

Evaluating civic empowerment in the Americas



THE 2018 AMERICAS CIVIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX



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About this report

This is the first edition of the Americas Civic Empowerment (ACE) Index, an index and benchmarking study developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit and supported by Humanitas360. This report discusses the key findings of the index and the accompanying model. The research for this project was conducted between December 2017 and February 2018.

The complete index, as well as detailed country analyses, can be viewed at the following website: <http://www.humanitas360.org>

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For further information, please contact:

The Economist Intelligence Unit

David Humphreys, Project Director:
davidhumphreys@eiu.com

Priya Bapat, Project Manager:
priyabapat@eiu.com

Lian Lin, Project Analyst:
lianlin@eiu.com

Humanitas360

Patrícia Villela Marino, President:
patricia@humanitas360.org

Piero Bonadeo, Vice-President:
piero@humanitas360.org

Ricardo Anderáos, Director of Partnerships and Communications:
ricardo@humanitas360.org

Alessandro Tomasi, Project Manager:
alessandro@humanitas360.org

About The Economist Intelligence Unit

The Economist Intelligence Unit is the research arm of The Economist Group, publisher of *The Economist*. As the world's leading provider of country intelligence, it helps governments, institutions and businesses by providing timely, reliable and impartial analysis of economic and development strategies. Through its public policy practice, The Economist Intelligence Unit provides evidence-based research for policymakers and stakeholders seeking measureable outcomes in fields ranging from gender and finance to energy and technology. It conducts research through interviews, regulatory analysis, quantitative modelling and forecasting, and displays the results via interactive data visualisation tools. Through a global network of more than 900 analysts and contributors, The Economist Intelligence Unit continuously assesses and forecasts political, economic and business conditions in over 200 countries. For more information, visit www.eiu.com.

About Humanitas360

The Humanitas360 Institute is a think & do tank committed to building human connections as a powerful tool to promote change in Latin America. Its mission is to advance research, promote knowledge, and engage citizens to achieve sustainable improvement of living standards in Latin America. Humanitas360 believes that citizen engagement improves living standards and tackles enduring and urgent challenges in governance and transparency, citizen security, and human rights in Latin America. For more information, visit www.humanitas360.org.

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Expert panelists and advisors:

Nathalie Alvarado, Angela Dannemann, Joan Hoey, Katherina Hruskovec, Lelia Mooney, Miguel Paz, Tiago Peixoto, David Smolansky Urosa and Brian Winter

Research and analysis:

Tamar Koosed, Joel Levesque and Yonatan Litwin

Model and report production:

Mike Kenny, Marcus Krackowizer and Paul Tucker

Foreword

Government is an integral part of people's everyday lives. From the quality of schools and roads to the trustworthiness and fairness of the police and judiciary system, a country's government can have a deep impact on the quality of life of its residents. One element that can help to hold governments to account and ensure that they take action when there are deficiencies is an active civil society that is engaged with its government and communities. Civic participation is an essential component in a functional democracy with sound governance; however, it is not the only factor. How empowered civil society is to engage with the government can vary significantly across countries, based on factors including legal and civic institutions, the protection of legal rights, and attitudes toward government and civic participation, among others. Assessing the environment for civic empowerment is a challenging task, but could be the key to understanding how people are able to shape the quality of life in their countries.

Although there is significant existing research on civic empowerment, there are no measures that look at the holistic environment. The inaugural 2018 Americas Civic Empowerment (ACE) Index addresses this gap by measuring the environment for civic empowerment across three dimensions: its enabling environment, its measured state and its public

perception. Each of these represents a different way to measure civic empowerment in a country:

- the **enabling environment** measures civic empowerment by assessing the legal, social and educational environment that enables people to become full and active participants in their societies;
- the **state of civic empowerment** assesses the extent to which people are participating in their community and political life; and
- **perceptions of civic empowerment** capture how people feel about their role in their communities and political environments.

In the process of creating this Index, the project team delved into the meaning of civic empowerment and what values were most important to include. Although by no means an exhaustive measure of every critical aspect of civic empowerment, the Index includes many key factors that should be considered when assessing a population's capacity to engage in civic life. Through reviews of literature, we determined that it was important to go beyond political life alone, building from the definition that civic engagement is a force for "promoting the quality of life in a community, through political and non-political processes".¹ In conversations with expert advisors, we found that it was also important to take

into consideration not only the high-level processes and institutions, but also how people interact on a more day-to-day level with the government (through service provision, police interactions and so on). Other metrics, such as political party membership, were not deemed as critical for assessing levels of civic empowerment, as political engagement could happen outside of political parties. An additional input from the expert advisors was to create indicators that measured similar themes across the three dimensions to assess any differences between the enabling conditions, current state and perceptions of each. For example, some indicators are measured across all three dimensions, such as freedom of speech (enabling conditions, current state and perceptions), while others are compared across two, such as gender equality (enabling conditions, current state).

We also developed the Index through the lens of what was most important to the region specifically. As a region, the Americas has a strong enabling environment for civic empowerment. Compared with other regions around the world, many countries in Latin America have established democracies, high levels of literacy and long life expectancies.² However, recent corruption scandals, from the Operation Car Wash (*Operação Lava Jato*) investigations, which have implicated governments across Latin America, to Guatemala's continuing challenges with presidential-level corruption, as well as the high risk of violent crime in many countries, demonstrate that solely examining the enabling environment is not enough to understand civic empowerment; it is also important to understand how people are engaging in social and political life, as well as their perceptions of their communities and their countries' political environments.

With this Index, The Economist Intelligence Unit seeks to provide a holistic, unique and insightful

assessment, through analysing and benchmarking civic empowerment in each country. To do so, we have built from existing measures and also created new qualitative metrics. The inaugural index assesses a set of seven countries—Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, the US and Venezuela, and the framework can be used to assess additional countries, as well as changes over time within each country. In the case of Venezuela, owing to challenges in data availability and the rapidly changing political environment, we present the information as estimates for scores and, therefore, as estimates for where we think the country might fit within our ranking. In this sense, Venezuela is often discussed separately to the six other countries included in the index. Despite these challenges, Venezuela is an important country to include specifically because of the deteriorating situation.

As expected, the 2018 ACE Index finds that the enabling environment, current state and perceptions of civic empowerment are not necessarily aligned within each country. For example, Brazil performs well in the Index for the current state of civic empowerment (Category 2, which measures levels of civic engagement), but ranks last for perceptions. Venezuela, on the other hand, is estimated to rank just below the US and above its Latin American neighbours for perceptions, while scoring at the bottom for both enabling environment (Category 1) and current state of civic empowerment (Category 2). Understanding how and why these discrepancies exist can reveal much about the overall environment for civic empowerment in each country.

In this report, we have included an analysis of the overall and category-level results for the Index, as well as top-line implications for what this means in the context of the socio-economic and political environment in the Americas.

Americas Civic Empowerment Index categories and indicators

The Americas Civic Empowerment Index is comprised of 22 indicators containing 34 questions, both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Data for the quantitative indicators are drawn from various resources, including The Economist Intelligence Unit, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. Gaps in the quantitative data have been filled by estimates developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit's project team.

The qualitative data are sourced from a range of primary data sources examined by The Economist Intelligence Unit. Examples of sources used in the index include legal texts, government websites and media reports.

The categories and their associated indicators are as follows (Appendix II provides detailed definitions of the categories and indicators):

1. Enabling conditions for civic empowerment (weighted 33 1/3 out of 100)

- 1.1 Freedom of speech
- 1.2 Freedom of assembly
- 1.3 Access to information
- 1.4 Access to services
- 1.5 Government responsiveness and effectiveness
- 1.6 Justice and security
- 1.7 Gender equality
- 1.8 Equality of minority groups

2. The state of civic empowerment (weighted 33 1/3 out of 100)

- 2.1 Freedom of speech
- 2.2 Freedom of assembly
- 2.3 Elections
- 2.4 Civil society organisations
- 2.5 Government responsiveness and effectiveness
- 2.6 Youth engagement
- 2.7 Gender equality
- 2.8 Equality of minority groups
- 2.9 Involvement in the community

3. Perceptions of civic empowerment (weighted 33 1/3 out of 100)

- 3.1 Freedom of speech
- 3.2 Elections
- 3.3 Access to services
- 3.4 Government responsiveness and effectiveness
- 3.5 Justice and security

Key findings from the study

| Overall Scores and Rankings | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|------|
| Country | Score | Rank |
| US | 81.9 | 1 |
| Chile | 56.8 | 2 |
| Colombia | 50.8 | 3 |
| Mexico | 46.5 | 4 |
| Brazil | 46.0 | 5 |
| Guatemala | 35.1 | 6 |
| <i>Venezuela</i> | | |

Note. Venezuela's score should be viewed as an estimate, given the rapidly changing political environment.

The 2018 ACE study reveals a number of noteworthy findings:

- **The US far outperforms the included countries from Latin America, demonstrating that there is significant room for improvement in the region.**

The US serves as a benchmark country in this study, outperforming the other countries included in the index. Legal protections, levels of community involvement and trust in government institutions are far above those in the Latin American countries.

- **Within Latin America, Chile ranks the highest and Guatemala the lowest.**

Chile is the top performing Latin American country in the Index, owing to strong legal and actual protections for people in terms of freedom of speech and elections. Chile also has the lowest risk for disrupting levels of violence of all countries in Latin America. Of the six countries scored and ranked within the Index (that is, excluding Venezuela), Guatemala ranks at the bottom of the overall index. Guatemala has low scores on indicators such as overall access to education and health, violent crime, freedom of the press, participation in petitions, and perceived corruption. Although Guatemala is the lowest ranked of the six countries, we estimate that Venezuela would score below Guatemala for the overall index, as well as in Categories 1 and 2.

- **People's feelings about their levels of civic empowerment do not necessarily match "reality".**

People's perceptions of their civic empowerment may not align with their capabilities. Brazil ranks at the bottom of the index for perceptions of the state of civic empowerment (Category 3). When looking at the three dimensions of freedom of speech, Brazil has similar freedom of speech protections (Category 1) to most countries, and higher than average expression of freedom of speech through the media and participation in petitions (Category 2); however, the country has the lowest perceived levels of freedom of speech (Category 3) of all countries within the study. Only 31.6% of Brazilians surveyed felt that freedom of speech is fully or fairly generally applied

everywhere and always, compared with 43.6-61.5% in the other countries in the Index. On the other hand, Venezuela ranks at the bottom for freedom and fairness of elections, yet a higher percentage of Venezuelans surveyed believed in the effectiveness of voting than any other country in the Index (77.7%, versus 50.4-70.6% elsewhere).

- **Similarly, confidence and satisfaction in institutions may not be connected with their objective strength.**

Experts emphasised the importance of examining the role of government as a service provider and how it plays a role in people's day-to-day lives (through health, education, policing and so on). It may be expected that people who live in countries with strong institutions would be happier with the services provided than those who live in countries with weaker ones. However, this may not always be the case. One example is the difference in access to services. Although Chile has high levels of educational attainment and the highest life expectancy of any country in the study, it ranks at the bottom for satisfaction in education, and only above Venezuela and Brazil in terms of satisfaction with access to health services. Guatemala has the highest levels of satisfaction with access to health services—and the lowest life expectancy of all countries in the index.

- **Positive enabling conditions and perceptions of civic empowerment do not always lead to actual civic participation.**

Civic participation can sometimes have an inverse relationship with both the enabling conditions and perceptions of civic empowerment. Although Brazil is ranked toward the bottom for Category 1 and Category 3, the country ranks second in Category 2. Brazil has the highest levels of participation in petitions and demonstrations of any country in the Index, as well as the lowest levels of satisfaction in access to services and perceived freedom of speech. Just as poor enabling conditions and perceptions of civic empowerment can be

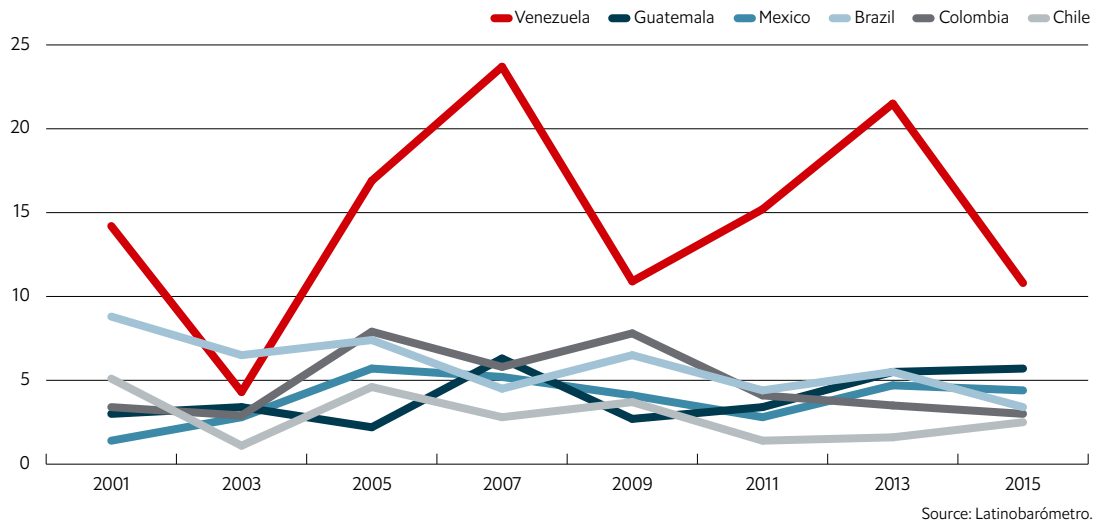
associated with high levels of civic participation, high enabling conditions and perceptions can be linked to lower levels of participation. Although Chile is found to have strong building blocks and perceptions for civic engagement, the country also has comparatively low levels of volunteerism and participation in petitions and demonstrations.

- **Perceptions of civic empowerment in Venezuela are surprisingly high, given the current situation.**

Although Venezuela ranks at the bottom overall when its estimated scores are included in the Index, it is estimated to score just below the US for perceptions of civic empowerment (Category 3). Despite an oppressive environment for political and civic engagement, the majority of people surveyed felt that freedom of speech was protected and that voting had an impact. This could be due to several different factors. First, the environment for civic empowerment in Venezuela is shifting at an accelerated pace. Although this makes it all the more important to measure, it does present some analytical challenges. There is always a time lag between the present reality and data collected through surveys and quantitative methods. When examining civic empowerment, many of the metrics collected for most countries in the index would be likely to reflect the situation in the present day, even accounting for a one-to-two-year time lag. However, in the case of Venezuela, data collected more than a year ago may not accurately capture the current situation. The data included in this index on trust in government representatives and participation in political protests were collected in 2015-17. Although this may reflect reality in most countries, these figures are likely to have changed significantly in Venezuela. As an example, **Figure 1** shows the change in trust in congress/parliament in 2001-15. The level of fluctuation in Venezuela is much higher than in other countries included in the study. Second, given the nature of the country's government, people may not feel comfortable responding honestly to

Figure 1: Trust in Congress/Parliament

(% respondents who say they have a lot of trust)



opinion surveys, and responses could be inflated. For both reasons, Venezuela is not included as a scored, normalised country within the index, but rather with approximate rankings for where the country might lie.

- **The study revealed interesting strengths and weaknesses for each country, regardless of their position in the overall index.**

Individual indicators within the index highlight particular achievements or deficiencies within each

country. In Colombia, for example, there is more comprehensive legal protection for minority groups; Mexico has one of the highest levels of female representation in legislature in the world; and Guatemala has the highest levels of satisfaction with access to education of any country in the Index. Among the top performers in the index, the US has the highest population and Chile has the lowest levels of trust in government representatives.

Category-level findings

Below we present the key findings for both the Index as a whole and on a category-by-category level:

Category 1: Enabling conditions for civic empowerment

Category 1 Scores and Rankings

| Country | Score | Rank |
|-----------|-------|------|
| US | 80.3 | 1 |
| Chile | 74.2 | 2 |
| Colombia | 59.1 | 3 |
| Brazil | 54.1 | 4 |
| Mexico | 49.9 | 5 |
| Guatemala | 37.7 | 6 |
| Venezuela | | |

Note. Venezuela's score should be viewed as an estimate, given the rapidly changing political environment.

Findings within Category 1 are presented below:

- **The US has an incarceration rate two to five times as high as the other countries included in the Index.**

Although the US ranks highest for both Category 1 and the Index as a whole, it is also an outlier, in the negative sense, for the metric on prison population. With an incarceration rate of nearly 0.7% of the population, the US also leads the world in the total prison population in the country overall. Brazil, which

ranks third in total prison population globally, has an incarceration rate that is half that of the US.³

- **Colombia is the only country in the study that has enshrined legal protections for citizens regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, race and ethnicity, and physical or mental ability.**

Most countries in the study lack protections in at least one area, but Colombia has legislation protecting the four minority groups included in this assessment. Although this may not translate into actual protection, it is worth noting.

Category 2: The state of civic empowerment

Category 2 Scores and Rankings

| Country | Score | Rank |
|-----------|-------|------|
| US | 83.0 | 1 |
| Brazil | 63.0 | 2 |
| Colombia | 59.0 | 3 |
| Chile | 57.7 | 4 |
| Mexico | 55.3 | 5 |
| Guatemala | 38.1 | 6 |
| Venezuela | | |

Note. Venezuela's score should be viewed as an estimate, given the rapidly changing political environment.

Findings within Category 2 are presented below:

- **Civic empowerment faces threats from violence by state and non-state actors.**

Violence, by government and non-government actors, is a well-known problem in the Americas, and it imposes barriers on the ability of people to actively

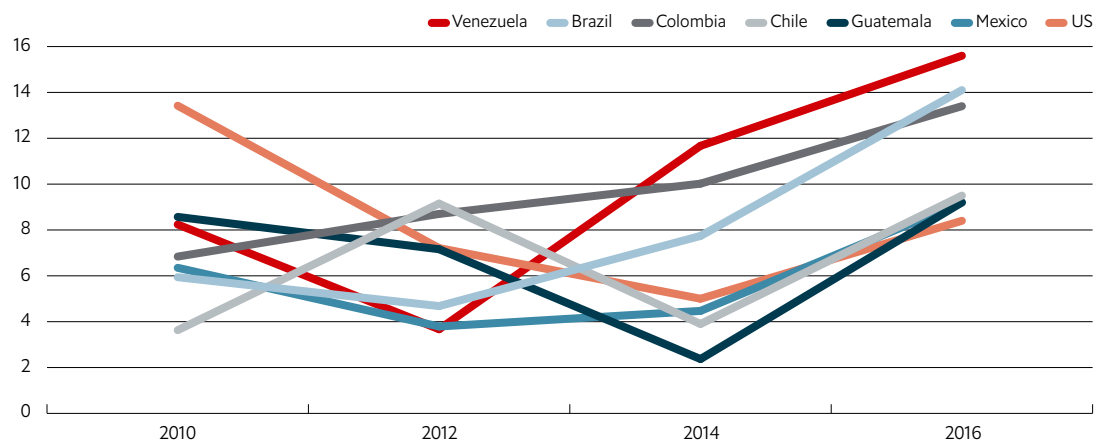
participate in civic life. In five of the seven countries—Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela—demonstrations have been suppressed by the government with excessive force. Moreover, in these same countries, civil society organisations (particularly those with political and civic engagement objectives) have been harassed by government or non-government agents. An additional finding from Category 1 could help to explain this: in these same five countries, The Economist Intelligence Unit expects that violent crime will be a significant problem for governments and businesses over the next two years.

- **Civic engagement in the region is high compared with historical levels, even as democratic institutions are facing challenges.**

Countries across the Americas are facing increased threats to democratic institutions, as revelations of high-level corruption have come to light. Even though trust in democratic institutions is low, civic participation levels are on the rise. In almost all countries included in the Index, participation in political protests and willingness to sign petitions are on the rise and, in some countries, are at the highest measured levels in ten years (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Participation in protests

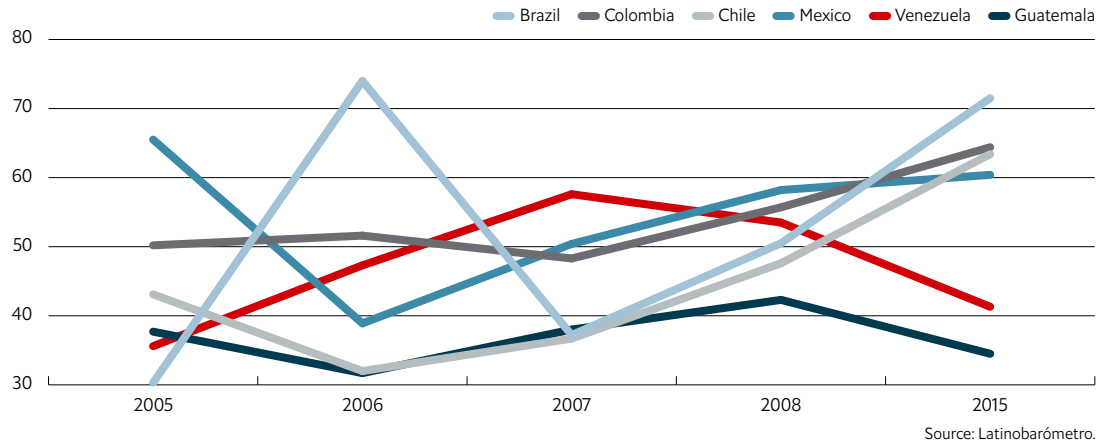
(% of respondents who have attended a protest in the past 12 months)



Source: Americas Barometer.

Figure 3: Disposition to sign petitions

(% of respondents who stated they either have or would be willing to sign a petition)



- Mexico is a global leader for representation of women in the national parliament, and is well above other countries in the region, including the US.

It is likely that this is due to a quota system requiring equal gender representation on candidate lists, which is strictly enforced.⁴ Mexico also ranks third in the region, behind the US and Chile, in terms of gender inequality (Category 1).

Category 3: Perceptions of civic empowerment

Category 3 Scores and Rankings

| Country | Score | Rank |
|-----------|-------|------|
| US | 82.5 | 1 |
| Venezuela | | |
| Chile | 38.6 | 2 |
| Colombia | 34.4 | 3 |
| Mexico | 30.0 | 4 |
| Guatemala | 29.5 | 5 |
| Brazil | 25.0 | 6 |

Note. Venezuela's score should be viewed as an estimate, given the rapidly changing political environment.

Findings within Category 3 are presented below:

- Perceptions of civic empowerment are extremely low in Latin America, particularly in comparison to the US.

The gap between the US and countries in Latin America is much larger in Category 3 than the first

two categories. An example of where the US significantly outperforms the countries in Latin America is in the polls on trust levels in the judiciary, the police and public institutions. In opinion surveys, the US surveys found that 57% of people had high levels of trust in the police, compared with 3.4-18.6% in the Latin American countries. Similarly, trust levels in the judiciary were assessed at 40% in the US, while falling between 4.3% and 8.2% in the other countries in the study.

- **Trust in government officials is extremely low across all countries.**

Trust in government representatives, the police and the judiciary were found to be at low levels across all countries in the Index. Outside of the US, the most trusted institution in the Index was the Chilean police, with 15.6% of those surveyed saying that they trusted the institution a great deal. Trust levels in government representatives were lower than trust levels in policymaking and the judiciary branch across all countries (with the exception of Venezuela). The US outperforms the region in many indicators in this category, but sometimes only by a small margin and with an overall low figure. For example, when asked about trust in government representatives, only 12% of US respondents stated that they have a great deal of trust. This compares with 2-6% of respondents in the other countries sharing a similar opinion about their own governments. Despite the higher US score, none of these figures are particularly high.

- **Venezuela scores relatively high for available data on perceptions of civic empowerment, which underlines how quickly the situation in the country has changed.**

Interestingly, available data for Venezuela show that people surveyed have much higher opinions about perceived freedom of speech, the effectiveness of voting and trust in government representatives compared with its neighbours. As stated above, opinion polls conducted in Venezuela may not be an accurate indicator of current beliefs, given the extreme changes observed between different years (see Figure 1), as well as the deterioration of the political situation that has taken place since survey data was collected in 2015. However, even in 2015, it is likely that Venezuela would have scored low for both Categories 1 and 2, underpinning the central point that perceptions might not always be in alignment with the enabling environment and current state of civic empowerment.

Americas Civic Empowerment Index country summaries

The following section provides a brief profile of the civic environment in each of the seven countries in this study and their performance in the Index. Countries are listed in alphabetical order. Please note that the information selected for the country profiles is intended to provide a high-level overview; it is not intended to provide an outline of the legal environment or represent a comprehensive account of all recent activity.

Brazil



BRAZIL IN THE INDEX

| | Score | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Overall score | 46/100 | 5 out of 6 |
| Category 1 | 50/100 | 5 out of 6 |
| Category 2 | 63/100 | 2 out of 6 |
| Category 3 | 25/100 | 6 out of 6 |

Civic engagement in Brazil is facing an inflection point, after Operation Carwash (*Operação Lava Jato*) exposed political corruption on a massive scale.⁵ Historical tolerance of corruption has been replaced by mass public protests,^{6,7} and civil society has increased its efforts to curb corruption.⁸

Brazil scores highly in Category 2, owing to high participation in demonstrations and petitions, and comparatively high levels of involvement in the community. Brazil scores at the bottom of the Index for Category 3 on perceptions. Although there is a high degree of trust in voting,⁹ satisfaction in access to services, perceived freedom of speech, belief in government transparency and trust in the police are comparatively low. Educational enrollment is relatively high for Latin America,¹⁰ although general satisfaction with education is low.¹¹

With impending elections this year, Brazil faces a number of challenges. Brazil ranks 155th (out of 191 nations) in female representation in the legislature,¹² and citizens hold a low degree of trust in government institutions.¹³ Farmers and Indigenous populations campaigning for land rights and access to natural resources face killings, threats and attacks,^{14,15} and recent reports show that the government has used excessive force to suppress non-violent demonstrations.^{16,17,18}

Chile



CHILE IN THE INDEX

| | Score | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Overall score | 57/100 | 2 out of 6 |
| Category 1 | 74/100 | 2 out of 6 |
| Category 2 | 58/100 | 4 out of 6 |
| Category 3 | 39/100 | 2 out of 6 |

In recent years, corruption scandals have hit Chile, including allegations against the president’s family in 2015.¹⁹ Tensions over education and pension issues have sparked nationwide protests.²⁰ However, the country has implemented major reforms, including adding gender quotas for Congress,²¹ and educational reforms.²² The incoming administration of Sebastián Piñera has also committed to pension reform and improving indigenous rights and representation.²³ Chile is the highest-scoring country in Latin America in the Index, although significant challenges remain. Although legal instruments exist to protect the freedom of assembly,²⁴ multiple cases of police brutality and use of excessive force to suppress protests have been reported in the past four years.²⁵ ^{26,27,28} Human rights defenders have also reported government harassment.^{29,30}

Chileans report little trust in their political institutions, as shown by the low degree of trust in judiciary and decline in voter turnout.³¹ There is low representation of women and minorities in the legislature.³²

Colombia



COLOMBIA IN THE INDEX

| | Score | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Overall score | 51/100 | 3 out of 6 |
| Category 1 | 59/100 | 3 out of 6 |
| Category 2 | 59/100 | 3 out of 6 |
| Category 3 | 34/100 | 3 out of 6 |

Colombia is facing a challenging transition following the peace accord with the FARC guerrilla group, ending a conflict of more than 50 years. Thousands of demobilised FARC fighters, many of whom lack a formal education, are being re-integrated into civil society, including as political leaders. Opinions on government handling of the FARC re-integration and frustration over high-level political corruption will influence the outcome of the 2018 elections.³³ Colombia has free and fair elections,³⁴ good legal protections of minority groups, constitutional protections of minorities,³⁵ and legislation that ensures the representation of minorities in its bicameral legislature.^{36,37}

Colombians have low trust and confidence in the legislature, police and judiciary.^{38,39} Rural, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities engaging in non-violent protests have been subject to violent suppression by government forces.⁴⁰ Additionally, threats against and killings of civil society members are reported in significant numbers, especially involving community leaders, land-rights and environmental activists, and peace and justice campaigners.^{41,42,43}

Guatemala



GUATEMALA IN THE INDEX

| | Score | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Overall score | 35/100 | 6 out of 6 |
| Category 1 | 38/100 | 6 out of 6 |
| Category 2 | 38/100 | 6 out of 6 |
| Category 3 | 30/100 | 5 out of 6 |

High-level corruption has sparked a series of protests in recent years, which led to the premature end of Otto Pérez Molina’s term as president in 2015, and is placing pressure on the administration of the current president, Jimmy Morales, who entered office on an anti-corruption platform. In addition to corruption, Guatemalan citizens are concerned with gang-related violence and tension between the Morales administration and the UN-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala.⁴⁴ Although Guatemala scores toward the bottom of the Index, there are some positive highlights of civic empowerment, including the presence of free and fair elections, and the ability to freely form political and civic organisations.⁴⁵

Guatemala has high levels of gender inequality, including in the legislature, where there is an under-representation of minorities and women.^{46,47} Guatemalans have a high perception of corruption⁴⁸ and a lack of trust in government institutions.⁴⁹ Guatemala also has a very low national enrolment rate for secondary school, of only 48.2%.⁵⁰

Police frequently threaten citizens with the use of force and have used violence against civil society and peaceful demonstrations.^{51,52,53,54}

Mexico



MEXICO IN THE INDEX

| | Score | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Overall score | 47/100 | 4 out of 6 |
| Category 1 | 54/100 | 4 out of 6 |
| Category 2 | 55/100 | 5 out of 6 |
| Category 3 | 30/100 | 4 out of 6 |

Civic empowerment in Mexico faces significant challenges, with rampant gang violence, corruption and weak state authority feeding growing public disenchantment. The intimidation and killing of journalists reached a historic high in 2017: six journalists were killed, putting Mexico just behind Iraq and Syria as the deadliest places in the world to work in media.^{55,56}

Positive highlights of civic empowerment include the percentage of women legislators—Mexico ranks highest in the Index and in the top ten countries globally.⁵⁷ However, progress in the representation of women in its legislature is not matched by government transparency, or by trust of government institutions.⁵⁸ In addition, serious legislation gaps remain for persons with disabilities.^{59,60}

Activists representing indigenous groups contesting large-scale infrastructure projects face harassment and violent resistance,^{61,61,62} including threats and murders.^{63,64} Significant violence exists against journalists and civil society.^{65,66,67} There are multiple examples of environmental and student protests being suppressed with excessive force by the government, resulting in the injury or death of protesters.^{68,69}

US



US IN THE INDEX

| | Score | Rank |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Overall score | 82/100 | 1 out of 6 |
| Category 1 | 80/100 | 1 out of 6 |
| Category 2 | 83/100 | 1 out of 6 |
| Category 3 | 83/100 | 1 out of 6 |

Political and social polarisation has been on the rise in recent years, and has only been exacerbated by the election of Donald Trump as president. The increasing size and frequency of protests, including the Black Lives Matter movement, the protests at Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota, the women’s marches of 2017 and 2018, and a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, demonstrate a rise in political engagement across the country.^{70,71,72,73,74,75}

The US ranks at the top of the Index, with strong protections of freedom of speech and civic activity.^{77,76,77} However, the US faces challenges in the protections and equality of women and minorities, who remain under-represented in the national legislature.⁷⁸ Women also still face gender inequality in healthcare and labour participation.⁷⁹

In addition, there are no federal laws explicitly guaranteeing the equality and protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.^{80,81} In fact laws protecting the right to discriminate against individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity still exist in multiple states.^{82,83}

Venezuela



Venezuela is in the midst of an unprecedented economic and political crisis, marked by an increasingly authoritarian executive and an extreme decline in the quality of life, including severe food and medicine shortages.^{84,85} Civil society suffer forms of harassment, violence and severe restrictions on activity,^{86,87,88,89} while government institutions increasingly serve to further the views of the ruling party.⁹⁰ As a result major changes in the past year, the Economist Intelligence Unit’s 2017 Democracy Index re-classified Venezuela as an authoritarian regime.⁹¹

Surveys and quantitative data fail to capture the extent of the challenges in Venezuela, as the situation changes each week. Anti-government demonstrations have been frequent since 2014, spurred by high levels of urban violence, inflation, chronic shortages of basic goods and low oil prices (Venezuela’s economy is reliant on oil exports).^{92,93} Civil society activists are regularly intimidated, physically attacked or killed.^{94,95,96,97} Excessive force has been used to suppress protests, with government forces firing tear gas and rubber bullets at short range, manipulating ammunition to make rounds more harmful, using live rounds, making arbitrary arrests, and torturing and sexually assaulting protesters.^{98,99,100,101}

Venezuela is also ranked as one of the worst places in the world to be a journalist, owing to restrictions and physical security threats.^{102,103}

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APPENDIX I – Methodology

Objective of the research

Humanitas360 worked with The Economist Intelligence Unit to build an index on civic empowerment in the Americas. The Americas Civic Empowerment (ACE) Index encompasses questions that are aimed mainly at assessing gaps between the enabling environment, the reality and the perceptions of civic empowerment in six countries in the Americas, with an additional comparative analysis of Venezuela.

Index construction

The research program investigated civic empowerment in political processes and civil society across the Americas. By investigating the driving forces as well as assessing measures of civic empowerment, we assessed the levels to which individuals can and do interact with their governments and service delivery systems.

Starting an index framework

The Economist Intelligence Unit examined the issue by looking at three broad categories of civic empowerment:

- the environment that enables citizens to engage and participate in political processes and civil society in a country;
- the current state of civic empowerment in a country; and
- the public's perception of civic empowerment.

Across those three categories, The Economist Intelligence Unit identified an initial set of indicators, which were then presented to a panel of international experts for discussion and recommendations.

Convening an international expert panel

The initial index framework was subjected to a thorough review process by Humanitas360 research staff and a panel of international experts. The expert panel convened in Washington, DC on November 8th 2017, and assembled seven renowned scholars and practitioners in the areas of political science and development, democracy, good governance, journalism, civil society, diversity, and social inclusion. The expert panelists played a critical role by making recommendations on the key themes addressed by the ACE Index. The panel validated aspects of the methodology, such as definitions, categories and indicators. During the meeting, experts offered insights on select areas of research and identified debates, as well as suggested evidence and data sources to support the research program. The international expert panel included:

- Ms Nathalie Alvarado, Citizen Security Principal Specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank.
- Ms Angela Dannemann, Superintendent of Fundação Itaú Social;
- Ms Lelia Mooney, Senior Program Officer for Global Practice and Innovation at the United States Institute of Peace;
- Mr Miguel Paz, Data Journalism Professor at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism;

- Dr Tiago Peixoto, Senior Public Sector Specialist at the World Bank's Governance Global Practice;
- Mr David Smolansky Urosa, Mayor of El Hatillo municipality in Venezuela; and,
- Mr Brian Winter, Editor-in-chief of *Americas Quarterly* magazine and Vice President for Policy at Americas Society/Council of the Americas.

Selecting the countries

The ACE Index project covered a total of seven countries across the region. Six countries were fully included in the Index, and Venezuela was included in the research as part of a comparative analysis, with a scoring and ranking parallel to the Index. In other words, while Venezuela appears in the Index, its figures were not considered for the normalisation of the Index.

In determining the list of countries to include in this inaugural version of the Index, we considered factors such as location, population size, demographic makeup, data availability, and state of economic and political development. Based on these factors, we selected Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and the US as the countries for this analysis.

Finalising a framework

After incorporating the expert panel's comments, The Economist Intelligence Unit and Humanitas360 produced a final framework. This is composed of 35 quantitative and qualitative questions, and is divided into 22 indicators across three categories, each of which is designed to capture a dimension of civic empowerment in the region.

The three categories of the index are:

- **Category 1: Enabling conditions for civic empowerment.** The social, economic and political environment in a country is an underlying driver that enables citizens to engage with the political process and participate in civil society. This category measures factors that enable people to participate in society.

- **Category 2: The state of civic empowerment.**

The realities on the ground may differ from stated rights and freedoms. This category measures how people are participating in their societies, in terms of both political and social participation.

- **Category 3: Perceptions of civic empowerment.**

How people view society's role and their freedom to contribute to their societies matters. This category measures public perceptions of the countries' institutions and their citizens' abilities to participate in civil society.

Research and assessment

Sources

The Economist Intelligence Unit relies primarily on publicly available sources for our index-based analyses. This research approach has the benefit of creating a fully transparent and repeatable methodology. However, not all publicly available data are up to date, which is especially relevant in such a fast-changing field. Additionally, several international sources rely on data reported by countries. Governments may use different methodologies to gather or count the data, or have less capacity to report the most current data, which causes variations in data quality and timeliness.

The main sources used in the ACE Index are The Economist Intelligence Unit, the World Bank, the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Latinobarómetro, Gallup, and Pew Research. For a full list of sources and the corresponding indicator, please see the *Index Framework* section (page 27) of this methodology for more details.

Conducting the research for quantitative indicators

Out of the total 35 questions in the Index framework, 29 are quantitative indicators whose data were collected from reputable, external sources, as well as from The Economist Intelligence Unit's proprietary

database. We collected the latest available data for each quantitative indicator between January 9th 2018 and February 15th 2018.

Conducting the research for qualitative indicators

Out of the total 35 questions in the Index framework, six are qualitative indicators whose scores were obtained through thorough research and analysis. The research was conducted in January 2018 and assessed what was considered the latest publicly available information. For each qualitative indicator, The Economist Intelligence Unit provides a score, a detailed justification for that score, and the sources used to determine that score.

Filling the data gaps

Alternative sources and estimation techniques were consulted and included in the research and

assessment of data gaps when a data point was missing for a specific question or country. The alternative sources used to fill the data gaps are reputable and verifiable, and the data pulled from those sources are comparable and sufficiently similar to the main source and definition as described in the question.

A main source was Latinobarómetro, an annual survey of public opinion that covers six of the seven countries in the ACE Index. Although the survey does cover many countries across Latin America, it does not cover the US. The indicators and questions that used Latinobarómetro were the ones that examined perceptions (Category 3) and those that were based on survey data. For the US data gaps, we collected a comprehensive list of similar survey questions from alternative sources and selected the question that best matched the one from the Latinobarómetro.

| Number | Name/description | Question | Main source | Alternative source (US) |
|---------|---|--|--|--|
| 1.4.1.2 | Education | Learning achievement in reading (primary) | Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) | OECD's PISA (EIU estimate) |
| 2.1.2 | Participation in petitions | % of people who have signed a petition or expressed a willingness to sign a petition | Latinobarómetro | Pew Research |
| 2.9.2 | Politics with friends | How frequently do you discuss politics with your friends? | Latinobarómetro | Pew Research |
| 3.1.1 | Perceived freedom of speech | To what extent does freedom of speech always and everywhere apply to your country? | Latinobarómetro | Knight Foundation, Newseum Institute, Gallup |
| 3.2.1 | Effectiveness of voting | % of people who believe voting has an impact | Latinobarómetro | Pew Research |
| 3.3.1 | Satisfaction with access to health services | Would you say you are very satisfied, satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the health services to which you have access? | Latinobarómetro | Gallup |
| 3.4.2 | Trust in government representatives | How much trust do you have in the national congress/parliament? | Latinobarómetro | Gallup |
| 3.4.3 | Government transparency | How much transparency do you believe there is in the government? | Latinobarómetro | Fox News |
| 3.5.1 | Trust in police | How much trust do you have in the police? | Latinobarómetro | Gallup |
| 3.5.2 | Trust in the judiciary | How much trust you have in the judiciary? | Latinobarómetro | Gallup |

The EIU employed estimation techniques to estimate one data point on the quality of education (question 1.4.1.2) for the US. The main source, the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), which was conducted in 2013, assessed learning achievement in reading in five countries in our index: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico. Although the exam covers many countries in Latin America, it does not include the US. To estimate a US score, The EIU consulted the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which was last conducted in 2015. The EIU identified the regional mean and standard deviation of each database and used statistical methods to project the US score on the LLECE distribution.

The figures that LLECE presents are normalised scores, where the mean is set at 700 with a standard deviation of 100. PISA also presents normalised scores, with the mean set at 500 with a standard deviation of 100. In order to assimilate both scores, the EIU identified the countries that are in both LLECE and PISA and calculated new means and standard deviations specifically for this group of countries. We calculated the number of standard deviations the US is away from the Latin American mean in the PISA exam, and then applied that number of standard deviations on the LLECE mean to estimate the US score in the LLECE.

Scoring, normalisation and weighting

Determining the scores

The EIU and Humanitas360 worked together to determine the scoring scheme for the 35 questions. Each question has its own scoring scheme and criteria. Indicator scores are aggregated across categories to enable a comparison of broader concepts across countries. All indicators in this model are scored on a 0-100 scale, where 100 indicates the strongest civic empowerment environment and zero indicates the weakest environment for civic empowerment.

Normalising the scores

In order to arrive at the overall score for each country, the EIU transformed the raw indicator data to a common unit, so that it can be comparable and aggregated. Each indicator data was rebased and normalised such that the maximum score became 100 and the minimum became zero. The scale and range of the indicators vary, so the EIU employed different approaches to normalise each question. For some indicators and questions, the data were already normalised on a scale of 0-100, so no change was made.

Scaling method

For indicators and questions where the range is defined and fixed and where the data points are appropriately distributed across the range, the normalisation exercise scales the raw data to a 0-100-point scale. In this approach, the low end of the raw data range is fixed at 0 and the high end is fixed at 100.

For example, to measure gender inequality this Index used the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, which scores each country in a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 is best. To convert this score to the scale used in this Index, we inverted the polarity so that 1 is best and multiplied each country's value by 100, so that the range for that measure becomes 0-100.

Rescaling method

For indicators and questions where there is no range or where the data points are not appropriately distributed across the range, the normalisation exercise makes data comparable across countries by converting the minimum-to-maximum range of the raw data to a common unit.

$$x_{normal} = 100 \times \frac{x_{raw} - x_{min}}{x_{max} - x_{min}}$$

The normalised score for a given country on an indicator is obtained by subtracting the lowest raw value recorded for that indicator, divided by the range value (that is, maximum minus minimum) for

that indicator, and then multiplied by 100. The country with the lowest raw value will receive a score of zero, and the country with the highest raw value will receive a score of 100.

For example, our health indicator considers life expectancy at birth, a measure that in theory has no maximum range. To normalise this indicator, we identified the countries with the highest and lowest life expectancies at birth, which respectively are Chile, with 79.2 years, and Guatemala, with 73 years.

Those two figures were set as maximum and minimum, and we applied the formula above to find the scores for each country. In this case, Chile's normalised score is 100, Guatemala's is 0, and all the other countries are appropriately scored in between.

Weighting the scores

The maximum score for the entire Index is 100, with each category weighted equally at 33 1/3.

APPENDIX II – Index framework

| Number | Name/description | Question | Scoring guidance | Source |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Category 1: Enabling conditions for civic empowerment | | | | |
| 1.1 | Freedom of speech | | | |
| 1.1.1 | Freedom of speech protections | Is there freedom of expression and protest (bar only generally accepted restrictions, such as banning advocacy of violence)? | 2 = Yes 1 = Some official harassment and restrictions in place via libel laws 0 = No | EIU Democracy Index |
| 1.2 | Freedom of assembly | | | |
| 1.2.1 | Political and civic freedom of assembly | Are citizens allowed to form political and civic organisations, free of state interference and surveillance? | 2 = Yes 1 = Officially free, but subject to some unofficial restrictions or interference. 0 = No | EIU Democracy Index |
| 1.3 | Access to information | | | |
| 1.3.1 | Internet access | % population with at least 3G coverage | % of the population covered by at least a 3G mobile network (irrespective of whether or not they are subscribers) | ITU |
| 1.3.2 | News consumption | % of adult population showing an interest in and following politics in the news | 2 = High (over 50%) 1 = Moderate (30-50%) 0 = Low (Less than 30%) | EIU Democracy Index; World Values Survey |
| 1.4 | Access to services | | | |
| 1.4.1.1 | Education | What is the national enrollment rate at the secondary school level? | % rate | UNESCO |
| 1.4.1.2 | Education | Learning achievement in reading (primary) | Average country score | Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) |
| 1.4.2 | Health | Life expectancy at birth | # | World Bank |
| 1.5 | Government responsiveness and effectiveness | | | |
| 1.5.1 | Accountability of public officials | How accountable are public officials? Is recourse possible in the case of unfair treatment? Do safeguards/sanctions exist to ensure that officials perform competently? | 0-4 score (0 = best) | EIU |
| 1.6 | Justice and security | | | |
| 1.6.1 | Fairness of legal system | To what extent can legal processes/the courts be interfered with or distorted to serve particular interests? | 0-4 score (0 = best) | EIU |

| Number | Name/description | Question | Scoring guidance | Source |
|--|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| 1.6.2 | Violent crime | Is violent crime likely to pose a significant problem for government and/or business over the next two years? | 0-4 score (0 = best) | EIU |
| 1.6.3 | Prison population | Number of jailed population per 100,000 | Number of jailed population per 100,000 | World Prison Brief |
| 1.7 Gender equality | | | | |
| 1.7.1 | Gender inequality | What is the level of gender inequality for health, education, political participation and labour participation? | 0-1 scale (0 = best) | UNDP Gender Inequality Index |
| 1.8 Equality of minority groups | | | | |
| 1.8.1 | Laws guaranteeing access to services for minority groups | Are there specific laws in place guaranteeing legal rights and protections and access to government services for citizens regardless of: - sexual orientation, gender identity - religion - race or ethnicity - physical or mental abilities | 2 = Yes, for all four groups 1 = Yes, but only for some 0 = No, no explicit guarantees for minorities | Qualitative |

Category 2: The state of civic empowerment

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|---------------------------|
| 2.1 Freedom of speech | | | | |
| 2.1.1 | Freedom of the press | Is the media able to operate freely and safely in country? | 2 = Media freedom is assessed as good/fairly good 1 = Media freedom is assessed as problematic 0 = Media freedom is assessed as bad or very bad | World Press Freedom Index |
| 2.1.2 | Participation in petitions | % of respondents who answered that they either have or could sign a petition | % of respondents who answered that they either have or could sign a petition | Latinobarómetro |
| 2.2 Freedom of assembly | | | | |
| 2.2.1 | Participation in demonstrations | In the past 12 months, have you participated in a demonstration or protest march? | % of people who have participated in a demonstration or protest march in the past 12 months | Americas Barometer |
| 2.2.2 | Government suppression of demonstrations | Are demonstrations often suppressed with excessive force by the government? | 1 = No, demonstrations have never or rarely been suppressed with excessive force by the government in the past four years 0 = Yes, there have been multiple reported cases of demonstrations being suppressed with excessive force by the government | Qualitative |
| 2.3 Elections | | | | |
| 2.3.1 | Free and fair elections | Are elections for the national legislature, head of government and municipalities free and fair? | 0-3 scale (composite indicator) | EIU Democracy Index |

| Number | Name/description | Question | Scoring guidance | Source |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| 2.4 Civil society organisations | | | | |
| 2.4.1 | Freedom of CSO operation | Are civil society organisations, particularly those with political and civic engagement objectives, allowed to operate freely in the country? | 2 = CSOs are able to operate freely and openly 1 = CSOs experience some harassment either from the government or from non-governmental agents. 0 = Harassment of CSOs by government and/or non-governmental agents is commonplace. | Qualitative |
| 2.5 Government responsiveness and effectiveness | | | | |
| 2.5.1 | Government consultations with the public | Is there a practice of pre-consultation with the public when the government is considering new regulations? | 1 = Yes 0 = No | World Bank Regulatory Governance database |
| 2.6 Youth engagement | | | | |
| 2.6.1 | Civics education | Does the Ministry of Education (or equivalent) standard curriculum include a requirement for civics education at the primary and secondary level? | 2 = Yes, civics classes are required at the primary and secondary levels 1 = Yes, but only at one of the levels 0 = No, there is no requirement for civics education at either the primary or secondary level | Qualitative |
| 2.6.2 | Fostering youth engagement | Does the national government have a dedicated youth volunteerism/youth civic engagement office that is actively conducting youth engagement programs (without clear favouritism toward advancing the views of the ruling party)? | 1 = Yes, the national government has an active, dedicated office dedicated to encouraging volunteerism or civic engagement for youth. 0 = No, the government does not have an active, dedicated office OR Yes, but the office is explicitly encouraging adopting the viewpoints of the ruling party. | Qualitative |
| 2.7 Gender equality | | | | |
| 2.7.1 | Women in legislature | % of women representatives in legislature | % of women representatives in legislature | International Parliamentary Union |
| 2.8 Equality of minority groups | | | | |
| 2.8.1 | Diversity in legislature | Are there representatives in the legislature from the three largest ethnic/racial groups in the country? | 1 = Yes 0 = No | Qualitative |
| 2.9 Involvement in the community | | | | |
| 2.9.1 | Volunteerism | % of people who have volunteered time in the past month | % of respondents who have volunteered time in the past month | Latinobarómetro |
| 2.9.2 | Politics with friends | How frequently do you discuss politics with your friends? | % of respondents who discuss politics very frequently or frequently | Latinobarómetro |

| Number | Name/description | Question | Scoring guidance | Source |
|--|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Category 3: Perceptions of civic empowerment | | | | |
| 3.1 Freedom of speech | | | | |
| 3.1.1 | Perceived freedom of speech | To what extent does freedom of speech always and everywhere apply to your country? | % of respondents who responded "fully" or "fairly generally" | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.2 Elections | | | | |
| 3.2.1 | Effectiveness of voting | % of people who believe voting has an impact | % of respondents who believe voting or voting and protesting are important to advance the country (versus those who believe that voting is not effective or important) | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.3 Access to services | | | | |
| 3.3.1 | Satisfaction with access to health services | Would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the health services to which you have access? | % of respondents who are very satisfied or satisfied | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.3.2 | Satisfaction with access to education | Would you say you are very satisfied, satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the education services to which you have access? | % of respondents who are very satisfied or satisfied | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.4 Government responsiveness and effectiveness | | | | |
| 3.4.1 | Perceived corruption | Corruptions Perception Index score | CPI Index | Transparency International |
| 3.4.2 | Trust in government representatives | How much trust do you have in the national congress/parliament? | % of respondents who trust the national congress/parliament a great deal | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.4.3 | Government transparency | How much transparency do you believe there is in the government? | % of respondents who mostly believe there is transparency | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.5 Justice and security | | | | |
| 3.5.1 | Trust in police | How much trust do you have in the police? | % of respondents who trust the police a great deal | Latinobarómetro |
| 3.5.2 | Trust in the judiciary | How much trust you have in the judiciary? | % of respondents who trust the judiciary a great deal | Latinobarómetro |

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London

20 Cabot Square
London
E14 4QW
United Kingdom
Tel: (44.20) 7576 8000
Fax: (44.20) 7576 8476
E-mail: london@eiu.com

New York

750 Third Avenue
5th Floor
New York, NY 10017
United States
Tel: (1.212) 554 0600
Fax: (1.212) 586 0248
E-mail: newyork@eiu.com

Hong Kong

1301 Cityplaza Four
12 Taikoo Wan Road
Taikoo Shing
Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2585 3888
Fax: (852) 2802 7638
E-mail: hongkong@eiu.com

Geneva

Boulevard des
Tranchées 16
1206 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: (41) 22 566 2470
Fax: (41) 22 346 93 47
E-mail: geneva@eiu.com

Dubai

Office 1301a
Aurora Tower
Dubai Media City
Dubai
Tel: (971) 4 433 4202
Fax: (971) 4 438 0224
E-mail: dubai@eiu.com