

What is the State of Institutional Trust in Latin America? A longitudinal multilevel analysis



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Questions

Since the 1990's, most countries of Latin America went through a democratic transition, which was concurrent to improved material conditions of life, and the reinstatement of civil rights that had been abolished. However, according to some researchers, this process was met with difficulties due to the low level of trust in the social and political institutions, as revealed by various public opinion surveys.

Is Latin America really experiencing a crisis in trust? And if so, what are the contextual factors that explain the variation in trust level for different institutions in different countries?

Data

The data come from three sources that have been combined in order to reduce uncertainty in the data:

| | Number of respondents: |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| LatinoBarometro | 378,669 |
| The World Value Survey | 48,178 |
| LAPOP | 271,962 |
| Total | 698,809 |

The combined file comprises 536 surveys conducted in 33 countries from 1995 to 2017

Methodological information

The answer scales (from 1 'no trust' to 4 'a lot of trust') are transformed into a '1 to 7' scale, from low to high trust, to make it comparable with LAPOP.

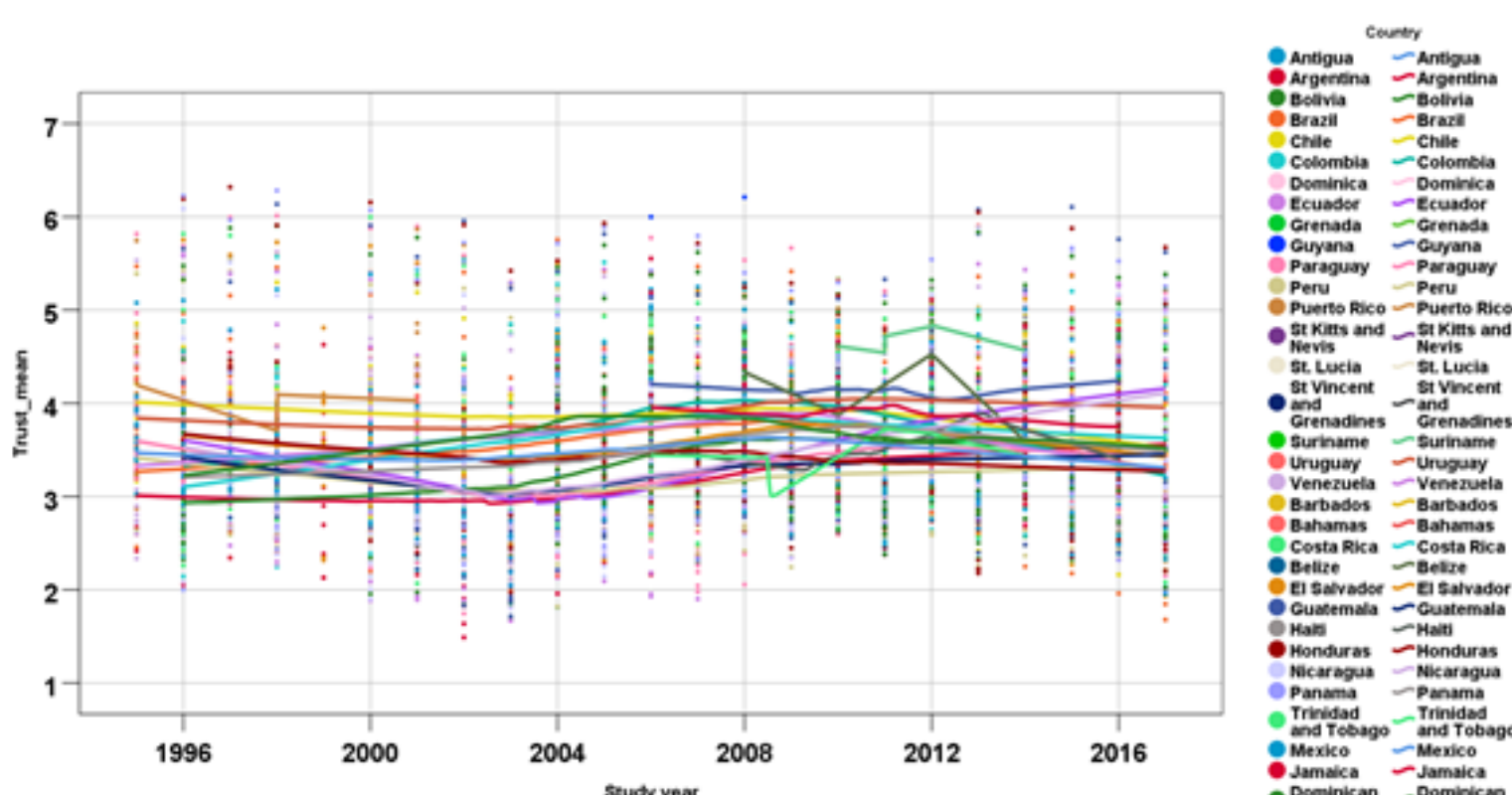
The middle point of the scale is 4. The average trust for the data is around 4, close to the middle point of the scale. The analysis uses local regressions. It allows for an adequate visualization of the data. On the graphs, the dots represent the mean trust for a specific survey, the lines represent the change over time in trust.

We present the information by region overall, institution for each region and region for each institution.

Finally we present the results of longitudinal multilevel regression to analyze whether trust varies according to the ideology of the government.

Results

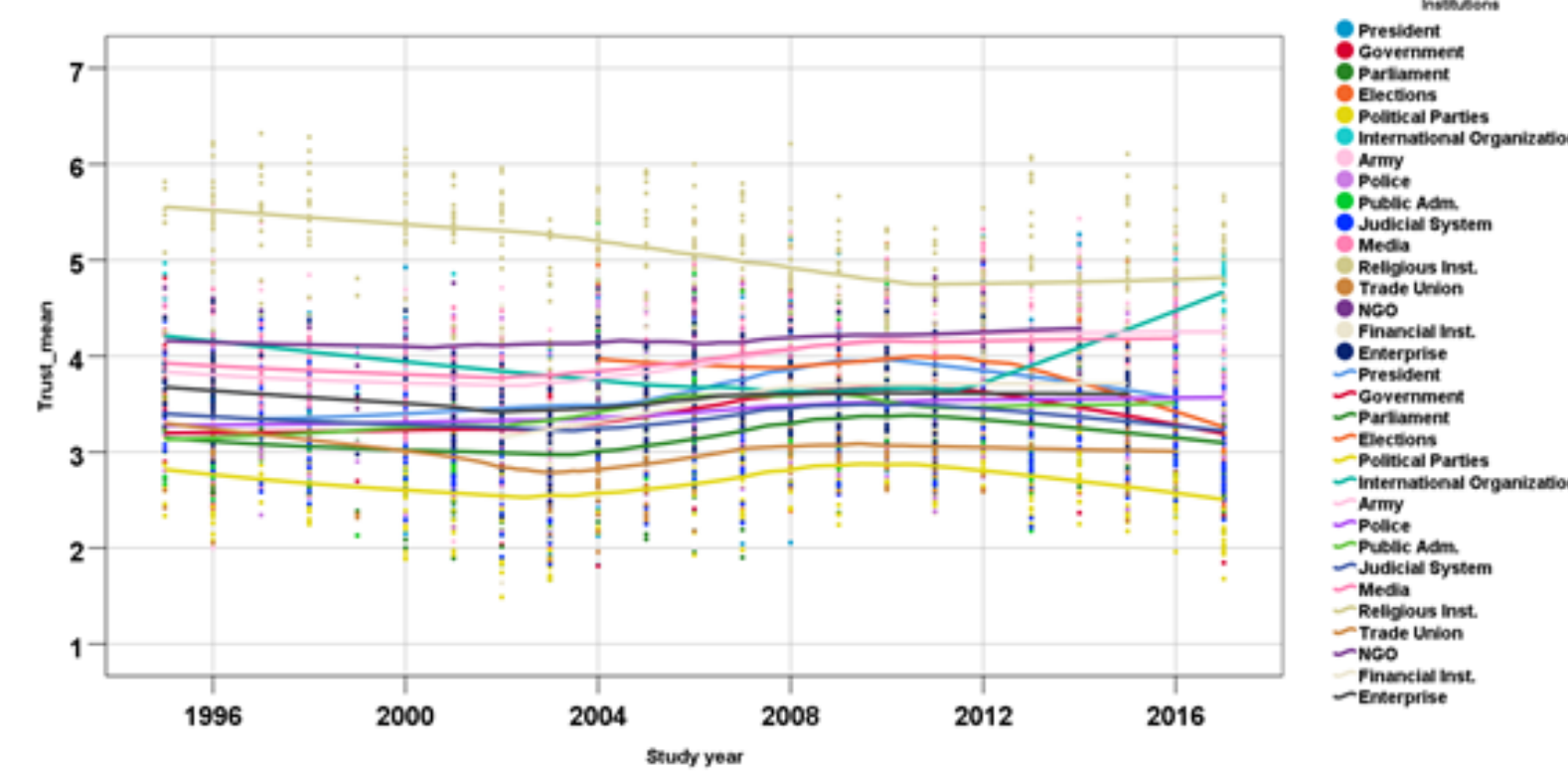
Change in Trust by country



In Latin America, average trust in Institutions has been relatively stable from 1995 to 2017.

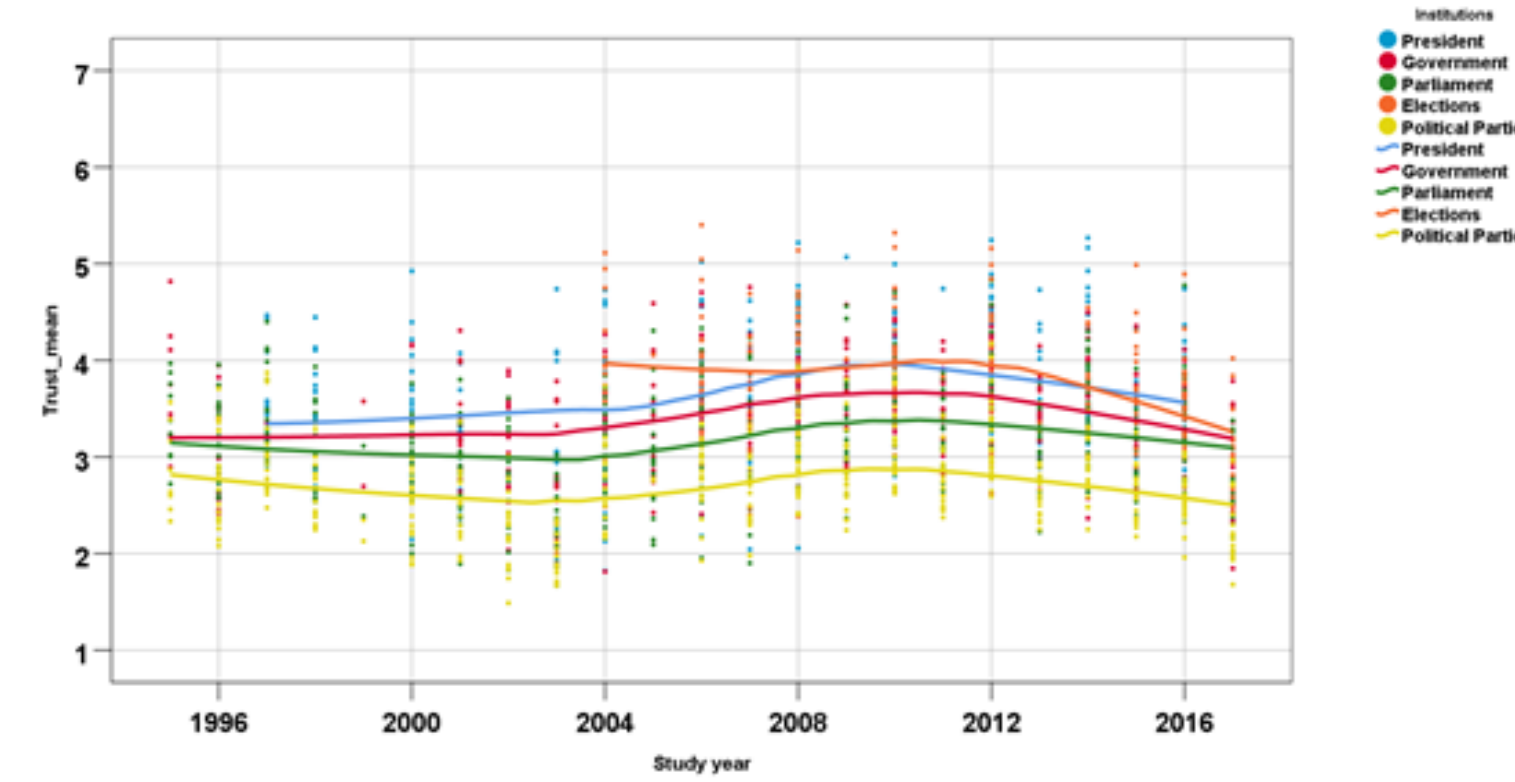
However, we can observe differences in trust between countries.

Change in Trust by Institution



We can also observe important differences between the institutions

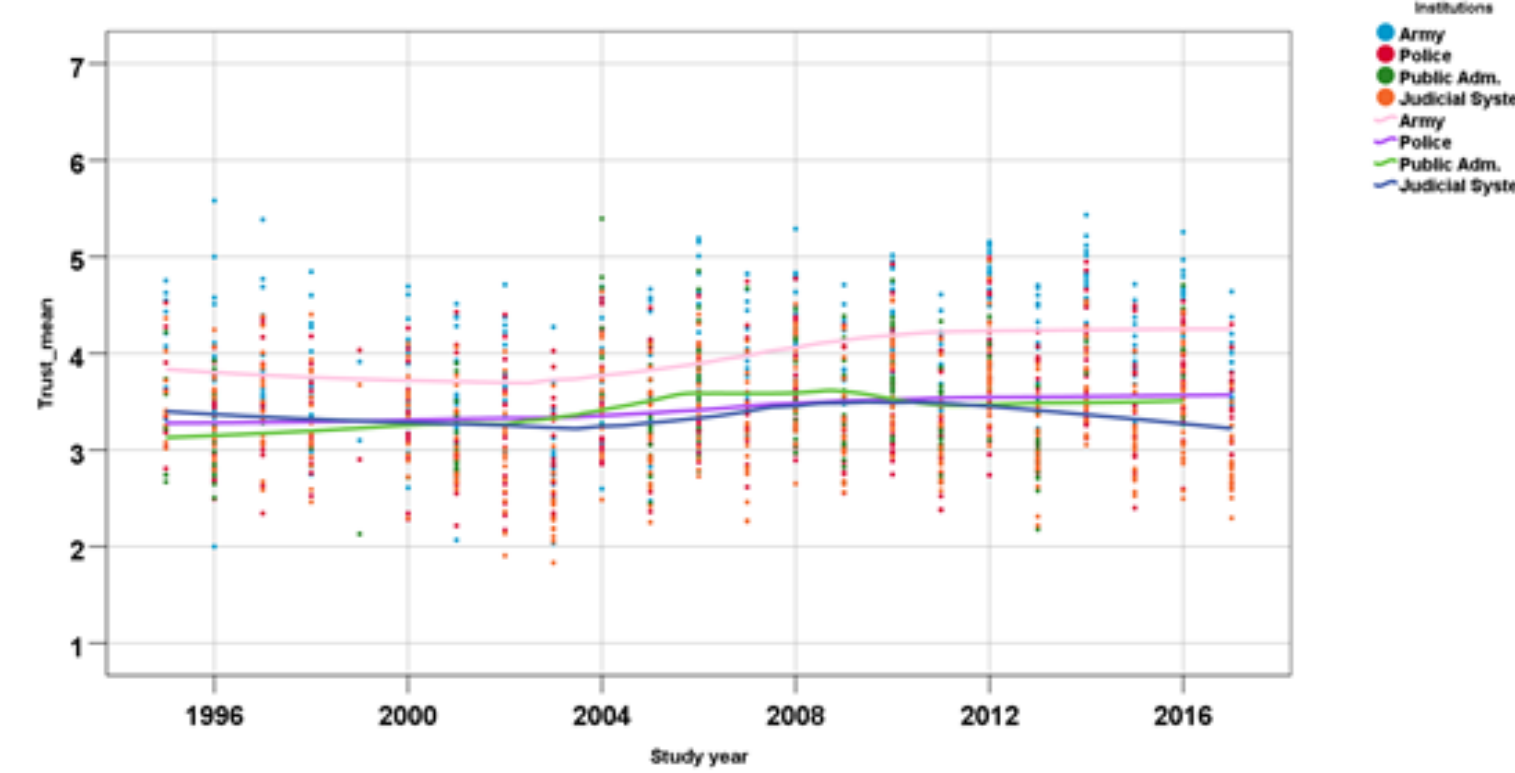
Trust in the Political System



Trust in institutions of the political system is relatively low in the region; it has risen a bit until 2005 but has declined continuously since 2010-2011.

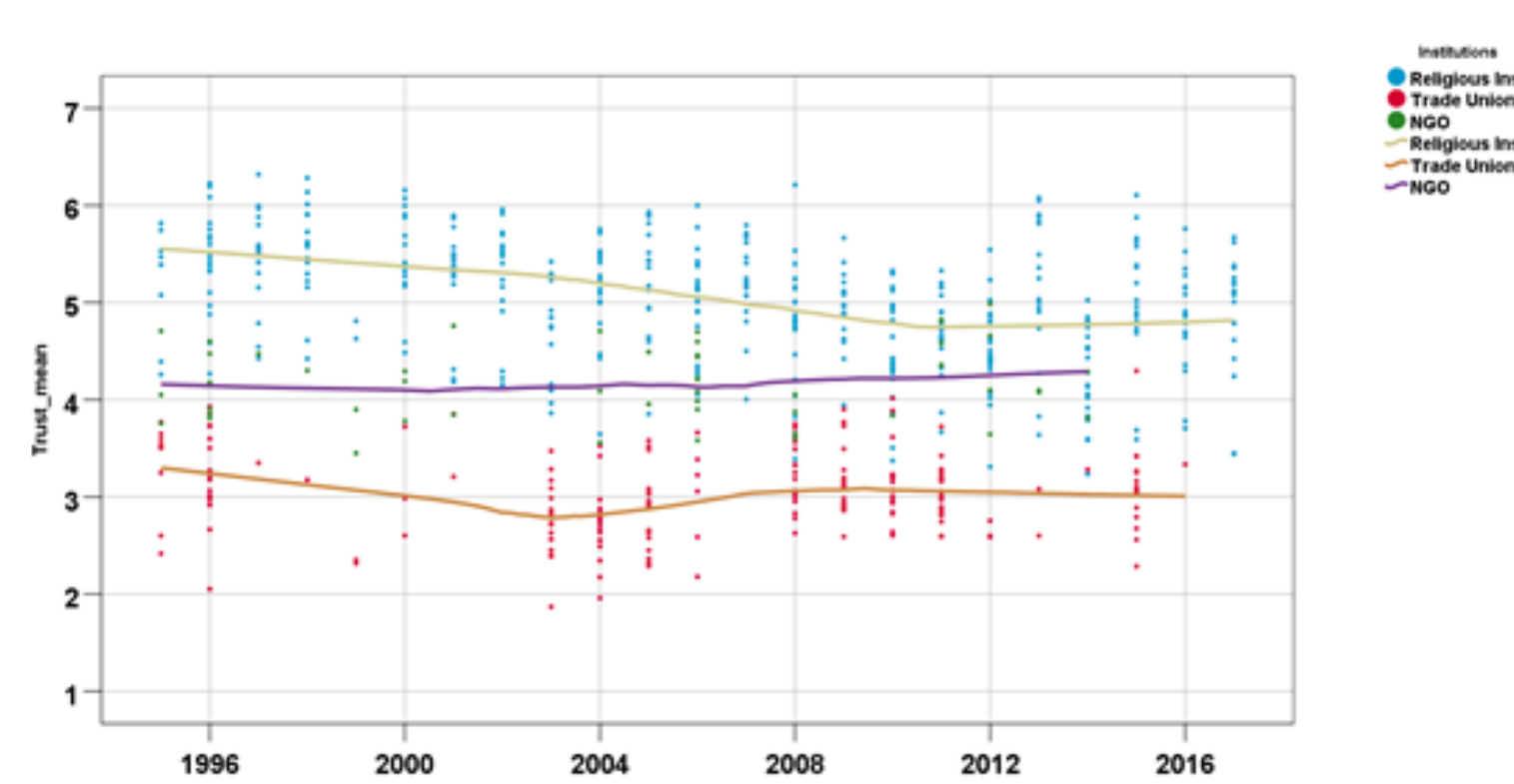
Political parties are the institution with the lowest level of trust among Latino Americans; it had also increased until 2005 but has declined since.

Trust in the Public Administration



Trust in institutions of the public Administration is stable and homogenous in the region. Trust in the Army differs from the rest and has been rising substantially until 2005.

Trust in Institutions of the Civil Society



Trust in religious institutions started high but has been declining systematically until 2010.

There is a significant difference between the institutions of the civil society, especially between churches and trade unions. The latter, together with the political parties, are among the institutions with the lowest level of trust.

| | Model 0 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4-B | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Intercept | 3,68 *** | 4,053 *** | 4,062 *** | 3,799 *** | 3,900 *** | | | | | |
| MEASUREMENT LEVEL | | | | | | | | | | |
| Media (REF) | | | | | | | | | | |
| President | | -0,374 *** | -0,373 *** | -0,374 *** | -0,809 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on President | | | | | 0,749 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on President | | | | | 0,322 ** | | | | | |
| -C.C Right on President | | | | | 0,266 ** | | | | | |
| Government | | -0,584 *** | -0,584 *** | -0,584 *** | -0,805 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Government | | | | | 0,411 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Government | | | | | 0,089 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C. Right on Government | | | | | 0,121 N.S. | | | | | |
| Parliament-Congress | | -0,848 *** | -0,847 *** | -0,848 *** | -1,162 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Parliament-Congress | | | | | 0,538 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Parliament-Congress | | | | | 0,151 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C. C Right on Parliament-Congress | | | | | 0,252 *** | | | | | |
| Elections | | -0,418 *** | -0,418 *** | -0,419 *** | -0,790 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Elections | | | | | 0,541 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Elections | | | | | 0,340 ** | | | | | |
| -C. Right on Elections | | | | | 0,313 ** | | | | | |
| Political Parties | | -1,329 *** | -1,329 *** | -1,329 *** | -1,575 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Political Parties | | | | | 0,375 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Political Parties | | | | | 0,091 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C. C Right on Political Parties | | | | | 0,253 *** | | | | | |
| International Organizations | | 0,312 *** | 0,313 *** | 0,314 *** | 0,313 *** | | | | | |
| Army | | 0,032 N.S. | 0,032 N.S. | 0,032 N.S. | -0,171 ** | | | | | |
| -Left on Army | | | | | 0,289 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Army | | | | | -0,071 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C.C Right on Army | | | | | 0,264 *** | | | | | |
| Police | | -0,562 *** | -0,562 *** | -0,562 *** | -0,723 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Police | | | | | 0,324 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Police | | | | | -0,090 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C.C Right on Police | | | | | 0,124 N.S. | | | | | |
| Public Administration | | -0,520 *** | -0,520 *** | -0,520 *** | -0,824 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Public Administration | | | | | 0,470 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Public Administration | | | | | 0,150 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C.C Right on Pub, Administration | | | | | 0,294 *** | | | | | |
| Judicial System | | -0,646 *** | -0,646 *** | -0,646 *** | -0,851 *** | | | | | |
| -Left on Judicial System | | | | | 0,291 *** | | | | | |
| -C. Left on Judicial System | | | | | 0,088 N.S. | | | | | |
| -C. Right on Judicial System | | | | | 0,222 ** | | | | | |
| Religious Institutions | | 0,755 *** | 0,755 *** | 0,755 *** | 0,754 *** | | | | | |
| Trade Union | | -0,855 *** | -0,855 *** | -0,855 *** | -0,858 *** | | | | | |
| NGO | | 0,188 ** | 0,189 ** | 0,189 ** | 0,202 ** | | | | | |
| Financial Institutions | | -0,337 *** | -0,337 *** | -0,336 *** | -0,334 *** | | | | | |
| Enterprise | | -0,318 *** | -0,318 *** | -0,318 *** | -0,323 *** | | | | | |
| RESPONDENT LEVEL | | | | | | | | | | |
| Woman | | | -0,011 ** | -0,011 ** | -0,011 ** | | | | | |
| Age | | | 0,004 *** | 0,004 *** | 0,004 *** | | | | | |
| Education | | | -0,013 ** | -0,013 ** | -0,013 ** | | | | | |
| Prop. no answers | | | 0,090 ** | 0,092 ** | 0,085 ** | | | | | |
| SURVEY | | | | | | | | | | |
| Time C | | | | 0,009 N.S. | 0,008 N.S. | | | | | |
| Time C2 | | | | 0,001 ** | 0,001 ** | | | | | |
| Time C3 | | | | -0,0002 *** | -0,0002 *** | | | | | |
| LAPOP | | | | 0,489 *** | 0,493 *** | | | | | |
| WVS | | | | -0,041 N.S. | -0,081 N.S. | | | | | |
| Left | | | | 0,168 *** | | | | | | |
| Center Left | | | | 0,188 *** | | | | | | |
| Center Center-Right | | | | 0,0337 N.S. | | | | | | |
| VARIANCE | | | | | | | | | | |
| Measurement | 2,68 | 69% | 2,40 | 66,1% | 2,40 | 66,1% | 2,40 | 67,2% | 2,40 | 67% |
| Respondent | 1,05 | 27,1% | 1,07 | 29,4% | 1,06 | 29,3% | 1,06 | 29,8% | 1,07 | 29,9% |
| Survey | 0,15 | 3,9% | 0,16 | 4,6% | 0,16 | 4,6% | 0,10 | 3% | 0,11 | 3,2% |
| TOTAL | 3,88863 | | 3,64567 | | 3,64519 | | 3,5865 | | 3,58793 | |
| Deviation | 34375169 | | 33507351 | | 33506948 | | 33506717 | | 33480291 | |
| df | 4 | | 19 | | 23 | | 31 | | 55 | |

At the institutions level

In comparison with the media :

- Trust in the religious institutions is 0.76 points higher
- Trust in the International organizations is 0.31 points higher
- Trust in political parties is 1.33 points lower
- Trust in the trade unions is 0.86 points lower

The initial model (Model 0) shows that 69% of the variance in the level of trust is between the institutions.

At the respondent level:

- Being a woman is associated with lowest trust.
- Age with higher trusts and education with lowest trust but the impact is minimal

At the survey- year level:

- The level of institutional trust varies over time in Latin America: There is no linear effect (time is not significant) but there is a quadratic and cubic effect which means that change over time is "fish-like".

Conclusions

-Institutional trust in Latin America has slightly increased until 2005. However, from 2010 on, we can observe a slight decrease.

-Religious institutions, despite a significant decline, continue to be the institutions with the highest level of trust.

-Trust in most other institutions has been stable, except for trust in the Army, which has been rising substantially.

-Trust in political parties and trade unions remains the lowest, by far.

-When the ideology of the ruling party is left -compared to right- the level of trust in the political and administrative institutions is significantly higher.

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