# Focus on Latin America

## Comparing perceptions of risks and government effectiveness across Europe, Israel and the Americas

LAPOP

OECD

# Focus on Latin American from the 2018 Risks that Matter Survey

COMPARING PERCEPTIONS OF RISKS AND GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS ACROSS EUROPE, ISRAEL AND THE AMERICAS

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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# Risks that Matter: Focus on Latin America: Comparing perceptions of risks and government effectiveness across Europe, Israel and the Americas

What worries people across Latin America, North America, Israel and Europe? How do attitudes towards governments' provision of social protection differ cross-nationally? A collaboration between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) illustrates how views of economic risk and government effectiveness vary across the Americas and Europe.

## Key findings

- Economic discontent is global. Many respondents of both the OECD's Risks that Matter survey and LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey find that their country's economic situation is worse than it was a year prior.
- While crime and violence surface as a major issue in a few OECD countries outside of Latin America, crime, violence, and insecurity are overwhelmingly cited as the top social challenges in Latin America.
- More than half of all respondents in the OECD and Latin American countries studied in this report say that government is failing to incorporate their views in social policy design and reform.

## Introduction

What worries people across Latin America, North America, Israel and Europe? How do attitudes towards governments' provision of social protection differ cross-nationally? A collaboration between the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) illustrates how views of economic risk and government effectiveness vary across the Americas and Europe.

Ensuring adequate access to social protection is a key part of any advanced democracy, yet governments differ dramatically in the level and quality of social services provided. Public attitudes towards government reflect, at least in part, perceptions of public social protection. Despite differences in the amount governments spend on social protection and large gaps in national income, however, results from the OECD Risks that Matter (RTM) survey and LAPOP's AmericasBarometer reveal that some concerns are nearly universal.

Across middle- and high-income countries in Europe and the Americas, as well as in Israel, people are worried about making ends meet, falling victim to crime or violence, becoming unemployed, and falling ill. Many low-income respondents, in particular, feel that their economic situation has worsened since the prior year. In response to these risks, people around the world have limited faith in government protecting them. Citizens are sceptical of their ability to access public benefits when they need them, and most people say that they do not feel government incorporates their views when designing public policies. In addition to investing in social programmes and strengthening relevant institutions, governments must simultaneously recommit to transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement when designing social protection.

### Box 1. Comparing the OECD's Risks that Matter Survey and LAPOP's AmericasBarometer

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Risks that Matter (RTM) survey is a cross-national survey that examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and how well they think government addresses those risks. Respondents are asked about their social and economic concerns, how well they think government responds to their needs and expectations, and what policies they would like to see in the future.

The Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer survey, hosted by Vanderbilt University, measures the opinion of citizens in government support, political tolerance, citizen participation, local governments, corruption, and authoritarianism, among other issues.

The OECD and LAPOP coordinated to share four of the same questions across their two surveys in 2018 and 2019, respectively. (See Annex A for the list of questions.) The same four questions ran in seven Latin American countries in 2019 (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru) and in 21 OECD countries in 2018 (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the United States). The analysis presented here uses a representative sample of 10 000 people aged 18 to 70 years old in the aforementioned seven countries in the AmericasBarometer survey, and a representative sample of 22 000 people aged 18 to 70 years old in the aforementioned 21 countries in the RTM survey.

RTM and AmericasBarometer differ in survey implementation. The inaugural (2018) wave of the RTM survey was implemented online using samples recruited via the internet and over the phone. Sampling is based on a modified form of quota sampling with sex, age group, education level, income level, and type of employment contract used as the sampling criteria to form a representative sample. In contrast, each AmericasBarometer survey is implemented based on a national probability design. Samples in each country were developed using a multi-stage probabilistic design (with quotas at the household level for most countries), and were stratified by major regions of the country, size of municipality and by urban and rural areas within municipalities. In some cases, oversamples are collected to allow precise analysis of opinion within sub-national regions. Survey participants aged 16 to 72[1] years were interviewed face to face in their households.

The surveys also differ in the timing of survey administration. The AmericasBarometer surveys were staggered across countries from the third quarter of 2018 to the second quarter of 2019, and RTM surveys were conducted in the first quarter of 2018. Both surveys are conducted in the respective national languages of the countries surveyed. Chile and Mexico are the only countries that are surveyed in both RTM and AmericasBarometer. While the results for Chile are consistent across the surveys for most questions, the timing of the July 2018 Mexican presidential election and December 2018 change of government contributed to different results across these surveys and years in Mexico (see Box 3).

## What risks matter the most?

Some concerns – like fears of economic and physical insecurity – are universal. Both the RTM and AmericasBarometer surveys seek to understand people's worries about themselves and about their country. When OECD RTM respondents are asked to rank the top social and economic risks *they and their families* face, respondents report that their biggest concerns in the short term (i.e., the next year or two) centre around falling ill and struggling to make ends meet. Countries with high rates of unemployment and sluggish economic performance tend to have the largest shares of people worried about the economic situation (OECD, 2019[1]). In the longer run – beyond the next decade – people in OECD countries are most worried about financial security in old age, with 72% of respondents cross-nationally identifying this as a top-three risk.

AmericasBarometer respondents, on the other hand, are asked about the most serious problem in their *country.* For this question, crime and violence frequently come out as top risks. Italy, Germany and Austria are the only RTM countries outside of Latin America in which respondents list crime as a top-three risk to themselves or their immediate family. The high percentage for 'None/ Other' within AmericasBarometer's "most serious problem" question is driven by the fact that respondents give open-ended responses to this question, which are then coded into around forty categories (Annex B). These answer categories are

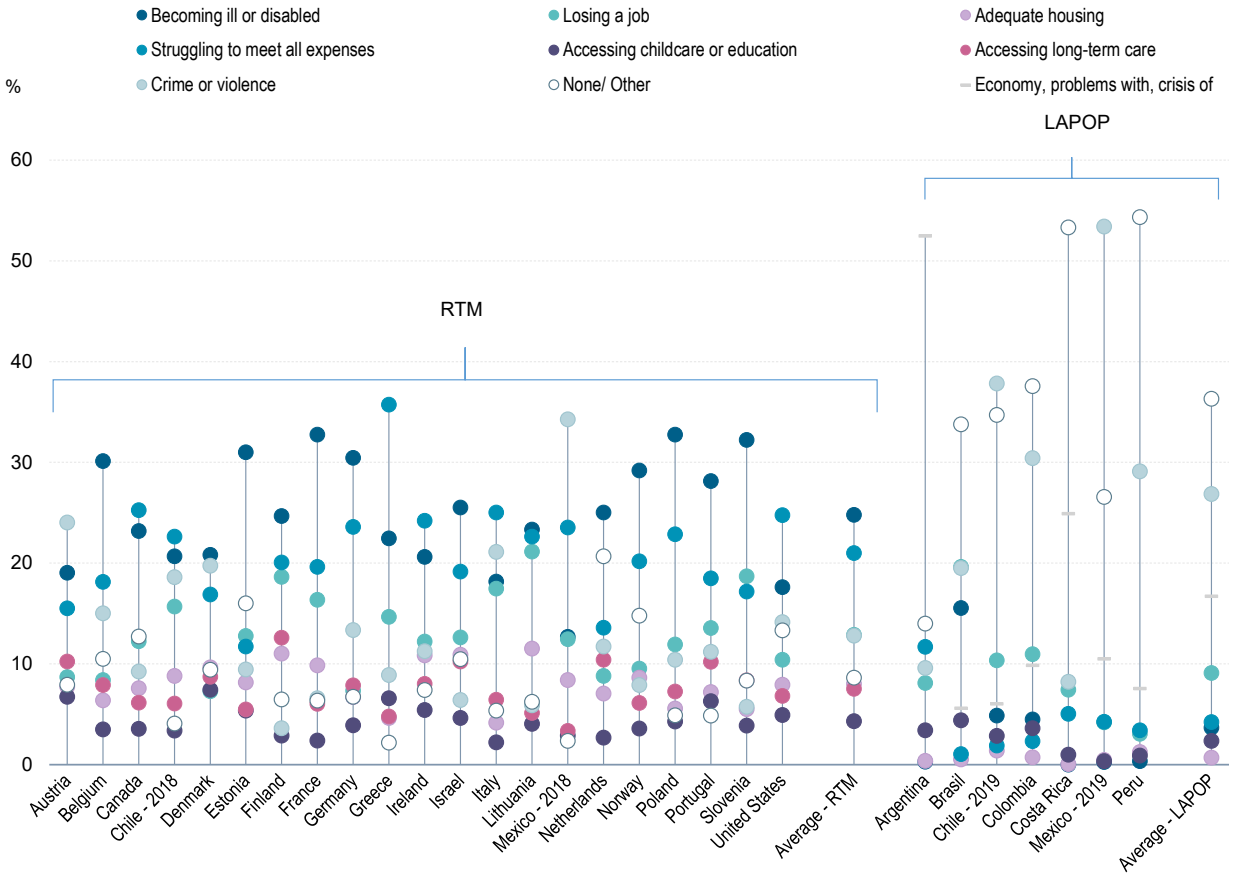
[1] Only respondents aged between 18 and 70 years old were used for analysis for uniformity with RTM.

therefore far more extensive than those offered in RTM. In order to harmonise answers with the RTM options, AmericasBarometer answer choices were therefore summed in this analysis.

## Figure 1. RTM respondents worry most about falling ill and struggling to make ends meet, while AmericasBarometer respondents worry most about crime and economic insecurity

RTM – % of respondents identifying each risk as the top greatest short-term (over the next year or two) risk to themselves or their immediate family, 2018

AmericasBarometer – % of respondents identifying the most serious problem that the country is facing, 2019




Note: The extended breakdown of responses per answer choice, as well as the AmericasBarometer-RTM option choice comparisons, can be found in Annex B. The AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019 and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018. The "None/Other" response choice incorporates the sum of all other answer choices offered in AmericasBarometer that were not closely aligned with RTM answer choices (see Annex B for full list).
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

Perceptions reflect reality in Latin America, as crime and lethal violence continue to be major problems. The region has spent decades in a vicious cycle where crime and violence has thwarted economic growth and opportunity, and the dearth of economic opportunity, in turn, has contributed to higher crime. Even as poverty levels have fallen and income inequality has declined over the past two decades, violence has still increased in most countries (Chioda, 2017[2]; Muggah, 2015[3]) and Latin American countries have some of the highest homicide rates in the world. In Colombia, for example, around 25 people were murdered for every 100 000 in 2017. In Mexico, the homicide rate was 24.8 out of every 100 000 in 2017, and in Brazil

the homicide rate was even higher, at 29.7 out of 100 000. In contrast, in the three RTM countries that cite crime as a top-three immediate concern, the actual risk of falling victim to homicide was far lower. In Germany, the homicide rate was 1.0 per 100 000 people in 2017, and Austria and Italy's homicide rate was 0.7 in 2017 (UNODC, 2019[4]).

Results in Mexico closely correspond across the AmericasBarometer's "most serious problem facing your country" and RTM's "greatest risk facing you and your family" questions. Unsurprisingly, for both AmericasBarometer and RTM respondents in Mexico, the fear of crime and violence is a serious concern. In RTM, 62% of Mexicans list crime or violence as a top-three short-term concern – a higher rate than in every other OECD country polled. 34% of Mexicans in RTM list crime or violence as their very top concern. In AmericasBarometer, where there are many more answer options, 53% of Mexicans surveyed note crime and violence as the most serious problem the country faces. These results also correspond with Mexico's results in the OECD's Better Life Index: only 42% of Mexicans say that they feel safe walking alone at night, much lower than the OECD average of 68%. Mexico's result is the lowest among OECD countries.

### Box 2. Comparing perceptions of serious risks

RTM and AmericasBarometer differ in how they ask respondents about their risk perceptions for themselves and for their country. In the OECD survey, respondents are asked, "In the near future (the next year or two), which of the following do you perceive as the greatest risks to *yourself or your immediate family*?" In the AmericasBarometer, respondents are asked "In your opinion, what is the most serious problem that *the country* is facing?" These questions obviously do not perfectly match, but they do both capture major risk perceptions.

It is important to note that the AmericasBarometer's "most serious problem" question is open-ended and responses are coded into around forty categories. These answer categories are therefore far more extensive than those offered in RTM, so in order to harmonise answers with the RTM options, AmericasBarometer answer choices were summed in this analysis. This accounts for the high percentage for 'None/ Other' within AmericasBarometer. This does not mean that AmericasBarometer respondents do not think their country has serious problems; rather, for the vast majority of respondents, other problems (that could not be easily harmonised with RTM) were selected by respondents. These were on average lower-priority concerns that have been aggregated into the 'None/Other' category, such as 'politicians' or 'inflation.'[2]

Another difference has to do with time horizons and the ranking of risks. The AmericasBarometer's question wording does not encompass the short and long run distinctions of RTM. There is also no element of ranking concerns embedded in the AmericasBarometer: AmericasBarometer asked each respondent to choose one answer and RTM asked each respondent to rank three. This reflects, in part, RTM's focus on the assessment of social and economic risks as a foundation for understanding perceptions of social protection, whereas AmericasBarometer captures a broader picture of the social landscape.

All of the possible answer choices to the AmericasBarometer's "serious problem" question, as well as the percentage of respondents who chose each answer per country, are listed in Annex B.

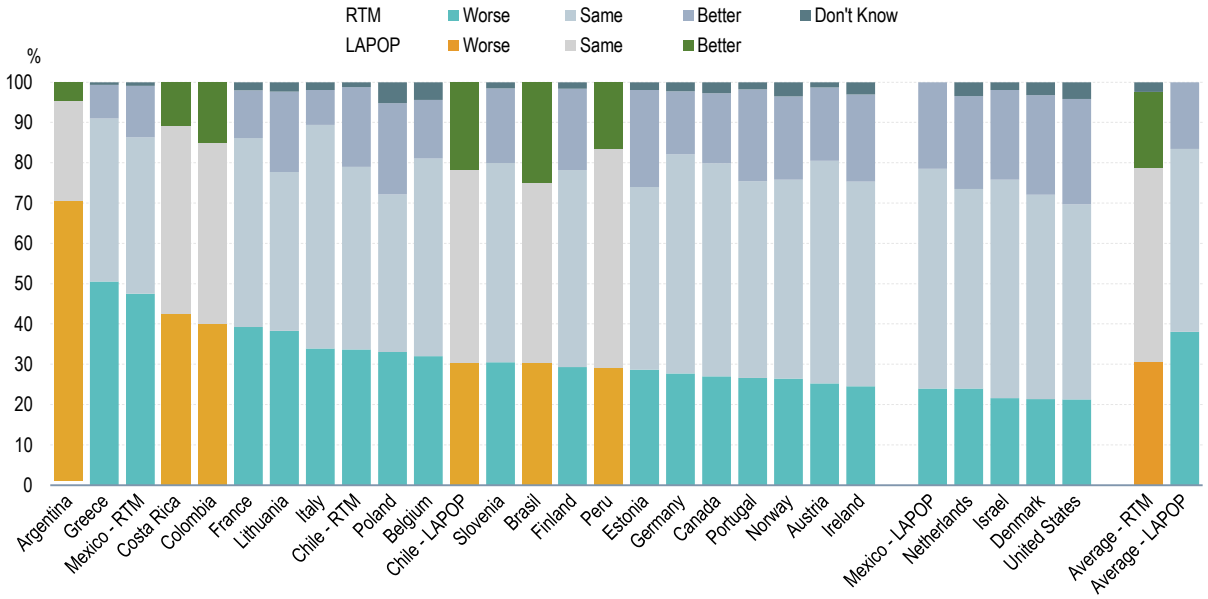
[2] The answer options that were harmonised into the 'None/Other' option are listed in Annex B. These include all the choice options apart from those harmonised into the RTM options and the 'Economy, problems with, crisis of' option outlined within Figure 1. 'The politicians' was an example of an option within the 'None/ Other' option, with an average of 1.1% of respondents. Another option is 'Migration' that amounts to around 1% of the respondents' primary serious concern.

## Few people feel their economic situation improved over the past year

Survey respondents across Latin America and in non-Latin American OECD countries are fairly pessimistic about their personal economic situation. On average, across the seven AmericasBarometer countries studied here, 38% of respondents report that their current economic situation is worse than in the year prior, likely reflecting (relatively) slowing economic growth in the region since 2015. 31% of all respondents surveyed by RTM in OECD countries feel the same way.

### Figure 2. Across countries, few people feel that their economic situation has improved over the past year

Distribution of responses to the question "Do you think your economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?"




Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

This result is driven, in part, by the highly negative views held by low-income respondents (Table 1). When observing differences across income groups, low-income respondents[3] surveyed in Latin America are more likely to think that their personal economic situation has worsened in the last year than their counterparts in OECD countries. Across the 21 OECD countries surveyed, a plurality of low-income RTM respondents (43.2%) claimed that their personal economic situation has remained the same from the previous year. Around half of middle-income and high-income respondents surveyed by both AmericasBarometer and RTM perceive their personal economic situation to be the same as the year prior.

3 The OECD asked respondents to places themselves into one of ten income groups based on national disposable income deciles based on OECD Income Distribution Database. Low-income respondents are respondents who fall within the first three income deciles, middle income fall within the 4th to 7th deciles and the high income fall within the last three income deciles. Similarly, the LAPOP respondents are asked to place themselves into groupings from 0 to 16. Low income respondents are until the 5th grouping. Middle income are from the 6th until the 10th grouping and the high income respondents are from the 11th until the 16th grouping based on the country's income groupings.

### Table 1. Low-income respondents are most likely to think their personal economic situation is worse than a year ago

Distribution of responses to the question:

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

AmericasBarometer – Do you consider that your economic situation is better, the same or worse than 12 months ago?

| | Risks that Matter Survey | | | AmericasBarometer | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Low Income** | **Medium Income** | **High Income** | **Low Income** | **Medium Income** | **High Income** |
| Situation is better | 13.5% | 18.7% | 24.2% | 13.0% | 16.5% | 21.4% |
| Situation is same | **43.2%** | **49.8%** | **51.2%** | 40.6% | **46.8%** | **50.2%** |
| Situation is worse | 39.8% | 29.5% | 22.8% | **46.4%** | 36.8% | 28.4% |
| Don't know | 3.6% | 2.1% | 1.8% | | | |

Note: The AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019 and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: LAPOP's AmericaBarometer, Vanderbilt University 2019; OECD Secretariat estimates based on the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

## Latin Americans are pessimistic about the health of their national economies

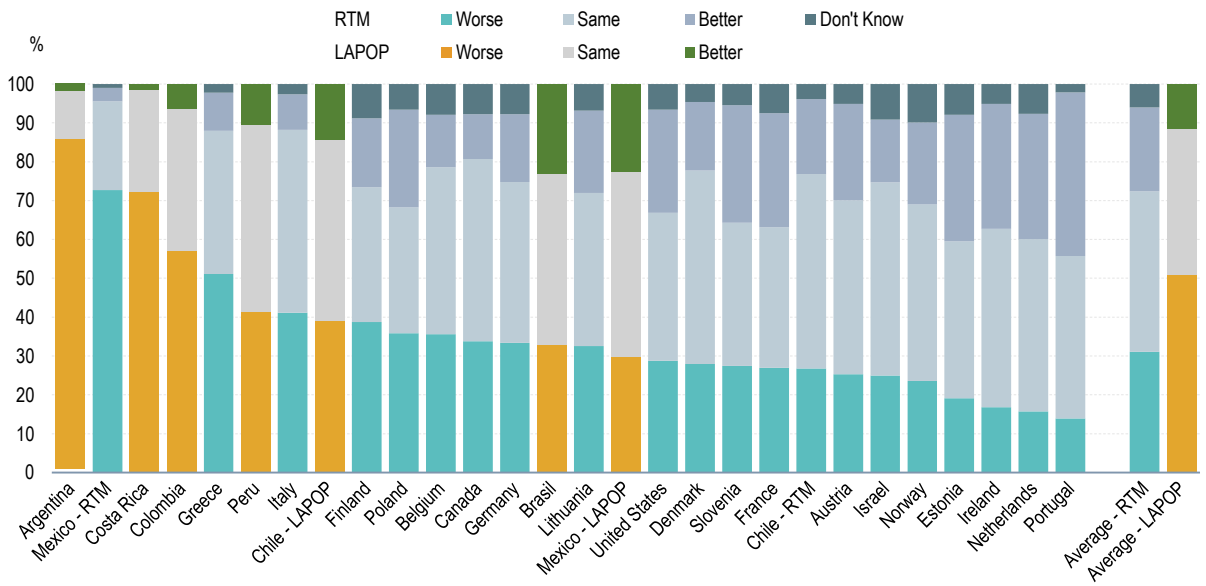
When asked about the economic situation of their *country,* Latin Americans tend to be more pessimistic about the state of their national economy than people in OECD countries outside of Latin America. On average, across the 21 OECD countries and seven Latin American countries studied here, people in Latin America are more likely to believe that the current economic situation of their country is worse than it was 12 months ago. More than half of all respondents surveyed in AmericasBarometer believe that the economic situation of their country is worse than 12 months ago, whereas only 31% of RTM respondents feel that their country is doing worse economically. In Risks that Matter, only Italy, Greece and Mexico have more than 40% of the population saying that the country is doing worse economically in 2018 than in 2017.

Argentina, following a sharp depreciation of the currency and subsequent recession, has the highest percentage of respondents who think the country's economic situation is worse than it was a year earlier (Figure 3). Indeed, Argentinians are at the bottom of the spectrum for both perceptions about the country's economic situation and their individual economic situation. Around 70% of Argentinian respondents feel that their own economic situation is worse than it was in the prior year, and around 85% think that the country's economic situation is worse than the previous year.

To some degree, these perceptions match reality. Much of Latin America is undergoing a "subdued recovery" after a decline in economic activity (OECD/CAF/UN ECLAC, 2018[5]), as well as a stagnation in socio-economic improvements and some reversals in some countries (OECD et al., 2019[6]). This modest recovery likely contributes to citizens' weakened confidence in a better future and in the ability of governments to contribute to it (ibid). Furthermore, even though unemployment is the lowest it has been in nearly four decades, real wages are not projected to grow much in 2019-2020. (OECD Ecoscope, 2019[7]) These dismal economic prospects and weakened confidence might explain some of the negative personal perceptions of the respondents.

## Figure 3. Latin Americans are more likely to believe that their country's economic situation is worse than 12 months ago

Distribution of responses to the question "Do you think that the country's economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?"




Note: Countries are ranked by the percentage of respondents choosing "Worse". The AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted during between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019, and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

The difference of opinion across income groups is smaller when asking about the *country's* economic situation (Table 2) than the individual economic situation (Table 1). Nearly half (44.4%) of high-income Latin Americans in the countries studied say that the national economic situation is worse than a year ago, as do 55.9% of low-income Latin Americans. In OECD countries surveyed by RTM, the most common response across income groups is that the country's economic situation is the same as last year.

Gender gaps emerge when looking at perceptions of national economic health. When looking at perceptions of the country's economic situation by sex, female AmericasBarometer respondents are significantly more likely than men to think that the country's economic situation is getting worse in all countries analysed here, except for Argentina. Latin America continues to suffer from enormous gender gaps in labour force participation, wages, and the quality of work, which may contribute to women's more negative perceptions of the economy than men.

### Table 2. AmericasBarometer respondents from all income levels are most likely to think the country's economic situation is worse than last year, whereas RTM respondents from all income levels are more likely to think that the country's economic situation is the same.

Distribution of responses to the question "Do you think that the country's economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?"

| | Risks that Matter Survey | | | AmericasBarometer | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Low Income** | **Medium Income** | **High Income** | **Low Income** | **Medium Income** | **High Income** |
| Situation is better | 16.4% | 21.2% | 27.4% | 10.7% | 11.0% | 14.4% |
| Situation is same | 40.1% | 42.1% | 41.4% | 33.5% | 39.0% | 41.2% |
| Situation is worse | 35.6% | 31.0% | 26.6% | 55.9% | 50.0% | 44.4% |
| Don't know | 7.9% | 5.8% | 4.5% | | | |

Note: The LAPOP AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019, and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

## How inclusive is government? Many feel excluded

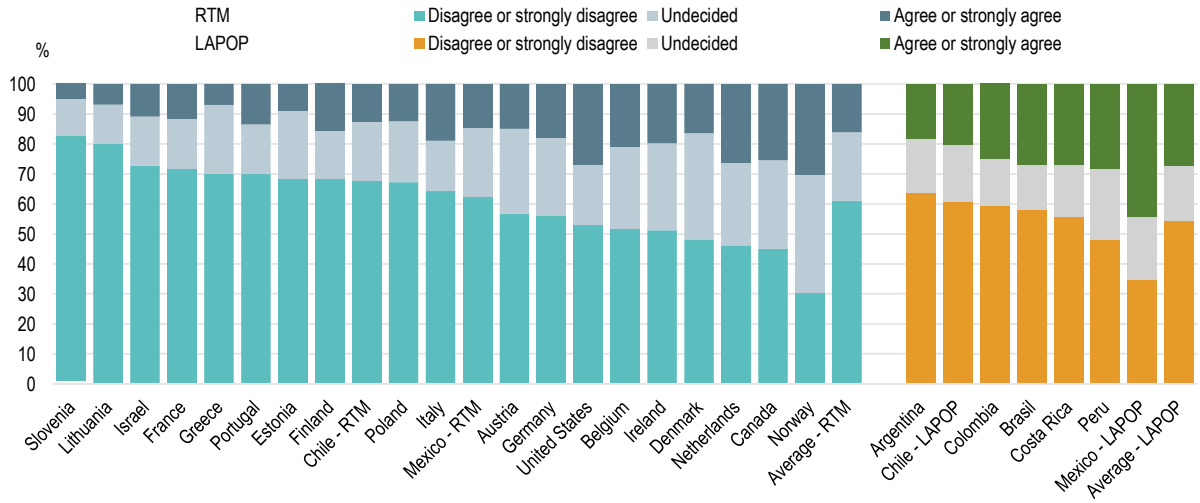
Throughout OECD and non-OECD Latin American countries, there is a pervasive sense that government does not listen to citizens when designing or reforming public benefits. Both RTM and AmericasBarometer asked the following question: How well do you feel government incorporates the views of people like you in designing or reforming public benefits? Respondents in OECD countries are largely dissatisfied with how their voice is incorporated in the policymaking process: 61.1% of respondents, on average, report that government does not incorporate the views of people like them (Figure 4). People are most dissatisfied in Slovenia and Lithuania, where around eight out of ten respondents say they are excluded from the policy design and reform process.

## Figure 4. In most countries, surveyed by LAPOP and RTM, many respondents feel the government does not properly take account of views of people like them when formulating social benefits

Distribution of responses to the statements:

RTM – "I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits."

AmericasBarometer – "You feel that the government takes into account the opinions of people like you when designing or reforming public benefits, such as services and social transfers."



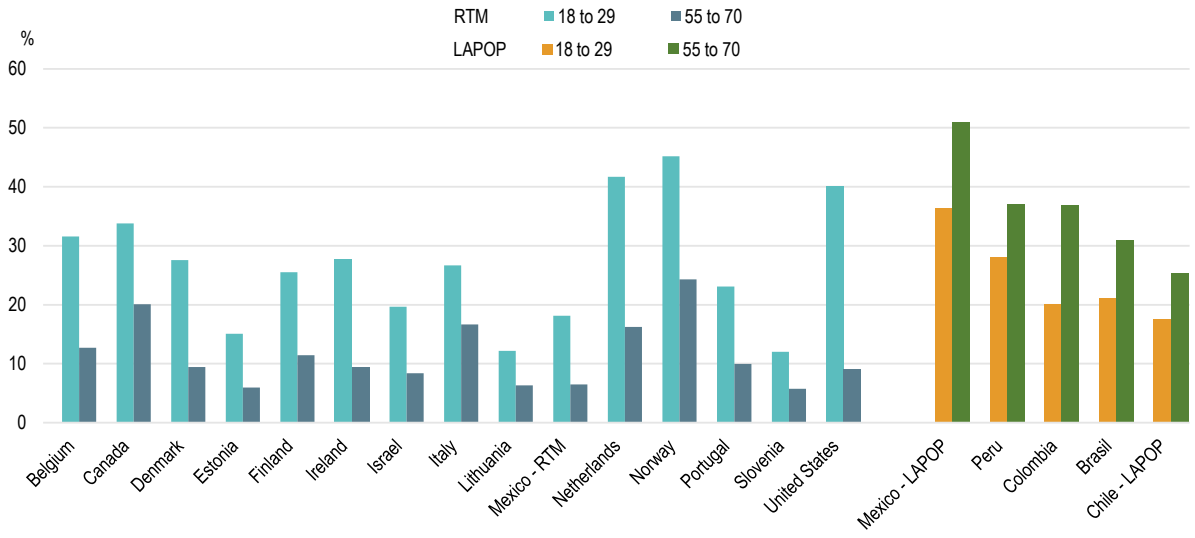

Note: Countries are ranked by the percentage of respondents choosing "Disagree or strongly disagree".
LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019, and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

Similarly, across the seven Latin American countries studied here, over half – 54.4% – of all respondents say that government does not incorporate the views of people like them (Figure 4). The least satisfied respondents are in Argentina, with over 63.8% of Argentinians saying that their voice is not heard. Interesting, though, given large gaps across Latin America and non-Latin American OECD countries in perceptions of economic and social risk, Latin America's values on government inclusivity are in line with the mid-range and more positive evaluations of government in the OECD.

The OECD finds that respondents aged 18-29 are *less* likely than others to feel that their voice is ignored. The results from LAPOP are very different. There, older respondents (55 to 70) are more likely than younger respondents to agree that their voices are acknowledged in policy discussion.

## Figure 5. Older respondents in Latin American countries are more likely to agree that their views are incorporated, whereas younger respondents are more likely to agree that their views are incorporated in non-LAC OECD countries

Distribution of "agree/strongly agree" responses to the statement "You feel that the government takes into account the opinions of people like you when designing or reforming public benefits, such as services and social transfers."




Note: Countries are ranked by the percentage of respondents choosing "Agree or strongly agree". Only countries with significant differences between older and younger groups are included.
LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019, and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

Gender gaps emerge in perceptions of government inclusiveness, as well. Men are significantly more likely than women to think that their opinions are incorporated in policy reform in the following countries: Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica Mexico, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United States.

## Surveys show limited faith in government benefits

Similar to respondents' perceptions of government inclusivity, many people surveyed by AmericasBarometer and by RTM have little faith in their ability to access public benefits. People across the Americas, Israel and Europe were asked, "Do you think you could easily receive public benefits if you needed them?" On average across the seven Latin American countries studied, 31.4% of respondents say that they feel they could easily access public benefits if they needed them, while 49.7% say that they feel they would have trouble accessing benefits (Figure 6).

On average, respondents are even more pessimistic in OECD countries: across the 21 OECD countries surveyed by RTM, only 20.3% of respondents report that they feel they could easily access benefits and 55.9% feel that they would *not* be able to access benefits if they needed them.

Though Latin Americans are still largely pessimistic about accessing social protection, the fact that Latin Americans are slightly more positive than people in OECD countries about the reach of the welfare state is interesting given that Latin American countries spend, on average, much less than non-Latin American

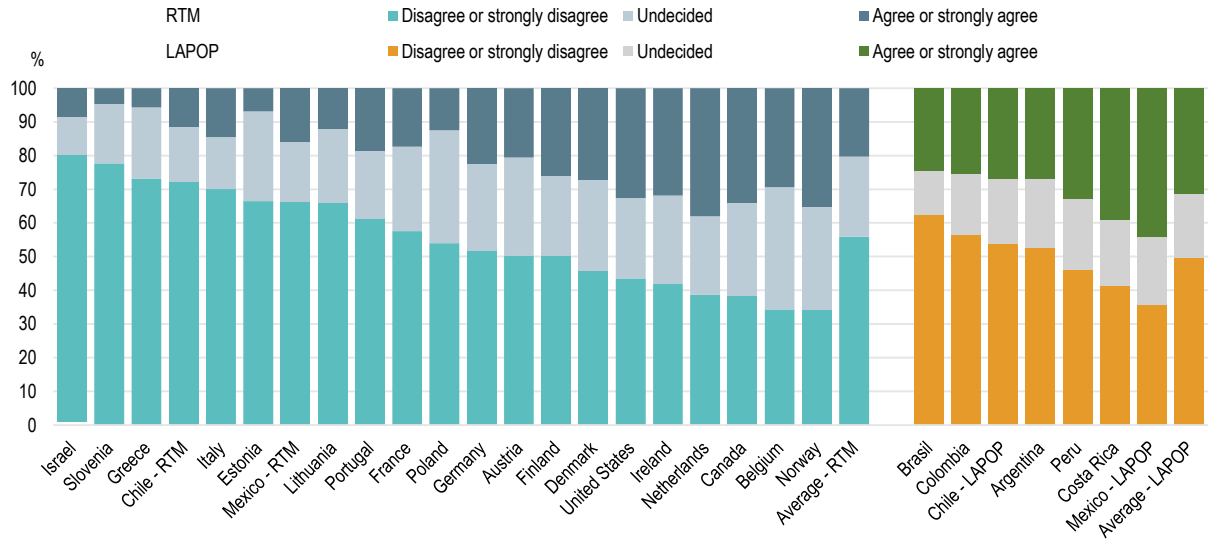
OECD countries on social protection. The OECD average[4] for public social expenditure as a percentage of GDP was around 20% in 2018. However, this percentage is quite a bit lower in the Latin American countries presented in this report, which spent around 11%[5] of GDP (OECD, 2019[8]).

## Figure 6. In most middle- and high-income Latin American and OECD countries, most respondents feel they cannot easily access public benefits

Distribution of responses to the statements:

RTM – Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I think I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them"

AmericasBarometer – To what extent do you agree or disagree with this phrase: "You believe that you would easily receive the public benefits provided by the state, should you need them."




Note: Countries are ranked by the percentage of respondents choosing "Disagree or strongly disagree".
LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019, and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP's AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

Several possible explanations might account for higher levels of negativity about benefit receipt in OECD countries than in middle- and high-income Latin American countries, even as people in OECD countries are overall more positive about their personal and national economic situation. Perhaps the negativity towards benefit accessibility in Europe, Israel and North America reflects overall higher expectations among the population for social protection from government. RTM reveals that many people in OECD

[4] The OECD average for all 36 member countries as of 2018.

[5] Brazil (16.7%), Costa Rica (15.5%), Chile (10.9%), Colombia (10.2%), Mexico (7.5%), Argentina (12.1%), Peru (5.1%) Source: OECD (2019), OECD Social Expenditure database (SOCX), www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm, OECD (2016[15])), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264261488-en, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Data for Chile refer to 2017, 2016 for Mexico, 2014 for Colombia and Costa Rica, 2010 for Brazil. The data for Argentina and Peru are not fully comparable with the other OECD countries as it only includes central government spending on social protection and health as in the classification of the functions of government. They are based on Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) database.

countries feel that they do not get their fair share from the government, relative to what they contribute: 59% of respondents, across countries, report that they do not get their fair share of public benefits, given the taxes and social contributions they pay. (This question was not included in AmericasBarometer, so results cannot be compared across Latin America.) It is also possible that straightforward eligibility criteria (e.g. means testing) and straightforward enrolment processes make accessing cash benefit programmes, for example, a slightly quicker process in Latin America. Of course, this could also imply unequal access if benefits are distributed through clientelistic networks.

Responses by socioeconomic group in Latin America lend some support for the means-testing explanation, as perceptions of benefit accessibility differ by socioeconomic class. When looking at education levels across Latin America, the higher educated respondents are significantly less likely to agree that they have access to public benefits than the lower educated respondents in all of the AmericasBarometer countries apart from Argentina and Costa Rica. Similarly, low-income respondents are significantly more likely to agree that they could access public benefits if they needed them, relative to high-income respondents from the same five countries in AmericasBarometer.

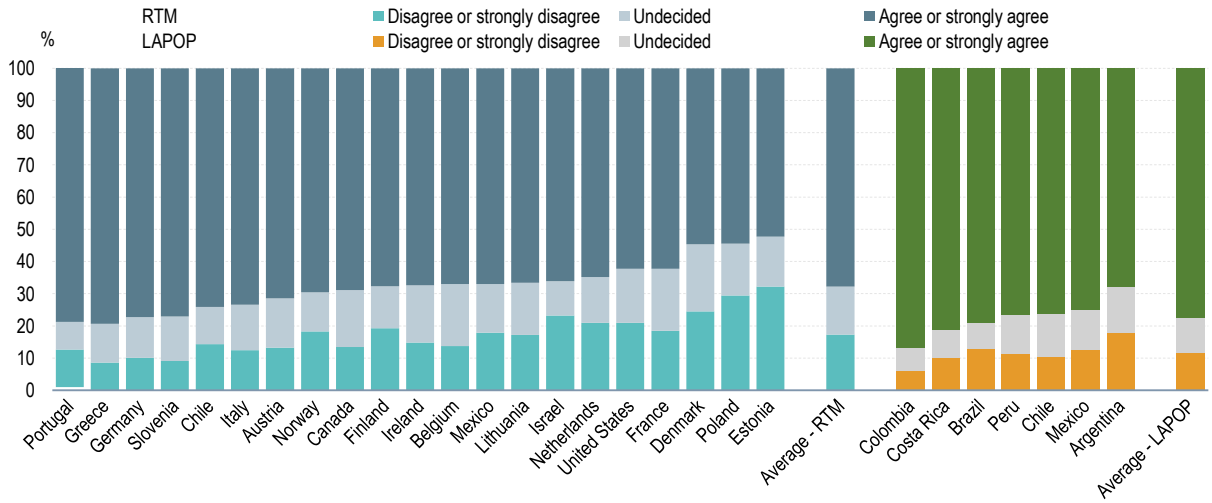
When thinking about the *design* of public benefits – in particular, the progressivity of tax and benefit policies – respondents from both RTM and AmericasBarometer overwhelmingly favour redistribution (Figure 7). In its question wording, RTM places more of the onus of taxation on the rich by asking respondents whether they favour taxing the rich more to support the poor. AmericasBarometer instead places the onus more on the government, by asking respondents whether they agree that the government should spend more on helping the poor. Although the wording differs, both questions illustrate support for progressive redistribution. The more neutral phrasing in AmericasBarometer may partially explain why the Latin America countries have a higher percentage of respondents agreeing with spending more on the poor, though of course part of the result may be driven by the fact that poverty is more widespread in these countries.

## Figure 7. Respondents favour redistribution to support the poor.

Distribution of responses to the statements:

RTM – “Should the government tax the rich more than they currently do in order to support the poor?”

AmericasBarometer – “The (Country) government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor.”




Note: LAPOP’s AmericasBarometer surveys were conducted between Q3 2018 and Q2 2019, and the RTM surveys were conducted during Q1 2018.
Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on LAPOP’s AmericasBarometer survey (2019) and the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018).

### Box 3. Changing perceptions in Mexico

Mexico's 2019 results on the AmericasBarometer's indicators of attitudes towards government are quite different from those of other Latin American countries within the 2019 survey wave, Mexico's results in previous years of the AmericasBarometer survey, and the results of the 2018 Risks that Matter survey.

2019 Mexican respondents in the AmericasBarometer appear to agree strongly that their opinions are being incorporated by the government and that they are able to access public benefits. These responses put the Mexican respondents on par with Norwegians in terms of their satisfaction with the government's incorporation of people's views. Chile, on the other hand, had similar results on perceptions of government inclusivity in both RTM and AmericasBarometer. Mexicans' attitudes towards government have also changed dramatically across different survey years of the AmericasBarometer, with a higher share of people in 2019 indicating that the government is interested in their opinions than at any other point in the past decade.

Given this variation in polling results over time, even when the same sampling method is used, what is going on in Mexico? This drastic change in opinion is likely tied to post-election optimism during the time of AmericasBarometer survey administration in 2019. When asked about the opinion of the current president (López Obrador) in the AmericasBarometer survey, Mexican respondents in 2019 were optimistic and felt that he was doing a good job. This positive opinion of López Obrador is corroborated by other opinion polls (AS/COA, 2019[9]; Moreno, 2019[10]) as well as throughout the AmericasBarometer survey responses on attitudes towards government.

Lopez Obrador's inauguration took place in December 2018, but his approval ratings remained relatively high six months after the election. The Mexican AmericasBarometer survey was administered from the end of January 2019 to the end of March 2019, so this post-inauguration optimism likely helps to explain these particular results for Mexico.

## How can governments do better?

Across middle- and high-income countries in Latin America and the OECD, people are dissatisfied with government and social protection. Providing an adequate social safety net, promoting good-quality jobs, and ensuring equality of opportunity are keystones of any advanced democracy. First and foremost, governments must invest sufficient resources and reinforce institutions to meet these objectives and ensure shared prosperity.

Around the world, but especially in Latin America, economic and social risks are tied very closely to physical and economic security. Given that crime and economic insecurity are at the forefront of public concern, governments must continue to improve security initiatives. This should happen not only through the channels of adequate human resources, sufficient budgets, appropriate incentives, and independent judicial institutions, but also, given feelings of public alienation from policymaking, by incorporating citizen feedback when policing and carrying out criminal justice. A few OECD member countries, such as Belgium and France, have created civilian adjuncts to police to foster a sense of community and provide greater social support (UNODC, 2010[11]), though care should be taken to reinforce the legitimacy of state institutions (vis-à-vis civilian "law enforcement") in such arrangements.

Pessimism towards government engagement and scepticism around benefit access reveal that governments around the world need to improve communication with citizens and incorporate citizen feedback in policymaking. In recent years, the Latin American region experienced an increase in laws and institutions that promote transparency and accountability in the public sector, much like what has been

emphasised through mandatory public consultation mechanisms in many OECD countries. (OECD, 2016[12]) Nevertheless, even when stakeholder engagement is mandatory, the general public is not always adequately consulted in OECD and Latin American countries. Governments need to account for real barriers to citizen participation in decision-making such as distance, time, resources, and access. Governments need to make sure that citizens are able to participate by making participation initiatives accessible, targeted, relevant and appealing. (OECD, 2015[13]).

The Open Government Partnership reports that citizen engagement in the decision-making processes can significantly improve the quality of and the efficiency with which public services are administered by the government. Many OECD and non-member countries have designed policies based on open government principles. Initiatives can take a variety of forms, including participatory budgeting at the local level, large stakeholder consultation meetings at the national level, and social media engagement in real-time with different levels or Ministries of government. (OECD, 2015[13]) Citizen engagement can be effective at different stages of social contribution efforts.

Many Latin American and non-Latin American OECD governments are attempting to improve public engagement. Mexico, for example, has created an online platform – (www.gob.mx) – in order to promote innovation and make government more accessible. Mexico's "Open Government Guide" aims to reduce the gap between government agencies and citizens by making it easier for citizens to participate (OECD/CAF/UN ECLAC, 2018[5]). Similarly, Chile has initiated a Public Health Observatory to monitor and analyse the health situation of the Chilean communities. The outcomes aim to support decision-making at the local level and are shared with the relevant stakeholders (ELLA, 2013[14]). The Ministry of Economic and Social Development Canada (ESDC) also recently implemented a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process as part of its national poverty reduction strategy. ESDC organised public town hall events, online discussions, a youth contest, and an in-depth research project as part of this campaign. This engagement process successfully reached thousands of Canadians in a short time frame on a low budget.

In an effort to catalogue these types of stakeholder initiatives in social policy, the OECD recently undertook a stocktaking of public engagement efforts in social policy design. This repository can be found at the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (https://oecd-opsi.org/).

Inclusive economic and social policymaking must be rooted in transparency, openness and engagement. Citizen engagement is an important complement to adequate public resources and strong institutions, and these processes provide citizens with a key avenue to help shape the policies that directly affect their lives.

# Annex A. Aligning questions across surveys

The following 2018 OECD Risks that Matter survey questions were added to the 2019 LAPOP AmericasBarometer survey

**Government inclusivity:**

> **RTM phrasing:** Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: “I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits.” [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]
>
> **LAPOP phrasing:** You feel that the government takes into account the opinions of people like you when designing or reforming public benefits, such as services and social transfers. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this phrase? [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]

**Accessibility of public benefits:**

> **RTM phrasing:** Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: “I think I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them” [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]
>
> **LAPOP phrasing:** You believe that you would easily receive the public benefits provided by the State, should you need them. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this phrase? [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]

The following 2019 AmericasBarometer questions were added to 2018 Risks that Matter survey (wording was the same):

> Do you consider that the economic situation of the country is better, the same or worse than 12 months ago?
>
> Do you consider that your current economic situation is better, the same or worse than 12 months ago?

# Annex B. Harmonising question responses across surveys

### Table A B.1. Distribution of responses to the following question in the 2019 AmericasBarometer survey: "In your opinion, what is the most serious problem that the country is facing?"

| Concern | Argentina | Brazil | Chile | Colombia | Costa Rica | Mexico | Peru | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economy, problems with, crisis of | 52.46% | 5.59% | 6.03% | 9.87% | 24.91% | 10.50% | 7.55% | 16.7% |
| Crime | 2.68% | 1.29% | 31.25% | 5.87% | 3.68% | 33.15% | 24.90% | 14.7% |
| Other | 8.79% | 13.19% | 13.42% | 7.65% | 24.91% | 15.51% | 12.10% | 13.7% |
| Corruption | 1.86% | 16.52% | 7.05% | 19.22% | 5.42% | 9.20% | 35.73% | 13.6% |
| Unemployment | 8.12% | 19.62% | 10.37% | 10.96% | 7.44% | 4.19% | 3.08% | 9.1% |
| Security (lack of) | 6.33% | 8.28% | 0.47% | 6.30% | 2.24% | 14.41% | 3.15% | 5.9% |
| Health, lack of service | 0.30% | 15.54% | 4.88% | 4.50% | 0.00% | 0.27% | 0.35% | 3.7% |
| Violence | 0.00% | 8.89% | 0.88% | 10.58% | 0.22% | 2.54% | 0.77% | 3.4% |
| Poverty | 5.96% | 0.26% | 1.63% | 2.00% | 3.90% | 4.12% | 3.15% | 3.0% |
| Popular protests (strikes, road closures, stoppages, etc.) | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.14% | 0.00% | 16.68% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.4% |
| Education | 3.43% | 4.40% | 2.85% | 3.62% | 1.01% | 0.34% | 0.91% | 2.4% |
| Drugs | 0.37% | 0.54% | 3.86% | 4.81% | 1.44% | 0.89% | 0.07% | 1.7% |
| Inflation, high prices | 5.74% | 0.78% | 0.27% | 0.33% | 1.16% | 0.14% | 0.28% | 1.2% |
| Inequality | 0.22% | 0.82% | 6.24% | 0.50% | 0.29% | 0.21% | 0.14% | 1.2% |
| The politicians | 1.12% | 1.65% | 1.69% | 1.03% | 1.23% | 0.14% | 0.77% | 1.1% |
| Migration | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.78% | 3.01% | 0.51% | 0.07% | 0.84% | 1.0% |
| Bad Government | 1.71% | 0.37% | 0.61% | 0.26% | 1.95% | 0.75% | 0.21% | 0.8% |
| Environment | 0.08% | 0.32% | 1.36% | 0.22% | 0.22% | 0.14% | 1.89% | 0.6% |
| Water. Lack of | 0.08% | 0.48% | 1.08% | 0.48% | 0.07% | 0.41% | 1.12% | 0.5% |
| Narcotics | 0.15% | 0.29% | 0.14% | 1.01% | 0.29% | 0.62% | 0.00% | 0.4% |
| Armed conflict | 0.08% | 0.11% | 0.34% | 1.44% | 0.07% | 0.07% | 0.00% | 0.3% |
| External debt | 0.08% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 1.88% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.3% |
| Kidnapping | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 0.17% | 0.00% | 1.44% | 0.00% | 0.2% |
| 80 | 0.08% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.54% | 0.2% |
| Peace, peace process, peace agreements | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.58% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.2% |
| Human rights, violations of | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.68% | 0.18% | 0.22% | 0.07% | 0.21% | 0.2% |
| The guerrilla | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.29% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.2% |
| Discrimination | 0.00% | 0.27% | 0.68% | 0.00% | 0.14% | 0.07% | 0.07% | 0.2% |
| War on terrorism | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.99% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 0.00% | 0.2% |
| Roads / roads in poor condition | 0.00% | 0.09% | 0.20% | 0.32% | 0.07% | 0.14% | 0.21% | 0.1% |
| Malnutrition | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.21% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.56% | 0.1% |
| Transportation, problems with the | 0.00% | 0.04% | 0.20% | 0.25% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.14% | 0.1% |
| Gangs | 0.00% | 0.11% | 0.14% | 0.06% | 0.07% | 0.21% | 0.00% | 0.1% |
| Credit, lack of | 0.00% | 0.51% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.1% |
| Electricity, lack of | 0.22% | 0.00% | 0.27% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.1% |
| Living place | 0.08% | 0.04% | 0.07% | 0.20% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 0.00% | 0.1% |
| Forced displacement | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.22% | 0.00% | 0.21% | 0.00% | 0.1% |
| Impunity | 0.08% | 0.00% | 0.20% | 0.08% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 0.00% | 0.1% |

| Concern | Argentina | Brazil | Chile | Colombia | Costa Rica | Mexico | Peru | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agricultural / Peasant Policy | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.34% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.0% |
| Terrorism | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 0.18% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.0% |
| Demographic explosion | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.07% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.14% | 0.0% |
| Land to cultivate, lack of | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.06% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.14% | 0.0% |
| Las BACR, paramilitaries | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.14% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.0% |

In response to the "serious problem" question, AmericasBarometer had many more options to choose from and the options also had different wording from that of RTM's "greatest risk" question. The options that paralleled most closely the RTM options were summed together to provide the AmericasBarometer parallels.

RTM answer choices and AmericasBarometer equivalent:

Becoming ill or disabled – AmericasBarometer option wording: "Health, lack of service"

Losing a job – AmericasBarometer option wording: "Unemployment"

Adequate Housing – AmericasBarometer option wording: "Living place", "Electricity, lack of", "Water, Lack of"

Struggling to meet all expenses – AmericasBarometer option wording: "Poverty", "Inflation, high prices"

Accessing childcare or education – AmericasBarometer option wording: "Education"

Accessing long-term care – There was no adequate parallel in AmericasBarometer for this RTM option

Crime or violence -- AmericasBarometer option wording: "Crime", "Violence", "Drugs", "Narcotics", "Security, lack of", "Armed Conflict", "Kidnapping", "Gangs", "Human rights, violations of"

None of these -- This category includes all of the other options from the AmericasBarometer survey question that do not easily correspond with RTM

Questions compared between RTM and AmericasBarometer

1. Risk perceptions

RTM **:** In the near future (the next year or two), which of the following do you perceive as the greatest risks to yourself or your immediate family?

a. Becoming ill or disabled
b. Losing a job or self-employment income
c. Securing/maintaining adequate housing
d. Struggling to meet all expenses (working, but income too low)
e. Difficulty accessing good quality child care or education for my children
f. Difficulty ensuring long-term care of elderly or disabled family members
g. Crime or violence
h. None of these risks

AmericasBarometer**:** In your opinion, what is the most serious problem that the country is facing?

*LAPOP does not have a long-term and short-term demarcation for risks faced by the country as is done in RTM.

| | |
|---|---|
| Water, lack of | Impunity |
| Roads / roads in poor condition | Inflation, high prices |

| | |
|---|---|
| Armed conflict | The politicians |
| Corruption | Bad government |
| Credit, lack of | Environment |
| Crime, crime | Migration |
| Human rights, violations of | Drug trafficking |
| Unemployment / lack of employment | Gangs |
| Inequality | Poverty |
| Malnutrition | Popular protests (strikes, road closures, stoppages, etc.) |
| Forced displacement | Health, lack of service |
| External debt | Kidnapping |
| Discrimination | Security (lack of) |
| Drugs, consumption of; drug addiction | Terrorism |
| Economy, problems with, crisis of | Land to cultivate, lack of |
| Education, lack of, poor quality | Transportation, problems with the |
| Electricity, lack of | Violence |
| Demographic explosion | living place |
| War on terrorism | Other |

2. Government considers your opinion

**RTM phrasing:** Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits." [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]

**AmericasBarometer phrasing:** You feel that the government takes into account the opinions of people like you when designing or reforming public benefits, such as services and social transfers. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this phrase? [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]

3. Accessibility of public benefits

**RTM phrasing:** Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I think I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them" [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]

**LAPOP phrasing:** You believe that you would easily receive the public benefits provided by the State, should you need them. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this phrase? [1. Strongly Disagree ...5. Strongly Agree]

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**Falling ill.**
**Struggling to make ends meet.**
**Having enough money in old age.**

What worries people across Latin America, North America, Israel and Europe? How do attitudes towards governments' provision of social protection differ cross-nationally? A collaboration between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) illustrates how views of economic risk and government effectiveness vary across the Americas and Europe. This report finds that economic discontent is global, as many respondents of both the OECD's Risks that Matter and LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys say that their country's economic situation is worse than it was last year, and that public satisfaction with government is low. More than half of all respondents in the OECD and Latin American countries studied in this report say that government is failing to incorporate their views in social policy design and reform.

**www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm**

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