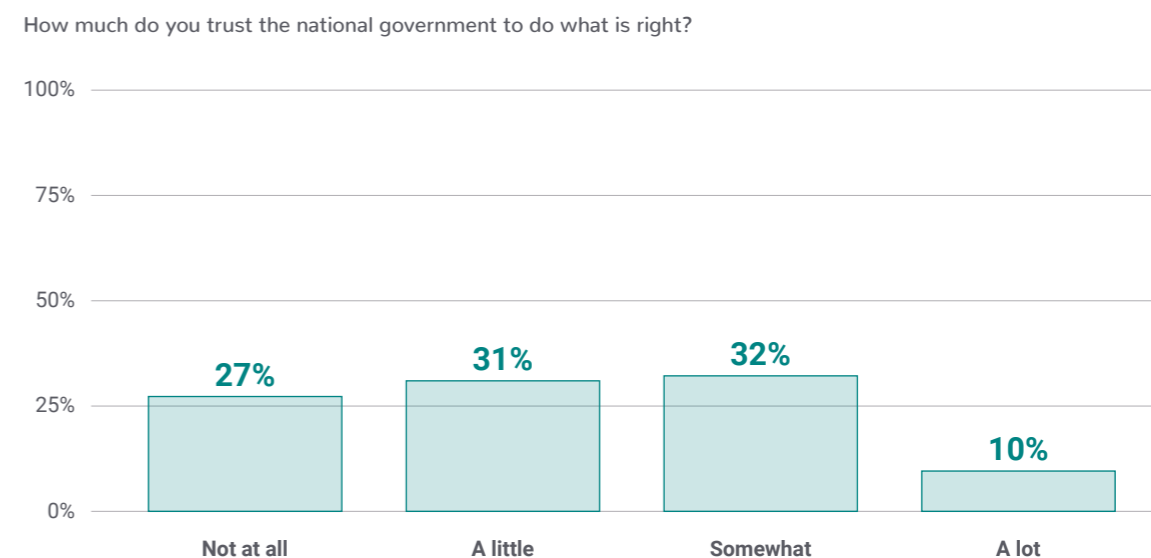
Trust in the prime minister, parliament, and the local government is less than 25%, and all within the margin of error of each other. This suggests that the important political institutions that are in power have low confidence from the public. Political parties themselves have the dubious distinction of having the lowest level of trust of any institution. Since the AmericasBarometer began surveying in Trinidad & Tobago, trust in political parties has historically been low, but there has been a significant drop since 2012 when trust was 20% to only 14% in 2023. The same two political parties, the United National Congress and the People’s National Movement, have dominated politics in Trinidad & Tobago for over 30 years. The low level of confidence in the parties, coupled with only about 20% of the population identifying with parties (a decline of 10 percentage

Figure 3.4 Trust in institutions is low, with only minorities expressing trust in key political institutions



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Figure 3.5 Less than half of Trinbagonians trust the national government somewhat or a lot



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

71%

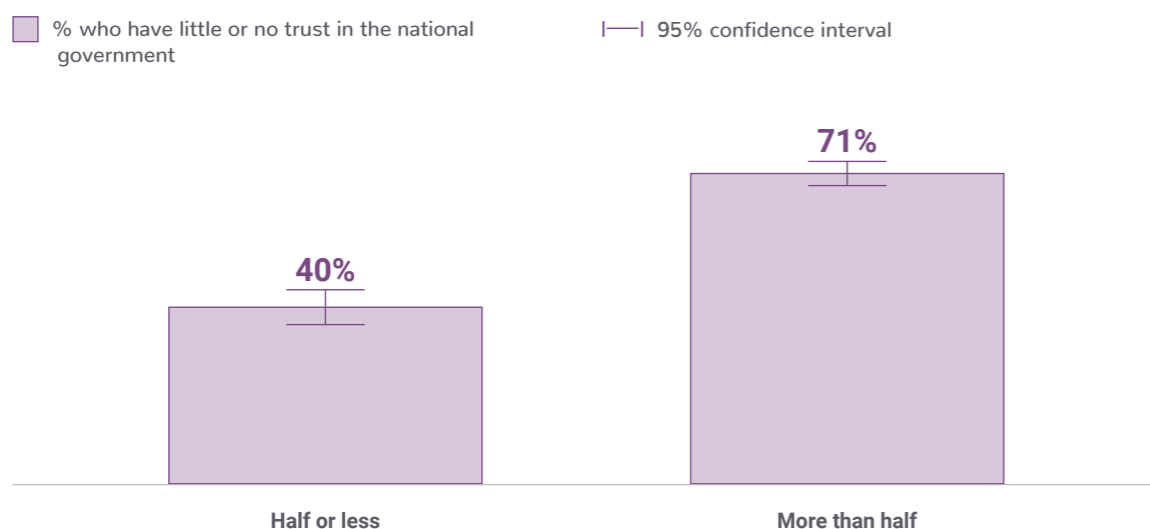
of those who perceive most politicians as corrupt lack trust in the government.

points since 2014), suggests a deep-seated dissatisfaction with parties in the country. Younger, less educated, and less wealthy individuals tend to have lower levels of trust in institutions, the same groups who expressed dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and lower support for democracy.

Trinbagonians have low levels of trust in parliament and the prime minister, and most believe that over half of the politicians in the country engage in corruption (see Spotlight on “Perceptions of Corruption”). Does this low confidence in key figures in the national government and high perceptions of corruption among politicians relate to overall trust in the national government?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, few Trinbagonians express a lot of trust in the national government—only 10% (Figure 3.5). Most say they have little or no trust at all in the national government to do what is right. Again, older individuals appear to have more faith in the national government compared to younger adults. Over 65% of those between 18-35 have little or no trust in the government compared to 37% of those over 66. Men are more likely to express little or no trust in the government compared to women. Those who perceive that more than half or all politicians are involved in corruption are 31 percentage points more likely to say they trust the government a little or not at all compared to those who believe half or less than half of politicians engage in corruption (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 The vast majority of Trinbagonians who perceive that most politicians are corrupt say they have little or no trust in the government



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

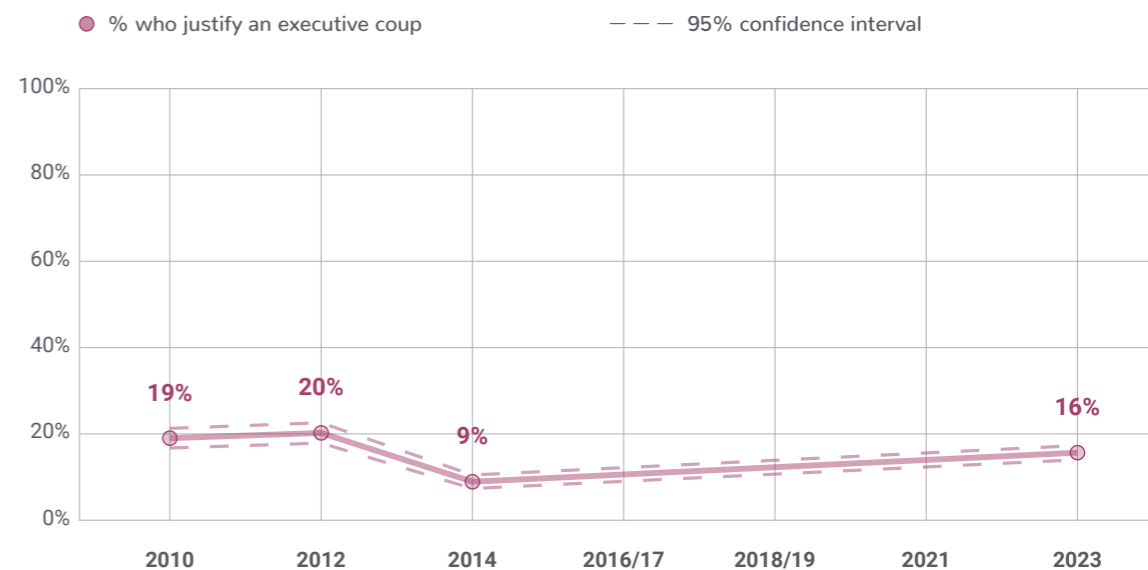
TRINBAGONIANS HAVE LITTLE SUPPORT FOR ACTIONS AND POLICIES THAT WOULD SUBVERT LIBERAL, REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

When the public believes that democracy and institutions are not working for them, they may support extraconstitutional and populist measures. The AmericasBarometer uses the following question to gauge support for one extreme measure—closing parliament during a crisis:

Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the prime minister of the country to close the Parliament and govern without Parliament?

Figure 3.7 shows that 16% of Trinbagonians support closing parliament in difficult times, about a 7-percentage point increase since 2014. Still, support for shuttering parliament among the public was higher in 2010 and 2012. In 2023, there are no significant differences in support for the prime minister closing parliament among women and men, urban and rural residents, and those in different wealth categories. However, younger individuals are more in favor of executive coups compared to older individuals. Higher levels of dissatisfaction with democracy and lower levels of trust in the national government among younger Trinbagonians may open them up anti-democratic measures.

Figure 3.7 Support for closing parliament among Trinbagonians has increased since 2014 but remains lower than in 2010 and 2012



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

Closing parliament may have little support from the public in Trinidad & Tobago, but do they have higher support for other measures that populist leaders often employ? The AmericasBarometer asks the following questions about limiting the voice and vote for the opposition and direct democracy, respectively:¹³

It is necessary for the progress of this country that our prime ministers limit the voice and vote of opposition parties. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?

The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?

Slightly over one in five Trinbagonians believe that the voice and vote of the opposition should be reduced for the country to progress—a nearly 8-percentage point increase in those who agree with the statement since 2012 (Figure 3.8). Those with primary education or less are more than 20 percentage points more likely to support limiting the opposition compared to those with post-secondary education. Those over 65 are 18 percentage points more likely to agree that the voice of the opposition should be limited to make progress. In addition, those who believe that Prime Minister Rowley is doing a very good job are 31 percentage points more likely to agree that the voice of the opposition should be limited compared to those who believe he is doing very

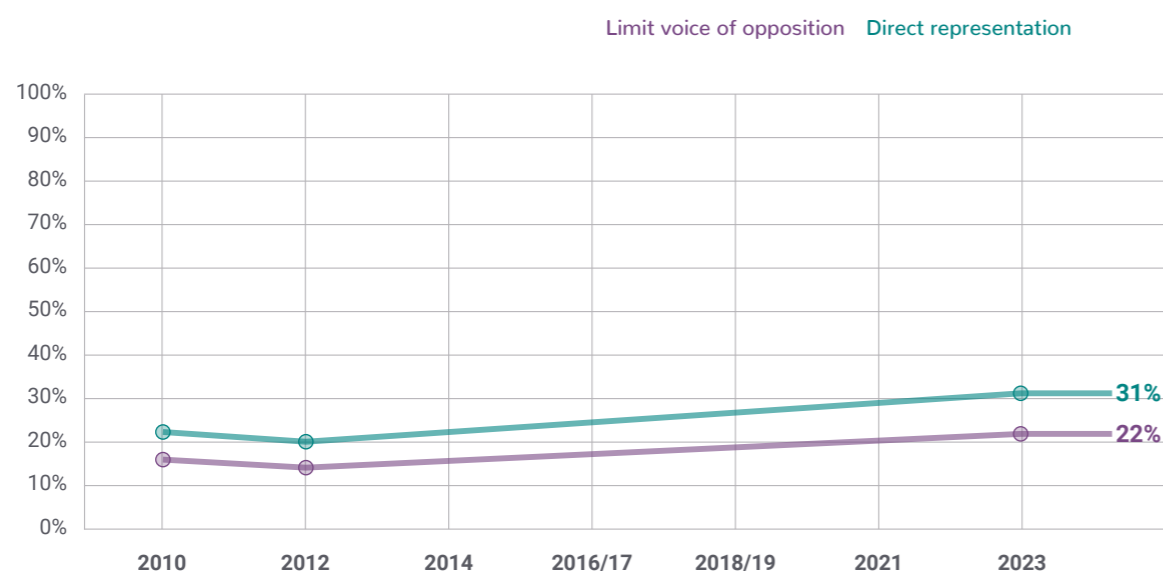
49%
who approve highly of the prime minister also agree with limiting the voice of the opposition.

badly (Figure 3.9). Rowley has at times said some contentious things about the opposition.¹⁴ Perhaps strong approvers of the prime minister may take a cue from him about the opposition, which is why there is greater approval among his supporters.

Finally, although direct democracy does not have the same impact as closing parliament and limiting the voice of the opposition, circumventing elected representatives and going directly to followers is part of the populist playbook and is often at odds with liberal democracy.¹⁵ Nearly seven in ten Trinbagonians do not believe that the people should govern directly, but there has been an over 11-percentage point

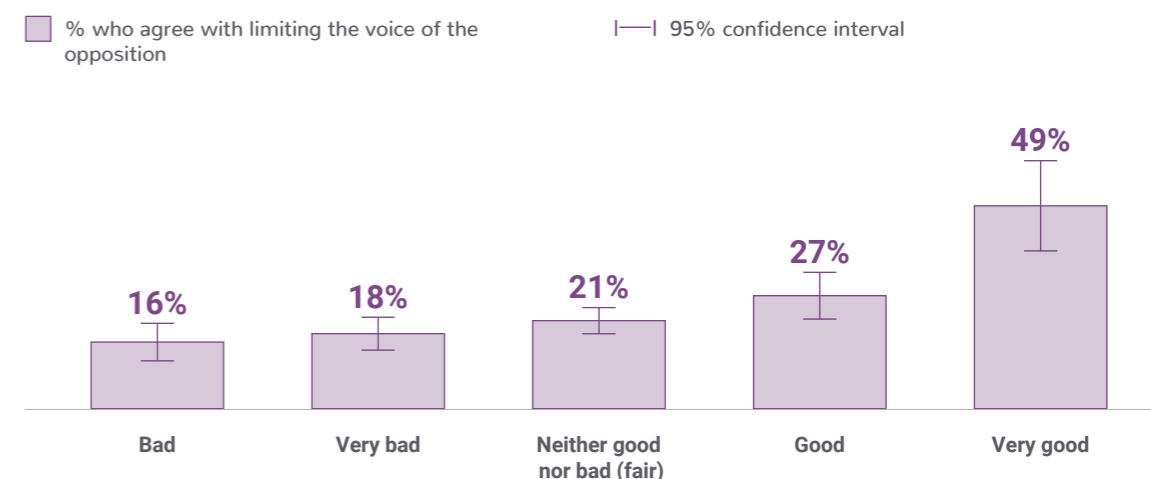
increase since 2012. The low overall trust that the public regards for elected officials including the parliament, prime minister, and local government may make direct representation more attractive. There are no significant differences in trust between men and women, urban and rural residence, and age groups in support for direct democracy. However, those with primary education or less are more than 20 percentage points more likely to agree that direct representation is preferable over elected representatives.

Figure 3.8 Support for limiting the voice of the opposition and support for direct representation have increased in Trinidad & Tobago since 2012



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2010-2023

Figure 3.9 Trinbagonians who are strong approvers of the president express illiberal attitudes toward the opposition



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

TRINBAGONIANS ARE WILLING TO GIVE UP ELECTIONS OVER GUARANTEED BASIC INCOME AND SERVICES BUT NOT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Although a strong majority of Trinbagonians do not support executive coups, limiting the voice of the opposition, and direct representation, when given a tradeoff they may be willing to part with aspects of liberal democracy for economic stability. The AmericasBarometer randomly assigned half of the respondents to the first question and the other half were given the second question:

Which political system seems best for Trinidad & Tobago: 1) A system that guarantees access to a basic income and services for all citizens, even if the authorities cannot be elected, or 2) To be able to vote to elect the authorities, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services.

Which political system seems best for Trinidad & Tobago: 1) A system that guarantees access to a basic income and services for all citizens, even if they cannot express their political opinions without fear or censorship, or 2) A system in which everybody can express

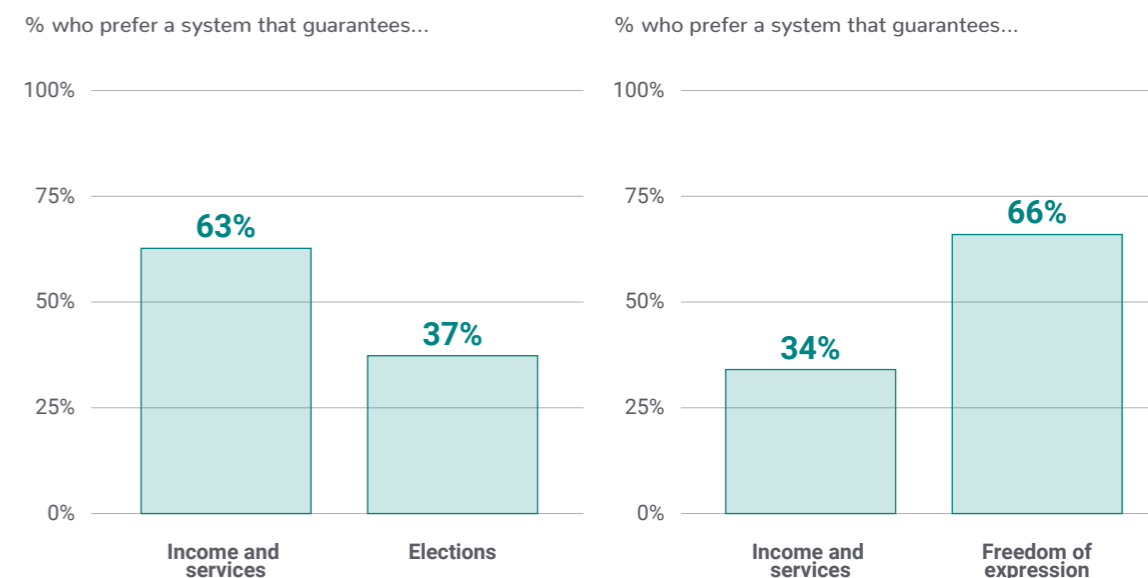
their political opinions without fear or censorship, even if some people do not have access to a basic income and services.

Perhaps because elections themselves have not produced outcomes that citizens would like, only 37% of Trinbagonians said they prefer elections over guaranteed income and services. However, it appears that Trinbagonians prefer a central tenet of liberal democracy, freedom of expression, over a guaranteed income at a rate of almost two to one (Figure 3.10). In the tradeoff between elections and guaranteed income, men, older individuals,

and those with more education are more likely to say that electing authorities is preferable to guaranteed income. Overall, there are far fewer demographic differences regarding freedom of expression—although the oldest cohorts are somewhat more in favor of freedom of expression over guaranteed income than the youngest.¹⁶

Despite low support for components of the political system and low confidence in institutions, a majority of Trinbagonians appear to reject illiberal actions such as executive coups, limiting the power of the opposition, and direct democracy.

Figure 3.10 Trinbagonians are willing to trade elections for guaranteed income but prefer free expression over guaranteed income



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Conclusions

Although experts consider Trinidad & Tobago’s democracy strong, public opinion suggests fairly high levels of dissatisfaction with every major political institution from the judiciary to the parliament and prime minister, the local government, the mass media, and the police. The Defence Force is the most trusted institution in the country, yet fewer than two in five citizens express confidence in the institution, compared to over 50% in 2010 and 2012.

Other chapters have uncovered that high perceptions of crime, gang presence, food insecurity, and poor economic perceptions weaken support for and satisfaction with democracy. Indeed, those who perceive their neighborhoods to be unsafe and are affected by gangs as well as food insecure individuals are less trusting of nearly all institutions and have lower support for components of the political system compared to those who live in safe neighborhoods, unaffected by gangs, and have not gone without food in the past three months. Even more striking, those who perceive the economy has been worsening for the past twelve months have significantly lower trust in *all* institutions and have lower support for *all* elements of the system.

Despite low support for components of the political system and low confidence in institutions, a majority of Trinbagonians appear to (mostly) reject illiberal actions such as executive coups, limiting the power of the opposition, and direct democracy. Nevertheless, support for these actions has increased somewhat. When faced with the tradeoff between freedom of expression and a guaranteed income, most Trinbagonians prefer freedom of expression. However, over 60% of Trinbagonians do prefer a guaranteed income over elections. This suggests that electoral democracy may not be as valuable to Trinbagonians as other tenets of liberal democracy.

Support for democracy has been waning in the country, but a majority still believe democracy is better than any other form of government. Yet, if citizens continue to express low levels of trust in institutions and political figures, more Trinbagonians may be pushed into disagreeing that democracy is the best political system. This may then lead many on the path toward illiberal or populist leaders who may be appealing in the short run but could undermine rights and freedom in the long run.

Notes

- 1 Boese-Schlosser et al. 2022.
- 2 Freedom House 2023.
- 3 Douglas 2020.
- 4 Wallace and Palder 2020.
- 5 Hutchinson-Jafar 2020.
- 6 International IDEA 2023.
- 7 Taitt 2020.
- 8 Differences across sociodemographic characteristics discussed in this chapter are confirmed with a multivariate regression model that includes gender, age, level of education, level of wealth, and place of residence (urban vs rural).
- 9 Responses to these questions are given on a 1 “not at all” to 7 “a lot” scale. The analyses here focus on the percentage of Trinbagonians who responded 5-7.
- 10 Responses to these questions are given on a 1 “not at all” to 7 “a lot” scale. The analyses here focus on the percentage of Trinbagonians who responded 5-7.
- 11 Some questions about trust in institutions have not been asked since 2012, while others were asked in both 2012 and 2014. This report compares institutions in the 2023 AmericasBarometer survey to the most recent survey prior to 2023.
- 12 Only 17% of crime victims trust the police compared to 27% of non-victims. This is consistent with Salazar-Tobar and Rengifo 2023.
- 13 Responses to these questions are given on a 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree” scale. The analyses here focus on the percentage of Trinbagonians who responded 5-7.
- 14 CNC3 Editor 2021; De Silva 2023.
- 15 Weyland 2020.
- 16 These tradeoffs may have been difficult to make as nearly 13% of respondents did not answer the first question and over 10% of respondents did not answer the second question.

Emily Noh¹

Over three in five Trinbagonians think most politicians are corrupt.

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index gave Trinidad & Tobago its highest corruption score in 2022.² Several senior public officials and offices have been recently alleged to be involved in high-level corruption cases, including former Attorney General Anand Ramlogan, former Senator Gerald Ramdeen, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, and the Ministry of Agriculture. Despite these recent corruption scandals, the country's anticorruption laws remain poorly enforced.³

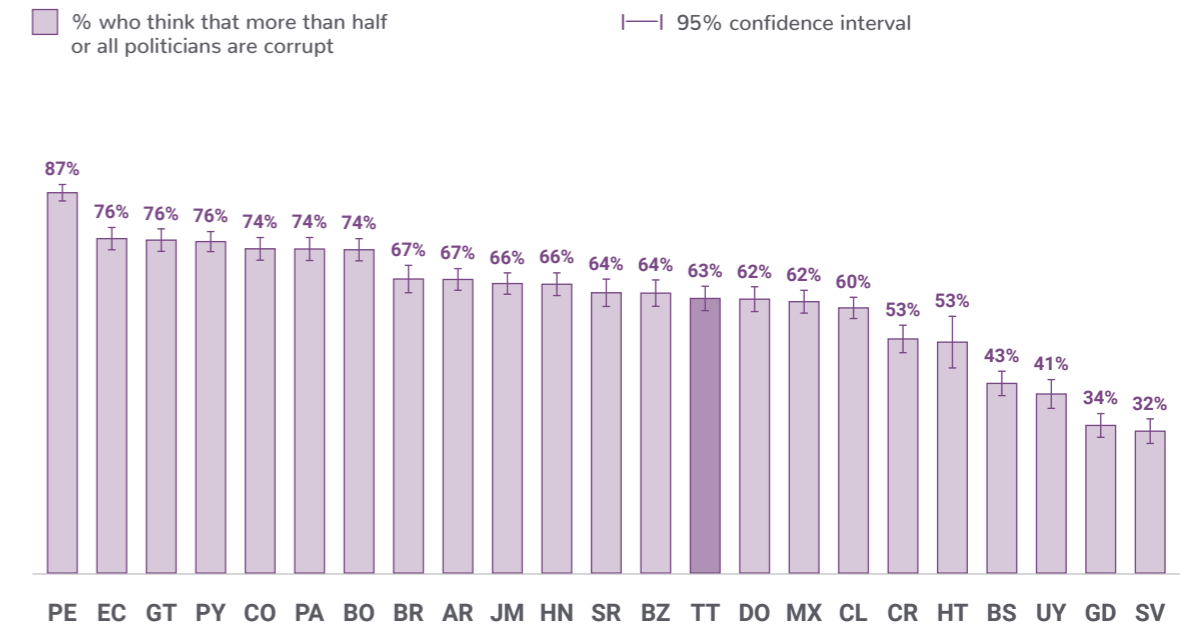
Given these circumstances, what are Trinbagonians' perceptions of political corruption?

The AmericasBarometer measures perceptions of corruption by asking the following question:

Thinking of the politicians of [country]... 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

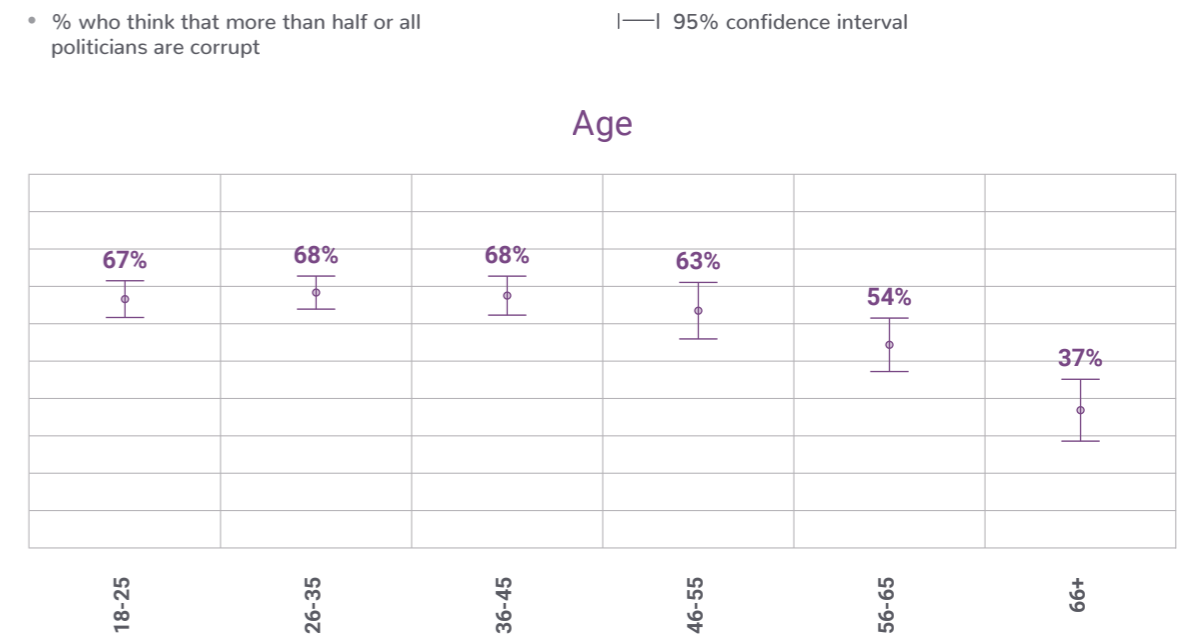
Here I code responses into a dichotomous variable to allow the estimation of the percentage of people who think more than half or all politicians are corrupt.⁴ Like in most countries in the LAC region, a majority of Trinbagonians say that more than half or all politicians are corrupt.

Like in most other countries of the LAC region, a majority of Trinbagonians think half or all politicians are corrupt



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer 2023

Younger Trinbagonians are more likely to think that corruption among politicians is common



Source: LAPOP Lab, AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago 2023

Despite recent corruption scandals involving senior officials, over three in five Trinbagonians believe most politicians are corrupt. Younger citizens are especially likely to hold this view, reflecting high corruption perceptions that align with expert assessments.

What individual characteristics are associated with perceptions of corruption in Trinidad & Tobago? On average, younger Trinbagonians are more likely to think that corruption is common among politicians in the country.⁵ While around two in three individuals below 46 years believe more than half or all politicians are corrupt, fewer than three in five above 55 years say that corruption is common (54% for ages 56-65, 37% for ages 66+). Gender, education, wealth, race/ethnicity,

and urban residence are not statistically related to perceptions of corruption in Trinidad & Tobago.⁶

Corruption is a pervasive issue in Trinidad & Tobago. Over three in five Trinbagonians think that most politicians in the country are corrupt, and those who are young are most likely to perceive politicians as corrupt. High corruption perceptions are in line with expert assessments of corruption levels in the country.

Notes

- 1 Emily Noh is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and a LAPOP affiliated researcher.
- 2 Transparency International 2022.
- 3 Freedom House 2023.
- 4 Responses were coded into a binary measure by combining “more than half of them” and “all” into one category, while placing the “none,” “less than half of them,” and “half of them” into a baseline category.
- 5 I performed a logistic regression where the dependent variable is coded as 1 if the respondent said more than half or all politicians in the country are corrupt and 0 if not. I include sociodemographic predictors in the model—gender (women vs men/other), age cohorts, race/ethnicity groups, wealth, place of residence (urban vs rural), and education (none/primary vs secondary vs superior).
- 6 Freedom House 2023.

References

- Appleby, Peter. 2022. "Trinidad and Tobago Struggling to Put Brakes on Rising Homicide Rate." *Insight Crime*. Sep 21. <https://insightcrime.org/news/police-initiatives-struggling-brakes-trinidad-and-tobagos-rising-homicide-rate/>.
- Boese-Schlusser et al. 2022. "Autocratization Changing Nature? Democracy Report 2022." Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem). https://v-dem.net/media/publications/dr_2022.pdf.
- Brabant, Malcolm. 2021. "Brutal violence against women in Trinidad and Tobago ignored by government, critics say." PBS News Hour. May 18. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/brutal-violence-against-women-in-trinidad-and-tobago-ignored-by-government-critics-say>.
- Bratton, Michael and Robert Mattes. 2001. Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental? *British Journal of Political Science* 31(3): 447-474. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123401000175>.
- Bruzual, Alexander. 2023. "Smaller gangs a growing threat." Daily Express. May 21. https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/smaller-gangs-a-growing-threat/article_c8aa3824-f776-11ed-8d34-ab240d6560d1.html.
- Caribbean Today. 2023. "UN Report: Caribbean Nations Amongst the Most Water-Stressed Globally." Mar 24. <https://www.caribbeantoday.com/sections/environment/un-report-caribbean-nations-amongst-the-most-water-stressed-globally>.
- Chee Hing, Ken. 2022. "Americans warned: Don't travel in Port of Spain." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. Oct 7. <https://newsday.co.tt/2022/10/07/americans-warned-dont-travel-in-port-of-spain/>.
- CMC News. 2023. "Trinidad Central Bank says local economy will improve in 2023." *Caribbean National Weekly*. February 14. <https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/news/caribbean-news/trinidad-central-bank-says-local-economy-will-improve-in-2023/>.
- CNC3 Editor. 2021. "Rowley: Opposition members have disgraced this country." Oct 21. *CNC3 News Trinidad and Tobago*. <https://www.cnc3.co.tt/rowley-opposition-members-have-disgraced-this-country/>.
- Cordero, Guillermo and Pablo Simón. 2016. Economic Crisis and Support for Democracy in Europe. *West European Politics* 39(2): 305-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2015.1075767>.
- Cruz, José Miguel. 2009. "Public Insecurity in Central America and Mexico." AmericasBarometer Insights Series No. 28. LAPOP Lab, Vanderbilt University. <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0828en.pdf>.
- Daily Express. 2023. "IMF: T&T's economy recovering." May 5. https://trinidadexpress.com/business/local/imf-t-t-s-economy-recovering/article_fd0f055c-eba7-11ed-a39b-13ddebbc3556.html.
- De Silva, Radhica. 2023. "PM Rowley lashes Opposition, media." May 25. *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*. <https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/pm-rowley-lashes-opposition-media-6.2.1715645.e37235f290>.
- Den Held, Douwe. 2022. "Why Are Trinidad and Tobago's Gangs Becoming More Violent?" *Insight Crime*. May 31. <https://insightcrime.org/news/why-are-trinidad-and-tobagos-gangs-becoming-more-violent/>.
- Douglas, Sean. 2020. "PM: No election delay despite covid19." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. May 8. <https://newsday.co.tt/2020/05/08/pm-no-plan-to-delay-general-election/>.
- Douglas, Sean. 2023. "Central Bank: Trinidad and Tobago did better than other economies in 2022." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. Feb 13. <https://newsday.co.tt/2023/02/13/central-bank-trinidad-and-tobago-did-better-than-other-economies-in-2022/>.
- FAO, IFAD, PAHO, UNICEF, and WFP. 2021. "Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and Trends." Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7497en>.
- Fernandez, Kenneth E. and Michele Kuenzi. 2010. Crime and Support for Democracy in Africa and Latin America. *Political Studies* 58(3): 450-471. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00802.x>.
- Fraser, Narissa. 2022. "Moonilal: Gang leaders, drug lords taking over Trinidad and Tobago." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. Dec 4. <https://newsday.co.tt/2022/12/04/moonilal-gang-leaders-drug-lords-taking-over-trinidad-and-tobago/>.
- Freedom House. 2023. "Trinidad and Tobago." Freedom in the World 2023. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/trinidad-and-tobago/freedom-world/2023>.
- Gibbs, Anselm. 2023. "Trinidad carnival revellers defy crime: 'If we unite, we can put up a fight.'" *BBC News*. Feb 21. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-64704969>.

Global Organized Crime Index. 2023. "Trinidad and Tobago." https://ocindex.net/country/trinidad_and_tobago.

Hutchinson-Jafar, Linda. 2020. "Trinidad and Tobago PM claims election victory for ruling party." Reuters. Aug 11. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trinidadtobago-election/trinidad-and-tobago-pm-claims-election-victory-for-ruling-party-idUSKCN2570E4>.

International IDEA. 2023. "Voter Turnout Database: Trinidad and Tobago." <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/288/40>.

International Monetary Fund. 2023. "Trinidad and Tobago." <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/TTO#countrydata>.

International Organization for Migration. 2020. "Trinidad and Tobago." <https://www.iom.int/countries/trinidad-and-tobago>.

Jamaica Observer. 2023. "Trinidad PM says crime and violence is a war the region cannot lose." 2023. Apr 17. <https://jamaica-star.com/article/news/20230417/tt-pm-says-crime-and-violence-war-region-cannot-lose>.

John-Lall, Raphael. 2022. "No one spared, citizens in fear as crime out of control." *Trinidad & Tobago Guardian*. <https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/no-one-spared-citizens-in-fear-as-crime-out-of-control-6.2.1563818.7631b880c8>.

Krauss, C. 2023. "Why Some Countries Find It Hard to Move Away From Fossil Fuels." *The New York Times*. May 15. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/15/business/energy-environment/trinidad-tobago-gas-oil.html>.

La Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL). n.d. "Assessment of the Social and Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago." https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/presentation_1_-_assessment_of_the_social_and_economic_impact_of_covid-19_on_trinidad_tobago.pdf.

Loop News. 2022a. "Teen pleads guilty to drug trafficking in school." *Loop News*. May 21. <https://tt.loopnews.com/content/teen-pleads-guilty-drug-trafficking-school>.

Loop News. 2022b. "Waterloo man held for allegedly trafficking guns, drugs to Tobago." *Loop News*. Nov 7. <https://tt.loopnews.com/content/waterloo-man-held-allegedly-trafficking-guns-drugs-tobago>.

Martin, Jeremy and Lily Folkerts. 2021. "COVID-19 and Climate Change Prompt an Energy Rethink in Trinidad and Tobago." *World Politics Review*. Jan 22. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/in-trinidad-oil-is-the-mainstay-of-the-economy-will-the-pandemic-change-that>.

Newsday Reporter. 2023. "The Carnival bump." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. Feb 16. <https://newsday.co.tt/2023/02/16/the-carnival-bump/>.

Phagoo, Vishanna. 2023. "Food insecurity decreases by 10% in English-speaking Caribbean." *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. June 29. <https://newsday.co.tt/2023/06/29/food-insecurity-decreases-by-10-in-english-speaking-caribbean/>.

Regulated Industries Commission. 2023. "Strategies and Policy Guidelines for the Efficient Use of water in Trinidad and Tobago." <https://www.ric.org.tt/strategies-and-policy-guidelines-for-the-efficient-use-of-water-in-trinidad-and-tobago/>.

Salazar-Tobar, Felipe and Andrés F. Rengifo. 2023. Trust in the police in Latin America: A multilevel analysis of institutional and experiential models. *Policing* 17(1): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paac113>.

Taitt, Ria. 2020. "Responses were too late." *Daily Express*. Aug 18. https://trinidadexpress.com/elections/2020/politics/responses-were-too-late/article_b92154ca-e1ba-11ea-8e37-bfdcc7898d8f.html.

The World Bank. "The World Bank in Trinidad and Tobago." <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/trinidadandtobago/overview>.

Transparency International. 2022. "Trinidad and Tobago." Corruption Perceptions Index 2022. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/tto>.

Trinidad & Tobago Police Service. 2023. <https://www.ttps.gov.tt/Stats/Crime-Totals-By-Month>.

Wallace, Jacob and Darcy Palder. 2020. "The Coronavirus Is Delaying Elections Worldwide." May 22. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/22/coronavirus-elections-postponed-rescheduled-covid-vote/>.

Wallace, Wendell C., Ayinka Nikesha Nurse-Carrington, and Akinee Harry. 2021. "An Evaluation of Guns, Gun Violence, and Gun Homicides in Trinidad and Tobago – 2010 to 2016." *Guns, Gun Violence, and Gun Homicides*, Ch. 10 pg. 229. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-84518-6_10.

Weyland, Kurt. 2020. Populism's Threat to Democracy: Comparative Lessons for the United States. *Perspectives on Politics* 18(2): 389-406. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719003955>.

World Food Programme. 2023. "Food Security improves in the Caribbean yet challenges persist." United Nations World Food Programme. www.wfp.org/news/food-security-improves-caribbean-yet-challenges-persist.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION FOR THE 2023 AMERICASBAROMETER IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

This survey was carried out between March 10 and April 28, 2023, as part of LAPOP's 2023 AmericasBarometer. It is a follow-up to LAPOP's AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago surveys of 2010, 2012, and 2014. The 2023 survey fieldwork was carried out by TAIRASS on behalf of LAPOP. Key funding came from Vanderbilt University, USAID, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Questionnaire cognitive pretesting took place on February 7 and 9, 2023, and interviewer training took place on March 3 and 5. Pilot surveys were conducted on March 5 and 6. A full copy of the 2023 AmericasBarometer Trinidad & Tobago questionnaire 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 1,660 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 five major regions of the country: West, East, Central, South, and Tobago. The sample is representative at the national level and of the five regions. Each stratum was further sub-stratified by the size of the 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 2000 Population Census, adjusted with information from the 2011 Population Census. The sample is representative of the voting age population at the primary stratum level, by urban/rural areas, and by size of the municipalities. No areas or regions of the country were excluded from the design. During fieldwork, a total of one cluster (six interviews) was substituted in Trinidad & Tobago.

The sample design consists of 126 primary sampling units and 252 secondary sampling units (sampling points) across two provinces in Trinidad & Tobago. The sample achieved includes a total of 1,274 people in urban areas and 386 in rural areas. The estimated margin of error for the survey is ± 2.41 . 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 Trinidad & Tobago, see the complete technical report at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/trinidad-tobago.php>.

¹ The sample design includes three different strata of municipalities classified according to their size: (1) other urban areas, (2) rural areas, and (3) cities and boroughs.

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.

076

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.

077

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.

The AmericasBarometer is made possible with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Vanderbilt University. Over the course of the 2023 round, we benefited from the thoughtful advice and leadership of USAID's Chantal Agarwal, Luis Azurduy, and Cara Thanassi. For their unflagging support for the project, we are grateful to leadership at Vanderbilt University, including John Geer, Timothy McNamara, Padma Raghavan, Alan Wiseman, and David Wright. We also thank Vanderbilt's Sponsored Programs Administration and the A&S Finance & Administration Unit for their support. We are proud to be a partner of Vanderbilt's Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies.

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.

We also owe thanks to the many experts who provided input on the project, including members of our [Advisory Board](#) and also Leticia Alcaráz, George Avelino, Dinorah Azpuru, Regina Bateson, Julio Carrión, Mollie Cohen, Danilo Contreras, Ricardo Córdova, José Miguel Cruz, Cristóbal Dupouy, Miguel García, Carlos Gervasoni, André Vincent Henry, Jon Hiskey, Elizabeth Kennedy, Zhivargo Laing, Balford Lewis, Jack Menke, Daniel Moreno, Jana Morgan, Luis Ortiz, Pablo Parás, Andrew Parkin, Juan Pablo Pira, Roody Reserve, Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Raga, Vidal Romero, Vivian Schwarz-Blum, Rachel Schwartz, Spencer Thomas, and Patricia Zárate.

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 Trinidad & Tobago

20
23