NORC at the University of Chicago

FINAL REPORT

APRIL 2023

Analysis of Trends in Democratic Attitudes: Honduras Report

Presented by:
NORC at the University of Chicago

Analysis of Trends in Democratic Attitudes: Honduras Report

Authors:

Orlando J. Pérez, Professor of Political Science, University of North Texas at Dallas

Christine J. Wade, Professor of Political Science and International Studies, Washington College

Technical Coordination Team:

Luis A. Camacho

Mollie Cohen, Assistant Professor, Department of International Affairs, University of Georgia

Ingrid Rojas, Research Scientist, NORC at the University of Chicago

Analysis and Support Team:

Angelo Cozzubo, Senior Research Associate II, NORC at the University of Chicago

Katrina Kamara, Senior Research Associate II, NORC at the University of Chicago

Paige Pepitone, Research Associate II, NORC at the University of Chicago

Table of Contents

List of Exhibits

List of Tables

Acronyms

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDBScan	Hierarchical Density-Based Clustering
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
LIBRE	Liberty and Refoundation (Libertad y Refundación) Political Party
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar

Presentation

In recent years, governance, political crises, insecurity, and longstanding issues of corruption, inequality, and lackluster economic performance have eroded democratic legitimacy and public trust in government in Latin America. Indeed, the 2019 *Pulse of Democracy* report from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) states that "the region has settled into a malaise with respect to public views of democracy."[1] Support for and satisfaction with democracy declined sharply in 2016 compared to prior survey rounds and remained low in 2018-2019. While support for democracy remained steady between 2018-2019 and 2021, support for centralizing power in the executive increased in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.[2]

In a context of global and regional democratic backsliding, in which domestic and foreign actors are actively working to undermine democracy, a citizenry that remains committed to democratic principles and values—even if dissatisfied with politics and governance—can be critical to staving off democratic decline. A citizenry with highly democratic attitudes is more likely to discourage those in power from undermining democracy from within. Perhaps more importantly, citizens with highly democratic attitudes are less likely to support authoritarian candidates at the ballot box in the first place, and more likely to mobilize against elite actions that undermine democracy.

To respond to the challenge of eroding democratic attitudes in cooperating countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) conducted a study that examines how democratic attitudes have evolved in the recent past. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

- Can the citizens of Latin America and the Caribbean be classified into groups with distinct patterns of democratic attitudes?
- What are the most salient attitudinal, economic, and other characteristics of the citizens in each group, and especially those groups that hold worrisome democratic attitudes?
- How have the groups and democratic attitudes evolved in the past ten years? What system-level, contextual factors have contributed to changes over time in patterns of democratic attitudes?

[1] Castorena, Oscar, and Sarah L. Graves. 2019. "Support for Electoral Democracy." In Zechmeister, Elizabeth J., and Noam Lupu (Eds.). *Pulse of Democracy*. Nashville, TN: LAPOP, p. 23.

[2] Lupu, Noam, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2021. "The Pulse of Democracy in 2021." In Lupu, Noam, Mariana Rodríguez, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister (Eds.). *Pulse of Democracy*. Nashville, TN: LAPOP, p. 2-5.

To answer the first two questions, NORC identified trends in democratic attitudes between 2012 and 2021 using cluster analysis, a classification technique described in greater detail below, to group citizens into "clusters" with distinct democratic attitudes. The team then identified the demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, and other characteristics differentiating the citizens in each cluster from the rest of the population using data from the last five waves of the AmericasBarometer[3] (2012, 2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2021) for each country. To address the third question, NORC recruited experts in the politics of each country to make sense of the cluster analysis results and examine the relationship between democratic attitudes and political, economic, and social developments over time.[4]

This report presents the analysis for Honduras. It was authored by Orlando J. Pérez (Professor of Political Science, University of North Texas at Dallas) and Christine J. Wade, (Professor of Political Science and International Studies, Washington College). Study coordinators Luis A. Camacho, Mollie Cohen (Assistant Professor, Department of International Affairs, University of Georgia), and Ingrid Rojas (Research Scientist, NORC at the University of Chicago) revised the report to ensure alignment with the study objectives.

[3] The AmericasBarometer by the LAPOP Lab, www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop.

[4] NORC recruited experts through an open call for contributors issued in December 2021. The call targeted academics and researchers with advanced degrees in political science or other social science at institutions in LAC and beyond. Subsequent targeted recruiting efforts relied on NORC's academic and professional networks. NORC ultimately recruited experts for 12 of 16 countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru.

Introduction

Democratic governance in Honduras has long been characterized by authoritarianism, corruption, militarism, and weak institutions. While Honduras escaped the civil wars that plagued some of its neighbors, its path to democracy has been difficult. The military occupied the presidency almost continuously between 1963 and 1982, when the country transitioned to civilian rule. The transition resulted in nominal electoral democratization. Two traditional elite-controlled parties, the Liberal and the National parties, alternated in power and controlled the state through patronage networks and corrupt practices. The military has continued to play an outsized role in politics and frequently intervenes to "correct" policies with which it disagrees.

By the time Liberal Manuel "Mel" Zelaya took office in 2006, Honduras had experienced seven consecutive democratic elections and four peaceful electoral turnovers between the traditional parties. In March 2009, President Zelaya called for a national referendum on whether to convene a constituent assembly. The subsequent power struggle between Zelaya, Congress, the courts, and the armed forces ultimately resulted in the June 28, 2009 military coup that ousted Zelaya. Roberto Micheletti, the President of Congress, became interim president for the remainder of Zelaya's term. National elections took place on schedule in November 2009, despite a wave of repression and the suspension of key constitutional rights, including freedoms of expression, movement, and association.

The 2009 coup marked a significant turning point in Honduran democracy. The next 12 years saw increasing corruption, violence, and authoritarianism through the presidencies of Porfirio Lobo (2010–2014) and Juan Orlando Hernández (2014–2022), both from the National Party. The military's policing powers and role in the economy and several key government agencies increased, placing the military in its most powerful position since the 1980s. Moreover, violence against opposition groups and civil society increased, rule of law and democratic institutions weakened, and citizen security deteriorated as criminal networks exploited weak governing institutions and gaps in the state's security apparatus.

This study describes the evolution of democratic attitudes in Honduras between 2012 and 2021 and identifies the contextual factors that contributed to changing attitudes over time. First, we draw on NORC's cluster analysis, which identifies groups of citizens with distinct patterns of democratic attitudes in each of five waves of AmericasBarometer data. To enrich the analysis, we also examine the evolution of public opinion on specific issues and questions. We find that public opinion has shifted significantly in recent years. Declines in satisfaction with democracy and increases in citizens' willingness to support presidential power grabs are particularly concerning. To identify how the political context has contributed to changes in attitudes, we examine how the deteriorating rule of law, rising violence, illegitimate elections, generalized repression, endemic corruption, and economic decline—all of which are largely consequences of the 2009 coup—have contributed to changes in public opinion.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. The first section describes the cluster analysis methodology and data sources and presents the key findings; it also highlights some key takeaways for supplemental analysis of public opinion trends. The second section examines

how Honduras' recent history has contributed to changes in public opinion. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and reflects on the significance of the 2021 elections.

Examining Trends in Democratic Attitudes

NORC used data from the AmericasBarometer and cluster analysis to classify Hondurans into groups or clusters with specific patterns of democratic attitudes. The analysis aims to maximize similarity *within* each cluster while maximizing dissimilarity *between* clusters. One advantage of cluster analysis compared to other classification schemes is that it is highly inductive, meaning that it lets survey respondents speak for themselves without making assumptions in advance about how to group them. Annex 1 provides detailed information regarding the study's methodology. NORC used five democratic attitudes to generate clusters:

- *Support for democracy:* The extent to which respondents agree or disagree that "democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government."
- *Opposition to military coups:* Whether respondents believe it would be justified for the military to take power in a military coup in certain circumstances.
- *Opposition to executive aggrandizement:* Whether respondents believe it would be justified for the President to close Congress and the Supreme Court and govern without them.
- *Tolerance of protest and regime critics:* The extent to which respondents support the right to protest and other political rights of regime critics.
- *Support for democratic inclusion:* The extent to which respondents support the political inclusion of homosexuals.

Questions to measure all five attitudes were available in the first four AmericasBarometer survey waves (2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018). Only two attitudes were available in 2021: support for democracy and opposition to executive aggrandizement. The 2021 cluster analysis results are therefore not comparable to those of prior waves and not discussed in the report. Annex 2 presents the main cluster analysis results for all waves.

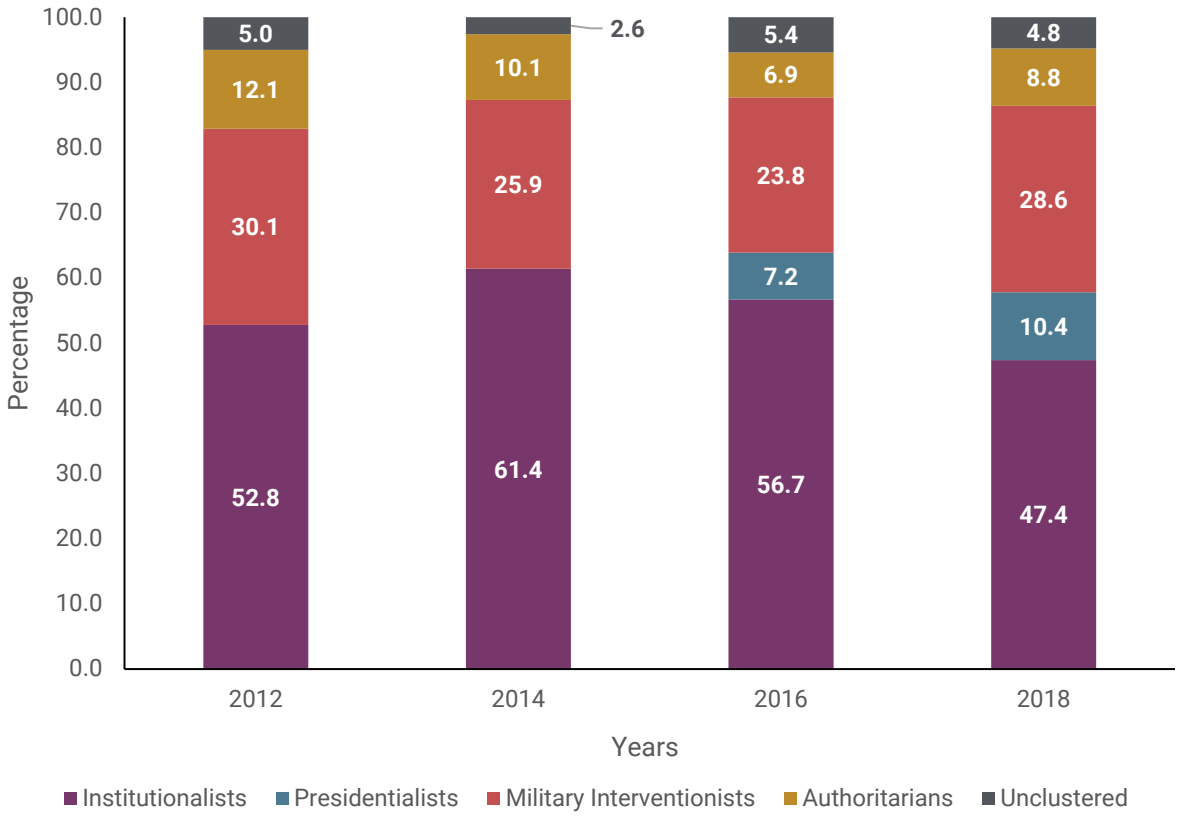
The cluster analysis identified three clusters in 2012 and 2014 and four in 2016 and 2018. In all waves, a share of respondents was not classified into any cluster. To facilitate comparisons over survey waves, we grouped the resulting clusters into four families that share a set of defining characteristics:

- *Institutionalists (including institutionalists and democratic institutionalists):* Individuals in this cluster family are characterized by full opposition to coups and executive aggrandizement. In this sense, they represent "ideal" democratic citizens compared to the other cluster families.

- *Presidentialists:* Individuals in this cluster family exhibit full opposition to coups but less-than-full opposition to executive aggrandizement.
- *Military Interventionists:* Individuals in this cluster family exhibit full opposition to executive aggrandizement but less-than-full opposition to coups.
- *Authoritarians (including authoritarians and ambivalent-military interventionist presidentialists):* Individuals in this cluster family are characterized by less-than-full opposition to both coups and executive aggrandizement.

Figure 1 shows how the relative size of these cluster families evolved between 2012 and 2018. Three points are noteworthy. First, institutionalists make up the largest cluster in all years. The percentage of institutionalists ranges from a high of 61.4 percent in 2014 to a low of 47.4 percent in 2018. Second, presidentialists first appeared as a distinct cluster with 7.2 percent of respondents in 2016 and increased to 10.4 percent by 2018. Finally, the declining share of institutionalists in 2018 corresponded with increases in the other three, non-democratic families. 2018 was the only year where military interventionists, presidentialists, and authoritarians combined make up a similar share of respondents than institutionalists: 47.8 percent vs. 47.4 percent.

Figure 1: Distribution of Clusters Across Survey Rounds, 2012-2018



As mentioned above, clusters were differentiated by their opposition to military coups and executive aggrandizement. We observed limited differences in the average scores for the other

three attitudes across clusters and differences are not consistent across years (see Figures A2.1–A2.5 in Annex 2).

NORC's cluster analysis identified the demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, and other characteristics that significantly distinguish respondents in each cluster from the rest of the sample for each survey wave. The study examined several variables, including age, gender, wealth, race, education, crime victimization, corruption victimization, political efficacy, and political participation. While respondents in all clusters were statistically significantly different from others on a few variables in each wave, most differences were substantively small. This suggests that demographic, socioeconomic, geographic, and other characteristics examined do not meaningfully structure attitudes toward democracy.

These caveats aside, we did find some recurrent statistically significant differences across all waves that are worth highlighting. First, institutionalists tended to be older than other Hondurans; the percentage of respondents in the 18-29 age bracket was lower among institutionalists than the rest of the sample. Second, institutionalists experienced less crime and corruption than other respondents; the percentage of respondents who reported having been the victim of a crime or asked to pay a bribe in the past 12 months was lower among institutionalists than the rest of the sample.

There were also recurrent statistically significant differences for presidentialists in the two waves where they appeared (2016 and 2018). First, presidentialists tended to be less educated than other Hondurans. In 2018, the average years of education for presidentialists was 6.1, compared to 7.7 for the rest of the sample. Second, presidentialists were more likely to approve of the president's performance than other respondents. In 2018, 48.1 percent of presidentialists approved of the president, compared to 32.5 percent of the rest of the sample. Presidentialists were also more likely to believe that those who govern are interested in what people think (33.1 percent of presidentialists vs. 26.4 percent of other respondents in 2018), but less likely to have voted in the last presidential election (66.9 percent vs. 72.7 percent in 2018).

To supplement the cluster analysis, we examined aggregate-level trends in six democratic and political attitudes: satisfaction with democracy, support for democracy, support for military coups when corruption is high, tolerance for regime critics, presidential approval, and support for the president closing congress during difficult times. We used data from all AmericasBarometer survey rounds since 2004. The analysis is available in Annex 3. The main takeaways from this analysis were:

- Satisfaction with democracy reached its highest level in 2010 and has been in a steady decline since then. Support for democracy saw a dramatic increase between 2012 and 2014 but has since been on a downward trajectory.
- The percentage of Hondurans who support a military coup under conditions of high corruption reached a high of 55 percent in 2008, prior to the military coup of 2009, and has remained relatively stable around 40 percent since 2010.
- Responses to questions regarding political tolerance often reflect the current political context, especially dissatisfaction with and opposition to the incumbent. Not surprisingly,

political tolerance increased significantly between 2012 and 2018 as opposition to President Hernández increased.

- Presidential approval declined significantly after Hernández's inauguration in 2014 amid growing dissatisfaction with corruption, violence, authoritarianism, and economic growth. At the same time, support for the president closing congress in times of difficulty increased. Along with increasing tolerance for the political rights of government critics, these trends indicate growing polarization around Hernández.

Declining satisfaction with and support for democracy, coupled with high levels of support for military coups and growing support for executive aggrandizement indicate a profound weakness in Honduras's democratic culture. The 2009 coup against Zelaya and more recent citizen experiences and political developments during the Hernández administration have had significant consequences on public opinion. The next section examines the contextual factors that contributed to these shifts in democratic attitudes.

Linking Democratic Attitudes to National Political Developments

Our analysis of the contextual factors that contributed to changes in democratic attitudes was guided by the realities of the Honduran political system. The Honduran party system is deeply clientelistic; its tightly controlled parties are effectively elite patronage networks. Honduran elections are therefore party-centered rather than candidate-centered. The establishment of the Liberty and Refoundation Party (Libertad y Refundación, LIBRE) in the aftermath of the 2009 coup disrupted the National-Liberal duopoly, but individual candidates remain less important than party alliances. Moreover, parties have become deeply entwined with organized crime and use state resources, including security forces, to enrich elites and suppress opponents.

Militarism, authoritarianism, and corruption have dominated Honduran politics since the coup. This environment has played a significant role in declining satisfaction with and support for democracy and increasing support for executive aggrandizement. At the same time, increased polarization has fueled high tolerance for coups and executive aggrandizement. Four factors have affected support for democracy and other indicators: crime and violence, corruption, illegitimate elections, and economic decline and rising poverty.

Crime and Violence

Crime and violence are widespread in Honduras. Drug trafficking organizations have proliferated since 2009 as Honduras became a major transshipment location for cocaine traveling from South America to the United States (US). Many drug trafficking organizations have known working relationships with powerful business interests and the state, including the police, armed forces, and elected politicians. Honduras is home to two large transnational street

gangs (*maras*), Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 (18th Street Gang), both of which originated in Los Angeles in the 1980s. Drug trafficking organizations and gangs prey upon individuals and businesses, demanding extortion payments; engaging in human trafficking; participating in assaults, murders, and sexual violence; and, in the case of gangs, engaging in forcible recruitment.[5]

As of 2020, Honduras had the second-highest homicide rate in Latin America.[6] While most homicide victims are young males, violence against women and girls is a serious problem. Drug trafficking organizations, gangs, intimate partners, family members, and agents of the state often subject women and girls to physical and sexual violence. Honduras' femicide rate is one of the highest in the world.[7] Importantly, between 2009 and 2017, there were 264 reported murders of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people in Honduras, 58 percent of whom were gay men and 32.5 percent were transgender people.[8] One study found that Honduras had the highest numbers of transgender murders per capita in the world, more than double the rate of the second-highest country.[9]

As shown in Figure 2, the rate of self-reported crime victimization has increased steadily since the 2010 AmericasBarometer survey wave.[10] In 2010, 14 percent of Hondurans said they were a victim of crime; this percentage rose to 25 in 2021.[11] Respondents living in cities tended to report being crime victims at a higher rate than those in rural areas, and respondents with higher levels of education tended to report being crime victims at a higher rate than those with less education.

[5] Welsh, Ericka. 2017. "The Path of Most Resistance: Resisting Gang Recruitment as a Political Opinion in Central America's Join-or-Die Gang Culture." *Pepperdine Law Review,* 44: 1083. https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/plr/vol44/iss5/4; according to Honduras' Education Ministry, over 200,000 children dropped out of school between 2014 and 2017, many because of gang violence. Since 2010, more than 90 teachers have been killed. Diaz, Diana. 2019. "'Another Teacher Has Left': Schools, Often Safe Havens for Teenagers and Teachers, Are under Threat in Honduras." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, July 12, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2019/7/5d28db684/another-teacher-has-left.html.

[6] Flannery, Nathaniel P. 2021. "Will Honduras Win the Fight Against Corruption?" Forbes, July 5, 2021. https://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanielparishflannery/2021/07/05/can-honduras-fight-corruption/?sh=9c8aa9b679bf. Violence in Honduras exceeds epidemic levels, defined by the World Health Organization as a homicide rate exceeding 10 per 100,000. In 2012, the homicide rate was more than 90 per 100,000. In 2020, the reported homicide rate was 38 per 100,000 and homicide rates in some municipalities exceed 80 per 100,000.

[7] The Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, a group in Honduras that studies violence against females in the country, places the 2018 femicide rate at 8.22 per 100,000. Centro de Derechos de Mujeres. 2019. "Datos y reflexiones: Violencias contra las mujeres 2017-2018." Observatorio de derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, April 2019. http://derechosdelamujer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Boletin_v3.pdf.

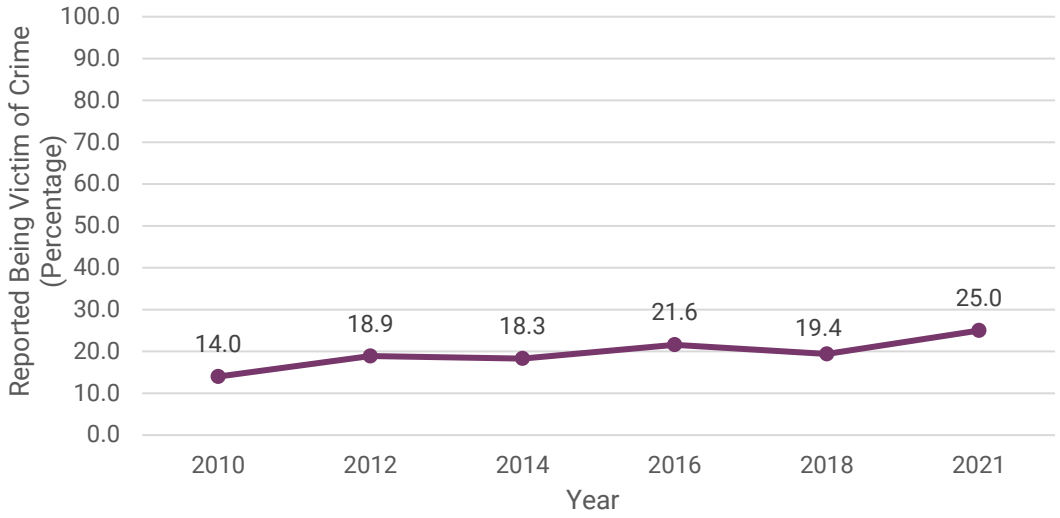
[8] Amnesty International. 2017. "No Safe Place: LGBTI Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Hondurans Seeking Asylum in Mexico." November 27, 2017. https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/no-safe-place-lgbti-salvadorans-guatemalans-and-hondurans-seeking-asylum-in-mexico/.

[9] Transgender Europe e.V. 2015. "Trans Murder Monitoring 2015." May 8, 2015. https://tgeu.org/tmm-idahot-update-2015/

[10] In 2010, the question wording for the crime victimization item changed, so it is not possible to make comparisons to earlier survey waves.

[11] The survey question used is VIC1EXT: "Now, changing the subject, have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threats, or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?" The response options are 1=Yes and 2=No. We graph the percentage who answered "yes."

Figure 2: Crime Victimization Over Time



Source: AmericasBarometer.

The connection between crime and support for democratic values has been extensively studied, and evidence suggests that crime victimization and perceptions of insecurity are key factors in determining democratic attitudes.[12] Analysis of AmericasBarometer data indicates that while crime victimization does not have a statistically significant effect on support for democracy, perceptions of insecurity does. Figure A4.1 in Annex 4 shows the correlation between levels of perceived insecurity in respondents' neighborhood and support for democracy. Respondents who feel safe in their neighborhoods are significantly more likely to support democracy than Hondurans who feel less secure. The relationship varies across survey waves; 2008 and 2010 showed higher support for democracy among the most insecure respondents. Importantly, as mentioned in cluster analysis section, institutionalists reported having experienced less crime than other Hondurans.

Two additional points regarding crime and violence are worth noting. First, successive administrations attributed much of the violence to gangs, though it was clear that gangs were only partly responsible. To combat violence, politicians adopted a "*mano dura*" approach using the police and the military. However, *mano dura* policies have not reduced levels of criminal violence. Instead, they have placed a burden on Honduras' prison system and increased human

[12] Pérez, Orlando J. 2004. "Democratic Legitimacy and Public Insecurity: Crime and Democracy in El Salvador and Guatemala." *Political Science Quarterly*, 118 (4): 627–44; Pérez, Orlando J. 2011. "Crime, Insecurity and Erosion of Democratic Values in Latin America." *Revista Latinoamericana de Opinión Pública* (Latin American Journal of Public Opinion), World Association for Public Opinion Research-Buenos Aires, Editorial Teseao, 1 (1): 61-86; Seligson, Mitchell A. 2003. "Public Support for Due Process Rights: The Case of Guatemala." *Journal of the Southwest*, 45 (4): 557–94; Fernandez, Kenneth E., and Michele Kuenzi. 2010. "Crime and Support for Democracy in Africa and Latin America." *Political Studies*. 58 (3): 450-71; Blanco, Luisa, and Isabel Ruiz. 2013. "The Impact of Crime and Insecurity on Trust in Democracy and Institutions." *American Economic Review* 103 (3): 284–88; Ceobanu, Alin M., Charles H. Wood, and Ludmila Ribeiro. 2011. "Crime Victimization and Public Support for Democracy: Evidence from Latin America." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 23 (1): 56–78.

rights abuses, corruption within the police and the military, and citizen dissatisfaction with government.[13]

Second, state security forces and parastatal and private actors have also been responsible for crimes. In the direct aftermath of the 2009 coup, state security forces killed dozens of protestors and activists with impunity.[14] Post-coup violence in Honduras also included a high level of targeted assassinations attributed to parastatal and private actors. Victims include journalists, human rights workers, environmental activists, and land defenders.[15] While it is not clear that targeted violence has the same impact on democratic attitudes that crime victimization does, targeted political violence can have a chilling effect on organizing, dissent, and political participation. It is also indicative of weak state capacity, which can undermine public trust in institutions and support for the system.

Corruption

Like violence, corruption in Honduras is also endemic. Links to organized crime, particularly drug trafficking organizations, permeate Honduran state institutions, from local officials to high-ranking politicians, including the Office of the President. Honduran officials extract benefits from both the private sector and the criminal sector, including gangs and illicit goods traffickers, in exchange for legislation or protection. In fact, one scholar described Honduras as a "kleptocratic network" wherein "corruption is the operating system."[16]

The erosion of checks and balances on executive power over the past decade and the weakening of judicial oversight has created fertile ground in Honduras for corruption and state collusion with actors engaged in illicit activities. During its 12 years in power with a solid majority in Congress, the National Party strengthened its control of the country's main institutions. In 2012, when Hernández was President of Congress, he led a successful effort to expel four of the five magistrates of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court. In 2015, the same court, by then stacked with judges close to the ruling party, struck down a constitutional article limiting presidents to one term in office, which allowed President Hernández to run for a second term in the 2017 elections.

In 2015, it was revealed that President Hernández and high-ranking members of the National Party were implicated in an elaborate kickback scheme that drained the Social Security Institute of more than United States Dollar (USD) 300 million. Some of those funds were used for

[13] InSight Crime. n.d. "Honduras Profile." Accessed Aug. 1, 2022. https://insightcrime.org/honduras-organized-crime-news/honduras/.

[14] Comision de Verdad y la Reconciliacion 2011. "Hallazgos y recomendaciones para que los hechos no se repitan. Informe de la Comision de la Verdad y la Reconciliacion." https://www.oas.org/es/sap/docs/DSDME/2011/CVR/Honduras%20-%20Informe%20CVR%20-%20RECOMENDACIONES.pdf.

[15] More than 120 environmental activists were killed in Honduras from 2010 to 2016. Lenca indigenous leader and Goldman Environmental Prize winner Berta Cáceres was one such victim. Despite the international attention surrounding her case, the killings continued. In 2019, Honduras had the highest per capita assassinations of environmental activists, with 14 killings. The next year saw another 17 killed.

Global Witness. 2017. "Honduras: The Deadliest Country in the World for Environmental Activism." January 2017. https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/honduras-deadliest-country-world-environmental-activism/.

[16] Chayes, Sarah. 2007. *When Corruption Is the Operating System: The Case of Honduras*. Carnegie Endowment for Peace.

Hernández's 2013 election campaign and some went to the National Party.[17] In response to those revelations, tens of thousands of Hondurans marched in cities throughout the country every Friday evening for months. The *indignados* (outraged), as the movement was called, demanded Hernández's resignation and the creation of an anti-impunity commission like the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala.

Soon after the revelations and protests, federal prosecutors in the US began to prosecute high-ranking members of the Honduran government on charges of money laundering, drug trafficking, and weapons trafficking. In 2017, former Investment Minister and prominent businessman Yankel Rosenthal pleaded guilty in US federal court to laundering money for the Cachiros drug trafficking organizations.[18] In November 2018, the President's brother and former Congressman, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández, was arrested on drug trafficking and weapons charges.[19] In October 2019, Tony Hernández was convicted of drug trafficking, weapons charges, and lying to authorities and he was sentenced to life in prison in March 2021.[20] That same month, Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez, who testified to paying bribes to President Hernández and other high-ranking officials in connection to drug trafficking, was convicted on multiple charges, including conspiracy to traffic cocaine and arms possession.[21]

In February 2022, the US Department of Justice requested the extradition of former President Hernández on drug trafficking and weapons charges. Hernández was arrested the following day, just two weeks after he left office. He was extradited to the US in April. His extradition was followed by that of his former police chief Juan Carlos Bonilla, who was accused of facilitating cocaine trafficking to the US on behalf of Hernández.[22] Lastly, in March 2022, a Honduran court convicted former President Porfirio Lobo's wife, Rosa Bonilla, of embezzlement of more than USD 1 million while her husband was in office. Bonilla had been found guilty of misappropriation

[17] Wade, Christine. 2015. "By Design Honduras' Anti-Graft Mission Won't Actually Fight Corruption." *World Politics Review*, November 4, 2015. https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/17124/by-design-honduras-anti-graft-mission-won-t-actually-fight-corruption.

[18] Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. 2017. "Former Honduran Cabinet Official Pleads Guilty in Manhattan Federal Court to Money Laundering Charge." Press Release, August 29, 2017. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-honduran-cabinet-official-pleads-guilty-manhattan-federal-court-money-laundering.

[19] According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration, Hernández "bribed law enforcement officials for sensitive information to protect drug shipments and solicited large bribes from major drug traffickers." During his trial, prosecutors also presented evidence that Hernández's 2013 campaign received USD 1.5 million from drug proceeds, as well as a million dollars from Mexican drug kingpin "El Chapo" Guzmán.

Drug Enforcement Administration. 2018. "DEA Announces Arrest of Former Honduran Congressman and Brother of Current President of Honduras for Drug Trafficking and Weapons Charges." Press Release, November 26, 2018. https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2018/11/26/dea-announces-arrest-former-honduran-congressman-and-brother-current.

[20] On October 26, 2019, only days after Tony Hernández's conviction, Nery Lopez Sanabria, whose ledgers were used in the trial against Hernández, was brutally murdered in a maximum-security prison in Honduras. Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. 2021. "Former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernández Sentenced to Life in Prison and Ordered to Forfeit $138.5 Million for Distributing 185 Tons of Cocaine and Related Firearms and False Statements Offenses." Press Release, March 30, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-honduran-congressman-tony-hern-ndez-sentenced-life-prison-and-ordered-forfeit.

[21] Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. 2021. "Honduran National Convicted on Drug Trafficking and Weapons Charges," Press Release, March 22, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/honduran-national-convicted-drug-trafficking-and-weapons-charges; Palmer, Emily, and Kirk Semple. 2021. "A Damning Portrait of Presidential Corruption, But Hondurans Sound Resigned." New York Times, March 23, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/23/world/americas/honduras-juan-orlando-hernandez-drug-trial.html.

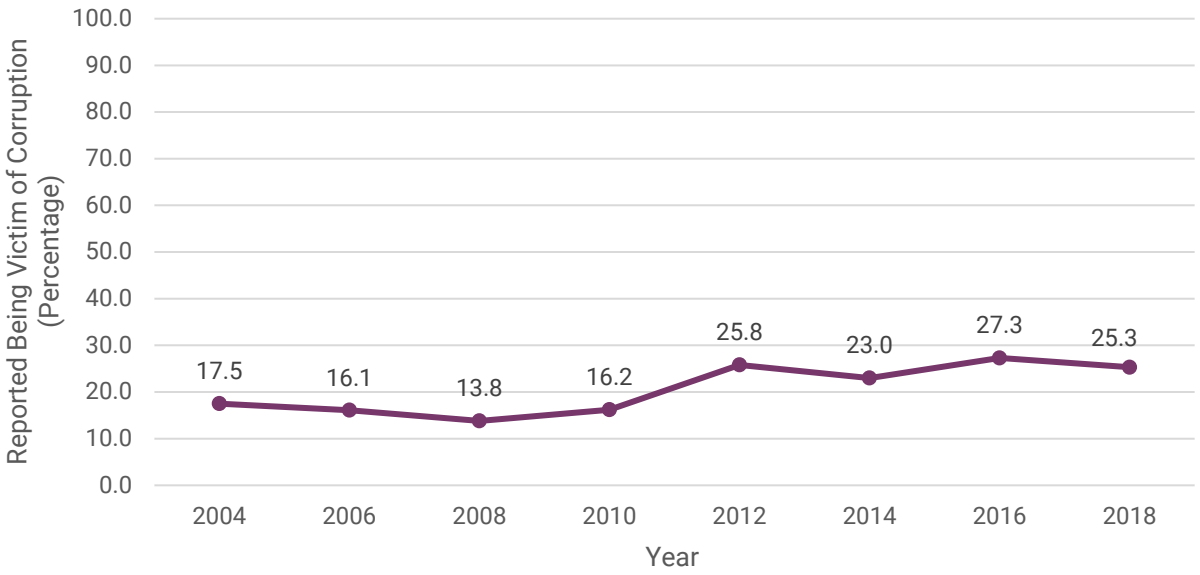
[22] Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. 2020. "Former Chief Of Honduran National Police Charged with Drug Trafficking and Weapons Offenses." Press Release, April 30, 2020. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-chief-honduran-national-police-charged-drug-trafficking-and-weapons-offenses.

and fraud by a Honduran court in 2019, and both Bonilla and Lobo had already been designated ineligible for entry to the US for corruption and bribery from drug traffickers.

Police and security forces play a vital role in sustaining the country's criminal networks. In addition to their relationships with gangs and drug traffickers, police also engage in low-level corruption and citizen extortion. Security forces have been involved in the extrajudicial killing (or "social cleansing") of street children, suspected gang members, student protestors, and other civilians over the past two decades.[23] They are also known to harass and target political opponents, journalists, human rights workers, land rights defenders, and members of the LGBTI community.

Figure 3 shows the rate of corruption victimization across time as measured by AmericasBarometer data.[24] It shows an upward trend in the number of Hondurans who say they have been asked to pay a bribe at least once in the previous year. The rate increased significantly between 2010 and 2012 and remained above 20 percent for the rest of the series.

Figure 3: Victimization by Corruption Over Time



Source: AmericasBarometer.

Corruption has a significant effect on satisfaction with democracy in Honduras. Figure A4.2 in Annex 4 shows the extent to which satisfaction with democracy varies with corruption victimization. Average satisfaction with democracy among corruption victims was lower than satisfaction among non-victims in every year other than 2008.

[23] Chayes 2007.

[24] "Since 2004, LAPOP's AmericasBarometer has measured corruption victimization via an index of individuals' experience with being asked for a bribe in a variety of institutions. If a person reports that, in the last 12 months, they were asked for a bribe by a police officer, government employee, someone at work, someone in the court system, a public health service provider, and/or by someone at a school - then they are categorized as being the victim of corruption." Evans, Claire Q. 2020. "Spotlight on Corruption Victimization in Latin America and the Caribbean," LAPOP Spotlight Series, December 2020, https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/spotlights/Spotlight-Evans-CORVIC-eng_final.pdf.

Illegitimate Elections

The 2009, 2013, and 2017 elections displayed varying degrees of irregularities, some of which were so significant that they led many to question the validity of the outcome. We believe this has an impact on citizens' appraisals of democracy.

Following the 2009 coup, the interim president suspended a variety of constitutional rights that are essential to ensuring free and fair elections, including freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of movement. Regardless, the 2009 national elections happened on schedule, just five months after the coup, but voter turnout was under 50 percent. Lobo won 56.6 percent of the vote and his National Party also won a majority in Congress.

The 2013 election was similarly troubled. Targeted assassinations of political candidates, party activists, human rights lawyers, and journalists created a climate of fear and intimidation surrounding the elections. More than 20 LIBRE candidates and activists were killed in the lead-up to the election, including three the week of the election and another the week after. Nearly 70 lawyers and 29 journalists were killed during the Lobo administration, though few cases were investigated and there were only four convictions.[25] This 2013 election occurred at the height of the Honduran homicide epidemic (rates exceeded 80 per 100,000 in 2012 and 2013).

Hernández seized upon the homicide epidemic in his 2013 campaign, promising "a soldier on every corner." As President of Congress, Hernández oversaw the expansion of militarized policing and was credited as the architect of the Military and Public Order Police. Hernández's chief competitor was LIBRE candidate Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, the wife of deposed president Mel Zelaya. LIBRE had been formed in 2011 by a coalition of groups who opposed the coup.

Allegations of vote buying, intimidation, and other irregularities marred the election. Both Hernández and Castro claimed victory on election night, magnifying an already tense environment. Hernández was ultimately elected with 36.8 percent of the vote, defeating Castro, who won just short of 29 percent. LIBRE claimed that the National Party had engaged in fraud at the polling centers, citing significant discrepancies between tally sheets and the National Electoral Tribunal results. The dispute further undermined the integrity of Honduran elections.

We do note a significant increase in support for democracy between the 2012 and 2014 surveys (from 41.1 percent to 62.8 percent), as seen in Figure A3.2. We believe this can be attributed to two factors. First, the mobilization of voters and civil society surrounding the 2013 elections likely contributed to an increase in support. Despite its flaws, the 2013 election was the first competitive election since the 2009 coup and voter turnout increased nine points from 2009. Second, Hernández enjoyed a brief honeymoon period during the initial months of his presidency in 2014, due to his new security policies.[26] We note that his approval rating (66 percent) exceeded his vote share and likely contributed to this increase in support for democracy.

[25] Frank, Dana. 2013. "A High-Stakes Election in Honduras." *The Nation*, November 6, 2013.

[26] Panting, César Andrés. 2014. "Reducir la delincuencia, el mayor logro del presidente de Honduras." *La Prensa*, May 27, 2014. https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/reducir-la-delincuencia-el-mayor-logro-del-presidente-de-honduras-HBLP713224.

In the 2017 election, Hernández faced Salvador Nasralla of the Anti-Corruption Party, which was allied with LIBRE, and Luis Zelaya of the Liberal Party, among others. The vote count was plagued with irregularities. On November 27, one day after the election, Nasralla appeared to be headed to victory with more than 50 percent of the votes counted. However, after the National Electoral Tribunal suspended and resumed the vote count several times in the following days, Hernández took the lead against all statistical probability.[27] The Organization of American States, which had election observers on the ground, called for a new election, citing extensive irregularities, including deliberate interference with the voting system. The opposition accused the governing party of fraud and called for roadblocks and protests to contest the results. The state responded with lethal force when the government declared a state of emergency and issued a curfew. A month of protests left 23 people dead and 1,351 detained. Finally, Hernández was declared the winner on December 17 with 42.6 percent of the vote to Nasralla's 41.4 percent.

The 2017 post-electoral crisis showcased the extent of public dissatisfaction in Honduras. Months-long protests erupted again in May 2019, first over the privatization of health services and then over the revelations from the Tony Hernández trial. As mentioned above, there was a notable increase in political tolerance following the 2013 elections, from 36.6 percent of respondents in 2012 to 52.9 percent in 2018. We attribute this increase to the growing dissatisfaction with corruption and the illegitimacy of elections. Tolerance increased alongside the growing protest movements in the country. There was also a notable decline in presidential approval and an increase in support for executive aggrandizement, which suggested increased polarization around Hernández's performance.

The 2021 presidential election marked a watershed moment for Honduras as a woman won the presidency for the first time, outside the duopoly of the National and Liberal parties for the first time since the 19th century. The election occurred in an environment of intimidation and violence, with dozens of candidates and party activists killed during the campaign. After 2017, the opposition learned that presenting a disunited front left the door open for a National Party victory with a plurality of the vote and invited further electoral manipulation. In the end, the two leading opposition candidates, Castro and Nasralla, agreed to run under a unified LIBRE ticket with Castro as the presidential candidate. The other major candidates were mayor of Tegucigalpa and National Party standard-bearer, Nasry Asfura, and former Vice President Yani Rosenthal of the Liberal Party.

A massive mobilization of opposition forces motivated by President Hernández's unpopularity and aggravated by the economic and social effects of the pandemic, led to a resounding victory for Castro. She won about 51 percent of the votes, compared to the National Party's 36 percent. The Liberal Party was relegated to third place with less than 10 percent. Turnout increased from 59 percent in 2017 to 68 percent in 2021.

[27] Wade, Christine J. 2017. "Is a Resolution to Honduras' Turbulent Elections Anywhere in Sight?" *World Politics Review*, December 8, 2017. https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/23787/is-a-resolution-to-honduras-turbulent-elections-anywhere-in-sight.

Economic Decline

Economic performance has an important effect on democratic attitudes and public opinion in Honduras. Satisfaction with democracy, support for democracy, and presidential approval ratings deteriorated as the Honduran economy experienced difficulties following the 2009 coup.

During the Zelaya administration (2006–2009), the government expanded social programs, including low interest loans, school fee abolition, and free school lunches; increased public sector wages; and reduced oil import costs through an agreement with Petrocaribe.[28] This combination of policies marked a departure from the neoliberal economic policies that had persisted since the 1990s, and contributed to a 6.6 percent increase in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2006 and a 6.3 percent increase in 2007. Perhaps more importantly, Zelaya's policies contributed to a reduction in poverty rates, which remained below 60 percent between 2006 and 2009.

The Lobo and Hernández administrations sought a return to neoliberal economic policies by offering new incentives for foreign investment and reducing public expenditures. The 2011 "Honduras Is Open for Business" conference was aimed at attracting new investment in the post-coup economy. Subsequent legislation offered new protections to investors and new tax benefits. At the same time, the government began to pursue privatization in the education and health sectors, which resulted in widespread student protests in 2015. The police responded with excessive force, killing four students, some as young as 13. Government expenditures on health and education declined from 21 percent in 2013 to 17 percent in 2017. Protesters again took to the streets between April and June 2019, when trade unions mobilized in response to reforms enacted by Congress that would lead to mass privatization and layoffs in the health and education sectors. Thus, economic policy proposals have generated multiple, prolonged protests. We note that these protests have coincided with growing political tolerance.

Poverty increased after the 2008 global recession and 2009 coup, despite continued GDP growth. In 2009, 58.8 percent of households lived in poverty; by 2012 that number had increased to 66.5 percent.[29] Poverty trended downward for the remainder of the decade, dipping below 60 percent in 2019. However, in 2020, following COVID-19 and two back-to-back hurricanes, poverty increased to over 70 percent of the population. Honduran migration, which jumped sharply from 2018 to 2019 after growing steadily since 2012, increased significantly from 2020 to 2021 before declining somewhat in 2022. The economic impact of COVID-19 exacerbated poverty, which, along with violence and corruption, was a major driver of migration.[30] Results from the 2021 AmericasBarometer show that intentions to migrate reached their highest rate in the series, with more than half of respondents (54 percent) saying they intended to live or work abroad. More than half (55 percent) identified lack of economic

[28] Ruhl, Mark. 2018. "Honduras: Democracy in Peril." In Harvey F. Kline, Christine J. Wade, and Howard Wiarda (Eds.). *Latin American Politics and Development*, 431. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

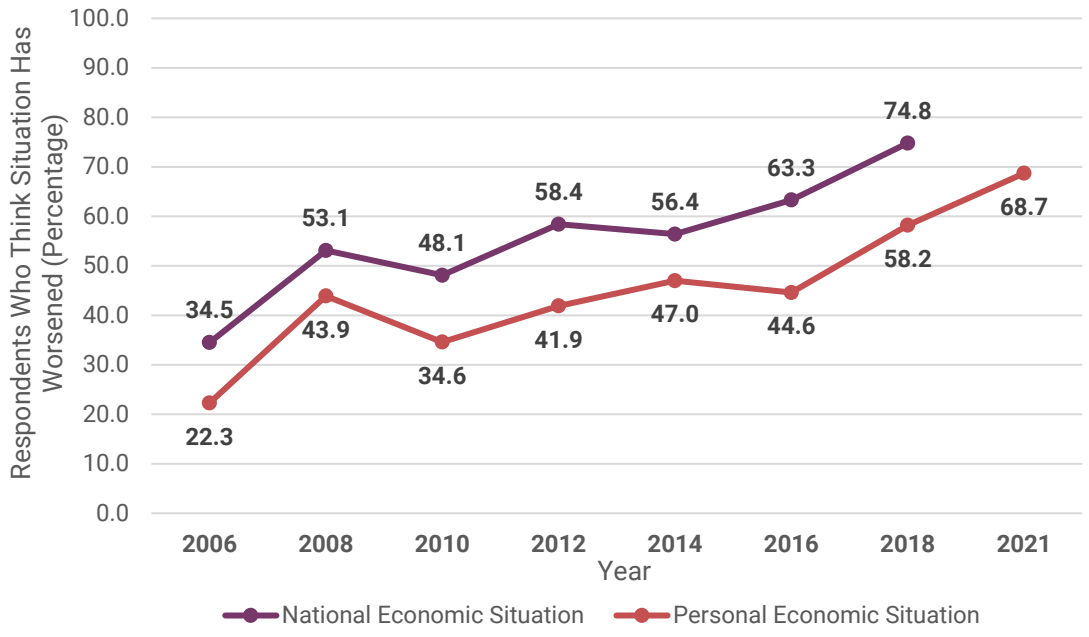
[29] Montalvo, Daniel. "Resultados preliminares 2019: Barómetro de las Américas en Honduras." Nashville, TN: LAPOP, Vanderbilt University. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/honduras/AB2018-19_Honduras_RRR_W_09.25.19.pdf.

[30] Bermeo, Sarah and David Leblang. "Climate, violence, and Honduran migration to the United States." Brookings Institute. April 1, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/04/01/climate-violence-and-honduran-migration-to-the-united-states/

opportunities as the most important reason for intending to migrate. Food insecurity, specifically, is a key motivating factor.[31]

The AmericasBarometer data demonstrated this economic deterioration. The number of Hondurans who said their family income did not cover basic needs increased significantly from 53.1 percent in 2012 to 71 percent in 2014 and 75.1 percent in 2018. By 2018, economic concerns had replaced security as the most serious problem confronting the country, according to respondents. When asked whether the national economy has worsened, improved, or remained the same, Hondurans were increasingly likely to say that it had gotten worse.[32] Figure 4 depicts the steady, significant increase in negative appraisals of the national economy. In 2010, 48.1 percent said it had gotten worse; in 2018, 74.8 percent said the same, and this question was not asked in 2021. Figure 4 also shows that Hondurans increasingly felt that their personal economic situation had deteriorated in the past year, rising from 34.6 percent in 2010 to 58.2 percent in 2018 and 68.7 percent in 2021.[33]

Figure 4: Percentage of Hondurans Who Think the Economic Situation Has Worsened in the Previous 12 Months



Source: AmericasBarometer.

[31] Pérez, Orlando J., Georgina Pizzolitto y Luke Plutowski. (Eds.) 2021. Cultura política de la democracia en Honduras y en las Américas 2021: Tomándole el pulso a la democracia. Nashville, TN: LAPOP. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/honduras/AB2021HND-Country-Report-Spanish-Final-220615.pdf.

[32] The survey question used is SOCT2. "Do you believe the current economic situation in the country is improved, the same or worse than 12 months ago?" The graph shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that the national economy was worse than 12 months ago.

[33] The survey question used is IDIO2. "Do you believe that your own personal economic situation is better, same, or worse than 12 months ago?" The graph shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that their personal economic situation was worse than 12 months ago.

Figure A4.3 in Annex 4 illustrates the connection between satisfaction with democracy and evaluations of the national economy. It shows that satisfaction with how democracy is working declines significantly as the evaluation of the national economy deteriorates. This pattern holds for every year surveyed. For example, in 2018, there was a 40-point difference in democratic satisfaction between respondents who perceive an improving economy and those who believe the economy is deteriorating. In analyses not reported here, we found that personal economic situation evaluations were similarly related to satisfaction with democracy. We found similar results for support for democracy and presidential job approval. In brief, the survey evidence shows a clear connection between economic perceptions and support for the political regime.

Conclusion

This study described the evolution of democratic attitudes in Honduras drawing on NORC's cluster analysis. We found that institutionalists make up the largest cluster in all years, but that their share has been declining since 2014. There are two additional signs of eroding democratic attitudes. First, presidentialists appeared as a distinct cluster starting in 2016. Second, the combination of the non-institutionalists clusters—military interventionists, presidentialists, and authoritarians—was similar in size to the Institutionalists cluster for the first time in 2018. Additional analysis of public opinion data shows declines in satisfaction with democracy and support for democracy, along with increases in citizens' willingness to support presidential power grabs.

We also traced the linkages between recent political, economic, and social developments and public opinion. We showed that President Hernández effectively erased checks and balances on state power by exerting growing influence over the judiciary and electoral institutions and appointing intimate allies as high-level state officials. The net effect has been to heighten polarization, increase public distrust of political elites, and fuel recurrent tides of unrest. Lacking trust in elections and with few other means to influence policy, demonstrations became vehicles for expressing anti-government sentiments. Unsurprisingly, satisfaction with democracy plummeted while support for executive aggrandizement and political tolerance increased.

This helps us understand the November 2021 election results, when opposition leader Xiomara Castro won the presidency. The decline in Hernández's approval rating reflected the economic, political, and social deterioration of the last four years of his presidency and the aftermath of COVID-19. Years of organizing and growing political acumen resulted in a profound shift in the 2021 elections, which clearly represented a referendum on the corruption and mismanagement of the Hernández years. The 2021 elections present Honduras with a real opportunity to shed the legacy of authoritarianism, militarism, violence, and corruption that have plagued the country for decades. Whether the new president can change the structural deficiencies that have historically characterized Honduran political culture remains to be seen.

References

Amnesty International. 2017. “No Safe Place: LGBTI Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Hondurans Seeking Asylum in Mexico.” November 27, 2017. https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/no-safe-place-lgbti-salvadorans-guatemalans-and-hondurans-seeking-asylum-in-mexico/.

Bermeo, Sarah and David Leblang. “Climate, violence, and Honduran migration to the United States.” Brookings Institute. April 1, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/04/01/climate-violence-and-honduran-migration-to-the-united-states/.

Blanco, Luisa, and Isabel Ruiz. 2013. “The Impact of Crime and Insecurity on Trust in Democracy and Institutions.” American Economic Review 103 (3): 284–88.

Campello, Ricardo, Davoud Moulavi, and Jörg Sander. 2013. “Density-based clustering based on hierarchical density estimates.” Pacific-Asia conference on knowledge discovery and data mining. Springer. p. 160-172.

Castorena, Oscar, and Sarah L. Graves. 2019. “Support for Electoral Democracy.” In Zechmeister, Elizabeth J., and Noam Lupu (Eds.). Pulse of Democracy. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

Centro de Derechos de Mujeres. 2019. “Datos y reflexiones: Violencias contra las mujeres 2017-2018.” Observatorio de derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, April 2019. http://derechosdelamujer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Boletin_v3.pdf.

Ceobanu, Alin M., Charles H. Wood, and Ludmila Ribeiro. 2011. “Crime Victimization and Public Support for Democracy: Evidence from Latin America.” International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 23 (1): 56–78.

Chayes, Sarah. 2007. When Corruption Is the Operating System: The Case of Honduras. Carnegie Endowment for Peace.

Comision de Verdad y la Reconciliacion 2011. “Hallazgos y recomendaciones para que los hechos no se repitan. Informe de la Comision de la Verdad y la Reconciliacion.” https://www.oas.org/es/sap/docs/DSDME/2011/CVR/Honduras%20-%20Informe%20CVR%20-%20RECOMENDACIONES.pdf.

Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office, Southern District of New York. 2017. “Former Honduran Cabinet Official Pleads Guilty In Manhattan Federal Court To Money Laundering Charge.” Press Release, August 29, 2017. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-honduran-cabinet-official-pleads-guilty-manhattan-federal-court-money-laundering.

Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office, Southern District of New York. 2020. “Former Chief Of Honduran National Police Charged with Drug Trafficking and Weapons Offenses.” Press Release, April 30, 2020. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-chief-honduran-national-police-charged-drug-trafficking-and-weapons-offenses.

Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. 2021. "Honduran National Convicted on Drug Trafficking and Weapons Charges." Press Release, March 22, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/honduran-national-convicted-drug-trafficking-and-weapons-charges.

Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. 2021. "Former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernández Sentenced to Life in Prison and Ordered to Forfeit $138.5 Million for Distributing 185 Tons of Cocaine and Related Firearms and False Statements Offenses." Press Release, March 30, 2021. https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-honduran-congressman-tony-hern-ndez-sentenced-life-prison-and-ordered-forfeit.

Diaz, Diana. 2019. "'Another Teacher Has Left': Schools, Often Safe Havens for Teenagers and Teachers, Are under Threat in Honduras." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, July 12, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2019/7/5d28db684/another-teacher-has-left.html.

Drug Enforcement Administration. 2018. "DEA Announces Arrest of Former Honduran Congressman and Brother of Current President of Honduras for Drug Trafficking and Weapons Charges." Press Release, November 26, 2018. https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2018/11/26/dea-announces-arrest-former-honduran-congressman-and-brother-current.

Evans, Claire Q. 2020. "Spotlight on Corruption Victimization in Latin America and the Caribbean." LAPOP Spotlight Series, December 2020. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/spotlights/Spotlight-Evans-CORVIC-eng_final.pdf.

Fernandez, Kenneth E. and Michele Kuenzi. 2010. "Crime and Support for Democracy in Africa and Latin America." Political Studies 58 (3): 450-71.

Flannery, Nathaniel P. 2021. "Will Honduras Win the Fight Against Corruption?" Forbes, July 5, 2021. https://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanielparishflannery/2021/07/05/can-honduras-fight-corruption/?sh=9c8aa9b679bf.

Frank, Dana. 2013. "A High-Stakes Election in Honduras." The Nation, November 6, 2013.

Global Witness. 2017. "Honduras: The Deadliest Country in the World for Environmental Activism." January 2017. https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/honduras-deadliest-country-world-environmental-activism/.

InSight Crime. n.d. "Honduras Profile." Accessed Aug. 1, 2022. https://insightcrime.org/honduras-organized-crime-news/honduras/.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. 2009. "Preliminary Observations on the IACHR Visit to Honduras." August 21, 2009. http://www.cidh.org/Comunicados/English/2009/60-09eng.Preliminary.Observations.htm.

Lupu, Noam, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2021. "The Pulse of Democracy in 2021." In Lupu, Noam, Mariana Rodríguez, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister (Eds.). Pulse of Democracy. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

Montalvo, Daniel. “Resultados preliminares 2019: Barómetro de las Américas en Honduras.” Nashville, TN: LAPOP, Vanderbilt University. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/honduras/AB2018-19_Honduras_RRR_W_09.25.19.pdf.

Palmer, Emily, and Kirk Semple. 2021. “A Damning Portrait of Presidential Corruption, But Hondurans Sound Resigned.” New York Times, March 23, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/23/world/americas/honduras-juan-orlando-hernandez-drug-trial.html.

Panting, César Andrés. 2014. “Reducir la delincuencia, el mayor logro del presidente de Honduras.” La Prensa, May 27, 2014. https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/reducir-la-delincuencia-el-mayor-logro-del-presidente-de-honduras-HBLP713224.

Pérez, Orlando J. 2004. “Democratic Legitimacy and Public Insecurity: Crime and Democracy in El Salvador and Guatemala.” Political Science Quarterly, 118 (4): 627–44.

Pérez, Orlando J. 2011. “Crime, Insecurity and Erosion of Democratic Values in Latin America.” Revista Latinoamericana de Opinión Pública, 1 (1): 61-86.

Pérez, Orlando J., Georgina Pizzolitto y Luke Plutowski. (Eds.) 2021. Cultura política de la democracia en Honduras y en las Américas 2021: Tomándole el pulso a la democracia. Nashville, TN: LAPOP. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/honduras/AB2021HND-Country-Report-Spanish-Final-220615.pdf.

Reporteros de Investigación. n.d. “Su vehículo, el lugar más peligroso para periodistas.” https://reporterosdeinvestigacion.com/2020/06/02/su-vehiculo-y-su-casa-los-lugares-mas-mortales-para-periodistas-hondurenos/.

Ruhl, Mark. 2018. “Honduras: Democracy in Peril.” In Harvey F. Kline, Christine J. Wade, and Howard Wiarda (Eds.). Latin American Politics and Development, 431. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Seligson, Mitchell A. 2003. “Public Support for Due Process Rights: The Case of Guatemala.” Journal of the Southwest, 45 (4): 557–94.

Transgender Europe e.V. 2015. “Trans Murder Monitoring 2015.” May 8, 2015. https://tgeu.org/tmm-idahot-update-2015/.

Wade, Christine. 2015. “By Design Honduras’ Anti-Graft Mission Won’t Actually Fight Corruption.” World Politics Review, November 4, 2015. https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/17124/by-design-honduras-anti-graft-mission-won-t-actually-fight-corruption.

Wade, Christine J. 2017. “Is a Resolution to Honduras’ Turbulent Elections Anywhere in Sight?” World Politics Review, December 8, 2017. https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/23787/is-a-resolution-to-honduras-turbulent-elections-anywhere-in-sight.

Welsh, Ericka. 2017. “The Path of Most Resistance: Resisting Gang Recruitment as a Political Opinion in Central America’s Join-or-Die Gang Culture.” Pepperdine Law Review, 44: 1083. https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/plr/vol44/iss5/4.

Annex 1. Methodology

NORC employed cluster analysis to classify citizens into clusters with distinct attitudinal profiles. Cluster analysis entails analyzing a collection of heterogeneous objects and grouping them in smaller, homogenous clusters according to two or more measurable attributes. The aim is to maximize similarity *within* each cluster while maximizing dissimilarity *between* clusters.

There are several variants of cluster analysis. NORC used Hierarchical Density-Based Clustering (HDBScan) as developed by Campello, Moulavi, and Sander.[34] HDBScan identifies groups of observations that are closely packed together in space and leaves outliers unclassified. HDBScan only requires one parameter—the minimum size of a cluster—and chooses the number of clusters endogenously through a hierarchical process that retains the most stable clusters. We employed Mahalanobis distances as the criteria for computing the distance metric used by HDBScan.

By using cluster analysis, we let survey respondents speak for themselves instead of making assumptions in advance about how to group them. We did not forcibly group observations that did not belong together by predefining acceptable combinations of attitudes or setting arbitrary cut-offs for scores to classify respondents into a given cluster. However, our analysis has one main limitation: the variables used are not continuous and do not share a common scale. Ideally, we would conduct cluster analysis with continuous variables that can be standardized to ensure comparability.

The democratic attitudes used for this analysis include support for democracy, opposition to military coups, opposition to executive aggrandizement, tolerance of protest and regime critics, and support for democratic inclusion. Table A1. 1 presents the full wording of the AmericasBarometer questions we used to measure each democratic attitude. We use these questions to create attitudinal scores, ranging from zero (least democratic attitude) to one (most democratic attitude). When more than one question is available for a given democratic attitude, we calculate the attitudinal score by averaging responses.

Table A1.1: AmericasBarometer Items and Underlying Democratic Attitudes

DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES[1]	QUESTIONS
Support for democracy	ING4. Changing the subject again, democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? *Response options: Seven-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disagree to (7) Strongly agree.*

[34] Campello, Ricardo, Davoud Moulavi, and Jörg Sander. 2013. "Density-based clustering based on hierarchical density estimates." In: *Pacific-Asia conference on knowledge discovery and data mining* (pp. 160-172). Springer.

DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES[1]	QUESTIONS
Opposition to military coups[2]	Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the military of this country to take power by a coup d'état (military coup). In your opinion would a military coup be justified… JC10. When there is a lot of crime *Response options: (1) A military take-over of the state would be justified; (2) A military takeover of the state would not be justified.*
	Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the military of this country to take power by a coup d'état (military coup). In your opinion would a military coup be justified… JC13. When there is a lot of corruption *Response options: (1) A military take-over of the state would be justified; (2) A military takeover of the state would not be justified.*
Opposition to executive aggrandizement[2]	JC15A. Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Legislative Assembly and govern without the Legislative Assembly? *Response options: (1) Yes, it is justified; (2) No, it is not justified.*
	JC16A. Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to dissolve the Supreme Court and govern without the Supreme Court? *Response options: (1) Yes, it is justified; (2) No, it is not justified.*
Tolerance of protest and regime critics	D1. There are people who only say bad things about the form of government of Honduras, not just the current government but the system of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people's right to vote? Please read me the number from the scale. *Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.*
	D2. How strongly do you approve or disapprove that such people be allowed to conduct peaceful demonstrations in order to express their views? Please read me the number. *Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.*
	D3. Still thinking of those who only say bad things about the form of government of Honduras, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to run for public office? *Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.*

DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES[1]	QUESTIONS
	D4. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people appearing on television to make speeches? *Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.*
Support for democratic inclusion	D5. And now, changing the topic and thinking of homosexuals, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of homosexuals being permitted to run for public office? *Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.*

[1] In the 2021 round of the AmericasBarometer, only questions ING4, JC13, and JC15A were included in the survey. Items JC13 and JC15A were administered in a split sample so that 25 percent of respondents were only asked question JC13, and another 26 percent of respondents were only asked question JC15A, while 50 percent of respondents were not asked either of these questions. We decided to use JC15A for cluster analysis as we believe that executive aggrandizement currently represents a greater threat to democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean than military coups.

[2] For the 2012-2019 waves, opposition to military coups and opposition to executive aggrandizement included up to two questions each (JC10 and JC13, and JC15A and JC16A, respectively). In 2012, respondents were asked all four questions. In 2014, respondents were asked JC10, JC13, and JC15A (JC16A was missing). In 2016, respondents were asked either JC10 or JC13 (split sample) and JC15A (JC16A was missing). In 2018, respondents were asked either JC10 and JC15A or JC13 and JC16A. We verified that responses to JC10 and JC13 had similar distributions. To ensure consistency across years, we artificially created a split sample by randomly taking the value of one of the two questions for each respondent in 2012 and 2014.

Annex 2. 2012–2021 Cluster Analysis Results

The bar graphs below present the main results of the cluster analysis. There is one bar graph per wave studied: 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2021. The bars indicate the average scores for the attitudes for each cluster. All attitude scores range from zero (least democratic) to one (most democratic). The percentages next to each cluster label in the legend indicate the share of respondents that was classified into the cluster. Thus, the graphs allow for comparing the clusters in terms of their democratic attitudes and their relative size.

Figure A2.1: 2012 Cluster Results

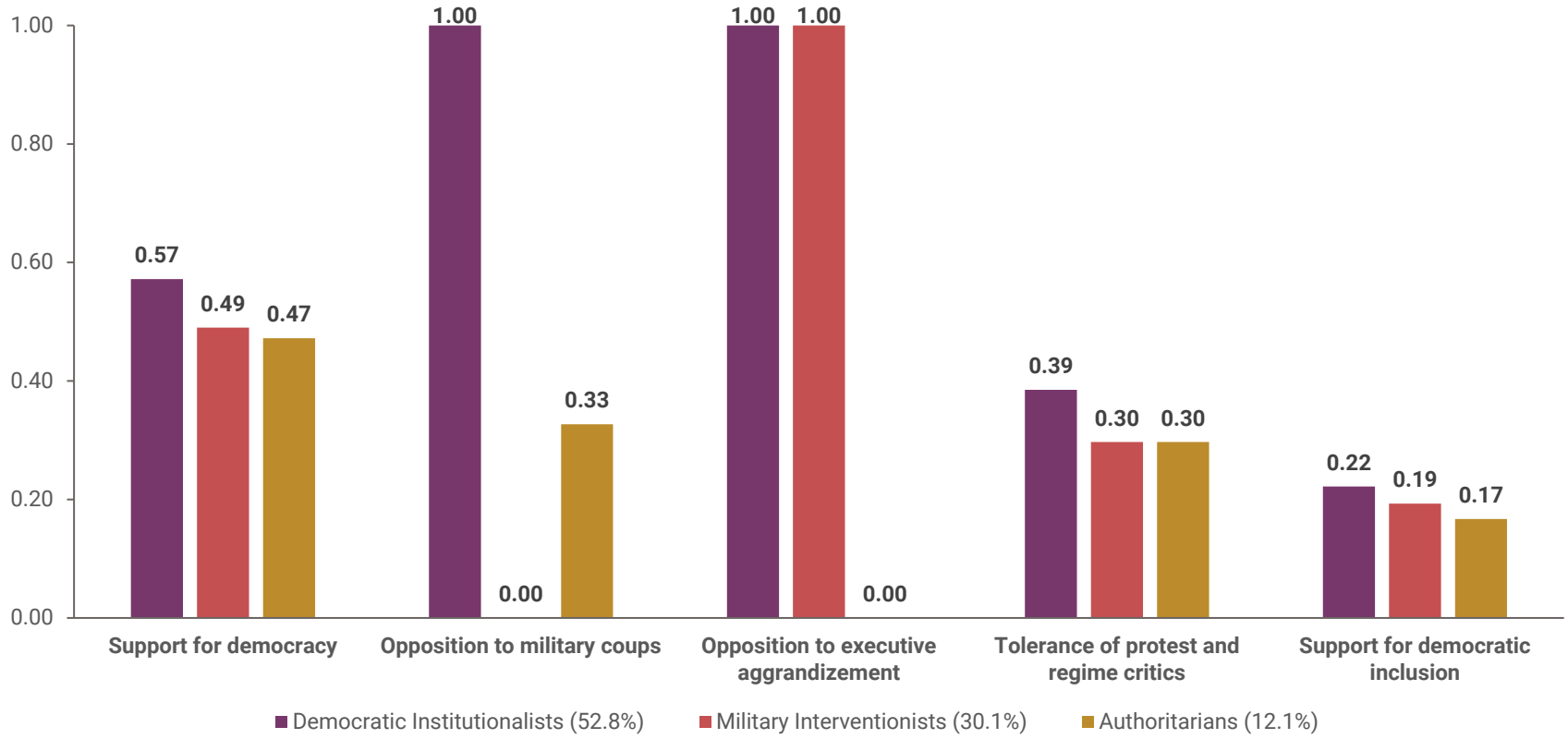


Figure A2.2: 2014 Cluster Results

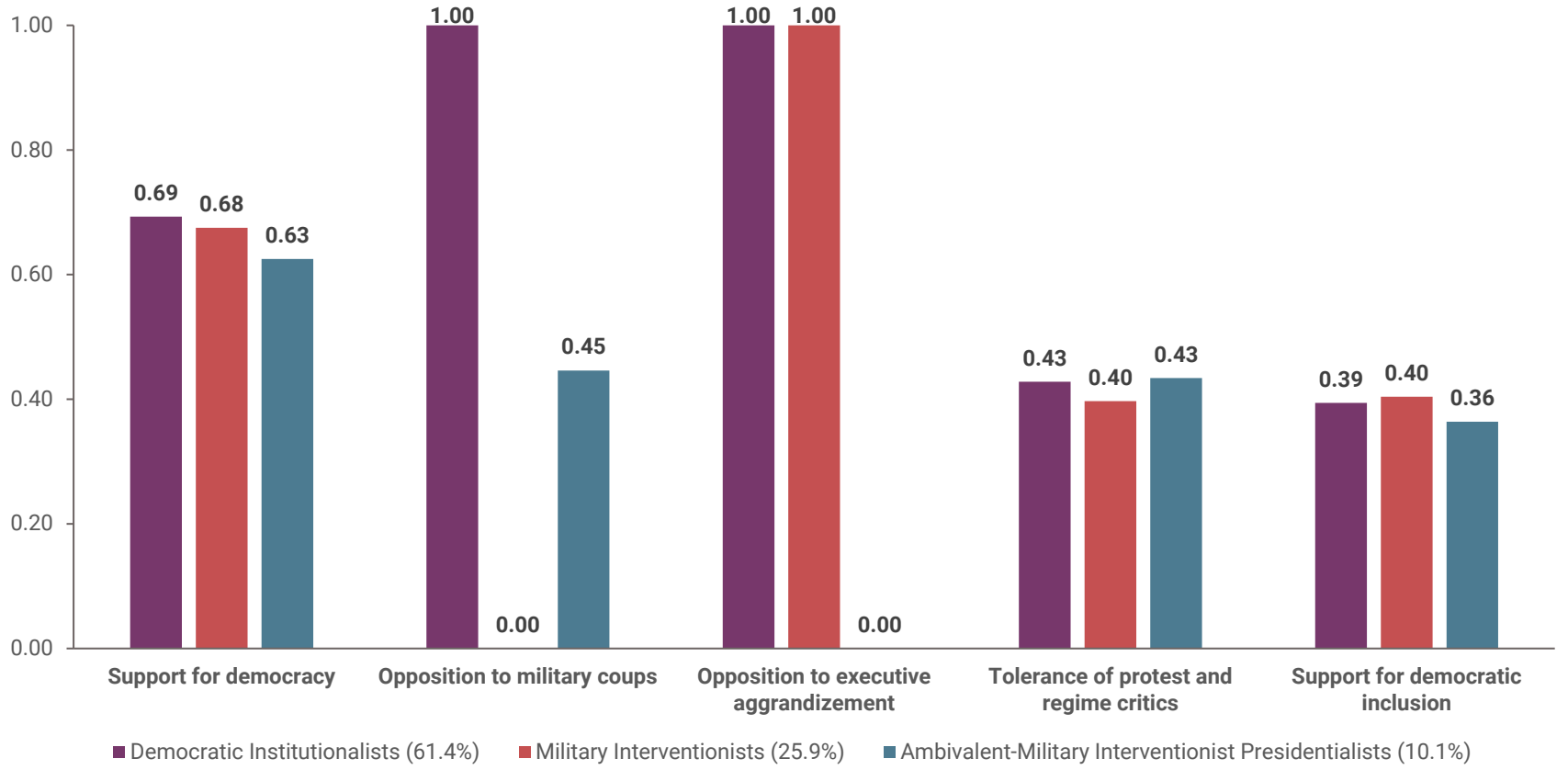


Figure A2.3: 2016 Cluster Results

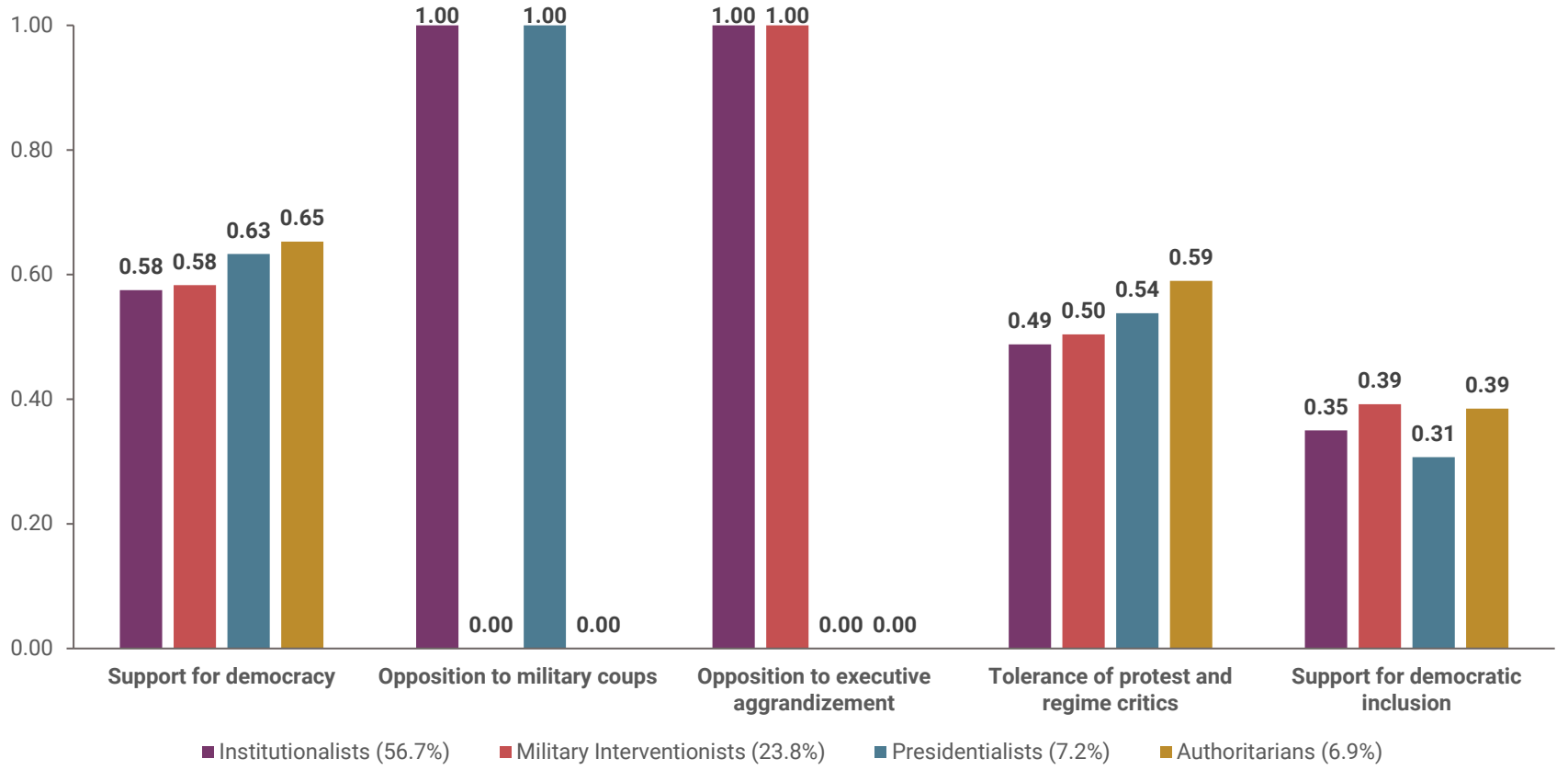


Figure A2.4: 2018 Cluster Results

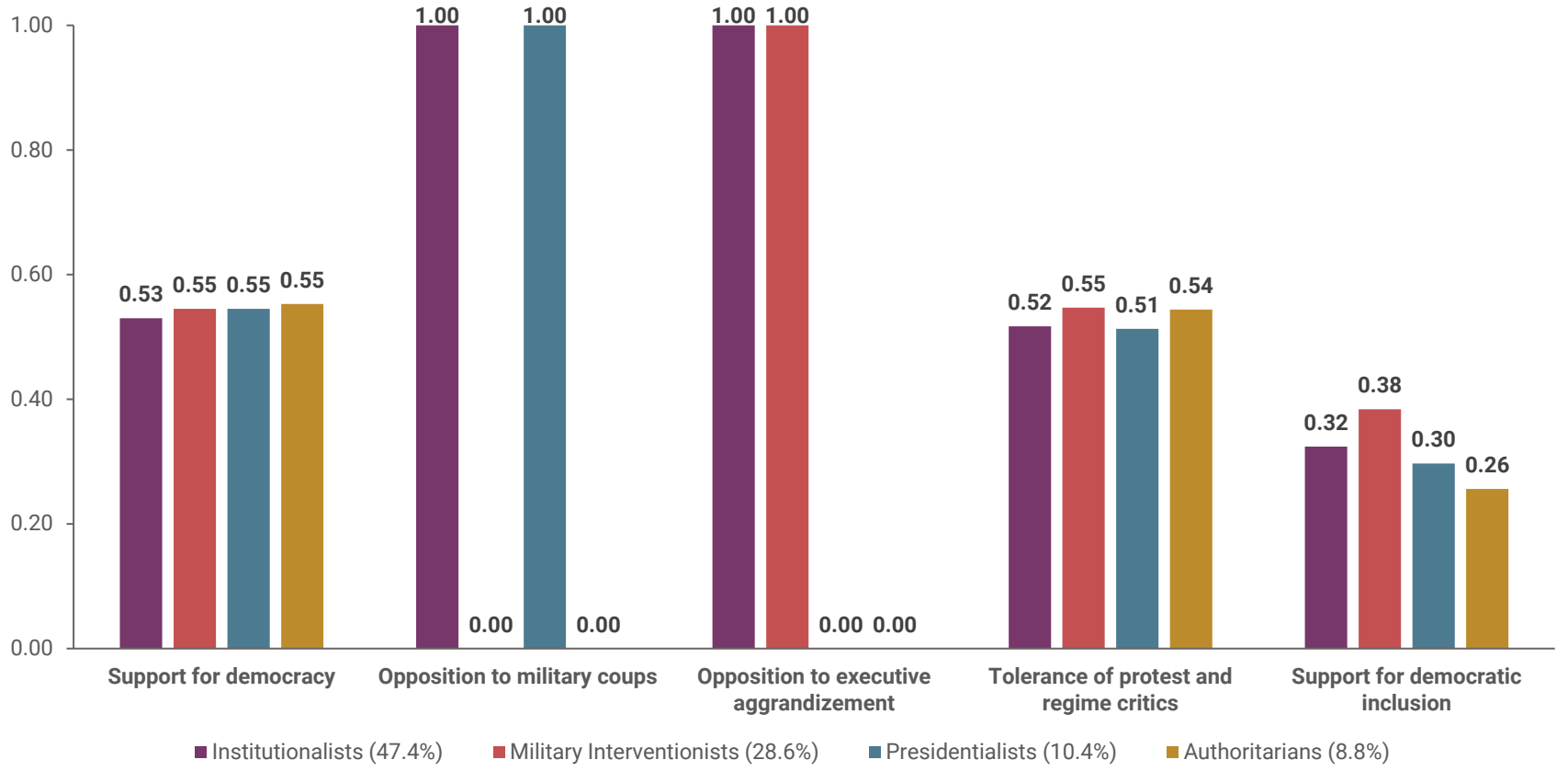
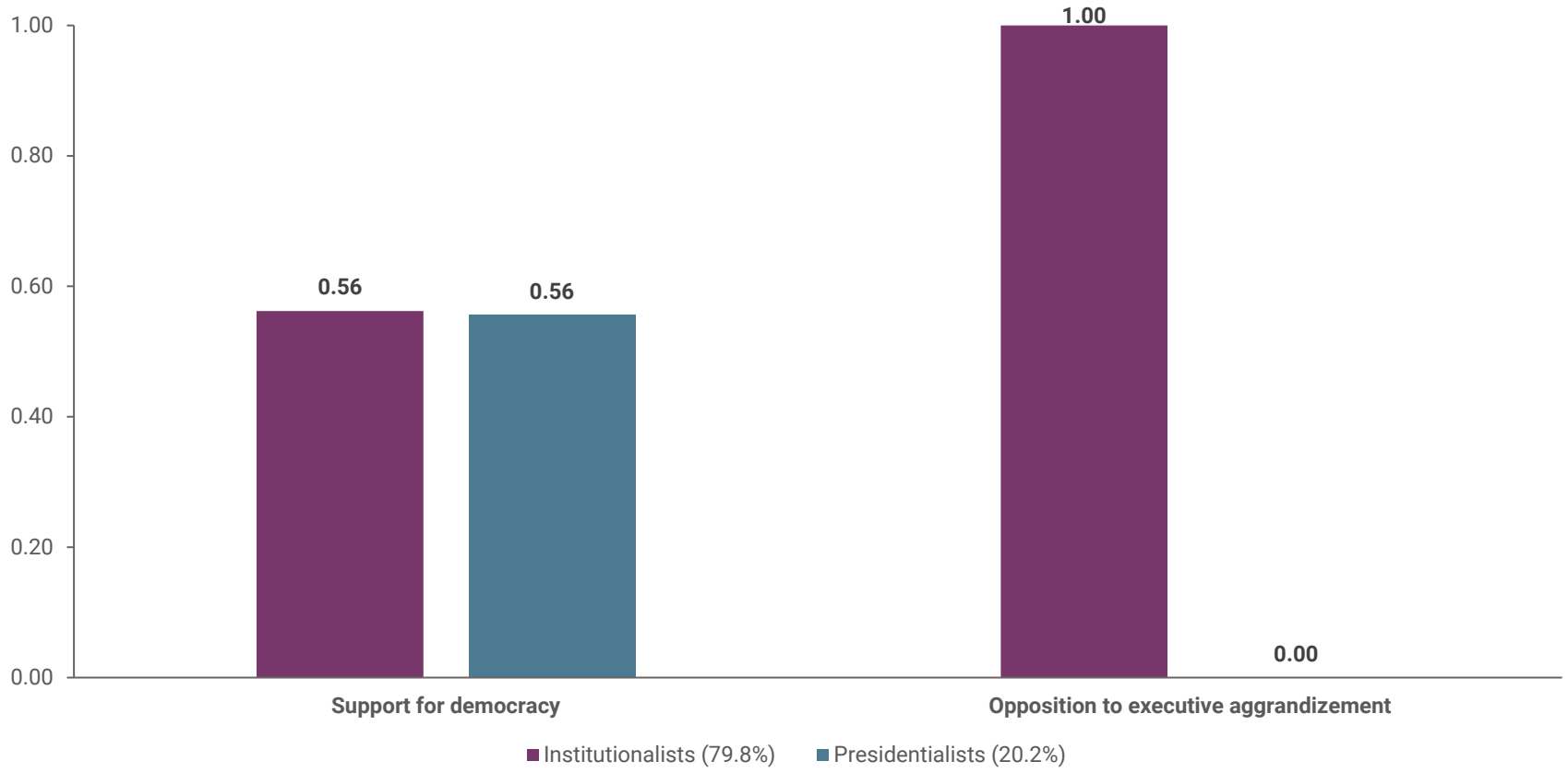


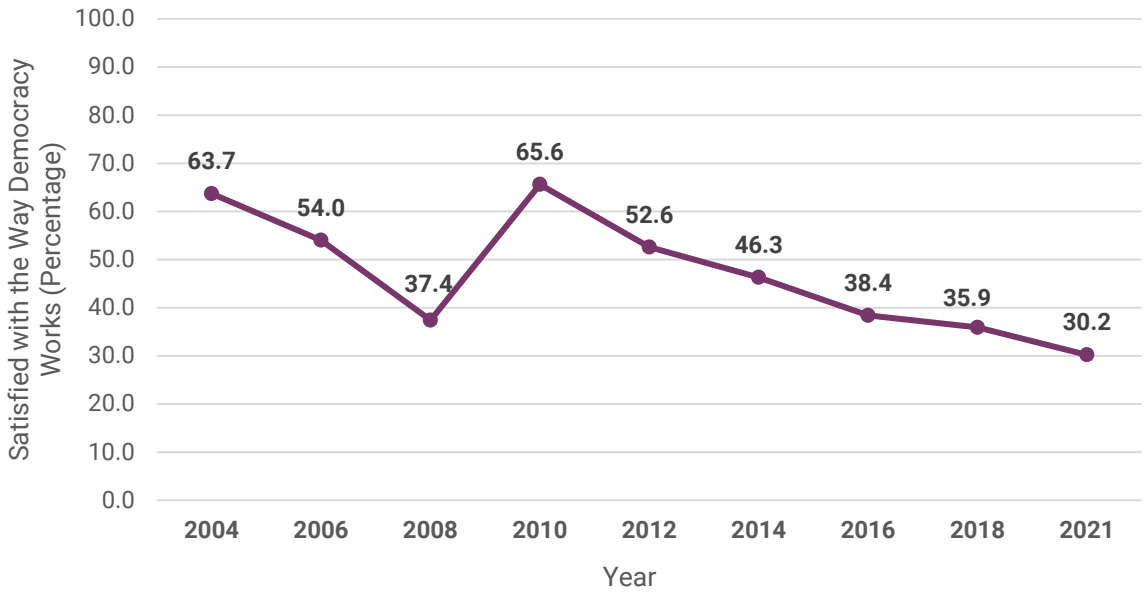
Figure A2.5: 2021 Cluster Results



Annex 3. Additional Analysis of Public Opinion Trends

Figure A3.1 shows the evolution of satisfaction with democracy, i.e., the percentage of respondents who said they were satisfied with the way democracy works in Honduras.[35] Prior to the 2009 coup, satisfaction with democracy had been declining significantly from a high of 63.7 percent in 2004, when the series began. By 2008, satisfaction was down to 37.4 percent. Ironically, these data indicate a substantial increase in satisfaction with democracy post-coup, which was potentially reflective of opposition to President Zelaya's policies and a widespread perception that his ouster would open possibilities for democratization. However, those hopes did not materialize. Satisfaction with democracy consequently experienced a steady decline and reached its lowest level in 2021.

Figure A3.1: Satisfaction with Democracy

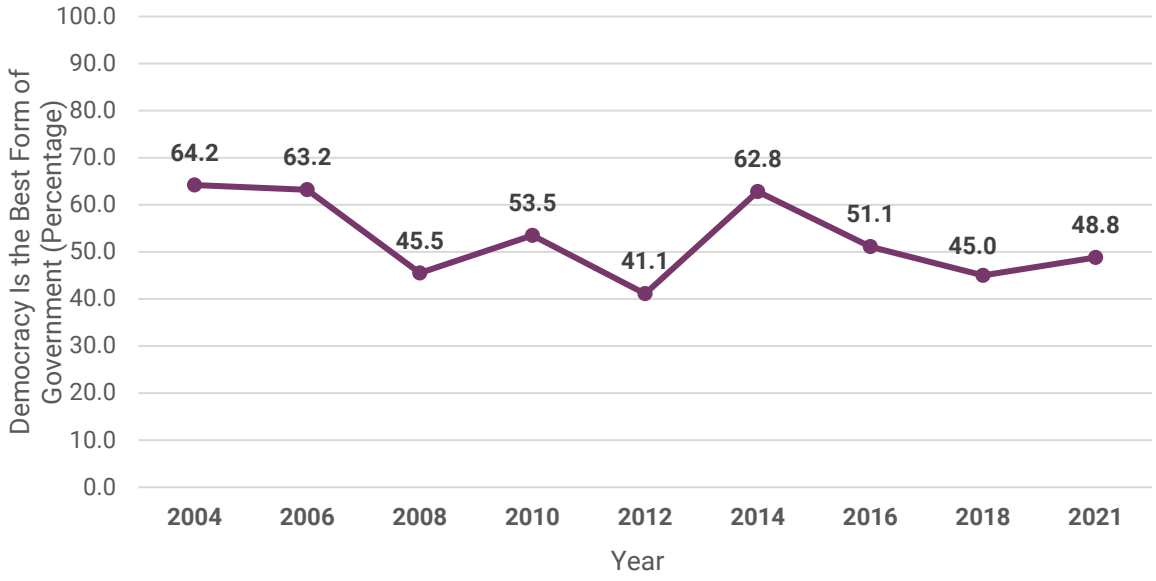


Source: AmericasBarometer.

[35] The question used is PN4: "In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Honduras?" We graph the percentage who said they were very satisfied or satisfied.

Figure A3.2 shows the evolution of support for democracy, i.e., the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement that "democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government."[36] Support for democracy has fluctuated from a high of 64.2 percent in 2004 to a low of 41.1 percent in 2012. Just prior to the coup in 2008, there was a significant decline to 45.5 percent, followed by a rebound to 53.5 percent in 2010. Support for democracy saw a dramatic increase between 2012 and 2014. However, support has had a declining tendency since then. By 2021, less than one-half of Hondurans agreed with the proposition that, despite its problems, democracy was the best form of government, which was well below the regional average of 61 percent.

Figure A3.2: Support for Democracy

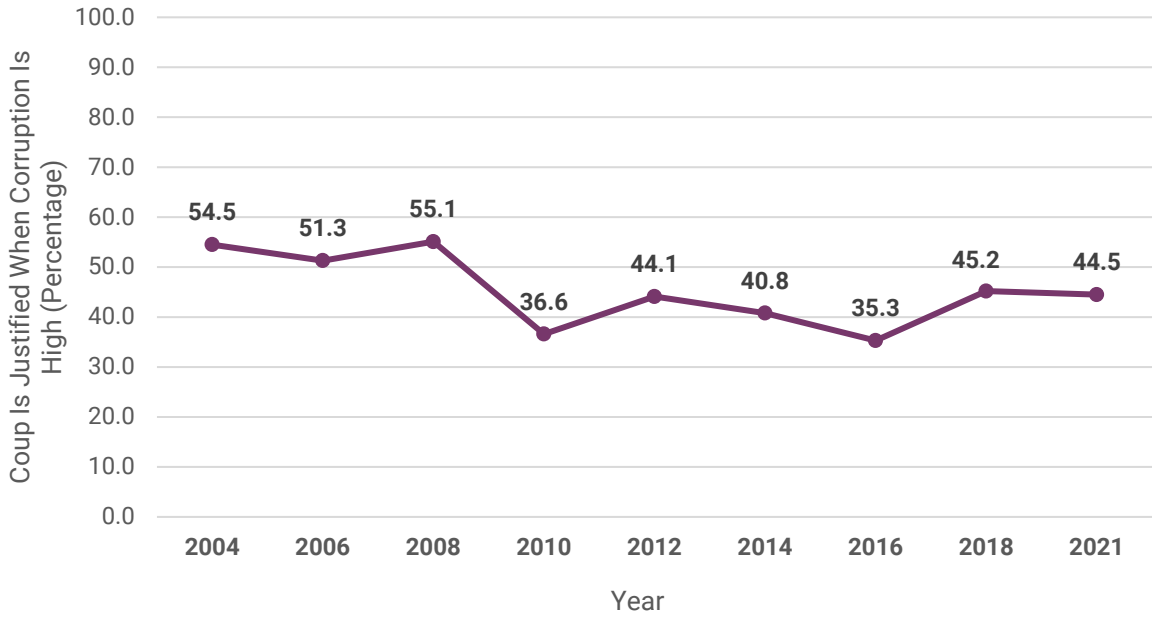


Source: AmericasBarometer.

[36] The question used is ING4: "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?" Responses were given on a one to seven point scale where one is "Strongly Disagree" and seven is "Strongly Agree." Figure A3.2 shows respondents who answered five, six, or seven.

Figure A3.3 shows the evolution of support for military coups when corruption is high, i.e., the percentage of respondents who believe that it would be "justified for the military of this country to take power by a military coup […] when there is a lot of corruption."[37] Support for military coups when corruption is high reached a high of 55.1 percent in 2008, prior to the 2009 coup. Support then declined to 36.6 percent in 2010, presumably due to the actual coup. The percentage of Hondurans who support a military coup under conditions of high corruption has remained relatively stable around 40 percent since 2010.

Figure A3.3: Coup Is Justified When Corruption Levels Are High

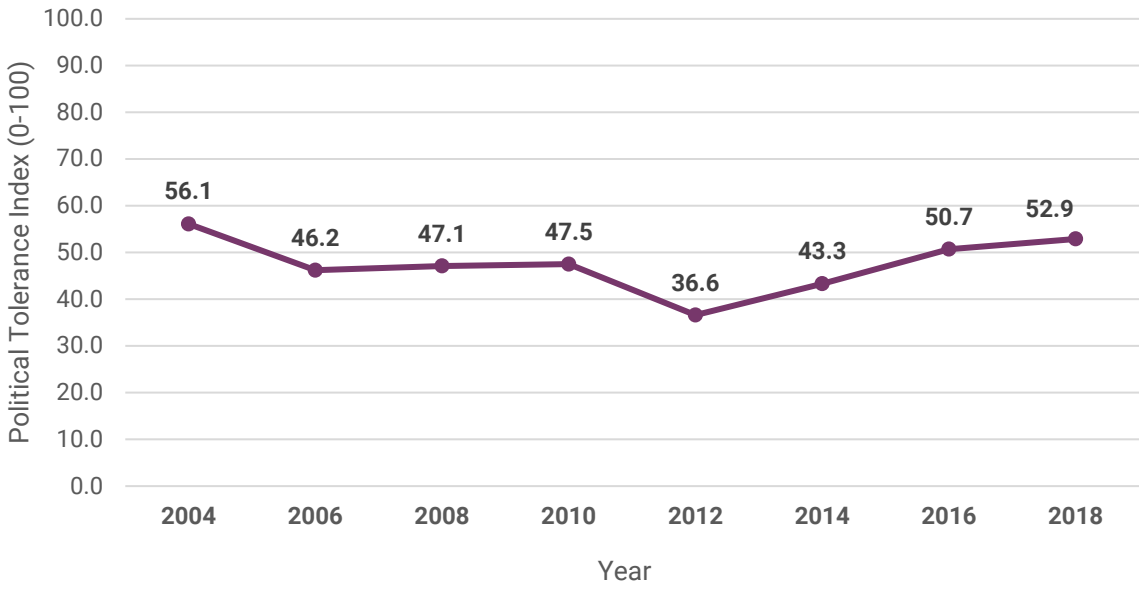


Source: AmericasBarometer.

[37] The question used is JC13: "Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the military of this country to take power by a coup d'état (military coup). In your opinion, would a military coup be justified…When there is a lot of corruption." Response options were "Yes" and "No."

Figure A3.4 shows the evolution of a political tolerance index used by LAPOP with AmericasBarometer data. The index combines several questions that ask respondents to state whether they approve of regime critics, i.e., "people who only say bad things about the form of government of Honduras, not just the current government but the system of government;" enjoying the right to vote, to peacefully demonstration, to run for office, and to appear on television to make speeches. Values range from 0 to 100, with 100 being the highest possible level of tolerance.[38] Responses to these questions often reflect the current political context, especially dissatisfaction with and opposition to the incumbent. Political tolerance increased significantly between 2012 and 2018 as opposition to President Hernández increased.

Figure A3.4: Political Tolerance

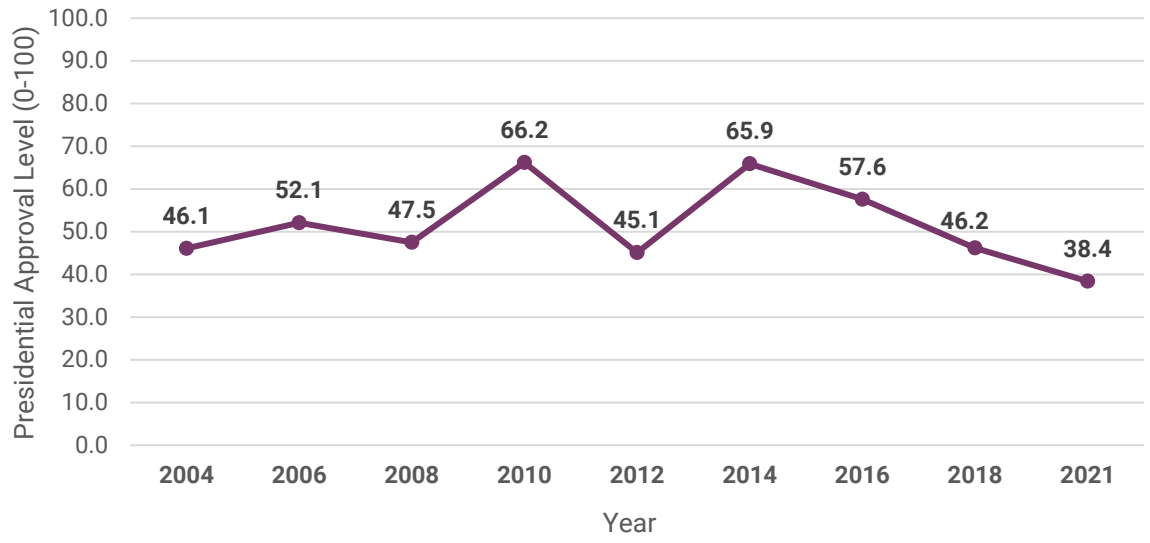


Source: AmericasBarometer.

[38] The questions used were: D1. "There are people who only say bad things about the form of government of Honduras, not just the current government but the system of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people's right to vote? Please read me the number from the scale;" D2. "How strongly do you approve or disapprove that such people be allowed to conduct peaceful demonstrations in order to express their views? Please read me the number;" D3. "Still thinking of those who only say bad things about the form of government of Honduras, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to run for public office?"; and D4. "How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people appearing on television to make speeches?" Responses were recorded using a ten-point scale ranging from one, "strongly disapprove," to ten, "strongly approve." As with standard LAPOP indices, each average response to these questions is calculated and recoded so that the resulting variable goes from 0 to 100, where 0 represents very low tolerance and 100 represents very high tolerance. Cronbach's alpha for an additive scale of the four variables is very high (0.84) and principal component analysis indicates that they measure a single dimension.

Figure A3.5 shows the evolution of presidential approval, which was gauged by a question that asked respondents to assess how good of a job President Hernández is doing. Values range from 0 to 100, with 100 being the highest possible level of approval.[39] The decline in presidential approval since Hernández's inauguration in 2014 was precipitous; he lost nearly half of his public support amid growing dissatisfaction with corruption, violence, authoritarianism, and economic growth. However, it is also noteworthy that, despite these issues, Hernández's popularity did not decline past 38.4 percent.

Figure A3.5: Presidential Job Approval

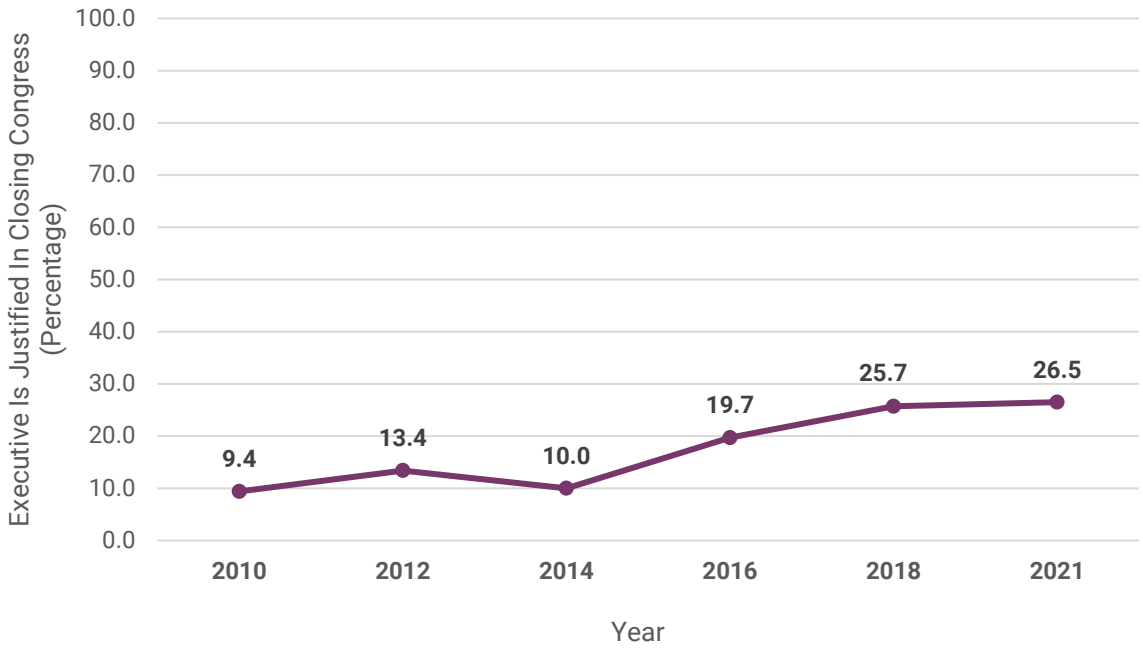


Source: AmericasBarometer.

[39] The question used is M1. "Speaking in general of the current government, how would you rate the job performance of President [NAME OF CURRENT PRESIDENT]?" The question was measured on a scale were one is "very good," two is "good," three is "neither good nor bad," four is "bad," and five is "very bad." Figure A3.5 shows responses recoded into a 0 to 100 scale.

Figure A3.6 shows the evolution of support for the president closing congress in times of difficulty, i.e., the percentage of respondents who believe that "when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close congress and govern without the legislature."[40] Support for the president closing congress has grown significantly since 2014; in 2014 only 10.0 percent of Honduras justified closing congress, while in 2021, 26.5 percent did. Increased polarization around Hernández's might explain the increase, driven by his supporters, and the decrease in presidential approval.

Figure A3.6: President Justified in Closing Congress

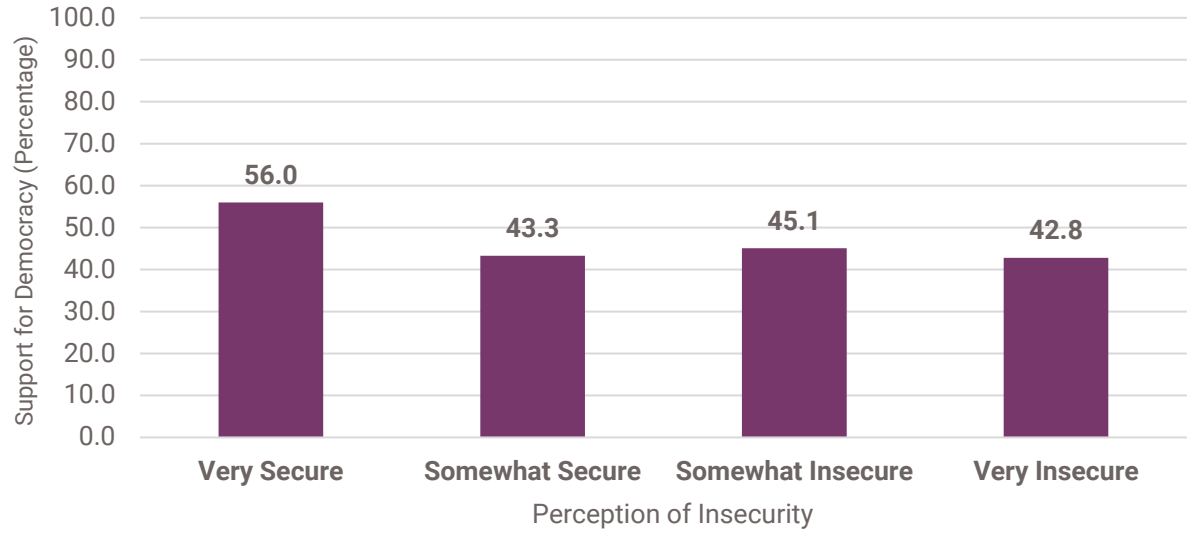


Source: AmericasBarometer.

[40] The question used is JC15A. "Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Congress/Parliament and govern without Congress/Parliament?" Response options were "Yes" and "No."

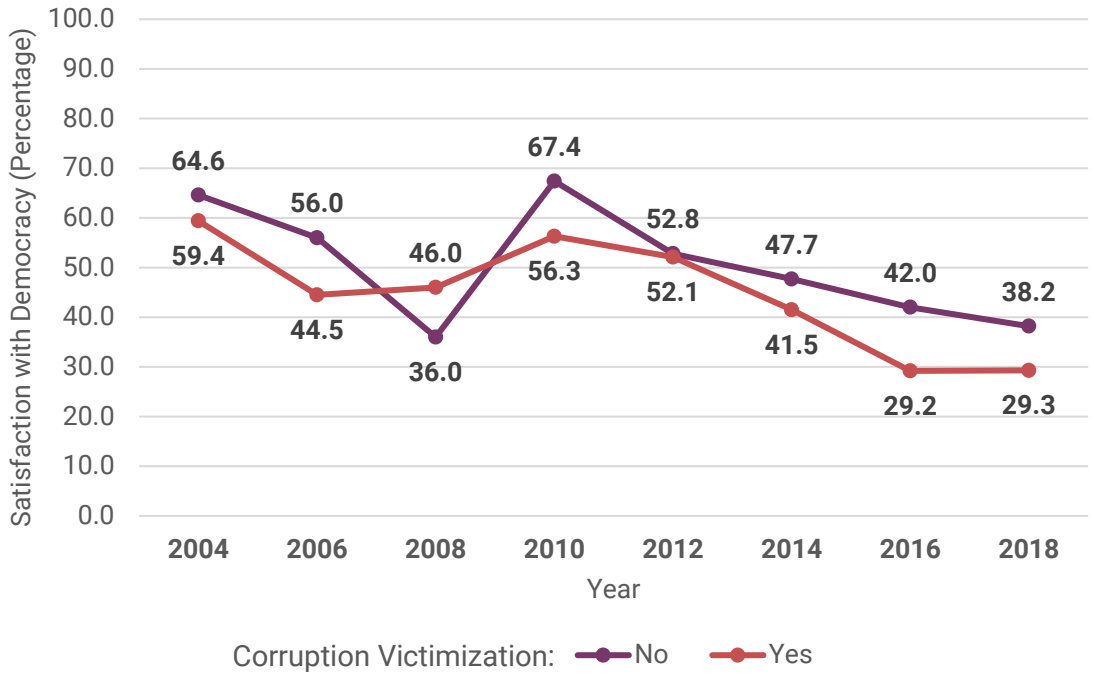
Annex 4. Supplemental Figures

Figure A4.1: Support for Democracy and Perception of Insecurity, 2021



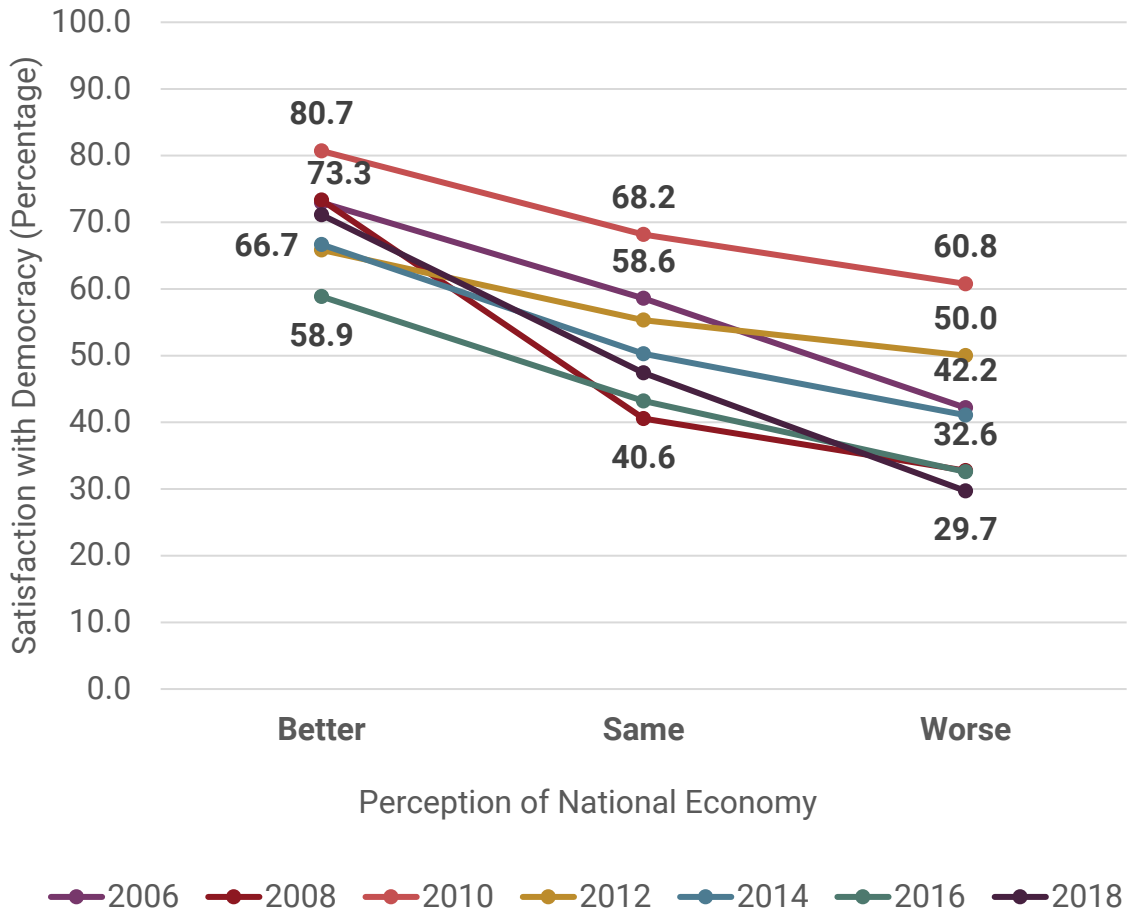
Source: AmericasBarometer.

Figure A4.2: Satisfaction with Democracy and Corruption Victimization, 2004–2018



Source: AmericasBarometer.

Figure A4.3: Satisfaction with Democracy by Perception of National Economy, 2006–2018.



Source: AmericasBarometer.