

# Voting and its Impact on Conventional Political Participation. Comparative Analysis Between Uruguay, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Panama

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## Abstract

By carrying out a comparative analysis through a “most similar” system, based on the socio-political and electoral history of Uruguay, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Panama, as well as the legal-electoral framework, level in different indexes and the perception of conventional participation, it is possible to demonstrate that there is a direct correlation between electoral participation (vote) in the countries analyzed and conventional political participation.

**Keywords:** Voting, conventional political participation, comparative politics, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Panama.

## 1. Introduction

This article is based on the premise that comparing implies assimilating and differentiating at the limits. It is therefore of academic interest to identify comparisons that have attributes that are partly shared and partly not shared. This reasoning underlies the decision to carry out a comparative analysis of the most similar systems. The case studies used in this analysis are Uruguay, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Panama (Sartori, 1994).

As will be demonstrated in the subsequent analysis, the Latin American countries in question exhibit a high degree of similarity, particularly in terms of their political system, electoral process, socio-demographic characteristics, and legal regulatory framework related to the duty to vote. However, they also display notable differences in their international rankings, which are measured in various items that assess the quality of life within society.

The objective of the comparative analysis is to examine the impact of electoral participation, specifically voting, on other types of conventional participation, such as organized political mobilization and contact with institutions and authorities.

This study begins with a theoretical explanation of political participation, with particular emphasis on the distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation. Additionally, the text discusses voting in Latin America in general and its

tendency. Subsequently, a historical-political analysis of the countries in question is conducted in order to highlight their similarities and differences. This is followed by an analysis of the type of voting in these countries, as well as a comparative analysis of different indexes used to measure the quality of life in these countries. Subsequently, a comprehensive comparative analysis of conventional political participation in the countries under consideration is conducted, after which conclusions are drawn.

## **2. Definitions of political participation**

In the traditional understanding of political participation, the act of voting is often highlighted as the most common form of expression. Delfino and Zubieta (2010) posit that while this may be the case, it is not the only avenue available to citizens. Indeed, the term “political participation” encompasses a broader range of activities.

One of the basic definitions of political participation is that of Verba and Nie (1972) who state that it is “those activities carried out by citizens, and which are more or less aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and the decisions they make (p. 2). Said authors focus their definition on democratic participation, leaving aside activities such as mobilizations or protests; restricting the term to a specific niche.

Other scholars of comparative politics, whose focus is political participation, have offered broader definitions of the term under study (Somuano, 2005). Examples are Brussino, Rabbia, and Sorribas (2009), who citing Conway (1990) define political participation as:

“all those behaviors that individuals and groups engage in to influence public affairs: through these practices, citizens make explicit their preferences regarding what kind of government should govern a society, how the state is run, and how they accept or reject specific government decisions that affect a community or its members” (p. 279).

Similarly, Sanchez and Leyva (2015) consider that political participation in a democratically governed state “is the action that the citizen externalizes to intervene in the selection of their representatives and directly or indirectly influence decision-making by the government” (p.77).

These definitions are broader in that they consider any type of behavior or action that directly or indirectly impacts the exercise of the State, either individually or collectively.

Based on this, there are different ways of dividing and classifying political participation, which should be studied with a multidimensional vision where the socio-political context and the cultural bases of political life in society are taken into consideration (Sánchez and Leyva, 2015, based on Benedicto, 2004).

## **3. Types of political participation**

Somuano (2005, based on Kim, 1980; Milbraith, 1965); and Dalton, 1988), establish that political participation is categorized in different ways:

- Active/inactive.
- Open/closed.
- Autonomous/subordinate.
- Intermittent/continuous.
- Manifest/instrumental.
- Verbal/non-verbal.
- Volunteer/involunteer.
- Conventional/non-conventional.

In this paper, emphasis will be given to the last categorization, taking into consideration its breadth and the fact that it is the most commonly used and habitual distinction (Sabucedo, 1988).

#### **4. Conventional political participation**

Conventional political participation is those actions that “conform to the guidelines set by the values and norms of liberal-democratic systems” (Valles, 2010, p.329,) That is, they correspond to the exercise of rights formally recognized by the State.

This participation is grouped into four blocks (Valles, 2010, p.329):

i. Related to the electoral process.

1. Voting.
2. Follow the electoral campaign through the media.
3. Attending rallies and meetings.
4. Participate in the campaign by supporting a candidate or party.
5. Contribute financially to the campaign.
6. Persuading others to guide their vote.
7. Apply as a candidate.

ii. Related to opinion creation.

1. Informing about the policy through the media.
2. Discuss political issues with family, friends, coworkers, etc.
3. Send letters to newspapers or telephone radio and television stations, expressing political opinions.

iii. Related to contact with institutions and authorities.

1. Send letters or messages of support or protest to authorities and institutions.
2. Request interviews with authorities to discuss common or personal problems.
3. Signing collective petitions to the authorities to demand political action.
- iv. Related to organized political mobilization.
  1. Participate in authorized demonstrations.
  2. Participate in groups or movements to solve local problems.
  3. Affiliation with parties or organizations.
  4. Contribute financially to the support of political causes.

## **5. Non-conventional political participation**

Unlike conventional political participation, which has already been defined as participation that is planned and adjusted to the state system, unconventional political participation also carries with it the will to transform or change a situation, but it is not necessarily considered illegal. This type of participation conflicts with dominant values and “usually develops outside institutional channels and at the edge or beyond accepted legality” (Valles, p. 334, 2010). They are wide-spectrum behaviors ranging from peaceful acts to violence. Examples of these are (Valles, 2010, p.334)

- 1.1. Testimonial acts of physical or cultural expression.
  - 1.1.1. Running of the Bulls.
  - 1.1.2. Hunger strike.
  - 1.1.3. Festive meetings.
- 1.2. Obstruction of other people's activities.
  - 1.2.1. Traffic blockage.
  - 1.2.2. Sitting.
  - 1.2.3. Occupancy of premises.
  - 1.2.4. Boycott of public events or commercial activities.
- 1.3. Protest and protest graffiti in public places.
- 1.4. Boycott of services or products.
- 1.5. Resistance to compliance with legal obligations.
  - 1.5.1. Payment of taxes.
  - 1.5.2. Payment of rents or fees.

### **1.5.3. Military service.**

**1.6.** Illegal demonstrations or wildcat strikes, without observing the requirements established by law.

**1.7.** Destruction or deterioration of public property and aggression against persons.

The weight of unconventional political participation activities is closely linked to their media visibility. The more visibility they have, the greater their desired impact (Valles, 2010). “It must be kept in mind that today's unconventional may be tomorrow's conventional. What separates conventional from unconventional forms is a social valuation that varies over time” (Valles, 2010, p. 336).

## **6. Voting in Latin America**

Not all Latin American systems conceive voting in the same way; some countries assign different consequences to its exercise or abstention (Thompson, 2007).

Fernández and Thompson (2007) establish that the electoral right in Latin America has three identifiable aspects: “the vote consecrated exclusively as a right (Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Venezuela), the vote as a duty without sanction for not exercising it (Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama) and the obligatory vote with sanction in case of non-compliance (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay)” (p. 253).

When it is said that voting is compulsory in a country, it refers to the fact that it is a legal duty; when it is said that it is voluntary voting, it implies the recognition of such practice as a citizen's right (Miranda, 2015).

The internationally recognized common denominator is that “suffrage is the exercise of a right whose protection is guaranteed by various branches of the legal system” (Thompson, 2007, p. 270).

Miranda (2015) states that there are two major trends in the suffrage issue in Latin America. The first is the trend of extending the regulations to the possibility that young people can vote from the age of 16. “Brazil in 1989, Nicaragua in 2000, Ecuador in 2008, and Argentina in 2012” (Miranda, s/a, 2015). The other trend is the move from compulsory to voluntary suffrage like in “Venezuela in 1999, Salvador in 2004, Dominican Republic in 2010, Chile in 2012 and Peru in 2013” (Miranda, 2015).

Taking into consideration that there are countries that see voting as a duty that is sanctioned for non-compliance and others that do not enforce such sanctions, it is understood in practice that in countries where sanctions are not exercised, voting is the will of the citizen, i.e., a right (Miranda, 2015).

Aragón (2007) establishes that in democratic contexts, voting as a right must be free, equal, direct, and secret. As previously established, in Latin America there is a predominant trend in suffrage reforms towards the conception of the action as a right, not an obligation.

## 7. Political history

Panama and Costa Rica are countries located in Central America, Paraguay, and Uruguay in South America. Their official language is Spanish, since they were Spanish provinces, and the four countries gained their independence from Spain in the 19th century. As a result, they have a rich mixture of indigenous and European cultures.

The first of the countries under investigation that gained its independence and became a republic was Paraguay in 1811. It then went through a period of dictatorship where José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia promoted isolationist policies. From 1864 to 1870 there was the War of the Triple Alliance, in which Paraguay faced Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay where it suffered enormous devastation, after this there was a reconstruction and modernization of the country.

In 1904, the Constitution was promulgated, establishing the presidential system and the separation of powers. From 1940 onwards the dictatorships began and ended in 1989, initiating the transition to democracy that Paraguay is experiencing today. In the political history of Paraguay, there have been periods of dictatorship and authoritarian governments, but in recent years there has been a transition to democracy and a consolidation of democratic institutions in the country (Rojas Villagra, 2014).

In 1821, Costa Rica gained independence from Spain, joining the Central American Federation formed by Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica as a single political and economic entity. However, in 1824 Costa Rica became an independent republic. In 1825, the Constitution was promulgated establishing the separation of powers.

Costa Rica's political history is marked by periods of political and democratic stability, as well as important social and economic reforms. In general, the country has been characterized by its commitment to democracy and human rights, as well as its focus on social development and environmental sustainability (Costa Rica Presidency, 2023).

Uruguay gained independence from Brazil and became a republic in 1825. In 1830, the first Constitution was established, and it was not until 1903 that the separation of powers and universal suffrage were established in the Constitution. A military coup led by General Juan María Bordaberry in 1973 established a dictatorship that lasted until the mid-80s when a new Constitution was approved with a presidential government.

Uruguay's political history has been marked by alternation between democratic governments and periods of dictatorship. However, in recent years, there has been political stability and consolidation of democratic institutions in the country (Moreira, 2008).

In 1903, Panama achieved its independence from Colombia with the support of the United States, as they sought to build an interoceanic canal in the region, a year later it granted control of the Panama Canal Zone to the United States, recovering it until 1994. In 1968, an authoritarian regime led by Colonel Omar Torrijos was established, ending in 1989.

Throughout its political history, Panama has experienced several periods of dictatorship and authoritarianism, as well as a transition to democracy and political stability. Since the full recovery of control of the Panama Canal, the country has achieved sustained economic growth

and has become an important regional and international financial and business center (National Institute of Statistics and Census - Panama, 2023).

Currently, all four countries are democratic, with political parties and regular elections, every five years in Paraguay, Uruguay, and Panama and every four years in Costa Rica. Public power emanates from the people and is exercised through three organs: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The executive branch consists of a president and vice-president in all countries.

## 8. Type of vote

In these countries voting is compulsory and is regulated by the Constitution; however, in Uruguay, the citizen who fails to comply with such obligation must pay a fine equivalent to the amount of one Readjustable Unit for the first time and three Units the following times (Law No. 16017, Art. 8; Art. 17). In Paraguay, those who violate the provisions of (Paraguayan Electoral Code, Art. 4) shall be sanctioned with a fine equivalent to one half to one minimum wage for unspecified miscellaneous activities. In Costa Rica (Constitution, Art. 93) and Panama (Constitution, Art. 135) there is no sanction.

Table 1. Type of vote in four American countries.

COUNTRY	POPULATION	STATE FORM	VOTE TYPE	ELECTION PERIOD	REELECTION
Paraguay	6,780,744 inhab.	Representative, participatory, and pluralistic democracy	Mandatory voting with sanction	5 years	No reelection
Uruguay	3,422,794 inhab.	Presidential democratic government, with a centralized republic.	Mandatory voting with sanction	5 years	No reelection
Costa Rica	5,180,829 inhab.	A democratic, free and independent republic, with a presidential system.	Mandatory voting without sanction	4 years	President cannot be re-elected successively
Panama	4,408,581 inhab.	Presidential democratic government, with a centralized republic.	Mandatory voting without sanction	5 years	President of the Republic, reelection is allowed ten years after leaving office.

Source: own elaboration with data from Knoema (2023) and Ace Project (2023).

All have relatively small populations compared to other Latin American countries, the most populous being Paraguay, which has almost twice as many inhabitants as Uruguay. Costa Rica and Panama have relatively similar numbers of citizens according to Knoema (2023).

## World ranking

Table 2. World ranking of four American countries.

World Ranking	Costa Rica	Panama	Paraguay	Uruguay
Human Development Index (2020)	0.82	0.80	0.73	0.82
Corruption Perception Ranking (2022)	54	36	28	74
Civil liberties index (2023)	53	46	35	58
Political rights index (2023)	38	36	27	39

Source: Own elaboration with data from the United Nations Development Program (2022), Transparency International (2022), and Freedom House (2021).

According to the United Nations Development Programme (2022), the Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure of human well-being that combines indicators of health, education, and standard of living. In the world ranking published in 2020, Costa Rica and Uruguay show the same qualification, then Panama, leaving Paraguay in last place.

The Corruption Perceptions Index is a measure of the perceived level of corruption in the public sector of each country, based on the perception of experts and business people (Transparency International, 2022). In the ranking published in 2022 of the Corruption Perceptions Index, where 100 is very clean and 0 is highly corrupt, Uruguay appears as the least corrupt of the four with a score of 74, followed by Costa Rica with 54 and Panama with 36, leaving Paraguay as the country with the highest perception of corruption of countries with 28.

The Political Rights Index is a measure of political freedom in each country of the world, based on a series of indicators related to the electoral process, citizen participation, transparency, and the functioning of political institutions, and the Civil Liberties Index is an annual assessment of the state of political and civil liberties in each country of the world, based on a series of indicators and criteria (Freedom House, 2021).

A country or territory's Freedom in the World score depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0 to 40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0 to 60. The 2023 edition of Freedom in the World places Uruguay with the highest score, followed by Costa Rica, Panama, and finally Paraguay.

For each country and territory, Freedom in the World analyzes the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, the functioning of government, freedom of expression and belief, rights of association and organization, the rule of law personal autonomy, and individual rights.

### Democracy index

The democracy index is a measure used to assess the level of democracy in a country (Smith, 2018). The one developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit is based on a series of indicators, which are grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, government functioning, political participation, and political culture.

Each indicator is evaluated on a scale of 0 to 10 and a weighted score is assigned. A weighted average score is then calculated for each category and a total score is assigned for the country evaluated. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index classifies countries into four categories: full democracies, imperfect democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. Countries are assessed annually and a score and ranking are provided for each country assessed.

This indicator is important because it evaluates the level of democracy in a country, allows comparisons between countries, helps identify areas for improvement, and contributes to public debate. Currently, the democracy index is an important tool for assessing the level of democracy in a country and for promoting democracy globally. However, it is only one measure and there may be different opinions and assessments of the level of democracy in each country.

**Table 3. Level of democracy in a country measured by the Democracy Index**

Post	Country	Score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of the government	Political Participation	Political Culture	Civil Rights	Category
11	Uruguay	8.91	10	8.93	7.78	8.13	9.71	Full Democracy
17	Costa Rica	8.29	9.58	7.50	7.78	6.88	9.71	Full Democracy
49	Panama	6.91	9.58	6.07	7.22	3.75	7.94	Deficient democracy
77	Paraguay	5.89	8.75	5.36	6.11	1.88	7.35	Hybrid regime

Source: Own elaboration with data from the Democracy Index 2022 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022)

The Democracy Index 2022 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022) places Costa Rica and Uruguay as Full Democracies, which is defined as political systems in which civil and political liberties are respected and guaranteed, elections are free and fair, the branches of government are balanced, the rule of law is effective and citizens participate actively in political life.

Panama's Deficient Democracy is explained as a political system in which civil and political liberties are restricted, the rule of law is weak, corruption is widespread, and democratic institutions are vulnerable. Paraguay is in the Hybrid Regime category, which is a political system that has characteristics of both a democracy and an autocracy. In these systems, although elections are held, they are not completely free and fair, civil and political liberties are limited, separation of powers is weak, and corruption is common.

## 9. Methodology

This article represents a comparative study with a focus on systems of more similarities. Sartori (1994) summarizes that comparisons are made for many reasons: to situate, to learn from the experiences of others, to have terms of comparison, to explain better, etc., where the guiding principle that forces comparison is control. It is necessary to control by comparing in order to know whether the hypotheses put forward in an investigation are true or false.

A mixed methodology will be used, applying deductive and explanatory techniques, to carry out an analysis in two stages, the first one is a historical comparison, trying to describe the historical-political phenomena of the four countries, to appreciate their political changes, as well as their similarities.

The second stage consists of a diachronic comparison through secondary source databases such as the Freedom House (2021), the United Nations Development Program (2022), The Economist Intelligence Unit (2022) and (Transparency International, 2022) in relation to the level of democracy, the perception of corruption, the human development index, the civil liberties index, and the political rights index.

The sources of data related to electoral participation are from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and for conventional politics, those available in

Latinobarómetro 2020 reports will be used. The delimitation of this date is because Latinobarómetro only has information collected up to that period.

Los estudios de caso de Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica y Panamá parecen útiles para explicar la incidencia de la participación política convencional con o sin sanciones por el voto obligatorio, dado que Uruguay y Paraguay cumplen aplican sanción mientras que Costa Rica y Panamá no establecen sanciones por incumplimiento del voto.

10. Comparative analysis

The research presents the data collected on electoral and conventional political participation in Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay, in order to carry out the analysis process.

1. Electoral participation

Uruguay is the Latin American country with the highest level of presidential electoral participation with 90%, Panama is in position seven, with 73%, while Paraguay with 61.3%, and Costa Rica with 60% share almost the same place in the IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) ranking from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance).

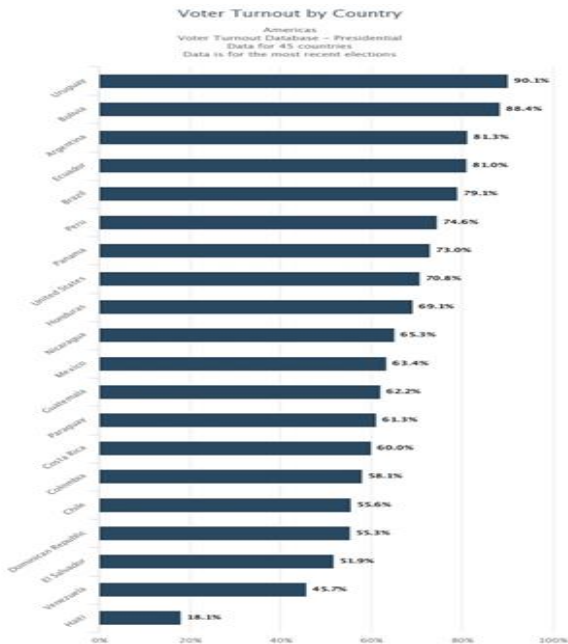


Figure 1. Database of electoral participation in the Latin American region.

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

## i. Uruguay

Uruguay maintains an upward trend in voter turnout, remaining at 90% in the 2019 presidential elections, as shown in the following graph 2. Table 1 shows that, since the introduction of compulsory voting with sanctions, the levels have increased, maintaining an average voter turnout of 88.75%.

But it is also worth mentioning that Uruguay is the Latin American country that leads in the world rankings of Human Development, Corruption Perception, Civil Liberties and Political Rights, as well as Political Culture according to the Democracy Index 2022.

In journalistic notes, it is pointed out that much of this high turnout is due to the sanctions established with compulsory voting, but also to the mandatory civic education in school, “new voters see in the electoral promises of the opposing parties a possible way towards a better Uruguay to live” (Speranza, 2019).

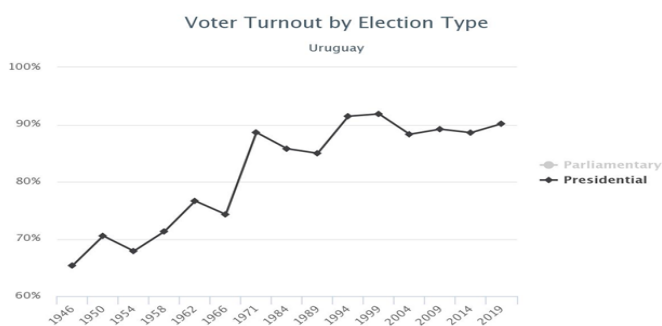


Figure 2. Presidential electoral participation in Uruguay.

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

Table 4. Presidential electoral participation in Uruguay periods from 1946 to 2019.

Year	Par. Electoral	Total Vote	Registration	Voting	Age	Population	Invalid votes	vote Ob.
2019	90,13 %	2,433,364	2,699,978	2,564,637		3,378,471	3,63 %	Yes
2014	88,57 %	2,321,230	2,620,791	2,389,639		3,332,972	5,95 %	Yes
2009	89,18 %	2,285,958	2,563,285	2,378,807		3,293,765	1,78 %	Yes
2004	88,29 %	2,196,491	2,487,816	2,393,866		3,399,237	2,40 %	Yes
1999	91,84 %	2,206,112	2,402,135	2,329,231		3,313,283		Yes
1994	91,44 %	2,130,618	2,330,154	2,216,900		3,167,000		Yes
1989	84,97 %	1,970,586	2,319,022	2,123,130		3,077,000		Yes
1984	85,76 %	1,886,756	2,200,086	2,033,200		2,990,000		Yes
1971	88,61 %	1,664,119	1,878,132	1,956,400		2,920,000		Yes
1966	74,28 %	1,231,762	1,658,368	1,842,500		2,750,000		No
1962	76,63 %	1,171,020	1,528,239	1,952,380		2,914,000		No
1958	71,30 %	1,005,362	1,410,105	1,850,540		2,762,000		No
1954	67,87 %	879,242	1,295,502	1,727,930		2,579,000		No
1950	70,52 %	823,829	1,168,206	1,612,690		2,407,000		No
1946	65,34 %	649,405	993,892	1,528,270		2,281,000		No

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

ii. Panama

In the case of Panama, it has maintained a level of electoral participation of 70%, with mandatory voting, but without sanctions, its levels of voter participation at the polls from 1948 to 2019 presents an average of 70.4% and it is worth mentioning that it is a higher percentage than those recorded in Paraguay, where voting is also mandatory, but fines are applied to those who do not vote.

Figure 3 shows that during periods of political and social instability, including coups d'état, such as in 1968, there were low percentages of electoral participation, but after the country's longest dictatorship under Colonel Manuel Antonio Noriega (1984-1989), voter turnout recovered.

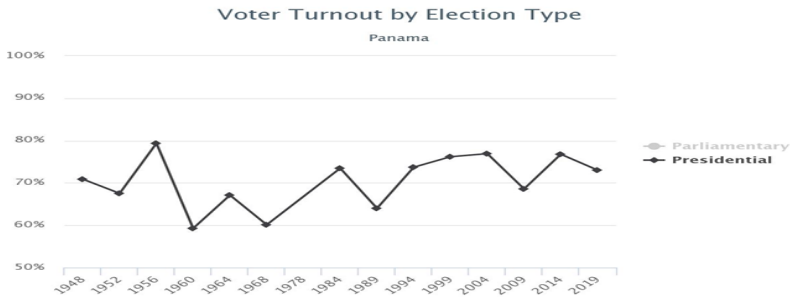


Figure 3. Panama's presidential electoral participation.

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

iii. Paraguay

In Paraguay, electoral participation has had break points that show how voter turnout has been on a downward trend, the same happens in Costa Rica, which in the last presidential elections has decreased.

It can be seen how the lowest point of electoral participation was recorded in 1989, the year in which the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, who ruled for 35 years, came to an end. But the history of fraudulent elections in this country, with the dictatorship, the corruption that prevailed in the government turned Paraguay into one of the most unequal countries in the world (Smink, BBC, 2019) generating in citizens a lack of credibility in the electoral process and distrust in government institutions.

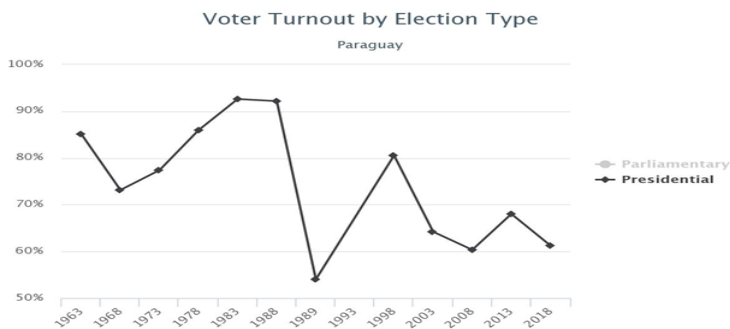


Figure 4. Presidential electoral participation in Paraguay.

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

#### iv. Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, voting is compulsory, but without sanction, the trend of electoral participation in presidential elections has remained at an average of 72% according to the data in Figure 5, which represents a high percentage compared to other countries in the region.

Costa Rica is in the category of full democracy, the same as Uruguay in the Democracy Index 2022; and has a score of 6.88 in political culture, an index higher than that registered for Panama (3.75) and Paraguay (1.88). In the world rankings of the Human Development Index, civil liberties, political rights, etc., Costa Rica is also the best-ranked, with a score of 6.88 in political culture. Costa Rica is also the best qualified, after Uruguay, and higher than Panama and Paraguay.

The percentage of 60% recorded in the last elections is possibly due, in part, to the impact of the economic, social, and political crises that have had a generalized impact in Latin America.

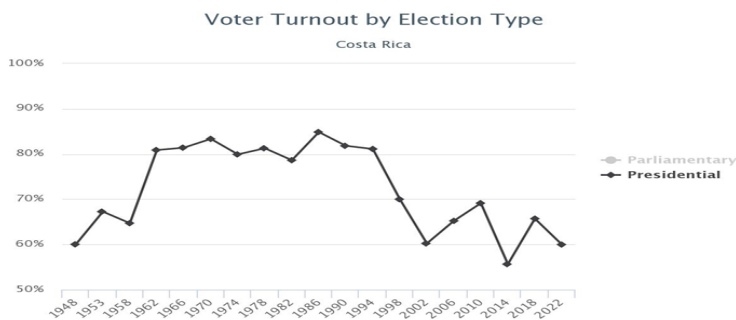


Figure 5. Presidential electoral participation in Costa Rica.

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

11. Conventional participation

This section presents the compilation of data compiled about the countries under analysis, with respect to the latest Latinobarómetro measurement on the different types of conventional participation. This study is conducted annually in 18 Latin American countries to record public opinion on various political, social, and economic issues.

The researchers selected the categories of analysis related to conventional participation, such as voting intention, discussion of political issues with family and friends and whether they influence their opinion, participation in community groups, participation with a party or candidate, their willingness to participate in protests, marches, signing petitions, and whether social networks (which increasingly have more impact on people's lives) are conceived as a vehicle for political participation.

The opinion survey referred to recorded the responses of 1,000 people interviewed in the case of Costa Rica and Panama and 1,200 for Paraguay and Uruguay.

Based on the typology proposed by Valles (2011), each of the categories we have chosen for the analysis of conventional participation published by Latinobarómetro are explained.

11.1Conventional participation related to the electoral process.

11.1.1 The vote

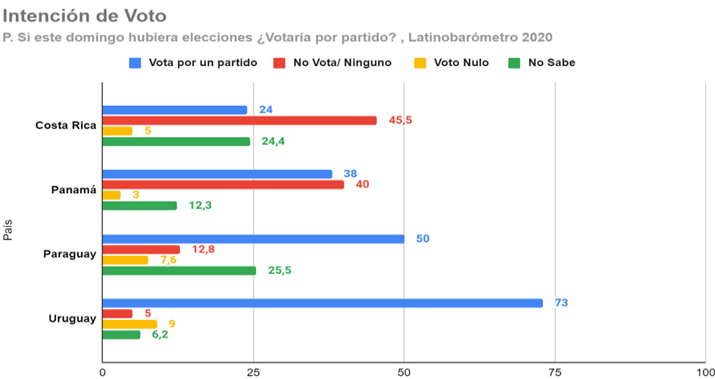


Figure 6. Voting intention

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

According to Figure 6, Uruguay is the country with the highest percentage of electoral participation (Figure 1), and also has the highest percentage of voting intention (73%) compared to the other countries; in second place, Paraguay with 50%, followed by Panamá with 38% and Costa Rica with 24%.

Possibly, the fact that Uruguay and Paraguay have mandatory voting with penalties has influenced the fact that they are the countries with the highest percentage of voting intention if elections were to be held in the near future.

On the other hand, the countries that have mandatory voting without sanction, Panama and Costa Rica, register a higher percentage of those who would not vote if there were elections.

#### 11.1.1.1 Participate in the campaign by supporting a candidate or party.

##### Trabajar para un partido o candidato

P. ¿Con qué frecuencia Ud. trabaja para un partido o candidato?, Latinobarómetro, 2020

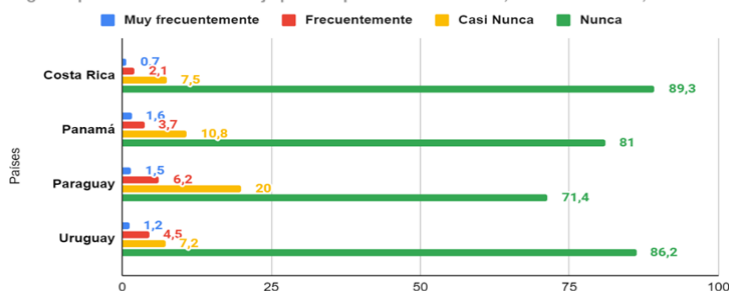


Figure 7. Working for a party or candidate

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Within this category, the four countries compared in the study registered high percentages in the option of never working for a party or candidate; however, Paraguay registered the highest percentage that would work for a party or candidate with 7.7%, compared to the other countries, followed by Uruguay with 5.7%, Panama with 5.3% and Costa Rica with 2.8%.

#### 11.1.1.2 Persuading others to guide their vote

##### Trata de convencer a alguien de lo que Ud. piensa políticamente

P. ¿Con qué frecuencia trata de convencer a alguien de lo que Ud. piensa políticamente?, Latinobarómetro, 2020

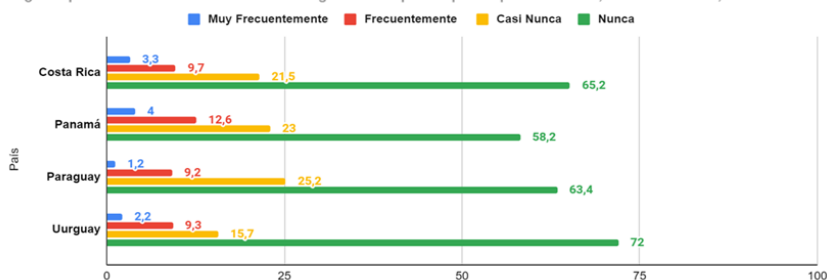


Figure 8. Trying to convince someone

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

In Figure 8, in the four countries, the option of never trying to convince someone of what they think politically is the highest percentage in Uruguay with 72% and the lowest in Panama with 58.2%, but this country has the highest percentage in the option of very frequently trying to convince someone with 16.6% in comparison with the other three.

11.1.2 Conventional participation related to opinion creation.

11.1.2.1 Discuss political issues with family, friends, colleagues, etc.

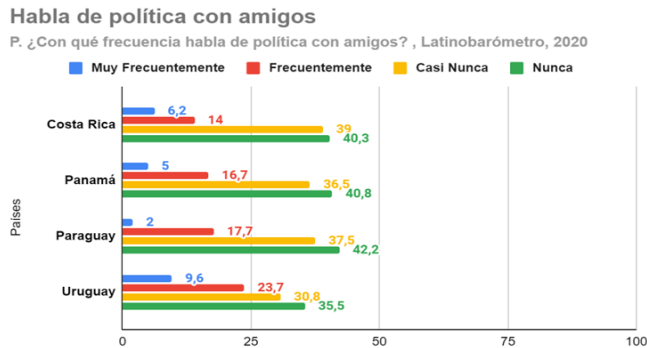


Figure 9. Talking about politics with friends

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Figure 9 shows that the four countries coincide with the highest percentages in the response that Never/Almost never discuss politics with friends. However, Uruguay is the country with the highest percentage of 33.3% in the percentages of Very frequently/Frequently talking about politics with friends.

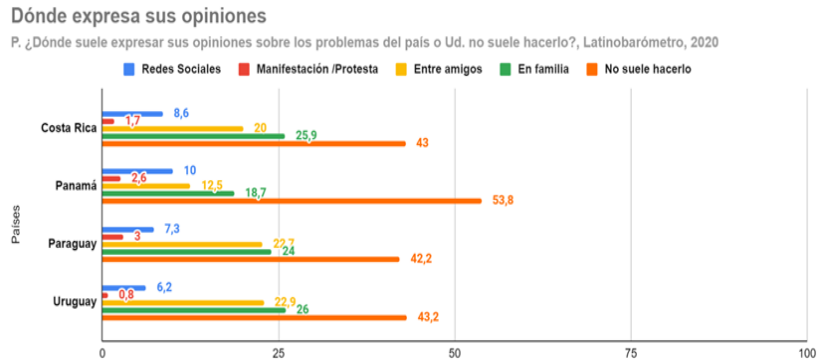


Figure 10. Where you express your opinions

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

The data in Figure 10 are related to the previous ones since it is the option of Not usually expressing their opinions about the country's problems that registers the highest percentages, but we highlight the fact that, if they choose to express their opinions, the four countries coincide in that it is the family environment where they prefer to express the problems occurring in their countries.

Another fact that we found interesting is that the four countries prefer, in a higher percentage, social networks to express opinions about the country's problems rather than in demonstrations or protests.

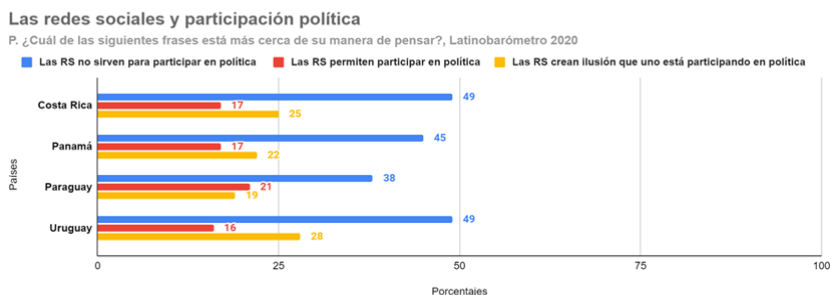


Figure 11. Social networks and political participation.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

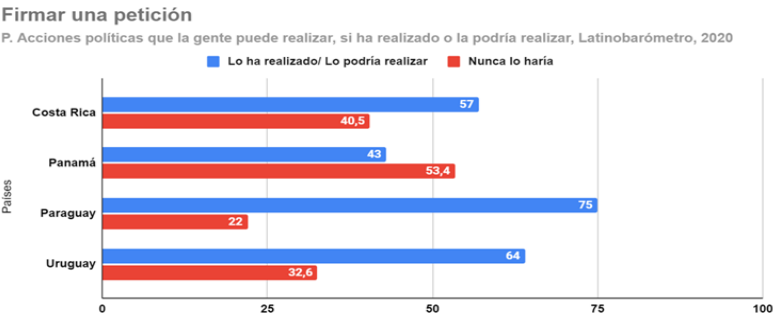
Figure 11 shows how social networks are a means of expressing opinions related to the country's problems rather than protests and/or demonstrations. Social networks in these countries are not considered a means to participate in politics and they agree that social networks create the illusion that they are participating in politics, except Paraguay, which is the country that registers a percentage of 21%, which considers that social networks allow participation in politics, the highest in comparison with Uruguay, Panama, and Costa Rica.

On the other hand, according to the Digital 2021: Global Overview Report, the penetration of social networks is high in these countries. Paraguay is the country with the highest number of social network users, 74% of the population, equivalent to some 5.3 million, are social network users. Although the report does not record the use of social networks in politics, it does highlight that the Paraguayan population uses social networks as a means to inform themselves and express opinions on political issues.

In the case of Uruguay, the Digital 2021 report indicates that the penetration of social networks is 68% of the population, equivalent to approximately 2.4 million social network users. In Panama, social network penetration is 66% of the population, equivalent to approximately 2.7 million social network users, and in Costa Rica, 56% of the population, 2.9 million, are social network users.

### 11.1.3 Conventional participation related to contact with institutions and authorities.

#### 11.1.3.1 Signing collective petitions to the authorities to demand political action.



Graph 12. Signing a petition

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Signing a petition is a form of participation that Paraguay, Uruguay, and Costa Rica have carried out or could carry out in a higher percentage. However, Panama is the country that registers a higher percentage of 53.4% of the option that has never signed or could sign a petition, compared to its percentage of Yes, which is 43%; even for Paraguay, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, Panama is the country with the highest percentage of Never would do so.

11.1.4 Conventional participation related to organized political mobilization.

11.1.4.1 Participate in demonstrations.

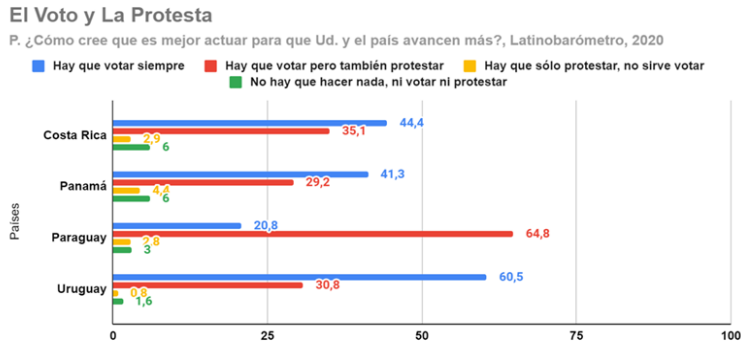


Figure 13. For the country to move forward, we must vote or protest.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

It can be seen how the countries with the highest electoral participation (Figure 1), such as Uruguay and Panama, have lower percentages of the choice to vote and also to protest; in both countries, the percentage for the option “Always vote” is higher.

In contrast with the countries with lower electoral participation, which registered a higher percentage in the item “We must vote, but also protest”, such as Paraguay with 64.8% and Costa Rica with 35.1%.

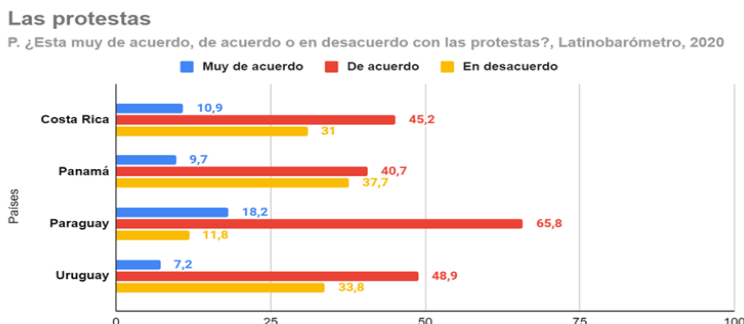


Figure 14. Protests.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Paraguay is the country with the highest willingness to vote and protest (Figures 13 and 14), as well as the highest percentage of the population that strongly agrees with the protests (84%). Figure 16 shows how Paraguay is also the country that has participated in demonstrations and would be willing to attend.

It is also interesting how Uruguay and Costa Rica register the same percentage of 56.1% who strongly agree with the protests, while Panama registers the lowest percentage of 50.4%.

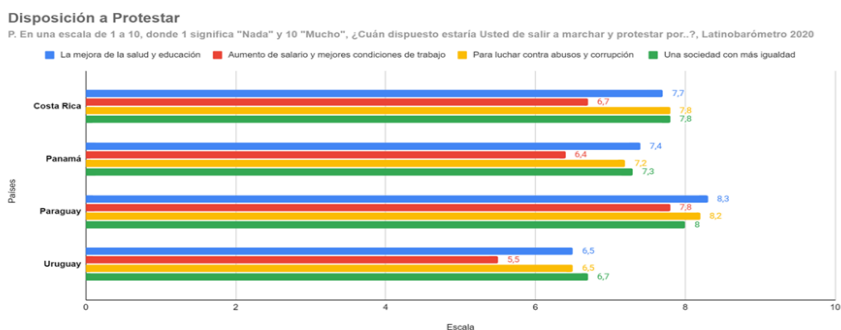


Figure 15. What are the issues for which you are willing to go out to protest?

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Figure 15 shows the issues for which each of the countries would be willing to protest. The four countries coincide in that they would go out to protest, in the highest percentage, for a more equal society. In second place, they would go out to protest for the improvement of health and

education, and in third place to fight against abuses and corruption, which is a reflection on the fact that these countries suffer from similar problems.

Authorized manifestations



Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Figure 16 shows that Paraguay, with 65%, is the country that has participated the most in authorized demonstrations and in second place is Costa Rica with 44%. The countries with the highest percentage of never having participated in authorized demonstrations are Panamá with 60% and Uruguay with 55.2%, and Costa Rica with the same percentage.

11.1.5 Participate in groups or movements to solve local problems.

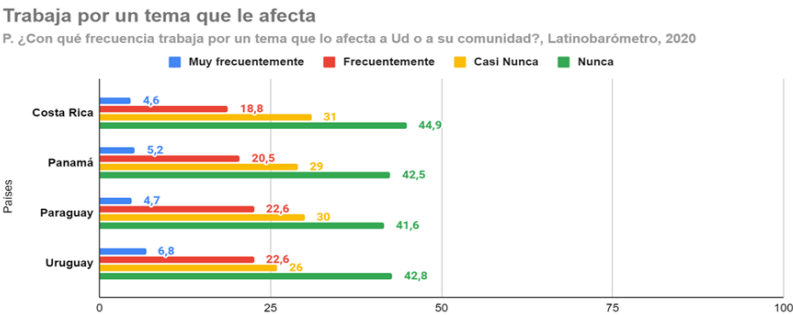


Figure 17. Working on an issue that affects you.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Latinobarómetro 2020.

Figure 17 shows that the four countries in the greatest number of countries never/almost never work on an issue that affects him/her or his/her community, but the percentage registered in the options Very frequently/frequently work on an issue that affects him/her or his/her community

stands out, with Uruguay and Paraguay registering higher percentages of 29.4% and 27.3%, respectively.

## 12. Conclusions

Taking into consideration the exhaustive analysis of comparative hard data described in this analysis, together with the socio-political history of the four countries taken as case studies, two main ideas can be concluded: The first and guiding conclusion of this analysis is that the higher the electoral participation (vote), the lower the level of participation in the other actions considered conventional, specifically organized political mobilization and contact with institutions/authorities.

The analysis shows that the countries with the highest level of electoral participation (vote), in this case, Uruguay and Panama have a lower intention to participate in political mobilizations or carry out actions to change their environment. On the other hand, the countries with the lowest level of electoral participation (vote), Paraguay and Costa Rica, show a greater intention to participate in mobilizations or to carry out the actions described above.

This argument gives rise to the second conclusion, derived from the one already described: the legal framework of compulsory voting and its sanction, as well as the results of the different indexes analyzed, do not have an impact on conventional political participation. This conclusion is based on the fact that Uruguay (mandatory voting with sanction and high average rating in the indexes) and Panama (mandatory voting without sanction and low average rating in the indexes) have a higher average voting percentage and lower participation in the other conventional participation compared to Paraguay (mandatory voting with sanction and low average rating in the indexes) and Costa Rica (mandatory voting without sanction and high average rating in the indexes), which have a low level of voting percentage and higher participation in the other conventional actions; demonstrating that there is no trend for the voting sanction and the results of the indexes analyzed.

The comparative analysis shows that the voting percentage of a country, regardless of whether or not there are sanctions to voting or the level of the index of the various international studies, has a direct correlation with the other actions of conventional political participation. The higher the country's electoral participation (voting), the lower its conventional political participation and vice versa.

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