Latin American political elites' positions on same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization

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Abstract

What explains the attitudes of Latin American political elites towards same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization? In recent years, several countries have engaged in political disputes centred on these three issues. Scholarship has explored the topic from different perspectives, ranging from theories of democracy to voters' political behaviour. Nonetheless, the perspective of political elites is still understudied. We use data from elite surveys in sixteen Latin American countries to address this question. First, we find significant differences between and within countries and political parties, meaning these issues are far from consensual. Second, we analyse the effects of ideology, religion, and sociodemographic characteristics. We confirm that ideology and religiosity are key predictors, but a deeper analysis shows that whereas those on the right and religious are strongly opposed to these issues, those on the left and less religious are not as strongly in favour. *Keywords*: Same-sex marriage, abortion, drug legalization, elites, Latin America.

Resumen: Posiciones de las elites políticas latinoamericanas sobre matrimonios del mismo sexo, aborto y legalización de las drogas

¿Qué explica las actitudes de las élites políticas latinoamericanas hacia el matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo, el aborto y la legalización de las drogas? En los últimos años, varios países se han involucrado en disputas políticas centradas en estos tres temas. La academia ha explorado el tema desde diferentes perspectivas, que van desde las teorías de la democracia hasta el comportamiento político de los votantes. No obstante, la perspectiva de las élites políticas todavía está poco estudiada. Usamos datos de encuestas de élite en dieciséis países latinoamericanos para abordar este tema. Primero, encontramos diferencias significativas entre y dentro de los países y los partidos políticos, lo que significa que estos temas están lejos del consenso. En segundo lugar, analizamos los efectos de la ideología, la reli-

gión y las características sociodemográficas. Confirmamos que la ideología y la religión son predictores clave, pero un análisis más profundo muestra que mientras los derechistas y los religiosos se oponen fuertemente a estos temas, los izquierdistas y los menos religiosos no están tan fuertemente a favor. *Palabras clave*: Matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo, aborto, legalización de drogas, élites, América Latina.

Introduction

What explains the attitudes of Latin American political elites towards same-sex marriage (SSM), abortion, and the legalization of drugs? These non-economic liberal values have been studied from several perspectives. They include public opinion, lobbying and advocacy, societal and congressional compositions, and so on. From Lipset (1959) to Dion and Díez (2017), most of them assume that elites react to exogenous forces rather than being motivated by their own positions – an unlikely characteristic of the lawmaking process. Furthermore, they are usually focused on single issues, rather than considering (and comparing) different civil liberties. We aim at filling this gap in the literature by explaining the individual attitudes of members of parliament (MPs) from all over Latin America. Furthermore, we use an extensive literature review to identify potential predictors of non-economic liberal attitudes and test each one of them with elite survey data. We draw on the Latin American Elites Database from the University of Salamanca (PELA-USAL), which gathers face-to-face interviews of Latin American MPs, and run multi-level mixed-effects ordered logistic regressions to identify the drivers of support for SSM, abortion and drug legalization. Besides contributing to the literature of political attitudes, Latin American politics, and morality politics, we perform this study in a moment when same-sex marriage, abortion, and the legalization of drugs are on the rise. In December 2013, Uruguay passed a bill allowing the recreational use of marijuana (Londoño, 2017); in January 2018, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in favour of same-sex marriage (Murillo, 2018); until the beginning of 2018, conditional abortion was legal in at least eleven countries in the region (Appendix II).

We present at least three key findings. First, these three issues are highly controversial in Latin America: There is no consensus in most countries and political parties, no matter their institutional framework or ideological position. Second, religiosity (that is, frequency of participation in religious cults) and ideology are the main predictors, statistically significant in all three cases. Socio-demographics and the perceived trustworthiness of the Catholic Church are significant in either one or two of the three issues, yet with lower coefficients. Third, although we identify a general effect coming from ideology and religiosity, the favourable opinions among leftists and non-believers are much less strong than the unfavourable opinions among rightists and religious are. This gives some insights on why there was not a substantive advance on this social agenda, especially when and where there have been leftist legislative majori-

ties. Following this introduction, we examined the scholarship on developed countries and Latin America to identify relevant independent variables to our research. The next section presents the data and methods of this paper. This empirical approach is applied in the following section, where we display ordered logistic regressions and marginal effects for several variables. The final section concludes.

Attitudes, factors and values

There are many explanations for attitudes towards same-sex marriage, abortion, and legalization of drugs. Our starting point is Lipset (1959), who was then followed by Welzel (2013) in seeking explanations for a combination of attitudes. In both cases, the authors focused on attitudes that are outside the economic realm (even though indirectly related to income and class) and reflect individual rights. They are the right to marry someone of the same sex, the right to interrupt a pregnancy, and the right to use drugs. As we demonstrate, there are similar individual-level predictors affecting them. Authors converge in the identification of social class, age, religiosity, gender, and partisanship as predictors of non-economic liberal attitudes. Older and poorer individuals tend to be more conservative, as well as members of traditionally conservative parties. Whereas the influence of religious affiliation and engagement function as strong explanatory variables, authors are not cohesive at identifying which religions or denominations lead to more conservative opinions. The factors that affect the support for non-economic liberal policies among the population are not controversial. However, the individual-level attitudes of political elites are understudied. In a few publications, authors point at MPs' religiosity and gender. Congresswomen tend to favour non-economic liberal policies, further than being elected also because of a liberal (or pro-women's rights) stereotype. Nonetheless, there is no cohesion when it comes to public opinion. As we will discuss, women tend to be either as liberal or less liberal than men depending on the case, even though women are more engaged than men in political issues as abortion.

Social class

Lipset (1959) argues that the poorer strata of the population tend to oppose non-economic liberalism, meaning "for example, civil liberties for political dissidents, civil rights for ethnic and racial minorities, internationalist foreign policies, and liberal immigration legislation" (Lipset, 1959, 485). Some underlying factors are the linkages between these individuals and conservative religions, low education, low political engagement, economic insecurities, and family patterns. In sum, they are more conservative because of their isolation from the liberal discourse. In this sense, the political integration of the working class could lead to the emergence of non-economic liberal values. The modern-

ization argument of Welzel (2013) follows this path. He finds that emancipative values, a collection of non-economic liberal attitudes (e.g., tolerance to abortion, divorce, and homosexuality), grow as nations develop. This trend generates what he terms "benign individualism," somehow similar to the characteristics of Florida's (2014) creative class. Nonetheless, Andersen and Fetner (2008b) suggest that economic development just alters the values of those who benefit the most from this process. In this context, the working class's social values remain unaffected, generally less tolerant toward homosexuality.

In Latin America, Orcés (2013) looked into public opinion in Ecuador in 2013 to find that the only predictor for abortion was high income. Montalvo and Saunders (2015) also confirm the relevance of social class when investigating which Latin American voters are more supportive of LGBT+ rights, including participation of homosexuals in political campaigns and the recognition of same-sex marriage. Their findings resemble those of modernization theory in developed countries. That is, they identify the wealthier, most well-educated (measured in years of schooling), and residents of urban areas as being the most favourable toward these non-economic liberal freedoms. Boidi and Corral (2013) find that the same variables help explain support for abortion rights in the region. Thus, the first independent variable that is commonly attributed to affect non-economic liberal values is economic. Be it at the macro-level (i.e., the country's growth) or at the micro-level (i.e., wealthier individuals), the modernization thesis poses that economic development exposes individuals to diversity, thus increasing the chances that they will become tolerant to (or supportive of) the legalization of drugs, same-sex marriage, and abortion.

Age

Modernization theory often attributes more relevance to inter-generational shifts than to those that occur within the same generation (Welzel, 2013). This proposition is supported by Baunach (2012) and Andersen and Fetner (2008a), who explore attitudes towards same-sex marriage in the United States. Tedin (1980) addresses the issue of age by comparing the political attitudes of adolescents and their parents. Whereas his data is not nationally representative (i.e., 183 adolescents and 322 parents from Iowa in 1972), the results reproduce a common trend. He finds that adolescents tend to be considerably more liberal towards marijuana laws than their parents. Alternative explanations for preferences toward drug decriminalization in the same timeframe were higher education (Knoke, 1979) and self-identification as liberal (Conover and Feldman, 1981). As it happens in the literature focused on developed countries, there is convergence on the relevance of inter-generational trends to explain attitudes towards non-economic liberal attitudes in Latin America. This is supported by several authors who relied on LAPOP to find, among voters, a negative correlation between age and support for these policies (see Lodola & Corral, 2010; Boidi, 2013; Marcano 2013; Maldonado, 2015). Alcántara (2013)

finds a similar trend among Latin American legislators. He demonstrates that older MPs tend to favour abortion slightly more than younger representatives. The rationale follows the same expectations stated before, which connects modernization theory to cultural shifts especially among the younger portion of the population.

Religiosity

As previously mentioned, Lipset (1959) highlights that the link between social class and religious affiliation helps to explain the conservative behaviour of the working class. There are several surveys in the United States confirming these expectations. They show that religious affiliation (most often with Protestant denominations) predicts intolerance toward homosexuality (Herek, 1987), same-sex marriage (Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2011), and abortion (Álvarez & Brehm, 1995). In fact, religiosity influences legislative behaviour in the United States through different channels. Besides the direct relevance of public opinion (Lax & Phillips, 2009), representatives are also influenced by religious organizations (Soule, 2004) and the share of Catholic and Protestant identifiers in the population (Mooney & Lee, 1995; Kreitzer, 2015).

While some authors account for the progressive nature of the Church in Latin America (Trejo, 2009; Mainwaring & Wilde, 1989), religiosity is still widely used as a predictor for non-economic conservatism in the region (Vaggione, 2011; Viterna, 2012). Engagement with religious activities (especially Catholic and Evangelical) are linked to negative attitudes toward abortion among voters (Boidi & Corral, 2013) and elites (Alcántara, 2013). Similarly, Dion and Díez (2017) suggest that lack of religiosity (i.e., frequency of religious services attendance) is a strong predictor of support for same-sex marriage especially when the interviewee has positive democratic values (Dion & Díez 2017). Still, they show that favouring democracy by itself does not automatically make someone in favor of LGBT+ rights.

Vaggione (2011) discusses the influence of the Catholic Church on debates over marriage in Argentina – where the Vatican directly approached Catholic MPs to influence decision making regarding same-sex marriage. Viterna (2012) assesses the Salvadoran case from the perspective of abortion laws. She argues that the approximation between Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and the Catholic Church has drastically changed the former left guerrilla organization's discourse. When in power, FMLN has allowed the development of stark anti-abortion laws rather than advancing the feminist agenda (see Kampwirth, 2008 for the Nicaraguan case).

Gender

Gender is introduced as a predictor of non-economic liberal values especially in papers related to abortion. Jennings and Farah (1981) analysed a survey carried out with Republican and Democrat delegates from Michigan in 1976 to find that women were more favourable to abortion in both parties. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) ran an experiment with undergraduate students to evaluate gender stereotypes. They perceive that women are seen as more competent to handle abortion legislation. This seems to have electoral relevance, since Dolan (1998) shows that pro-abortion values increase the chances of voting for a woman in Senate elections. Still, Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999) argue that men and women tend to have similar positions on abortion based on data from the National Election Studies in 1992 and 1996. Schlozman et al. (1995) use a different dataset in the same timeframe to find out that men are much less politically engaged but more favourable to abortion than women. If that is true, it means that women have different average attitudes as voters and politicians – at least for abortion.

Previous research has identified the impact of feminism, women *bancadas* (i.e., congressional caucuses) and women's interest groups on abortion policies in Latin America (Franceschet, 2003; Hahner, 1985; Mazur, McBride, & Hoard, 2016; Pribble, 2006; Santos, 2004). The same is true for sexual minority rights, which have advanced also due to the engagement of LGBT+ movements (Díez, 2010; Encarnación, 2011; Kollman, 2007). This is supported, to a certain extent, by scholars dedicated to study attitudes. Among voters, Boidi and Corral (2013) find that women are significantly more supportive of abortion than men. However, among elites, Alcántara (2013) shows that, whereas strong agreement for this policy if often more present among women than men, there is no significant difference in average responses. This seems to be the opposite finding of the literature focused on developed countries.

Ideology

Finally, there is the issue of ideology and partisanship. In the United States, Adams (1997) demonstrates that only the Democratic Party's elites became increasingly more tolerant toward abortion from 1973 to 1994. Baunach (2012) relies on more recent data (1998-2008) to show that this one-sided cultural shift also affect mass-level attitudes, thus increasing the ideological gap between liberals and conservatives. Naturally, many of these variables are connected. There is an intrinsic link between ideology (or partisanship) and non-economic liberal attitudes, which is dependent on other variables. This is part of Lipset's original proposition regarding the conservative working class, which holds these attitudes not only because of their party affiliation but also due to the isolation motivated by social class and religious affiliation. Furthermore, as suggested in the recent literature on social sorting (Mason, 2018),

there is an ongoing alignment of selected social identities (e.g., religion, gender, race), partisanship, and political attitudes.

In Latin America, ideology appears to matter at least when the dependent variables are drug and abortion legalization. After the legalization of marijuana in Uruguay, Boidi, Queirolo, and Cruz (2015) found that the country's population was largely supportive of abortion and same-sex marriage. Yet, 59.9 percent were sceptical of drug legalization – a policy that was widely supported by left-leaning voters and those who approved the (also left-leaning) government. Alcántara and Rivas (2013) also explored the role of ideology on support for drug legalization in the region. However, besides considering an expanded set of cases (Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua), they focused on elite attitudes. They find support to the thesis that the Latin American left is more supportive of this policy than their right-wing colleagues. The same, according to Alcántara (2013), is also true for support for abortion – another non-economic liberal issue.

Latin American elites' non-economic liberal values

Most studies assessing non-economic liberal values centre their research on a single dependent variable rather than also tackling other related attitudes, e.g., toward abortion and drug legalization. If scholarship aims at better understanding elites' and masses' belief systems, new studies should include comprehensive measurements that combine sets of attitudes, rather than focusing on single issues. As previously mentioned, one example of this approach is provided by Welzel (2013) – even though focused solely on public opinion. Furthermore, research on elite behaviour and attitudes has exclusively touched the relationship between politicians and interest groups (e.g., religious organizations, social movements) or societal and political conjunctures. Elites are generally treated as actors who solely respond to external influencers rather than implementing their own ideas. Our paper aims at filling this gap, especially given the availability of empirical evidence from PELA-USAL. Besides the similar predictors of different non-economic liberal values, there seems to be cohesion in their relevance to explain attitudes in Latin America and the developed world. In most accounts, richer, younger, non-religious, and a woman increases the chances of supporting issues as same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization. Additional explanations in the region are the residence in urban areas, education level, attitudes toward democracy, and country effects. The latter evidence that whereas the region is homogeneous in many historical and political aspects, each country has its own particularity (see for instance Miranda, 2011). Whereas deviations in the core independent variables do exist, we expect to find similar results when systematically studying MPs' attitudes in the region.

Still, the main difference between the accounts of Latin Americanists and other students lies in the assessment of ideology. Whereas research on devel-

oped democracies (generally the United States) focus on partisanship, the weak party systems of Latin America (Guedes-Neto & Bohigues, 2018) lead to the use of self-placement scores in the left-right scale as a measurement of ideology. In these cases, left-wingers are generally more liberal, reproducing the American divide between conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats. The assumption of weak partisan ties follows a vast literature. Latin American parties usually have short life-spams (Lupu, 2016) and their representatives tend to hold incongruent policy attitudes (Hawkins & Morgenstern, 2010; Rosas, 2010). It follows, among others, from the electoral rules in the region. Since voters generally have to vote for candidates in open list systems, individual images and personal linkages become more relevant than party brands (Deegan-Krause 2007). Even though we discuss such partisan conflicts in the descriptive part of this work, we opt for variables as left-right and government-opposition self-placement when running regressions. We expect that these parameters function as stronger predictors especially under fragmented party systems.

We also follow the assumption that the non-economic liberal attitudes of political elites and public opinion are guided by similar factors at least to a certain extent. Socioeconomic conditions, mostly related to group identity (i.e., class, gender, religion) are relevant to determine one's political views, as well as the ideological self-positioning in the right-left spectrum. Indeed, there may exist discrepancies led by the misstereotyping of certain identities (i.e., electing individuals from a certain group given a wrong or exaggerated understanding of issue ownership) or intragroup discrepancies in the levels of engagement (i.e., individuals of a given group are politically activated based on specific attitudes). Still, group identity remains a relevant predictor of non-economic liberal attitudes.

Countries and variables

Are these findings reflected in the opinion of Latin American political elites? In other words, what individual variables predict non-economic liberal values among MPs? We use the Latin American Elites Database from the University of Salamanca (PELA-USAL)[1] to address this question. It includes face-to-face interviews with MPs from lower houses in every Latin American democracy in the post-electoral year since 1994. The questionnaires include three specific questions about same-sex couple marriage, abortion, and drug legalization. Merging the responses from MPs from the sixteen countries here analysed (Table 1) resulted in 1,124 interviewees. This sample of elite surveys represents a unique opportunity to better understand the attitudes of MPs. To identify determinants of the attitudes toward these three issues, we run multi-level mixed-effects ordered logistic regressions, with MPs nested in countries.

Table 1. Countries included in the study

Country	Legislature	Fieldwork year	N
Argentina	2009-2013 2011-2015	2012	67
Nicaragua	2012-2017	2013	52
Paraguay	2014-2018	2014	55
Chile	2014-2018	2014	68
Colombia	2014-2018	2014	84
Costa Rica	2014-2018	2014	55
Honduras	2014-2018	2014	82
Panama	2014-2019	2014	47
Mexico	2015-2018	2016	100
El Salvador	2015-2018	2015	58
Bolivia	2015-2020	2015	93
Uruguay	2015-2020	2015	69
Dominican Rep.	2016-2020	2017	61
Guatemala	2016-2020	2016	78
Venezuela	2016-2021	2016	67
Ecuador	2017-2021	2017	88

Source: PELA-USAL

We selected questions that address issues related to individual liberties, namely the possibility of same-sex couples to marry, the possibility of aborting a pregnancy, and the legalization of drugs. The questions are as following: (1) How strongly do you approve or disapprove that same-sex couples have the right to get married?; (2) Indicate in the following scale your personal opinion with regard to abortion; and (3) How strongly do you approve or disapprove the legalization of drugs? Thereafter, the interviewer presented a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means 'strongly disapproves/against' and 10 means 'strongly approves/for'. Our models use these scores as the dependent variables.

Our independent variables are based on the reviewed literature on non-economic liberal attitudes. First, we use two religion-related variables. One regards the trust of the respondent in the Catholic Church: very trustworthy (4), trustworthy (3), untrustworthy (2) and very untrustworthy (1). The other assesses religiosity, that is, frequency of mass attendance. This question uses a 1-5 scale restricted to believers, where 1 means never/hardly ever and 5 is more than once per week. We also include in this scale the value 0 for MPs declaring they are non-believers as they, by consequence, do not attend religious services. We hypothesize that the more religious or closer to the Catholic Church legislators are, the less they will support for all three issues.

We also add socio-demographic variables regarding levels of education and income. In both cases, higher responses represent higher levels. Furthermore,

we have a continuous variable for age and a dummy variable for sex (1=woman). In similar terms, we hypothesize that younger MPs, with higher income and studies, and women, are more prone to support all three issues. Given the importance of ideology and political parties, we include these dimensions as well in the analysis. Thus, we have two variables for ideological positions: 1-10 scales for left-right (1=left) and preference for state or market regulation of the economy (1=state). The latter variable is also helpful to test whether economic[2] and non-economic liberalism are connected to each other. This is especially relevant since, at least in the United States, they seem to be defended by opposing parties to the extent that "economic liberalism" has a different meaning to that adopted in many Latin American and European countries. Thus, following the reviewed literature and, to a certain extent, the American experience, we expect that leftists and statists will be more supportive of these three issues. In view of the complexity of including variables related to political parties in such a heterogeneous database, we decided to include a binary control variable regarding MPs' self-stated relationship to the government (1=opposition, 0=government).

Finally, given the country disparity among existing legislations, we added a dummy variable that measures the possible effects of the legal status, i.e., an institutional binary variable in the models of same-sex marriage and abortion (Appendix II). In each of these cases, we considered as legal (1) only if the country recognizes same-sex marriage (not civil union) and if there exists any legal possibility to abort a pregnancy. Since the only case for drug legalization was marijuana in Uruguay and PELA-USAL asks about all drugs, we did not extend our operationalization to this variable. We hypothesize that higher support for these two issues shall be identified in countries where they are legal. We do not expect to find coefficients moving toward different directions in the three regressions, that is, positive for one issue, but negative for another. The reason we choose these three questions is the possibility to assess their causes, and find out if the drivers of support for same-sex marriage, abortion and drug legalization are the same. We provide the descriptive statistics of the variables in Appendix I.

Latin America's institutional and political framework

During the period when the interviews were fielded, same-sex marriage was legal in three out of sixteen countries. This number is based on two parameters. First, it regards a legislation that recognizes the marriage between people from the same sex. It could be a constitutional right or an infra-constitutional right, i.e., approved by the Congress. These cases include Argentina and Uruguay. Second, we considered countries where the Supreme Court has decided, *erga omnes*, that same-sex couples could marry. It was the case of Mexico, and, after the interviews were conducted, Colombia. Mexico represents a hybrid case. In many states, same-sex marriage is legal. Still, there is no decision in the na-

tional level; in 2015, the Supreme Court has ruled in favour. We are aware that the second scenario represents different levels of legal certainty. Constitutional and infra-constitutional rules are more significant. Therefore, we have operationalized this institutional feature considering both paths, legislative and judiciary.

We operationalized abortion following a single path. We coded a binary variable setting 1 when there is at least a conditional possibility to abort the pregnancy and 0 when it is criminalized in every case. Conditions vary widely. They involve health risks, a genetic malformation of the child, rape, and incest. We have coded eleven out of sixteen countries as positive. They are Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. This operationalization is relevant for two main reasons. First, it shows that both issues are far from consensual among Latin American legislations. It differs from the case of drugs, legalized only in Uruguay and restricted to the use of marijuana. Second, it should exercise a relevant impact over MPs' opinion. Depending on the legality of each issue, MPs will be expressing their opinions toward the change or maintenance of a given institution.

The reality is that political elites in Latin America have very differing views about same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization. One aspect that deserves to be mentioned, and which proves the sensitivity of these issues, is the significant lack of coherence among countries, as measured by standard deviation. Figure 1 displays the mean support of each country for all three issues, with the standard deviations.[3] Uruguayan elites are, by far, the most favourable to these issues, followed by Argentineans, and Mexicans regarding same-sex marriage; Argentineans, Mexicans, and Chileans in abortion; and Mexicans, Colombians and Chileans in the legalization of drugs. This group of elites would be the most tolerant to this social agenda: Uruguay, Argentina, Mexico, and Chile. On the opposite side, we find Panamanians, Hondurans, and Nicaraguans. Overall, Central American elites have the most unfavourable attitudes. It is noteworthy that same-sex marriage is generally more accepted, followed by abortion and the legalization of drugs. Although Uruguayans score 9.51 in the first, their rate of approval is reduced to 7.04 when it comes to the legalization of drugs. Indeed, only Uruguay and Mexico score higher than 5 for the legalization of drugs. The same is valid for Uruguay and Argentina in the case of abortion, and a total of eight countries in regard to same-sex marriage: Uruguay, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Still, these cross-national comparisons across countries should be read with great caution, given the uncertainty the standard deviations show.

Figure 1. Mean support (with SD) for same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization per country
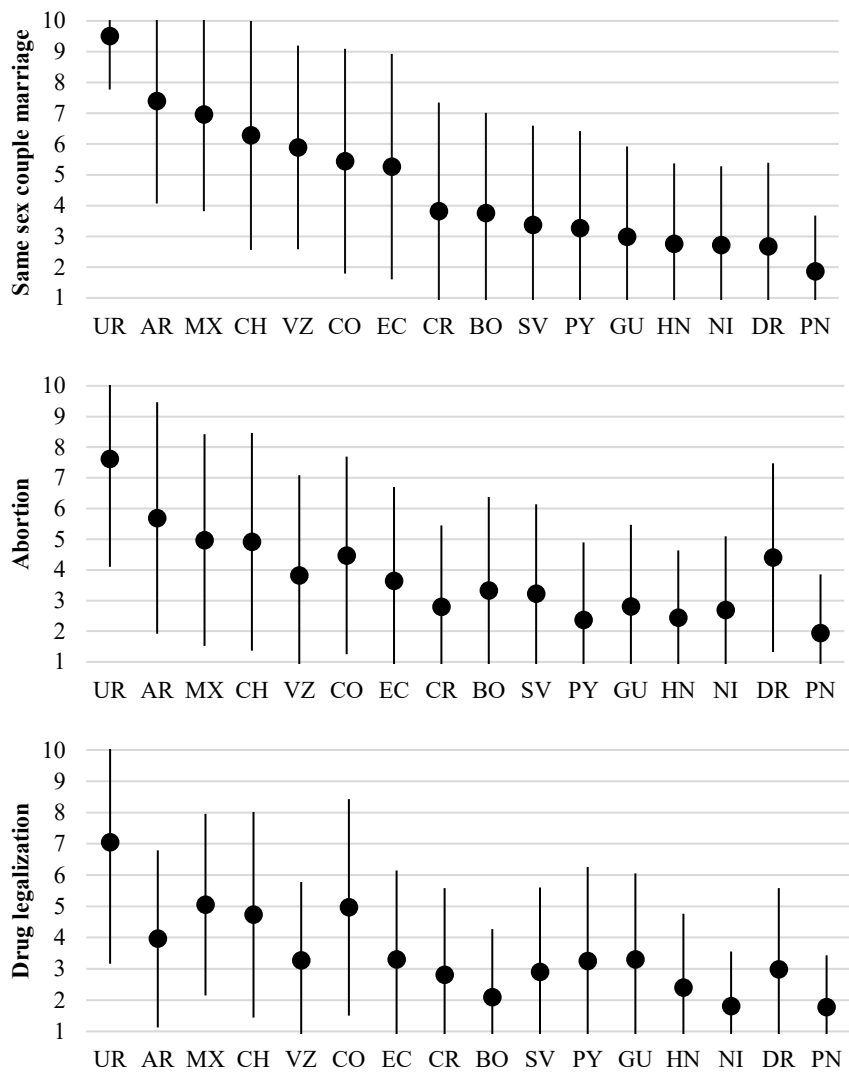
Thus, looking at each country separately, the lack of similar views (high standard deviations) precisely means that non-economic liberal attitudes constitute a political divide in Latin American politics: There is no general agreement on abortion, legalization of drugs or same-sex marriage. Therefore, given this disparity not only between countries but also within each country, we expect to find non-linear effects. The fact that these are controversial issues, in terms of lack of consensus both between and within countries, we hypothesize that the effects we find will be stronger in the extreme positions; in our case, strongly

opposed and strongly in favour. We thus chose to run ordered logistic regressions instead of linear regressions. The former works the same as logistic regressions, but instead of just two values (0-1), ordered logistic regression considers as many values as the response scale has, and the change from one position to the following (1 to 2, 2 to 3, and so on). Once these general results are presented, we then turn to the two main predictors, ideology and religiosity, to explore on how their substantive impact varies depending on the position in the three scales regarding same-sex marriage, abortion and drug legalization, with a special focus on extreme positions (1 and 10 in the scales), in order to verify the hypothesis.

Results

Table 2 displays the multi-level ordered logistic regressions, one for each question.[4] To avoid any post-treatment bias, and following Campbell et al.'s (1960) "funnel of causality", for each DV we first include sociodemographics (gender, age, studies, income), and then attitudes (ideology, state/market, trustworthiness of the Catholic church, religiosity). By doing this we can observe how each group interacts with the dependent variable.

  ➢ *Gender*. It is significant for SSM in both models, and significant for abortion only when attitudes are taken into account. Also, it is possible to observe the absence of a gender-effect in the legalization of drugs. In other words, women in Parliaments are more progressive than men in same-sex marriage and abortion, but both men and women have the same attitude toward the legalization of drugs.
  ➢ *Age*. We also identify a consistent age effect in the cases of SSM and drug legalization, with the notable absence of significance for abortion: Age differences apparently do not discriminate support for abortion among Latin American elites.
  ➢ *Studies and income*. As expected too, these two have positive coefficients, but limited to some scenarios: Studies are drivers in SSM, but not for abortion and drug legalization. For its part, income is significant for SSM and abortion when attitudes are excluded, but loses its significance when these are added. We see the reverse situation for drug legalization.

Thus, looking at the complete models, with both sociodemographics and attitudes, the only sociodemographic variable significant for abortion is gender, while for drug legalization does not yield statistical significance along with studies. As for SSM, all independent variables except income have significant coefficients.

  ➢ *Ideology and religion*. Turning to attitudes, these two emerge as the main predictors, with significant negative coefficients. Rightists and more religious MPs are less supportive in all three issues. The perceived trustworthiness of the Catholic Church is also significant, in the

expected direction (negative), but not for same-sex marriage. Surprisingly, at least based the literature review, the state-market variable is rather negligible, in terms of statistical significance. Interestingly, non-economic liberal values do not covary with economic liberalism. The economic agenda in Latin America is not linked, in these terms, to this more social agenda.

Table 2. Determinants of support for SSM, abortion and drug legalization

	SSM		SSM		Abortion		Abortion		Drug legalization		Drug legalization	
Woman	0.47	(0.18)***	0.61	(0.14)***	0.26	(0.16)	0.45	(0.12)***	-0.08	(0.10)	0.00	(0.12)
Age	-0.01	(0.01)*	-0.01	(0.01)**	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	-0.02	(0.01)***	-0.02	(0.01)***
Studies	0.29	(0.09)***	0.34	(0.12)***	0.07	(0.10)	0.14	(0.16)	0.12	(0.10)	0.19	(0.12)
Income	-0.17	(0.07)**	-0.06	(0.10)	-0.11	(0.06)*	0.03	(0.08)	0.06	(0.09)	0.19	(0.09)**
Ideology			-0.14	(0.05)**			-0.19	(0.05)***			-0.09	(0.04)**
State/Market			-0.04	(0.05)			-0.02	(0.04)			-0.04	(0.04)
Catholic Church			-0.12	(0.14)			-0.33	(0.10)***			-0.20	(0.10)*
Religiosity			-0.44	(0.06)***			-0.56	(0.07)***			-0.38	(0.06)***
Opposition	-0.18	(0.28)	0.24	(0.26)	-0.45	(0.28)	-0.02	(0.18)	-0.26	(0.26)	-0.02	(0.23)
SSM legal	2.73	(0.73)	2.29	(0.52)***								
Abortion legal					0.41	(0.42)	0.05	(0.29)				
/cut1	0.35	(0.71)	-1.49	(1.12)	0.32	(0.79)	-2.47	(1.45)*	-0.39	(0.78)	-2.01	(1.14)*
/cut2	0.67	(0.71)	-1.17	(1.11)	0.58	(0.78)	-2.16	(1.43)	-0.12	(0.79)	-1.70	(1.14)
/cut3	0.92	(0.71)	-0.88	(1.09)	0.77	(0.79)	-1.92	(1.42)	0.22	(0.80)	-1.33	(1.14)
/cut4	1.07	(0.69)	-0.70	(1.06)	0.90	(0.79)	-1.76	(1.42)	0.40	(0.80)	-1.11	(1.13)
/cut5	1.58	(0.71)**	-0.12	(1.11)	1.66	(0.80)**	-0.80	(1.38)	1.03	(0.82)	-0.38	(1.14)
/cut6	1.81	(0.71)**	0.16	(1.08)	1.94	(0.82)**	-0.46	(1.40)	1.35	(0.83)	0.01	(1.13)
/cut7	2.04	(0.72)***	0.42	(1.10)	2.16	(0.81)***	-0.18	(1.39)	1.68	(0.83)**	0.35	(1.12)
/cut8	2.40	(0.73)***	0.84	(1.11)	2.56	(0.83)***	0.31	(1.37)	2.29	(0.91)**	0.98	(1.16)
/cut9	2.65	(0.74)***	1.13	(1.11)	2.76	(0.85)***	0.56	(1.37)	2.62	(0.97)***	1.33	(1.19)
Groups	16		16		16		16		16		16	
N	966		929		962		925		962		926	

Source: own elaboration from PELA-USAL (*p ≤0.1; ** p ≤0.05; *** p ≤0.01. Mixed-effects ordinal logistic regressions with robust standard errors in parentheses. We rely on the Stata routine meologit.)

➢ *Opposition*. Although opposition was included as a control variable, we want to highlight the absence of significant differences between government and opposition in all three cases.
➢ *Institutional framework*. As for the impact of the institutional framework, it is mixed. The legal status is a strong predictor in same-sex marriage. Once there is legal recognition, MPs are far more favourable than in the countries where it is illegal. Nonetheless, there is no such legal effect at all on abortion. It is true that the relationship could suffer from reverse causality: countries with MPs more supportive of same-sex marriage are more prone to approve it. Still, this covariance does not exist for abortion.

Nevertheless, beyond the absence of effects and the "funnel of causality", all independent variables have the theoretically expected effects, and there is no different direction depending on the issue. That being so, both ideology and religiosity are the most salient attitudinal determinants in comparative perspective: These two variables[5] are key predictors in all three issues. Perceived

trustworthiness of the Catholic Church for same-sex marriage, gender for drug legalization, and age and studies for abortion are not significant. Thus, we now turn to these two salient variables to assess their different substantive impacts depending on the positions in the scale from 1 (disapproves/against) to 10 (favourable/for). To do so we display on Figure 2 the marginal effects of these two variables in the multi-level ordered logistic regressions (Stata command *margins*). Due to the ordinal nature of the DV (ten-point scales) we ran ordered logits; thus, when looking at marginal effects we can identify how ideology and religiosity predict each one of the 10 possible positions in the scales on the support for same-sex marriage, abortion and drug legalization. As aforementioned, we expect stronger effects in the extreme positions. For the ease of interpretation, Figure 2 only displays values 1, 5 and 10 of the three questions, although the remaining values follow similar patterns. The results are sufficiently clear, both statistically and visually, to confirm our hypothesis: There are stronger effects in the extreme positions, but with a key nuance: only on rightist and very religious positions.

Each slope represents the probability of choosing positions 1 (disapprove/against), 5, and 10 (approve/for) for all positions on the left-right and religiosity axes. The probability in the Y-axes refers to how likely MPs are on each ideological and religious position to choose each of the three values here displayed: 1-5-10. In the case of ideology (graphs on the left), it is thus possible to visualize the probability of choosing 1, 5 or 10 on leftist positions, and how probability does change on the most rightist position, 10. As an example, in the case of abortion, the probability of choosing 1-Against rises from over 30 percent in the extreme Left (1) to almost 70 percent in the Right (10). In similar terms, the probability of choosing 10-For drops from almost 12 percent in the Left to barely 3 percent in the Right. Put it differently: A legislator on the 1-Left has a 12 percent likelihood to be totally in favour of abortion, compared to a 3 percent for his/her peer on the 10-Right.

From Figure 2 we can see that the ideological differences are significantly intense not in both extreme positions, as expected, but on extreme contrary positions. The change in the probability of being totally against these issues, that is choosing 1-Against, between the extremes of the Left-Right axis rises to 25 points for SSM, 40 for abortion and 20 for drug legalization. As expected, the most substantive impact is limited to strongly opposed views. We do find an ideological effect, but even the left is not that supportive of these three issues. Otherwise, at least the slope of "Approve/For (10)" would be totally opposed to the slope of "Disapprove/Against (1);" i.e., considerably higher probability of being in favour in the left. Therefore, given what marginal effects display, we can see how ideology and religiosity work when predicting the support for SSM, abortion and drug legalization: slightly favourable positions on the left, and much stronger opposition on the right.

Figure 2. Marginal effects of ideology and religiosity: predicted probabilities for same-sex marriage, abortion and drug legalization

Source: own elaboration. (Adjusted predictions with 95 per cent of confidence intervals.
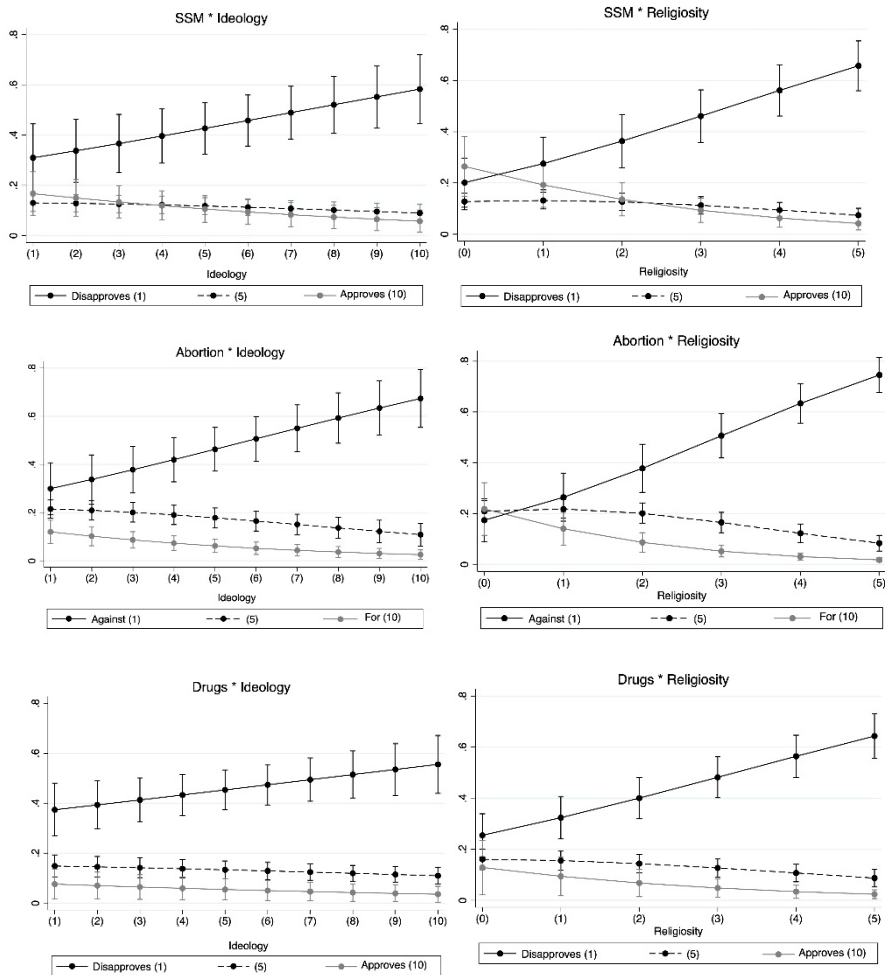
Command *margins* in Stata)

As for religiosity (graphs on the right), the patterns are revealingly similar. The most important religious differences are limited to extreme unfavourable opinions: In the Left, the probability of being totally in favour of SSM, abortion, and drug legalization is much lower than the probability of being totally against on the right. Once again, we underline that there is a significant religiosity effect on all positions, from Against-1 to For-10, displayed in Table 2, but the substantive impact of religiosity is mainly determined by the high levels of rejection among the most religious MPs. As with ideology and leftists, we cannot state that non-believers are fierce supporters of these issues. If that were the case, Figure 2 would display sharp slopes for totally favourable (10), with high values on the left side, and very low values on the right side. We

certainly find both ideology and religiosity effects in all three questions: The more leftist or the less religious, the higher the probability to approve/be in favour. However, the marginal effects on Figure 2 allow us to nuance the findings: the overall effects are mainly determined by the strong opposition on the right/religious MPs, always above 50 percent or even 70 percent. What we find for the left and less religious MPs are much lower values of support, always below 30 percent, even 10 percent.

Conclusion

This paper has assessed the predictors of MPs' opinions toward same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization. We find that the most important predictors are ideology and religiosity; the more MPs attend religious services and the more rightist they are, the less prone to support same-sex marriage, abortion, and the legalization of drugs they are. Interestingly, the influence of the Catholic Church vanishes when MPs express their opinions on same-sex marriage. Ideology helps to better understand the region's political scenario in many cases. Leftists are generally more favourable toward non-economic liberal issues. The Left-Right divide still works in Latin America on these issues. It is important to notice that this ideological divide does not hold when we consider MPs' positions toward market regulation. This independent variable has no significance in predicting non-economic liberal values.

However, the main findings and contributions of this paper are the substantive impacts of ideology and religiosity. Although we find a significant general effect, we discern some key elements on how the relationships work. This general effect is mostly due to the substantive differences between left/right and non-believer/religious in totally against positions. In the rest of the positions there are significant differences, but comparatively less substantive. Furthermore, even among leftists and non-believers totally against positions are much likely. We do not find substantive differences in most supportive opinions. Indeed, we find significant statistical differences at conventional levels, but negligible substantive differences when put in comparative perspective.

These results help to explain and understand the situation of same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization in the region. For these to be widely accepted and normalized, elite support is a key condition (Bohigues & Fernández-i-Marín, 2022). Rightist and religious elites are against, something we already knew, and this paper confirms. The surprising finding, however, regards the opposing pole: Leftists and non-religious. Certainly, as expected, there is an effect of ideology and religion among them, but this does not mean leftists and non-religious MPs are resolutely supportive of same-sex marriage, abortion and drug legalization. Indeed, it is more appropriate to state that leftist and non-believer MPs are less unfavourable than rightists and religious MPs are. If the former are slightly in favour, and the latter are strongly opposed, the panorama seems less promising for these policies than a superficial analysis of the

effects of ideology and religion might suggest. In light of these findings, and how ideology and religiosity actually work, even with leftist majorities, away from religious influences, the evidence from elite attitudes here analysed suggests that the chances to pass progressive bills on any of these issues will remain low. Higher than in cases of religious rightist majorities, no doubt, but low at the end of the day.

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Notes

1 For more information see: https://oir.org.es/pela/
2 We understand that economic liberalism may have different meanings depending on, among others, country and theoretical family. Here, when we speak of economic liberalism, we refer to classical liberal (or pro-market) ideas.
3 Lack of coherence is even more striking among political parties (Appendix III). Among the most favourable parties to same-sex marriage there are two right-wing parties: Partido Nacional (PN) from Uruguay and Voluntad Popular (VP) from Venezuela. The others are left-wing parties from the Southern Cone. The most unfavourable parties are all from Central America and non-leftist. Among the most favourable parties to legalization of drugs, we find Partido Colorado (Uruguay), Partido Patriota (Guatemala), and Partido

Liberal (Colombia). The remaining ones are left-wing parties from Chile, Uruguay, and Mexico. The most unfavourable are right-wing and religious parties, plus a left-wing former guerrilla party, the Frente Sandinista de Libertación Nacional (FSLN). It shares positions with traditional parties, as Partido Liberal de Honduras (PLH) and Partido Unidad Social Cristiana (PUSC, Costa Rica). Finally, only left-wing parties are found among the positive toward the legalization of abortion. They are from Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. In the opposite side, only right-wing parties are found, spread all over Latin America.

4   The models include the cases with no missing values (respondents who chose not to answer) on every variable, hence the differences between Tables 2 and 3 of around 100 cases.

5   Correlation between ideology and religiosity is 0.37.

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Appendix

I. Descriptive statistics from PELA-USAL

Variable	Observations	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Ideology	1,080	4.82	2.42	1	10
State-Market	1,103	5.48	2.54	1	10
Trust Catholic Church	1,106	3.01	0.89	1	4
Religiosity	1,060	2.60	1.52	0	5
Opposition	1,050	0.55	0.50	0	1
Woman	1,098	0.29	0.45	0	1
Age	1,054	47.64	10.96	21	79
Studies	1,088	5.04	0.96	1	6
Income	1,056	2.16	1.09	1	4
SSM legal	1,124	0.21	0.41	0	1
Abortion legal	1,124	0.71	0.45	0	1
SSM	1,074	4.83	3.68	1	10
Abortion	1,070	3.88	3.29	1	10
Drugs	1,070	3.60	3.09	1	10

II. Operationalization of institutional variables based on the legal framework of each country

Countries	Same-Sex Marriage	Abortion
Argentina	Yes (1)	Yes (1)
Bolivia	No (0)	Yes (1)
Chile	No (0)	No (0)
Colombia	No* (0) At the moment the interviews, not legal	Yes (1)
Costa Rica	No (0)	Yes (1)
El Salvador	No (0)	No (0)
Ecuador	No (0)	Yes (1)
Guatemala	No (0)	Yes (1)
Honduras	No (0)	No (0)
Mexico	Yes (1)	Yes (1)
Nicaragua	No (0)	No (0)
Panama	No (0)	Yes (1)
Paraguay	No (0)	Yes (1)
Dominican R.	No (0)	No (0)
Uruguay	Yes (1)	Yes (1)
Venezuela	No (0)	Yes (1)

III. Average support for same-sex marriage, abortion, and drug legalization per political
party based on PELA-USAL

		Same sex marriage		Abortion		Drugs legalization	
		Mean (SD)	N	Mean (SD)	N	Mean (SD)	N
Argentina	FpV	9.38 (1.48)	19	5.73 (2.49)	15	7.92 (3.2)	18
	UCR	7.38 (3.07)	11	4.19 (3.42)	10	5.8 (4.05)	9
	PJ	6.89 (3.91)	13	3.5 (2.62)	11	3.13 (3.33)	11
	PRO	7 (2.89)	3	2.33 (1.34)	3	1.5 (1.36)	3
Bolivia	MAS	3.27 (3.26)	63	1.98 (2.09)	61	3.42 (3.12)	61
	PDC	4.5 (3.41)	7	1.75 (1.5)	7	2.63 (3.32)	7
	UD	4.82 (2.89)	23	2.5 (2.48)	23	3.32 (2.7)	23
Chile	PC	10 (0)	4	6.33 (1.44)	4	10 (0)	4
	PS	8.43 (2.58)	9	5.4 (2.96)	6	7.71 (1.85)	9
	PPD	7.12 (4.05)	8	6.5 (3.7)	7	7.38 (3.05)	7
	PRSD	7 (4.37)	3	5.5 (3.2)	3	6.75 (2.28)	3
	PDC	7.18 (3.3)	11	5.55 (2.83)	11	5.09 (2.5)	11
	RN	4.5 (3.81)	9	2.2 (1.63)	9	1.4 (0.71)	9
	UDI	2.88 (1.62)	16	2.47 (2.12)	16	1.12 (0.33)	16
Colombia	PL	5.75 (3.66)	20	6.25 (3.35)	16	4.69 (2.93)	16
	P de la U	4.85 (3.74)	19	4.54 (3.72)	17	4.62 (3.48)	17
	CR	6.86 (2.93)	8	5.25 (3.12)	7	4 (2.73)	6
	PC	2.92 (3.05)	14	3.85 (2.95)	12	3.42 (2.32)	11
	CD	5.1 (3.74)	9	2.9 (3.29)	9	3.3 (3.7)	9
Costa Rica	FA	7.44 (3.88)	9	6.11 (3.58)	9	5.78 (3.86)	9
	PAC	5.67 (3.72)	12	2.45 (2.54)	11	3.25 (2.52)	12
	PUSC	1.25 (0.46)	8	1.5 (0.53)	8	1.25 (0.46)	8
	PLN	2.44 (2.38)	18	1.94 (1.69)	18	2.06 (1.51)	18
Dominican Republic	PLD	1.96 (1.68)	34	2.96 (2.73)	33	4.52 (2.88)	33
	PRM	3.78 (3.58)	15	3.22 (2.64)	15	4.43 (2.98)	15
	PRD	1.67 (1.15)	5	1.67 (1.14)	3	4.33 (3.03)	3
	PRSC	2.5 (1.77)	4	3.5 (1.95)	4	1 (0)	4
Ecuador	Alianza-PAIS	5.53 (3.48)	43	3.83 (2.97)	42	4.15 (3.38)	41
	SUMA-CREO	5.33 (3.83)	23	2.59 (2.15)	22	3.18 (2.15)	22
	PSC	4 (5.19)	3	2.67 (2.88)	3	1 (0)	3
El Salvador	FMLN	5.94 (3.24)	18	4 (2.97)	17	6.56 (2.06)	18
	ARENA	2.1 (1.92)	24	2.52 (2.42)	21	1.78 (1.54)	23
	PCN	1 (0)	4	1 (0)	2	1 (0)	3

	GANA	1 (0)	9	2.25 (2.55)	8	1 (0)	8
Guatemala	PP	1.8 (1.78)	5	6.8 (4.44)	5	4.4 (1.94)	5
	UNE	4.18 (3.61)	18	3.65 (2.93)	17	3.41 (2.94)	17
	TODOS	3 (3.27)	10	2.56 (1.74)	9	2.78 (2.59)	9
	LIDER	2.38 (2.47)	17	2.44 (2.16)	16	2.63 (2.85)	16
	FCN	2.83 (2.99)	7	3.67 (2.66)	6	1.5 (1.22)	6
	UCN	1.5 (0.577)	5	2.75 (2.36)	4	1 (0)	4
Honduras	LIBRE	3.92 (2.87)	25	3.08 (2.64)	25	3.32 (2.35)	25
	PAC	2.44 (1.66)	9	3.33 (1.87)	9	2.33 (2)	9
	PNH	2.5 (2.76)	30	2.07 (2.5)	30	2.03 (1.96)	30
	PLH	1.76 (1.68)	17	1.59 (1.33)	17	2 (1.12)	17
Mexico	MORENA	9 (2.23)	5	7 (1.225)	5	8.6 (2.19)	5
	PRD	8.27 (2.69)	12	7.36 (2.73)	11	8.55 (2.02)	11
	PRI	7.33 (2.74)	50	4.91 (2.88)	47	5.02 (2.97)	47
	Verdes	7 (4.08)	4	4.25 (2.28)	4	4.25 (4.03)	4
	PAN	4.82 (3.09)	23	3.61 (2.37)	23	2.13 (2.24)	23
Nicaragua	PLI	2.24 (1.93)	15	2.44 (2.26)	14	2.71 (2.40)	15
	FSLN	2.94 (2.73)	36	1.55 (1.41)	35	2.69 (2.4)	34
Panama	PRD	2.06 (2.16)	18	1.78 (1.83)	18	1.94 (2.18)	18
	Panameñista	2 (1.73)	9	1.89 (1.76)	9	1.78 (1.56)	9
	CD	1.39 (1.24)	18	1.44 (1.25)	18	1.67 (1.57)	18
Paraguay	PC-ANR	2.35 (2.04)	28	2.81 (2.7)	26	1.73 (1.22)	26
	PLRA	2.82 (2.96)	19	2.5 (2.36)	18	1.72 (1.49)	18
Uruguay	FA	9.84 (0.82)	36	8 (2.33)	36	9.55 (1.70)	36
	PC	10 (0)	9	7.25 (3.54)	9	6.43 (4.46)	8
	PN	8.7 (2.751)	22	3.95 (3.88)	22	4.95 (3.48)	22
Venezuela	VP	8.56 (2.11)	6	5.89 (2.19)	5	5 (2.98)	5
	PSUV	4.29 (2.97)	20	2.29 (1.8)	20	4.35 (3.65)	20
	PJ	6.81 (3.31)	13	4.87 (2.89)	13	3.94 (3.15)	13
	AD	4.7 (3.68)	10	2.7 (2.21)	10	3.4 (3.02)	10
	UNT	7.71 (2.11)	8	3.43 (2.47)	8	3 (3.01)	8