



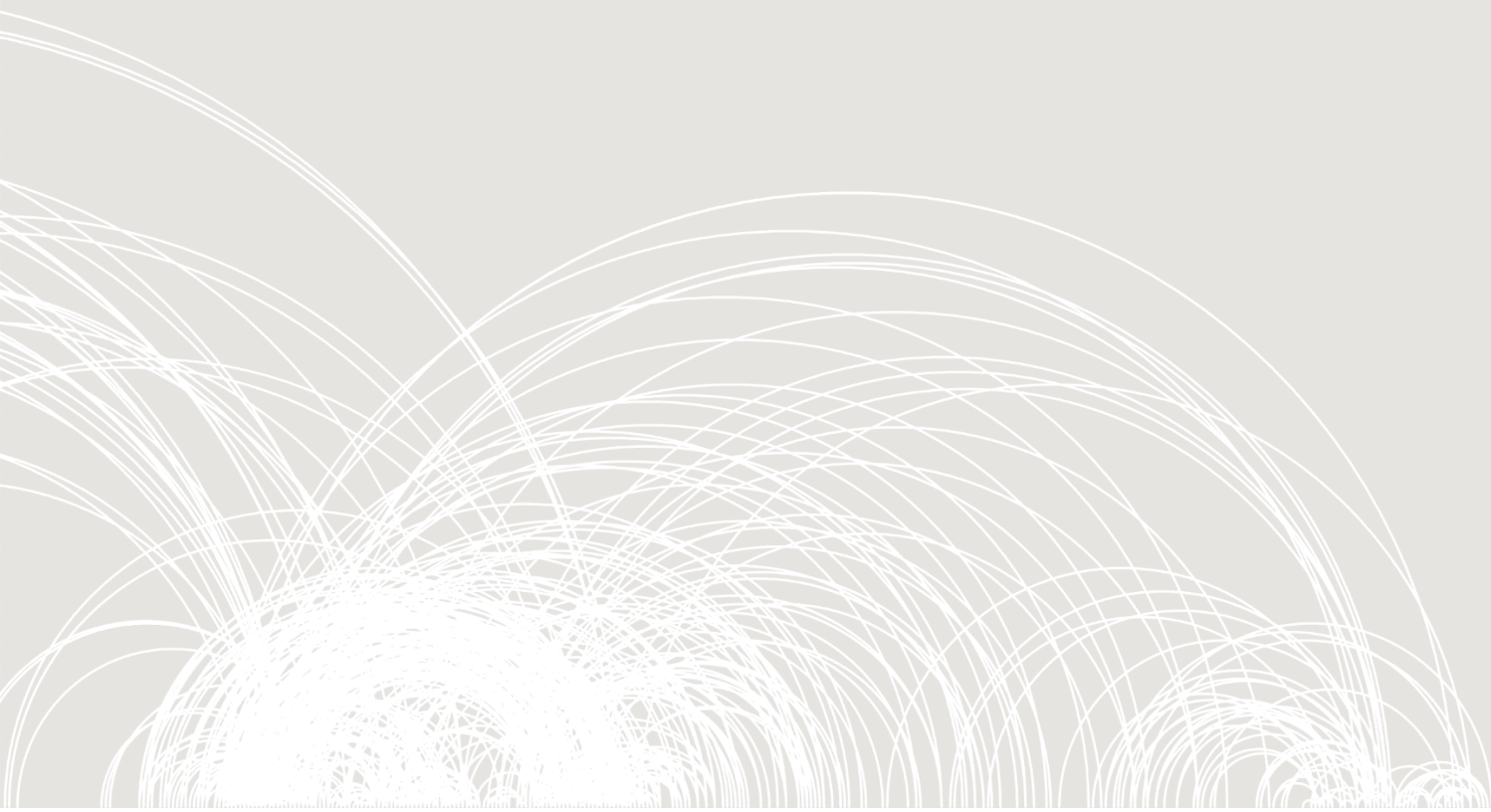
**FINAL REPORT**

APRIL 2023

# **Analysis of Trends in Democratic Attitudes: Ecuador Report**

**Presented by:**

NORC at the University of Chicago



---

# Analysis of Trends in Democratic Attitudes: Ecuador Report

---

**Author:**

Paolo Moncagatta, Associate Professor of Political Science, Universidad San Francisco de Quito

**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

Presentation .....	1
Introduction .....	3
Patterns of Change In Democratic Attitudes .....	4
Support for Democracy .....	4
Satisfaction with Ecuadorian Democracy .....	5
Cluster Analysis of Democratic Attitudes .....	7
Factors That Have Contributed to Changes In Attitudes Toward Democracy .....	11
Ecuadorian Democracy and Social Movements In the Post-Correa Era .....	14
Conclusion .....	16
References.....	17
Annex 1. Methodology .....	21
Annex 2. 2012–2021 Cluster Results .....	24

# List of Exhibits

<b>Figure 1.</b> Support for Democracy Over Time.....	5
<b>Figure 2.</b> Satisfaction with Democracy Over Time.....	6
<b>Figure 3.</b> Satisfaction with Democracy and Executive Approval Over Time.....	7
<b>Figure 4.</b> Evolution of Cluster Families in Ecuador, 2012–2019 .....	9
<b>Figure A1.</b> 2012 Cluster Results.....	25
<b>Figure A2.</b> 2014 Cluster Results.....	26
<b>Figure A3.</b> 2016 Cluster Results.....	27
<b>Figure A4.</b> 2019 Cluster Results.....	28
<b>Figure A5.</b> 2021 Cluster Results.....	29

---

# List of Tables

**Table A1.1.** AmericasBarometer Items and Underlying Democratic Attitudes..... 21

# Acronyms

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDBScan	Hierarchical Density-Based Clustering
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
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 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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?

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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

---

AmericasBarometer<sup>3</sup> (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.<sup>4</sup>

This report presents the analysis for Ecuador. It was authored by Paolo Moncagatta (Associate Professor of Political Science, Universidad San Francisco de Quito). 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.

---

<sup>3</sup> The AmericasBarometer by the LAPOP Lab, [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop).

<sup>4</sup> 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

Ecuador's transition to democracy in 1979 inaugurated the third wave of democratization in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1980s, democracy in Ecuador appeared to be functional, with a relatively structured party system and regular elections. However, over the last three decades Ecuador's democracy has become increasingly unstable.<sup>6</sup> Starting with Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, three successively-elected presidents were not able to finish out their terms, which began a gradual delegitimization of traditional political parties and actors.<sup>7</sup> This eroded public confidence in political parties, the National Assembly, and the national government.<sup>8</sup>

When Rafael Correa came to power in 2007, the Ecuadorian political system gained stability. President Correa has been the longest-serving president since the 1979 transition. His mandate lasted ten years (2007–2017) and was characterized by high levels of popular support, reflected through numerous public opinion polls and in electoral results. Correa was on a “permanent campaign” and won three presidential elections as well as three national referendums.<sup>9</sup>

However, while Ecuador gained in political stability under Correa's leadership, it lost in institutionalization and in democratic culture. Correa's populist style and persistent use of popular referenda crushed the Ecuadorian party system and undermined key political institutions, including the National Assembly and the justice system. Correa and his allies created a hyper-presidential system that concentrated power in the executive branch.<sup>10</sup> Executive control over the legislature and constant interventions of the executive in the judicial branch severely undermined executive accountability.<sup>11</sup>

Given this context of populism, weak institutions, and unstable parties and institutions, how have Ecuadorians' attitudes toward democracy changed in the last decade? This report answers this question in three parts. First, we assess the patterns of change in support for democracy and other key attitudes toward the democratic system among the Ecuadorian population. We also analyze the results of NORC's cluster analysis, which identifies groups of citizens with distinct patterns of democratic attitudes in each of five waves of AmericasBarometer data. We then identify key events that contributed to changing attitudes

---

<sup>5</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

<sup>6</sup> Freidenberg, Flavia, and Simón Pachano. 2016. *El Sistema Político Ecuatoriano* Quito: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Ecuador.

<sup>7</sup> Basabe-Serrano, Santiago, Simón Pachano, and Andrés Mejía Acosta. 2010. “La Democracia Inconclusa: Derechos Fundamentales, Instituciones Políticas y Rendimientos Gubernamentales En Ecuador (1979-2008).” *Revista de Ciencia Política* 30, no. 1: 65–85.

<sup>8</sup> Seligson, Mitchell A., et al. 2006. *Democracy Audit: Ecuador 2006*. Quito, Ecuador: CEDATOS Editions.

<sup>9</sup> Conaghan, Catherine, and Carlos de la Torre. 2008. “The Permanent Campaign of Rafael Correa: Making Ecuador's Plebiscitary Presidency.” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 13, no. 3: 267–84.

<sup>10</sup> Meléndez, Carlos, and Paolo Moncagatta. 2017. “Ecuador: Una Década de Correísmo.” *Revista de Ciencia Política* 37, no. 2: 413–47.

<sup>11</sup> Pachano, Simón, and Sergio García. 2015. “Ecuador: Un Régimen Híbrido.” *Revista Latinoamericana de Política Comparada* 10: 123–48.

toward democracy in Ecuador. We finally examine the evolution of Ecuadorian democracy and social movements after Correa.

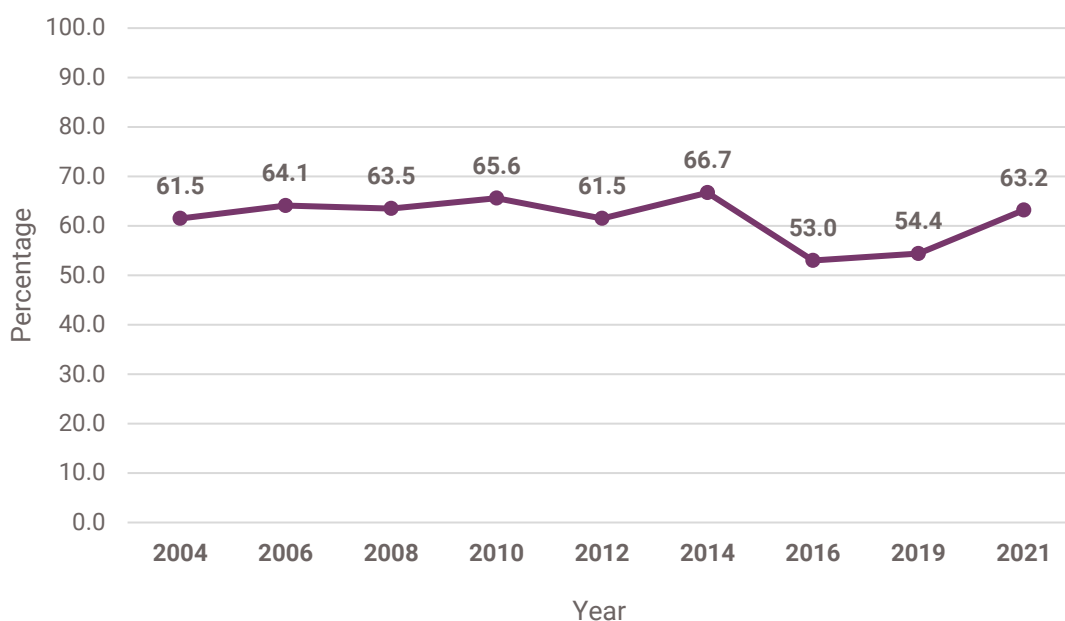
## Patterns of Change In Democratic Attitudes

How have Ecuadorians' democratic attitudes changed in the past ten years? In this section, we describe trends in some of the most frequently studied public attitudes toward democracy, including support for democratic rule and satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. Next, we present the results of cluster analysis that groups citizens in terms of their attitudes toward democracy and examine how these “cluster families” have changed over time in Ecuador.

### Support for Democracy

To examine public support for democracy in Ecuador, we draw on public opinion data from the AmericasBarometer surveys, which have been conducted in Ecuador since 2004. We first examine levels of public support for democracy, using the following survey question: “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 recorded on a one-to-seven-point scale where one is “strongly disagree” and seven is “strongly agree.” We consider respondents who gave responses ranging from five to seven to support democracy. Figure 1 illustrates levels of support for democracy in Ecuador from 2004–2021.



**Figure 1: Support for Democracy Over Time**

Source: AmericasBarometer.

Although this report focuses on the decade between 2012 and 2021, we plot the results starting in 2004 to place the trends in historical context. As Figure 1 shows, support for democracy in Ecuador was quite stable from 2004 to 2012: just over 60 percent of the public believed that democracy was the best form of government. Starting in 2014, however, two important shifts occur. First, in 2014, Ecuadorians showed their highest recorded level of support for democracy: two out of every three respondents expressed support for democracy. Second, an exceptional change happens between 2014 and 2016, when support for democracy plummeted almost 14 percentage points. This decline was not an exclusively Ecuadorian phenomenon; the AmericasBarometer data show a significant, region-wide decline in support for democracy in these years.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, Ecuador maintained its record-low levels of democratic support. However, the latest wave of the survey, conducted in 2021, showed a return to the higher levels of democratic support observed between 2004 and 2014. This was a departure from regional average, which remained low.

## Satisfaction with Ecuadorian Democracy

Next, we turn to public satisfaction with democracy, another important attitude in the study of democratic culture. To assess levels of satisfaction, we analyzed responses to the following survey question: “In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or

<sup>12</sup> Moncagatta, Paolo, and Camila Montero. 2018. “Actitudes Hacia La Democracia En Ecuador: Apoyo y Satisfacción Con La Democracia al Término Del Mandato de Rafael Correa.” In *Cultura Política de La Democracia En Ecuador y En Las Américas, 2016/17: Un Estudio Comparado Sobre Democracia y Gobernabilidad*, edited by Juan Carlos Donoso, et al., 59–80. Nashville, TN: LAPO.

very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Ecuador?” In Figure 2, we plot the percentage of respondents who have expressed they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the functioning of democracy in each year.

**Figure 2: Satisfaction with Democracy Over Time**



Source: AmericasBarometer.

The figure shows striking volatility in Ecuadorians’ satisfaction with the way democracy works domestically. Between 2014 and 2019, there was a 30-percentage point drop in satisfaction, followed by an increase of almost 20 percentage points from 2019-2021. This volatility is not entirely unexpected: unlike support for democracy in the abstract, satisfaction with democracy is subject to the ups and downs of everyday political events.<sup>13</sup>

Political scientists have amassed evidence showing that party preferences significantly affect levels of satisfaction with democracy.<sup>14</sup> In particular, this literature shows that “individuals who belong to the political majority are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works than those in the minority”<sup>15</sup> As we show below, a variation of this so-called “winner effect” seems to be present in Ecuador, where there is a very strong correlation between executive approval and satisfaction with democracy at the aggregate level.<sup>16</sup> In Figure 3, the black line plots the percentage of Ecuadorians who are satisfied with democracy, while the blue line shows executive approval in the country. To measure executive approval, the AmericasBarometer

<sup>13</sup> Easton, David. 1975. “A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support.” *British Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 4: 435–57.

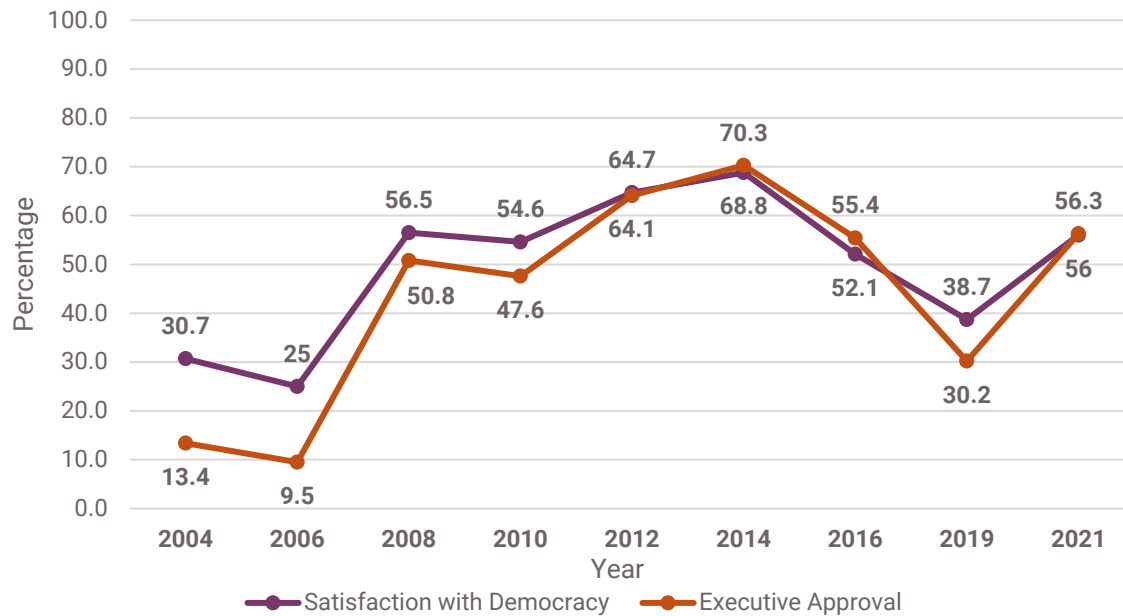
<sup>14</sup> Anderson, Christopher, et al. 2005. *Losers’ Consent: Elections and Democratic Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Anderson, Christopher, and Yuliya Tverdova. 2001. “Winners, Losers, and Attitudes about Government in Contemporary Democracies.” *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 4: 321–38; Singh, Shane, Ekrem Karakoç, and André Blais. 2012. “Differentiating Winners: How Elections Affect Satisfaction with Democracy.” *Electoral Studies* 31, no. 1: 201–11; Singh, Shane, Ignacio Lago, and André Blais. 2011. “Winning and Competitiveness as Determinants of Political Support.” *Social Science Quarterly* 92, no. 3: 695–709.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, Christopher, and Christine Guillory. 1997. “Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems.” *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1: 66.

<sup>16</sup> Meléndez, Carlos, and Paolo Moncagatta. 2017. “Ecuador: Una Década de Correísmo.” *Revista de Ciencia Política* 37, no. 2: 413–47.

survey asks: “Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President [NAME CURRENT PRESIDENT]?” Respondents were recorded in a scale ranging from one to five, where one is “very good” and five is “very bad.” We consider “very good” and “good” responses as approving of the executive.

**Figure 3: Satisfaction with Democracy and Executive Approval Over Time**



Source: AmericasBarometer.

Satisfaction with democracy and executive approval in Ecuador track each other closely during this period; the correlation between them is 0.98. When executive approval increases, so too does satisfaction with democracy, and vice versa. This very strong relationship suggests that executive approval is likely a key factor driving Ecuadorians’ satisfaction with democracy.

## Cluster Analysis of Democratic Attitudes

Figure 1 suggests that a majority of Ecuador’s population supports democracy in the abstract. However, a robust liberal democracy also requires public support for foundational democratic principles and institutions. How have these attitudes changed over time?

In this section, we examine the results of NORC’s cluster analysis, which classified Ecuadorians into groups or clusters with specific patterns of democratic attitudes using data from the AmericasBarometer. The aim of this analysis is 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 2019). Only three attitudes were available in 2021: support for democracy, opposition to military coups, and opposition to executive aggrandizement. The 2021 cluster analysis results are therefore not directly comparable to those of prior waves. Annex 2 presents the main cluster analysis results for all waves.

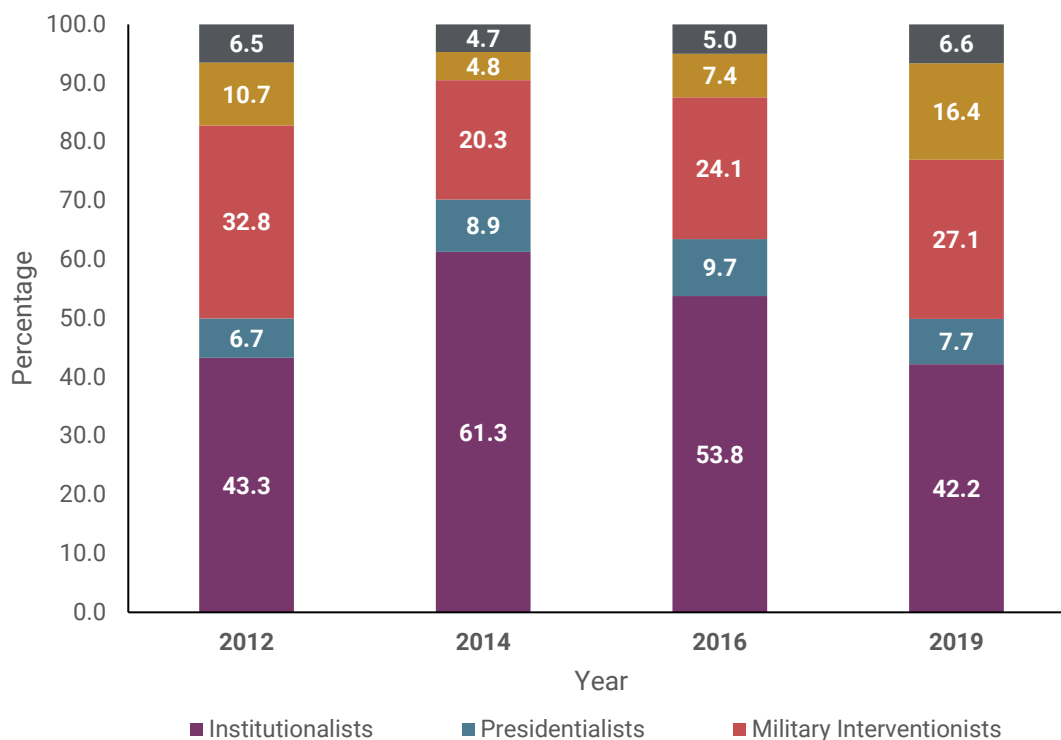
The cluster analysis identified four clusters in each wave. In all waves, a small share of respondents were not classified into any cluster. Unclustered individuals are dissimilar from each other and from those included in other clusters. To facilitate comparisons over survey waves, the resulting clusters can be grouped into four families that share a set of defining characteristics:

- *Institutionalist (including both institutionalists and democratic institutionalists)*: Individuals in this cluster family are characterized by full opposition to military coups and executive aggrandizement. These are the citizens who could be qualified as having the strongest democratic attitudes out of all.
- *Presidentialists*: Individuals in this cluster family exhibit full opposition to coups but less-than-full opposition to executive aggrandizement. While rejecting military intervention and supporting democracy as an abstract concept, these citizens could justify concentration of power in the executive.
- *Military Interventionists*: Individuals in this cluster family exhibit full opposition to executive aggrandizement but less-than-full opposition to coups. They reject concentration of power in the executive and support democracy as an abstract concept. However, these citizens could justify military intervention under certain circumstances.
- *Authoritarians*: Individuals in this cluster family are characterized by less-than-full opposition to both coups and executive aggrandizement. This group of citizens could be considered the least democratic out of all: they could justify the president closing down Congress and the Supreme Court and governing without them. They also could justify a military coup under certain circumstances.

Figure 4 shows the evolution of clusters in Ecuador from 2012 to 2019. In 2012, six years after Correa took power, the cluster analysis identifies four groups: the largest group was the institutionalists, who accounted for 43.3 percent of the public; the next-largest group was military interventionists, who accounted for nearly one in three Ecuadorians (32.8 percent);

authoritarians comprised 10.7 percent of the population; and presidentialists accounted for 6.5 percent. In 2012, 6.5 percent of the sample could not be placed into a cluster. This value is relatively stable over time, ranging from 4.7 percent (2014) to 6.6 percent (2019).

**Figure 4: Evolution of Cluster Families in Ecuador, 2012–2019**



In short, one year before Correa's third term in office began, the public was divided, with a narrow plurality of institutionalists representing the largest attitudinal cluster. However, military interventionists, presidentialists, and authoritarians together accounted for 50.2 percent of the population, signifying that one in two Ecuadorians was willing to justify anti-democratic actions at this time. While the results do not reveal the extent to which Correa's authoritarian presidency shaped public opinion, the distribution of clusters is an important point of comparison for later years.

Following Correa's second re-election in 2014, the distribution of attitudes shifted. As in 2012, institutionalists represented the largest group, accounting for 61.3 percent of the population. The share of authoritarians and military interventionists declined in 2014, to 20.3 and 4.8 percent of the population, respectively. While the share of individuals with anti-democratic profiles in the population declined during this period, one in four Ecuadorians still supported military interventions in democratic policies after Correa's re-election. The share of presidentialists increased slightly in 2014, to 8.9 percent of the population. In 2014, Ecuadorians also reported their highest levels of support for democracy in the abstract across the period under analysis.

Consistent with declining democratic support from 2014 to 2016, the 2016 cluster analysis showed evidence of democratic retrenchment. The percentage of institutionalists declined by 7.5 percentage points. While institutionalist still represented the plurality of the population, the share of authoritarians grew to 7.4 percent, and the share of military interventionists saw a four-percentage point increase. Presidentialists represented 9.7 percent of the population in 2016. These results suggest that the decline in Ecuadorians' support for democracy in 2016 (Figure 1) was not limited to an abstract measure. Rather, the decline in democratic support extended to a much broader range of attitudes, encompassing increased support for hypothetical coups. However, declines in these democratic attitudes occurred more slowly than the sharp decline in support for democracy in the abstract.

In 2019 and 2021, the share of institutionalists remained stable: they made up around 42 percent of Ecuadorians. The share of military interventionists increased, accounting for 27 percent of the population. The share of Authoritarians more than doubled in 2019, to 16.4 percent of the population. Other data from the AmericasBarometer surveys indicate that the percentage of Ecuadorians who would justify a coup when crime is high, increasing from 26 percent in 2014 to 49 percent in 2019 (there were no data for this variable in 2021). Similarly, the percentage of Ecuadorians who would justify a coup when corruption is high grew from 31 percent in 2014 to 40 percent in 2021.

NORC's cluster analysis also identified the variables that significantly distinguish each cluster from all others. The variables examined include gender, income, race, education, experience with violence and corruption, political efficacy, and political participation. All clusters are statistically significantly different from the others on a few of these variables, but there is no discernible pattern that holds across all waves. Moreover, most statistically significant differences are substantially small. This suggests that the demographic and other characteristics examined do not structure attitudes toward democracy in a meaningful way.

These limitations notwithstanding, we highlight some predictors of membership in different clusters. In 2019, authoritarians and military interventionists are significantly more likely to approve of the president's performance compared to other Ecuadorians. Unsurprisingly, presidentialists, who support actions that consolidate executive power by removing checks and balances, also expressed higher levels of presidential approval than other Ecuadorians. Institutionalists were more likely to be crime victims than other Ecuadorians, with about one in four reporting they were victimized by crime in the past 12 months in 2012 (26 percent), 2016 (28 percent), and 2019 (26 percent). We find no consistent cross-time trends in wealth or gender, nor do we find patterns in protest participation or beliefs that the government is representative. However, in 2016 and 2019, young adults (those aged 18–29) were disproportionately represented among military interventionists.

Altogether, the analysis of public opinion data suggests two main conclusions. First, fewer than half of Ecuadorians currently express consistent support for democratic principles; this share of the population declined by more than 20 percentage points from 2014 to 2019. Second, the apparent upswing in levels of democratic support from 2019 and 2021 illustrated in Figure 1 should be interpreted with caution: these results point to an important erosion in the democratic culture of Ecuadorians between 2014 and 2021. While democratic attitudes took longer to erode

than support for democracy in the abstract, these attitudinal foundations of democracy will likely take longer to rebuild than abstract support.

## Factors That Have Contributed to Changes In Attitudes Toward Democracy

What contextual factors have contributed to these changing patterns of support for democracy and other democratic attitudes? In this section, we suggest two potential explanations for changes in Ecuadorians' attitudes toward democracy. The first explanation links fluctuations in Ecuador's economic fortunes to fluctuating satisfaction with democracy and presidential turnover. Second, pervasive national and international corruption scandals in 2015 and 2016 likely affected the democratic culture of Ecuadorians.

The 2013 election occurred at the peak of President Correa's popularity. Under his leadership, Ecuador experienced an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 4.4 percent between 2007 and 2014. The growth was largely due to the increase in international commodity prices; this "economy boom" benefited several Latin American countries between 2003 and 2012.<sup>17</sup> Thanks to oil export revenues, Correa was able to carry out an unsustainable "growth in the public sector (relative to GDP) from less than 25 percent between 2002 and 2004 to a staggering 43 percent between 2012 and 2015."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, during this time, poverty, inequality, and unemployment all declined. The AmericasBarometer surveys show that more than 60 percent of Ecuadorians approved of Correa's performance in 2012 and more than 70 percent in 2014. Correa won the 2013 election in a landslide, obtaining more than 57 percent of the vote in the first round, a result not witnessed in Ecuador since the return to democracy in 1979.

Shortly after the 2013 election, support for and satisfaction with democracy in Ecuador reached their highest values over the entire AmericasBarometer time series. High levels of social spending contributed to citizens' well-being, and Correa was effective at claiming credit for economic success. Improvements in Ecuadorians' quality of life, and the clear attribution of these improvements to the incumbent leader, likely resulted in positive evaluations of the president and the democratic system, and even in increased support for democracy in the abstract.

The end of 2014 saw the end of the international growth-producing commodity boom. Following an initial economic contraction in 2014, the Ecuadorian government applied a temporary tax on imports to prevent the exit of dollars from the country and to encourage the consumption of

---

<sup>17</sup> de la Torre, Augusto, Simón Cueva, and María Alexandra Castellanos-Vásquez. "The Macroeconomics of the Commodities Boom in Ecuador: A Comparative Perspective." In *Assessing the Left Turn in Ecuador*, edited by Francisco Sánchez and Simón Pachano, 163–212. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>18</sup> Bayas-Eraza, Matías. "Understanding Ecuador's Growth Prospects in the Aftermath of the Citizens' Revolution." In *Assessing the Left Turn in Ecuador*, edited by Francisco Sánchez and Simón Pachano, 213–30. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

nationally produced goods. In 2015, Ecuador's growth continued to decline precipitously, reaching 0.4 percent, and creating the need for a fiscal adjustment. The legislature proposed increases in the inheritance and capital gains taxes to increase revenue. However, middle- and upper-class citizens opposed these measures, which gave rise to mass protests demanding the initiatives be shelved. In another hit to the oil-rich nation, the price of a barrel of oil fell from United States Dollar (USD) 79 to between USD 22 and USD 40 in 2015.<sup>19</sup> This global price decline further decreased government revenue, increased the national debt, and led to cuts in public investment. Lastly, in 2016, the worst earthquake Ecuador had experienced in decades destroyed vast areas in the Manabí province, an important contributor to the agriculture, fishing, and tourism industries. The Ecuadorian economy officially entered a recession in 2016, contracting by 2 percent.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the economic difficulties that started emerging in 2015, a series of corruption scandals broke in 2016 that affected several key members of Correa's cabinet. The international Panama Papers scandal broke in April, which revealed that high-ranking current and former officials of the Correa government, including the former prosecutor general and the former manager of the central bank, had offshore bank accounts and business dealings in Panama.<sup>21</sup> That same month, the former Minister of Electricity was arrested and accused of receiving a USD 1 million bribe from the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht.

In May, the General Manager of the public petroleum company Petroecuador was arrested for illicit enrichment when it was revealed that he owned several offshore companies with links to oil contractors active in Ecuador.<sup>22</sup> Shortly thereafter, two former General Managers of Petroecuador were linked to the case. These events revealed a years-long corruption scheme, with government officials illegally enriching themselves through the oil company's international trade and infrastructure construction. In December 2016, the United States Department of Justice revealed that between 2007 and 2016, Odebrecht paid around USD 33.5 million to obtain contracts worth around USD 116 million in Ecuador.<sup>23</sup>

This confluence of factors—an economic crisis and a corruption scandal involving several high-ranking politicians—weakened public support for Correa's political movement (“*correísmo*”) while hardening the pro- and anti-Correa political divide among the public. In 2016, as citizens began to feel the economic recession in their own pockets, they were faced with evidence that oil executives had profited from ill-gotten gains. Correa's approval plummeted. Ecuadorians' attitudes toward democracy also began to decline, as the democratic system had resulted in these economic outcomes and allowed oil executives to self-deal. In 2016, support for

---

<sup>19</sup> Vera Rojas and Llanos Escobar 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Vera Rojas, Sofía, and Santiago Llanos Escobar. 2016. «Ecuador: La Democracia Después de Nueve Años de La 'Revolución Ciudadana' de Rafael Correa.» *Revista de Ciencia Política* 36, no. 1: 145–75.

<sup>21</sup> Diario El Universo. 2016. «Las Denuncias de Corrupción En Ecuador En 2016.» *Diario El Universo*, December 21, 2016. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2016/12/14/nota/5954056/denuncias-corrupcion-ecuador-2016/>.

<sup>22</sup> Diario El Universo. 2017. «Algunos de Los Casos Más Polémicos de Cercanos al Gobierno de Rafael Correa.» *Diario El Universo*, May 23, 2017. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2017/05/23/nota/6197560/algunos-casos-mas-polemicos-cercanos-gobierno-rafael-correa/>.

<sup>23</sup> Diario El Universo. 2016. «Constructora Odebrecht Pagó Sobornos En Ecuador, Anuncia Departamento de Justicia de EE. UU.» *Diario El Universo*, December 21, 2016. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2016/12/21/nota/5965135/constructora-odebrecht-pago-sobornos-ecuador-anuncia-fiscal-estados/>.



democracy dropped by almost 14 percentage points from 2014. Even more starkly, levels of satisfaction with democracy dropped by more than 16 points from 2014 to 2016.

Despite declining support for *correísmo* in the wake of economic crisis and a series of corruption scandals, its candidate Lenin Moreno won the presidential election in 2017 by a narrow margin. In a highly polarized environment, Moreno beat right-wing conservative Guillermo Lasso in the second round with a little over 51 percent of the vote. Moreno turned his back on *correísmo* once in power, reducing public spending, liberalizing trade, and implementing anti-corruption measures. Without the support of the *correísta* movement and with a country facing acute financial crisis, Moreno struggled to maintain high approval ratings. In 2019, Ecuadorians showed low levels in support for democracy (54.4 percent). In addition, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy dropped below 40 percent, a level unseen in Ecuador since before Correa came to power in 2007.

Moreno's weak presidency led to a shift in Ecuadorian politics. The *correísmo* vs. anti-*correísmo* divide was still present, but cultural divisions gained new importance during the 2021 contest.<sup>24</sup> Four main candidates competed for the presidency: Lasso, *correísta* Andrés Arauz, indigenous movement candidate Yaku Pérez, and social-democrat Xavier Hervas. The election saw a strengthened indigenous movement, and several candidates' agendas included progressive issues that had not figured in previous elections. Arauz and Lasso advanced to the second round and had to compete for the "progressive" voters. In an apparent rejection of *correísmo*, Lasso was able to peel off substantial support from progressive candidates Pérez and Hervas in the second round, leading to his victory. Indeed, the results of an original survey conducted in early 2022 in Quito and Guayaquil (n=3,270), show that 50 percent of Pérez's first round supporters and 62.5 percent of Hervas's gave their support to Lasso in the second round.<sup>25</sup>

For many, Lasso's 2021 victory came as a breath of fresh air in Ecuador's system after Correa spent a decade in power undermining democratic institutions and his chosen successor, Moreno, spent four years in power struggling to govern. The rebound in support for and satisfaction with democracy in 2021 is likely related both to a post-inauguration honeymoon period that Lasso enjoyed when the survey was fielded (June–July 2021) and a successful vaccination plan against COVID-19 in the first months of his term. In brief, the entry of a new leader without links to the former authoritarian government, combined with evidence that government could respond effectively to a public health crisis, likely helped restore citizens' attitudes toward Ecuadorian democracy.

---

<sup>24</sup> Moncagatta, Paolo, and Espinosa Fernández de Córdova. 2022. "The Right Returns to Power in Ecuador: Catholic Neoliberalism, Anti-Correísmo and the Progressive versus Conservative Divide." Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Meeting, LASA Virtual Conference.

<sup>25</sup> Moncagatta, Paolo, et al. 2022. "Ethnicity, Inequality, Trust and Politics in Ecuador," Unpublished survey data (Universidad San Francisco de Quito).

# Ecuadorian Democracy and Social Movements In the Post-Correa Era

The end of President Correa's administration in 2017 after ten years in office constituted an important milestone in Ecuadorian political dynamics. Correa came to power in 2007 amid a crisis in the political system. He used his informal powers and took advantage of broad partisan and public support to consolidate his power, while undermining competing institutions.<sup>26</sup> In 2008, a new constitution, backed by the citizenry in two referenda, endowed Correa with outsized power and allowed him to make substantial reforms without the legislative and judicial branches. In the following decade, Correa remade the political system to ensure his ability to act as a unitary executive, limited only by explicit constitutional prohibitions.<sup>27</sup>

Moreno's election in 2017 brought with it a popular consultation aimed at "uncorrupting" the state by removing many of the unitary structures Correa had created. Among other things, citizens voted for the elimination of indefinite reelection and for reforms to the Citizen Participation Council. Created in the 2008 constitution, the council appoints and evaluates the performance of the comptroller-general, the human rights ombudsman, and the attorney general; officials who ensure the president is held accountable. In practice, Correa had stacked the council with his supporters, limiting presidential accountability. Moreno replaced council members and called for their popular election in 2019.<sup>28</sup>

Certainly, measures of the quality of Ecuador's democracy have improved since Correa exited power. In 2017, Correa's last year in power, Freedom House gave Ecuador a rating of 57/100 (100 is the most democratic score) and classified its political system as "partly free."<sup>29</sup> In 2021, the last year of the Moreno administration, Ecuador's democracy score increased substantially, to 67/100.<sup>30</sup> In 2022, after the first year of the Lasso government, the rating assigned was 71/100, which allowed the country to rise to the "free" category. Importantly, this improvement reflects increases in both the political rights and civil liberties dimensions.<sup>31</sup>

These figures suggest a "re-democratization" after Correa's departure. However, other studies are less optimistic. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index describes Ecuador as a "hybrid regime" and assigns a rating of 2.5/10 to the political culture of its citizens.<sup>32</sup> The 2021

---

<sup>26</sup> Polga-Hecimovich, John. 2019. "La Presidencia Del Ejecutivo Unitario de Rafael Correa." *Revista Latinoamericana de Política Comparada* 15: 99–122.

<sup>27</sup> Polga-Hecimovich 2019.

<sup>28</sup> De la Torre, Carlos. 2018. "Latin America's Shifting Politics: Ecuador After Correa," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 4: 77–88.

<sup>29</sup> Freedom House. 2017. *Freedom in the World 2017*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ecuador/freedom-world/2017>.

<sup>30</sup> Freedom House. 2021. *Freedom in the World*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ecuador/freedom-world/2021>.

<sup>31</sup> Freedom House. 2022. *Freedom in the World 2022*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ecuador/freedom-world/2022>.

<sup>32</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit. 2022. "Democracy Index 2021: The China Challenge" <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/>.

AmericasBarometer study on Ecuador finds that 65 percent of citizens stated they were willing to give up elections in exchange for guaranteed income and basic services.<sup>33</sup> These findings regarding political culture, together with longstanding political fragmentation in the political system, create uncertainty about the prospects for Ecuadorian democracy.<sup>34</sup>

The evolution of government styles and agendas is also concerning. These have changed from Correa's technocratic left-wing populism, to his successor Moreno's moderate neoliberalism, and then to the current president Lasso's conservative neoliberalism.<sup>35</sup> The latter represents the pre-Correa economic status quo that caused upheaval from the 1980s to the early 2000s and ended with Correa's presidency.<sup>36</sup>

The post-Correa era has witnessed significant social mobilization and the strengthening of the indigenous movement. In October 2019, mass protests against an executive order eliminating fuel subsidies erupted throughout the country. Indigenous movements featured prominently in the protests, along with students and various unions. After days of increasingly intense protests, Moreno agreed to negotiate with indigenous leaders, and the protests ended when Moreno announced he would rescind the decree. This decision strengthened the indigenous movement in Ecuador, which had weakened during Correa's regime. The 2021 general elections highlighted the movement's renewed strength, as indigenous movement candidate Pérez came in third place and nearly advanced to the runoff. His party also obtained an unprecedented 27 seats (out of 137) in the National Assembly, becoming the second-largest force.

Similar protests took place again in June 2022. Shortly after Lasso completed his first year, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, the country's largest pan-indigenous organization, called for a national strike. There was no specific trigger; rather, the indigenous and peasant organizations that mobilized the demonstrations presented a document with ten demands for the government to fulfill. They demanded an increase in fuel subsidies, forgiveness of debts, price control policies, non-privatization of state assets, and expansion of social benefits for the most vulnerable populations. Ultimately, the indigenous organizations agreed to cease the protests in exchange for establishing a dialogue with the government.

These episodes demonstrate not only that social movements have been revitalized in the post-Correa era, but also that these movements can exercise veto power over government policies through pressure in the streets, outside of formal channels. Perhaps the exit of a populist movement from power, combined with citizen frustration over unpopular policies, has encouraged the use of protest to address policy concerns.

---

<sup>33</sup> Pazmiño, Mateo, and Paolo Moncagatta. 2021. "¿Qué Tipo de Sistema Político Apoyan Los Ecuatorianos? Estabilidad En La Democracia Delegativa." In *Cultura Política de La Democracia En Ecuador y En Las Américas 2021: Tomándole El Pulso a La Democracia*, edited by Arturo Moscoso Moreno, et al., 82–100. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

<sup>34</sup> Ecuador has many small but weak parties. This limits citizen representation and political accountability. An indicator of fragmentation is President Lasso's congressional representation. His party won only 12 of 137 seat in the National Assembly, making it very difficult to pass his legislative priorities.

<sup>35</sup> De la Torre, Carlos. 2013. "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift: Technocratic Populism in Ecuador," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3: 33–46; Moncagatta, Paolo, and Carlos Espinosa Fernández de Córdova. 2022. "The Right Returns to Power in Ecuador: Catholic Neoliberalism, Anti-Correísmo and the Progressive versus Conservative Divide." Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Meeting, LASA Virtual Conference.

<sup>36</sup> Polga-Hecimovich, John, and Francisco Sánchez. 2021. "Latin America Erupts: Ecuador's Return to the Past," *Journal of Democracy* 32, no. 3: 5–18, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2021.0030>.

---

## Conclusion

The analysis of public opinion data showed that support for and satisfaction with democracy significantly declined in the post-Correa era but rebounded in 2021. The share of Ecuadorians who can be classified as institutionalists because they oppose military coups and executive aggrandizement declined from 61.3 percent in 2014 to around 40 percent in 2019 and 2021. The share of Ecuadorians who can be classified as military interventionists, presidentialists, and authoritarians correspondingly grew. Disappointing economic growth and pervasive corruption fueled disappointment with the government and democracy and made the citizenry more open to justify authoritarian actions.

The end of the Correa years marked a turning point for Ecuadorian politics and democracy. On the one hand, the country regained some of the checks and balances, political rights, civil liberties, and meaningful political competition that Correa undermined. On the other hand, Ecuadorian politics seems to have come full circle to the 1990s and 2000s with a neoliberal conservative in office and a more contentious citizenry willing to take to the streets to veto policies they disagree with. These developments create uncertainty about the prospects for democracy in Ecuador.

## References

- Anderson, Christopher, André Blais, Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan, and Ola Listhaug. 2005. *Losers' Consent: Elections and Democratic Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Christopher, and Christine Guillory. 1997. "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems." *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1: 66–81.
- Anderson, Christopher, and Yuliya Tverdova. 2001. "Winners, Losers, and Attitudes about Government in Contemporary Democracies." *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 4: 321–38.
- Basabe-Serrano, Santiago, Simón Pachano, and Andrés Mejía Acosta. 2010. "La Democracia Inconclusa: Derechos Fundamentales, Instituciones Políticas y Rendimientos Gubernamentales En Ecuador (1979-2008)." *Revista de Ciencia Política* 30, no. 1: 65–85.
- Bayas-Eraza, Matías. n.d. "Understanding Ecuador's Growth Prospects in the Aftermath of the Citizens' Revolution." In *Assessing the Left Turn in Ecuador*, edited by Francisco Sánchez and Simón Pachano, 213–30. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 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.
- Conaghan, Catherine, and Carlos de la Torre. 2008. "The Permanent Campaign of Rafael Correa: Making Ecuador's Plebiscitary Presidency." *International Journal of Press/Politics* 13, no. 3: 267–84.
- 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.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2004. *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- De la Torre, Carlos. 2013. "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift: Technocratic Populism in Ecuador." *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3: 33–46.
- De la Torre, Carlos. 2015. *De Velasco a Correa: Insurrecciones, Populismos y Elecciones En Ecuador, 1944-2013*. Quito, Ecuador: Corporación Editora Nacional-Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar.
- De la Torre, Carlos. 2018. "Latin America's Shifting Politics: Ecuador After Correa." *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 4: 77–88.

Diamond, Larry, and Marc F. Plattner, eds. 2015. *Democracy in Decline?* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Diario El Universo. 2016. "Constructora Odebrecht Pagó Sobornos En Ecuador, Anuncia Departamento de Justicia de EE.UU." *Diario El Universo*. December 21, 2016. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2016/12/21/nota/5965135/constructora-odebrecht-pago-sobornos-ecuador-anuncia-fiscal-estados/>.

Diario El Universo. 2016. "Las Denuncias de Corrupción En Ecuador En 2016." *Diario El Universo*. December 21, 2016. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2016/12/14/nota/5954056/denuncias-corrupcion-ecuador-2016/>.

Diario El Universo. 2017. "Algunos de Los Casos Más Polémicos de Cercanos al Gobierno de Rafael Correa." *Diario El Universo*. May 23, 2017. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2017/05/23/nota/6197560/algunos-casos-mas-polemicos-cercanos-gobierno-rafael-correa/>.

Easton, David. 1975. "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support." *British Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 4: 435–57.

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2022. "Democracy Index 2021: The China Challenge." The Economist Intelligence Unit. <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/>.

Freedom House. 2017. *Freedom in the World 2017*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ecuador/freedom-world/2017>.

Freedom House. 2021. *Freedom in the World*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ecuador/freedom-world/2021>.

Freedom House. 2022. *Freedom in the World 2022*. Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ecuador/freedom-world/2022>.

Freidenberg, Flavia, and Simón Pachano. 2016. *El Sistema Político Ecuatoriano*. Quito: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Ecuador.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Broadway Books.

Linz, Juan J., and Alfred C. Stepan. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1: 69–105.

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.

Mainwaring, Scott, Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds. 1992. *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Meléndez, Carlos, and Paolo Moncagatta. 2017. "Ecuador: Una Década de Correísmo." *Revista de Ciencia Política* 37, no. 2: 413–47.

Mishler, William, and Richard Rose. 2001. "Political Support for Incomplete Democracies: Realist vs. Idealist Theories and Measures." *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 4 (October 1): 303–20.

Moncagatta, Paolo, Brett Bessen, Carew Boulding, Andrea Endara, Francisco Sánchez López, and Sebastián Vallejo Vera. 2022. "Ethnicity, Inequality, Trust and Politics in Ecuador." Unpublished survey data. Universidad San Francisco de Quito.

Moncagatta, Paolo, and Carlos Espinosa. 2019. "No Country for the Right Wing? Actores, Trayectoria, Oferta y Demanda de La Derecha En Ecuador." *Colombia Internacional* 99: 121–50.

Moncagatta, Paolo, and Carlos Espinosa Fernández de Córdova. 2022. "The Right Returns to Power in Ecuador: Catholic Neoliberalism, Anti-Correísmo and the Progressive versus Conservative Divide." Latin American Studies Association Virtual Conference.

Moncagatta, Paolo, and Camila Montero. 2018. "Actitudes Hacia La Democracia En Ecuador: Apoyo y Satisfacción Con La Democracia al Término Del Mandato de Rafael Correa." In *Cultura Política de La Democracia En Ecuador y En Las Américas, 2016/17: Un Estudio Comparado Sobre Democracia y Gobernabilidad*, edited by Juan Carlos Donoso, Paolo Moncagatta, Arturo Moscoso Moreno, Simón Pachano, Daniel Montalvo, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, 59–80. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

Norris, Pippa. 1999. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1994. "Delegative Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1: 55–69.

Pachano, Simón, and Sergio García. 2015. "Ecuador: Un Régimen Híbrido." *Revista Latinoamericana de Política Comparada* 10: 123–48.

Pazmiño, Mateo, and Paolo Moncagatta. 2021. "¿Qué Tipo de Sistema Político Apoyan Los Ecuatorianos? Estabilidad En La Democracia Delegativa." In *Cultura Política de La Democracia En Ecuador y En Las Américas 2021: Tomándole El Pulso a La Democracia*, edited by Arturo Moscoso Moreno, Paolo Moncagatta, Juan Carlos Donoso, Sebastián Larrea, and J. Daniel Montalvo, 82–100. Nashville, TN: LAPOP.

Polga-Hecimovich, John. 2019. "La Presidencia Del Ejecutivo Unitario de Rafael Correa." *Revista Latinoamericana de Política Comparada* 15: 99–122.

Polga-Hecimovich, John, and Francisco Sánchez. 2021. "Latin America Erupts: Ecuador's Return to the Past," *Journal of Democracy* 32, no. 3: 5–18, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2021.0030>.

Seligson, Mitchell A., Juan Carlos Donoso, Daniel Moreno, Diana Orcés, and Vivian Schwarz-Blum. 2006. *Democracy Audit: Ecuador 2006*. Quito, Ecuador: CEDATOS Editions.

Singh, Shane, Ekrem Karakoç, and André Blais. 2012. "Differentiating Winners: How Elections Affect Satisfaction with Democracy." *Electoral Studies* 31, no. 1: 201–11.

Singh, Shane, Ignacio Lago, and André Blais. 2011. "Winning and Competitiveness as Determinants of Political Support." *Social Science Quarterly* 92, no. 3: 695–709.

Torre, Augusto de la, Simón Cueva, and María Alexandra Castellanos-Vásconez. "The Macroeconomics of the Commodities Boom in Ecuador: A Comparative Perspective." In *Assessing the Left Turn in Ecuador*, edited by Francisco Sánchez and Simón Pachano, 163–212. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, n.d.

V-Dem Institute. 2021. "V-Dem Institute Democracy Report 2021: Autocratization Turns Viral." V-Dem Institute, 2021. [https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/files/dr/dr\\_2021.pdf](https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/files/dr/dr_2021.pdf).

Vera Rojas, Sofía, and Santiago Llanos Escobar. 2016. "Ecuador: La Democracia Después de Nueve Años de La 'Revolución Ciudadana' de Rafael Correa." *Revista de Ciencia Política* 36, no. 1: 145–75.



## 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.<sup>37</sup> 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 <sup>1</sup>	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? <i>Response options: Seven-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disagree to (7) Strongly agree.</i>

<sup>37</sup> 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.

DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES <sup>1</sup>	QUESTIONS
<b>Opposition to military coups<sup>2</sup></b>	<p>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...</p> <p>JC10. When there is a lot of crime</p> <p><i>Response options: (1) A military take-over of the state would be justified; (2) A military takeover of the state would not be justified.</i></p>
	<p>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...</p> <p>JC13. When there is a lot of corruption</p> <p><i>Response options: (1) A military take-over of the state would be justified; (2) A military takeover of the state would not be justified.</i></p>
<b>Opposition to executive aggrandizement<sup>2</sup></b>	<p>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?</p> <p><i>Response options: (1) Yes, it is justified; (2) No, it is not justified.</i></p>
	<p>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?</p> <p><i>Response options: (1) Yes, it is justified; (2) No, it is not justified.</i></p>
<b>Tolerance of protest and regime critics</b>	<p>D1. There are people who only say bad things about the form of government of Ecuador, 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.</p> <p><i>Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.</i></p>
	<p>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.</p> <p><i>Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.</i></p>
	<p>D3. Still thinking of those who only say bad things about the form of government of Ecuador, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people being permitted to run for public office?</p> <p><i>Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.</i></p>

DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES <sup>1</sup>	QUESTIONS
	<p>D4. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people appearing on television to make speeches?</p> <p><i>Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.</i></p>
<p><b>Support for democratic inclusion</b></p>	<p>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?</p> <p><i>Response options: Ten-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly disapprove to (10) Strongly approve.</i></p>

<sup>1</sup> In the 2021 round of the AmericasBarometer, only questions ING4, JC13, and JC15A were included in the survey. Item JC13 was administered to one quarter of the sample and item JC15A, to one half of the sample. About 26 percent of the sample was asked the two questions. We use this portion of the sample to conduct cluster analysis.

<sup>2</sup> 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 2019, 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 Results

The bar graphs below present the main results of the cluster analysis. There is one bar graph per wave studied: 2012, 2014, 2016, 2019, 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 A1. 2012 Cluster Results

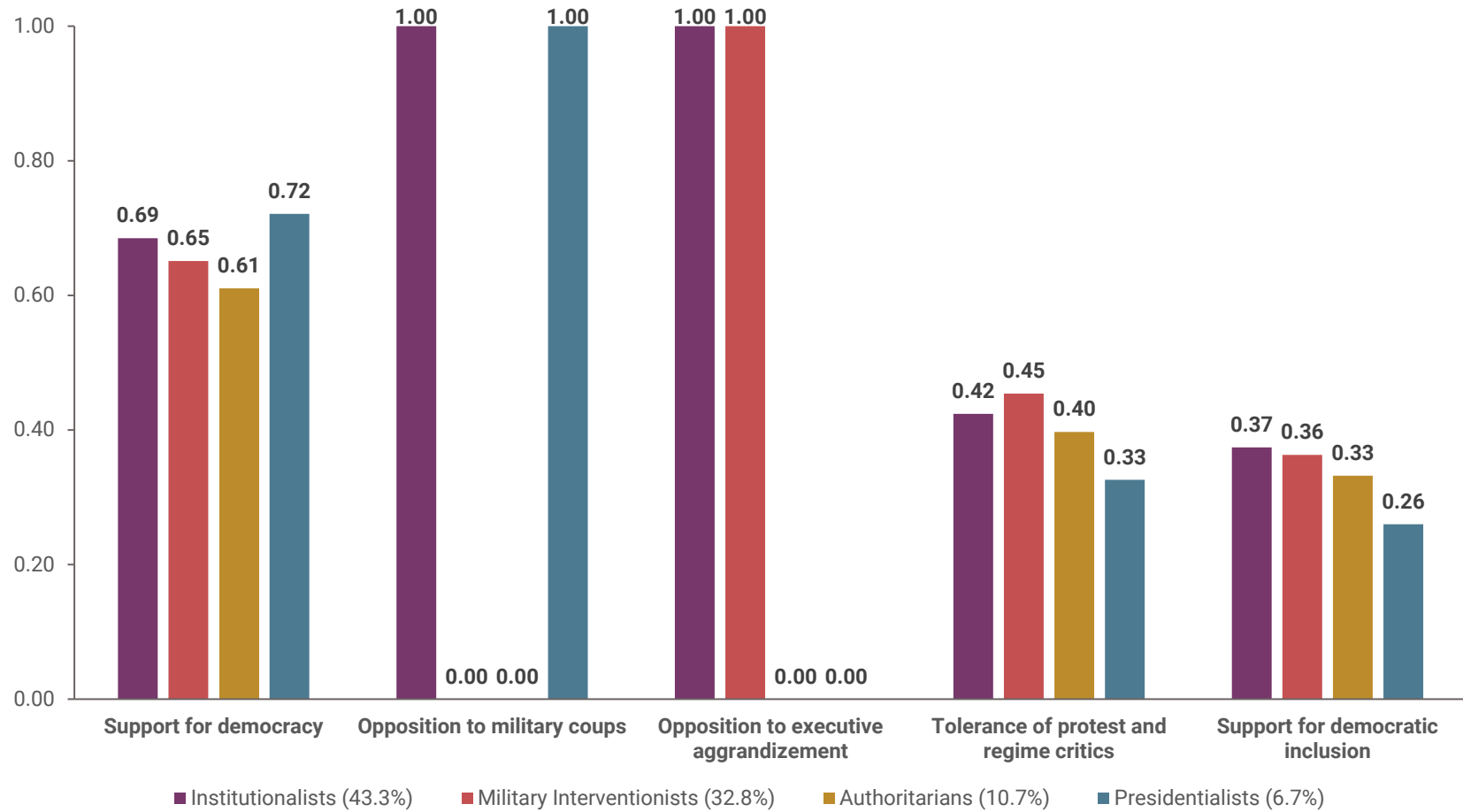


Figure A2. 2014 Cluster Results

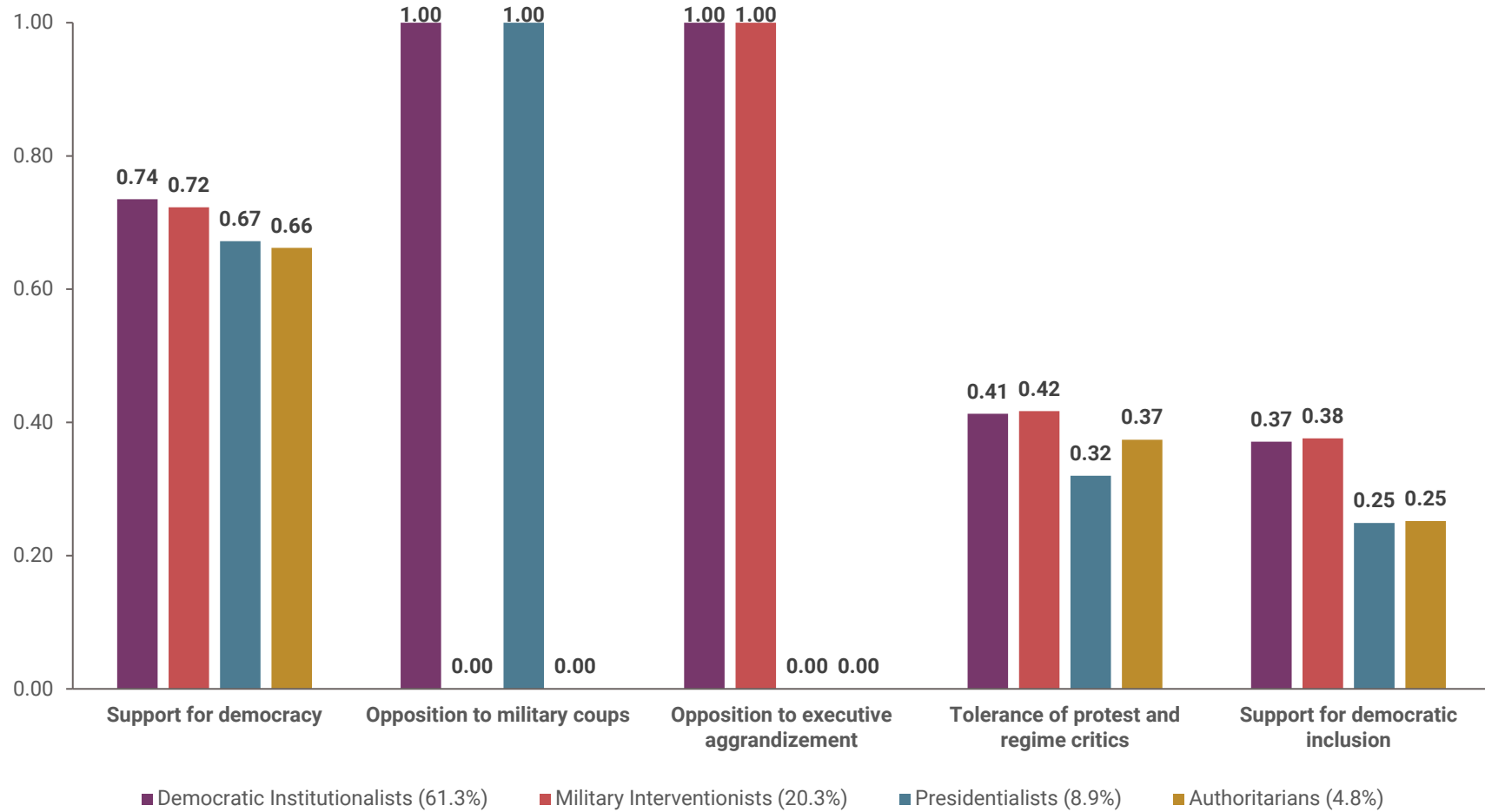


Figure A3. 2016 Cluster Results

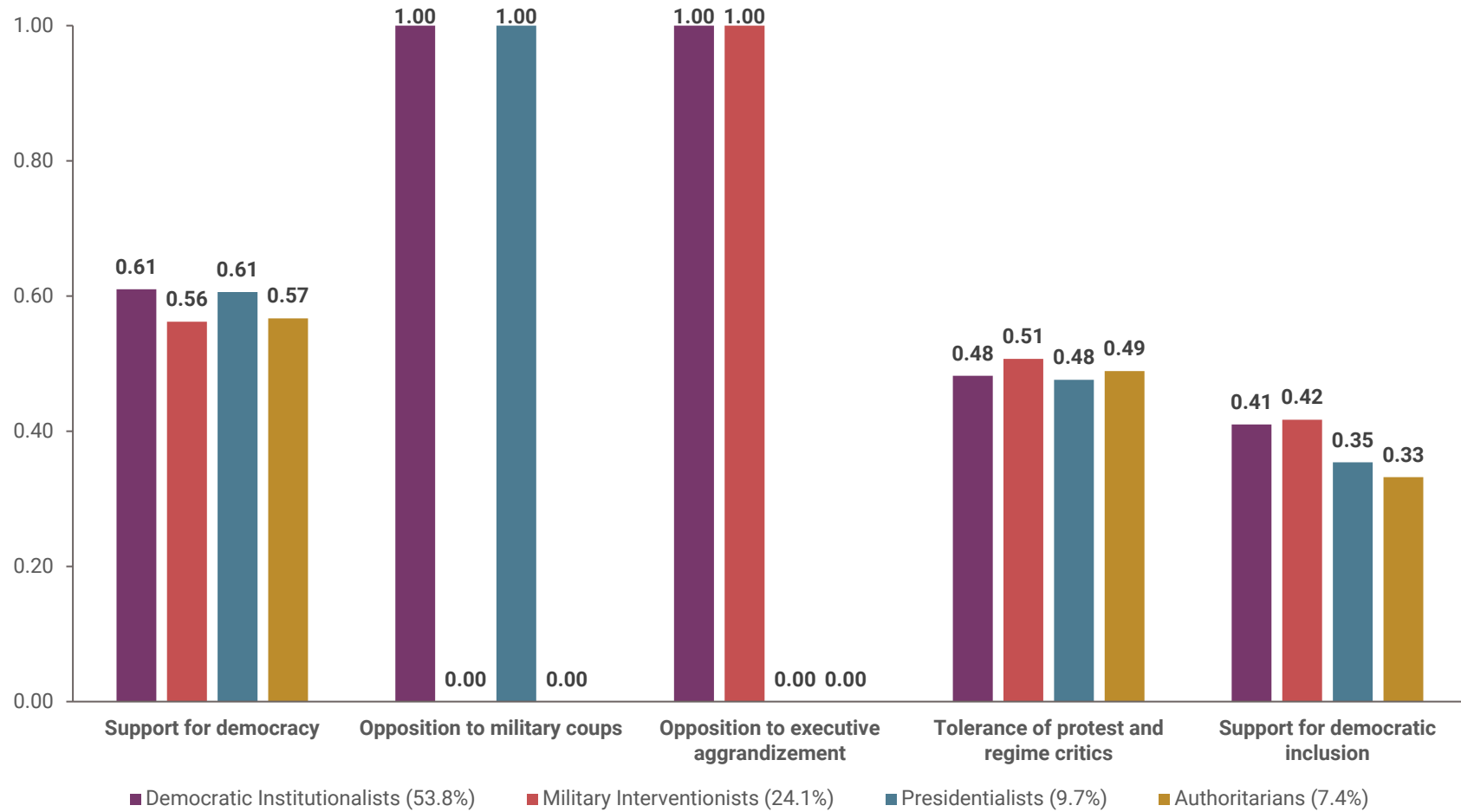


Figure A4. 2019 Cluster Results

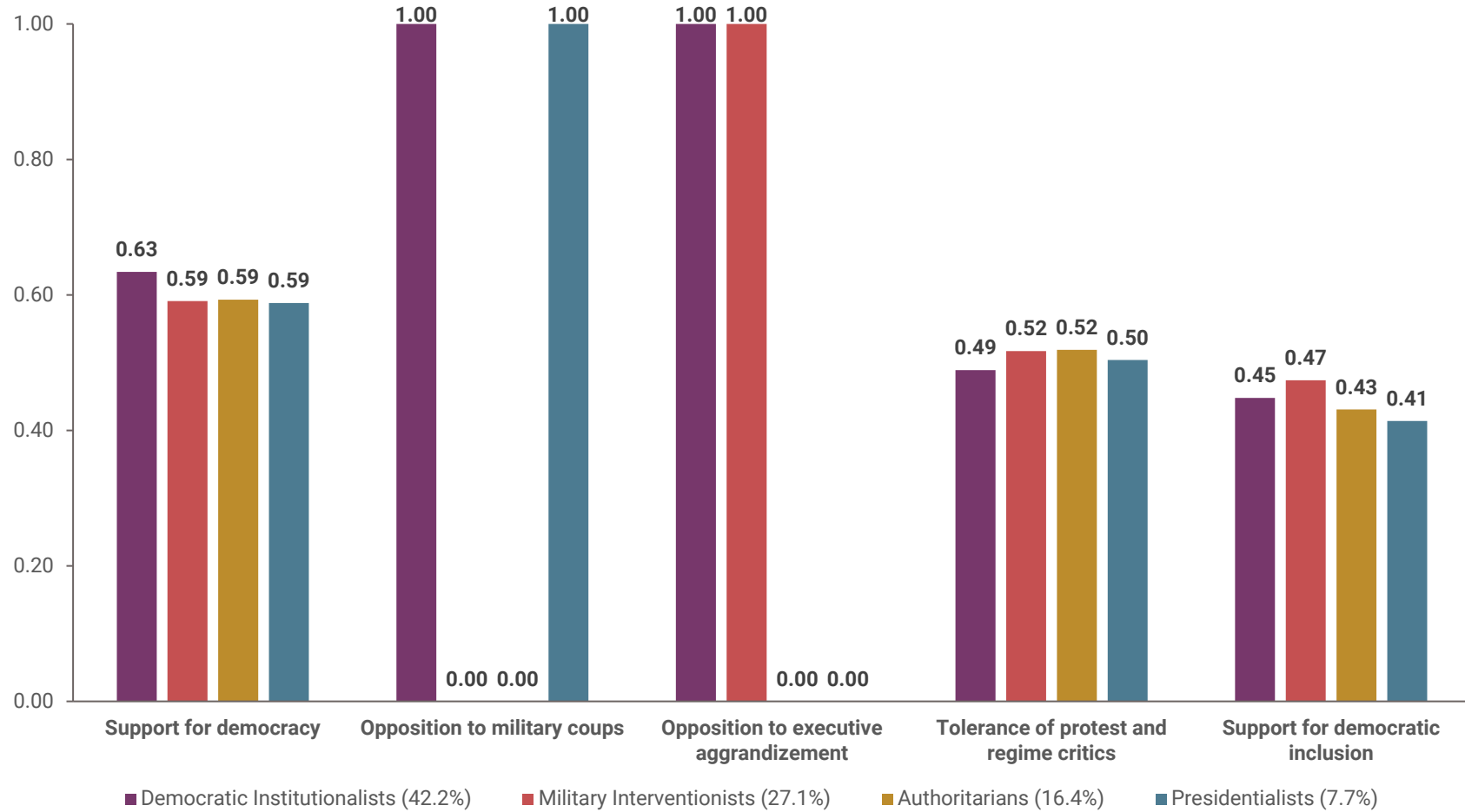




Figure A5. 2021 Cluster Results

