Gender and Institutional Trust in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Abstract

This paper documents a region-specific gender gap in institutional trust. Using the World Values Survey, I show that women in Latin America and the Caribbean report lower institutional trust than men, and that this gap is more negative than in most other regions. The gap is concentrated in state and political institutions, especially institutions of authority and representation. A smaller within-region gap also appears for interpersonal trust, but the regional differential is concentrated in institutional trust. The result is robust to specification, weighting, and composition checks. Latinobarómetro provides complementary evidence, especially for trust in the armed forces.

Keywords: trust; gender; institutions; Latin America; Caribbean; World Values Survey; Latinobarómetro.
JEL codes: D72; D74; J16; O54; Z13.

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1 Introduction

Trust is a central ingredient of economic and political life. It facilitates cooperation, reduces transaction costs, supports exchange and investment, and is associated with economic development and well-being (Arrow, 1972; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Zak and Knack, 2001; Algan and Cahuc, 2010, 2014). A large literature studies the determinants and consequences of social and institutional trust (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002; Bjørnskov, 2007; Algan and Cahuc, 2014). Less is known, however, about whether gender differences in trust vary systematically across world regions and across different domains of trust.

This paper documents a region-specific gender gap in institutional trust. Using data from the World Values Survey (WVS), I show that women in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) report lower institutional trust than men, and that this gap is more negative than in most other regions. The result is concentrated in state and political institutions, particularly institutions of authority and representation. A smaller negative gap also appears for interpersonal trust, while no comparable within-region gap appears for non-state or associational organizations.

The WVS estimates are robust to country-year fixed effects, individual controls, survey weights, equal country-year weighting, alternative index constructions, balanced item availability, and leave-one-country and leave-one-year checks. The estimated institutional trust gap is modest in absolute terms, but non-negligible relative to standard individual-level correlates of trust such as education, income, age, and employment. Component-level results show that the gap is especially visible for trust in the armed forces, government, political parties, parliament, and electoral institutions.

Complementary evidence from Latinobarómetro points in a similar direction. Within the Latinobarómetro sample, women report lower interpersonal trust, lower broad institutional trust, and lower trust in core state institutions. At the component level, the strongest cross-survey agreement concerns trust in the armed forces. Because the surveys differ in country coverage, years, wording, and item availability, I interpret Latinobarómetro as complementary regional evidence rather than as a one-to-one replication of the WVS results.

The contribution is to show that gender differences in trust are not uniform across regions or domains. Existing work has documented gender gaps in political participation and civic engagement in Latin America (Desposato and Norrander, 2009; Espinal and Zhao, 2015); this paper shows that gender differences also extend to institutional trust. The results suggest that low institutional trust in LAC has a gendered dimension, especially in relation to state institutions and political authority. The analysis is descriptive and does not identify causal mechanisms, but it establishes a robust comparative fact that can inform future work on

gender, institutions, and democratic legitimacy in the region.

2 Data and Empirical Strategy

The main analysis uses the World Values Survey (WVS), pooling all available waves from Wave 1 to Wave 7. The effective estimation sample for the main institutional trust specification covers Waves 2–7, because Wave 1 does not contain the institutional trust items and baseline covariates required for the main specification. As complementary regional evidence, I use Latinobarómetro, covering available waves from 1995 to 2023.

I study four trust outcomes. Interpersonal trust is based on the generalized trust question and is coded on a 1–2 scale, with higher values indicating that most people can be trusted. Institutional trust is an average of confidence in state and political institutions, including the armed forces, police, justice system, government, political parties, parliament, civil service, and elections. I also construct a core state trust index and a non-state or associational trust index. Institutional trust items are measured on a 1–4 confidence scale, with higher values indicating greater trust. I therefore analyze interpersonal trust separately and use standardized outcomes when comparing magnitudes across domains. Appendix A provides details on variable construction, item availability, regional classification, and descriptive statistics.

The main WVS specification compares the gender gap in trust in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) with the corresponding gap in other regions:

$$Trust_{ict} = \alpha + \beta Female_i + \gamma(Female_i \times LAC_c) + X_i'\delta + \mu_{ct} + \varepsilon_{ict}, \tag{1}$$

where $Trust_{ict}$ is a trust outcome for individual i in country c and survey year t, $Female_i$ is an indicator for female respondents[1], LAC_c identifies countries in LAC, X_i includes individual controls, and μ_{ct} denotes country-year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the country level, and survey weights are used in the baseline specifications.

The coefficient β captures the gender gap outside LAC, while γ captures the differential gender gap in LAC relative to the rest of the world. The implied gender gap within LAC is $\beta + \gamma$. Because the LAC indicator is absorbed by country-year fixed effects, the specification does not compare average trust levels across regions; it compares gender gaps across regions. For Latinobarómetro, which is restricted to countries in the region, I estimate the same specification without the interaction term, so that the coefficient on $Female_i$ directly

[1]The analysis uses the respondent's reported sex/gender as recorded in each survey. I refer to the corresponding female indicator as "Female" throughout the paper.

captures the within-sample gender gap.

3 Results

Figure 1 presents the gender gap in institutional trust by world region using the WVS. LAC has the clearest and most precisely estimated negative gender gap in institutional trust. Some other regions also display negative point estimates, but these estimates are smaller, less precise, or less robust across pairwise comparisons. This regional pattern motivates the pooled specification in Equation (1).

Table 1 reports the main WVS estimates. Women in LAC report lower trust than men in both interpersonal and institutional domains, but the gap is substantially larger for institutional trust. Outside LAC, women report slightly higher institutional trust than men. In contrast, the interaction between Female and LAC is negative and statistically significant for both the broad institutional trust index and the core state trust index. The implied gender gap within LAC is also negative and statistically significant for these institutional outcomes.

The WVS also shows a smaller negative gender gap in interpersonal trust within LAC. However, the Female $\times$ LAC interaction for interpersonal trust is small and statistically insignificant, indicating that the regional specificity of the result is concentrated in institutional trust. For non-state or associational trust, women outside LAC report higher trust than men, while the LAC interaction is negative; however, the implied within-region gender gap is not statistically significant. Thus, the distinctive LAC pattern is not a general gap across all trust domains, but is instead most pronounced for state and political institutions.

The magnitudes are modest but non-negligible. Using standardized outcomes, the implied LAC gender gap is approximately 0.020 standard deviations for interpersonal trust, 0.058 standard deviations for institutional trust, and 0.032 standard deviations for core state trust (Appendix Table B.1). Appendix Table B.2 benchmarks the institutional trust gap against standard individual-level correlates estimated in the same specification. The institutional trust gap is roughly one-half of the high-versus-low education gradient, and is comparable to the associations with a one-standard-deviation increase in income and ten additional years of age. The result is therefore small in absolute terms, but not negligible relative to conventional predictors of institutional trust.

Table 2 decomposes the broad institutional trust index into its components. The interaction between Female and LAC is negative for all institutional components. The implied within-region gender gap is especially pronounced for trust in the armed forces and electoral institutions, and is also negative for trust in the police, government, political parties, and parliament. The gap is weaker or statistically insignificant for the justice system and civil

service. This pattern indicates that the institutional trust gap is concentrated in institutions of authority, representation, and democratic legitimacy.

Complementary evidence from Latinobarómetro points in a similar direction (Appendix C). Women report lower interpersonal trust, institutional trust, and core state trust within the Latinobarómetro sample. At the component level, the strongest cross-survey agreement concerns trust in the armed forces, government, political parties, and electoral institutions. Because the surveys differ in wording, coverage, years, and item availability, I interpret these results as complementary evidence rather than as a one-to-one replication of the WVS estimates.

The institutional trust gap is robust across a range of checks reported in Appendix D. It remains negative and statistically significant when using alternative fixed effects, excluding controls, removing weights, reweighting the data so that each country-year receives equal total weight, excluding each LAC country or survey year one at a time, and comparing LAC separately with each other region. It also remains similar when using a balanced eight-item institutional trust index or a PCA-based index. Additional controls for ideology, political engagement, religiosity, subjective well-being, perceived insecurity, and victimization do not materially change the estimate.

4 Conclusion

This paper documents a region-specific gender gap in institutional trust. Using the World Values Survey, I show that women in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) report lower institutional trust than men, and that this institutional gap is more negative than in most other regions. A smaller negative gap also appears for interpersonal trust within LAC, but the regional differential is concentrated in institutional trust. Complementary evidence from Latinobarómetro points in a similar direction, with the strongest cross-survey agreement for trust in the armed forces.

The results clarify the domain specificity of the gap. The WVS shows no statistically significant within-region gap in non-state or associational trust, while the institutional gap is concentrated in institutions associated with authority, representation, and democratic legitimacy, including the armed forces, elections, government, political parties, and parliament. Heterogeneity exercises indicate that the institutional trust gap is larger among older respondents and among respondents with lower levels of education.

The analysis is descriptive and does not identify causal mechanisms. The patterns are consistent with several possible interpretations, including gender differences in experiences with state institutions, exposure to insecurity, political representation, perceived respon-

siveness, or social norms around gender and authority. Future work should examine these channels using data with more detailed measures of institutional contact, victimization, political representation, and local institutional quality.

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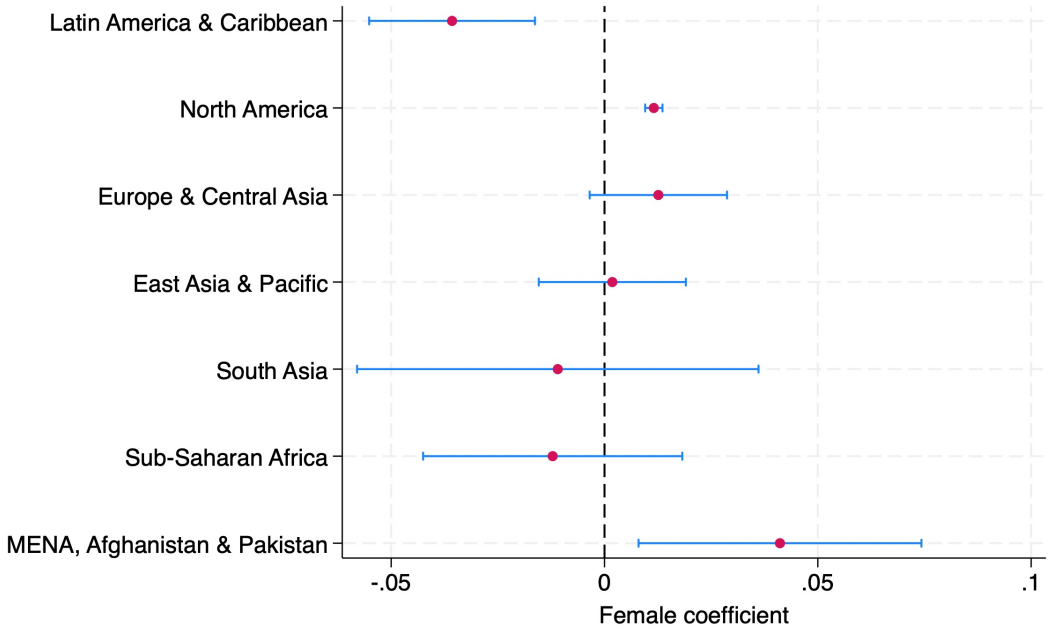
Figure 1: Gender Gap in Institutional Trust by Region



Notes: The figure reports the coefficient on Female from separate region-specific OLS regressions using World Values Survey data. The dependent variable is the institutional trust index, coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. All regressions include individual controls and country-year fixed effects; standard errors are clustered at the country level. Bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals. The effective institutional-trust sample covers WVS Waves 2–7. The number of countries by region is: North America, 2; Latin America and the Caribbean, 16; Europe and Central Asia, 37; East Asia and Pacific, 16; Sub-Saharan Africa, 14; MENA, 10; South Asia, 2.

Table 1: Gender Gap in Trust, World Values Survey

	Interpersonal Trust	Institutional Trust	Core State Trust	Non-State Trust
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	-0.006**	0.009*	0.019***	0.057***
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Female × LAC	-0.003	-0.049***	-0.042***	-0.044***
	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.010)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.009**	-0.040***	-0.024**	0.013
	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Observations	278,003	264,134	263,160	258,937
R^2	0.363	0.261	0.256	0.195

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variables are listed in the column headers and are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. Interpersonal trust is measured on a 1–2 scale; institutional trust indices are averages of 1–4 confidence items. The institutional trust index averages confidence in state and political institutions; core state and non-state indices are defined in Appendix A. "Female" is an indicator for female respondents. "Female × LAC" interacts the female indicator with an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. All regressions include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, and survey weights. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and reported in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table 2: Components of Institutional Trust, World Values Survey

	Armed Forces	Police	Justice System	Government	Political Parties	Parliament	Civil Service	Elections
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Female	-0.037***	0.040***	0.036***	0.029***	-0.006	-0.001	0.017***	-0.020
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.013)
Female × LAC	-0.095***	-0.062***	-0.033**	-0.060***	-0.023*	-0.031**	-0.024**	-0.059**
	(0.026)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.022)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.132***	-0.022**	0.003	-0.031*	-0.028***	-0.031**	-0.007	-0.079***
	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.018)
Observations	264,850	265,483	196,405	261,707	257,852	258,863	259,344	75,848
R^2	0.176	0.172	0.180	0.216	0.213	0.250	0.190	0.199

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. Dependent variables are the individual institutional trust components listed in the column headers and are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. "Female" is an indicator for female respondents. "Female × LAC" interacts the female indicator with an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Controls, fixed effects, weights, and clustered standard errors are as in Table 1. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

A Data and Measurement Details

A.1 Datasets, waves, and regional classification

The main analysis uses the World Values Survey (WVS). I start from all available WVS waves from Wave 1 to Wave 7, covering surveys fielded between 1981 and 2023.[2] In practice, Wave 1 does not enter the baseline institutional trust estimation sample because the institutional trust items and baseline covariates required for the main specification are not jointly available. The effective WVS estimation sample for the main institutional trust analysis therefore covers Waves 2–7.

The regional classification is constructed by the author. The main regional indicator groups together countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Caribbean coverage in the WVS estimation sample is limited, so the LAC estimates are driven primarily by mainland Latin American countries and should be interpreted as providing limited independent evidence on the Caribbean.

As complementary regional evidence, I use Latinobarómetro, a regional survey that provides comparable trust measures for Latin American countries over time. The Latinobarómetro analysis uses all available waves covering the period 1995–2023.

A.2 Trust outcomes and controls

The unit of observation is the individual respondent. The main explanatory variable is an indicator for whether the respondent is female. In the WVS analysis, I interact this indicator with an indicator for countries in LAC. In Latinobarómetro, where the sample is restricted to countries in the region, the coefficient on the female indicator directly captures the within-sample gender gap.

The main outcomes measure different dimensions of trust. First, I consider interpersonal trust, based on the generalized trust question. In both the WVS and Latinobarómetro, interpersonal trust is coded on a 1–2 scale, where higher values indicate that most people can be trusted.

Second, I construct a broad institutional trust index. In the WVS, this index averages trust in the armed forces, police, justice system, government, political parties, parliament, civil service, and elections. Third, I construct a core state trust index that averages trust in the police, justice system, government, parliament, and political parties. Fourth, I construct a non-state or associational trust index that averages trust in churches, the press, television,

[2] The WVS waves cover the following periods: Wave 1, 1981–1984; Wave 2, 1990–1994; Wave 3, 1995–1998; Wave 4, 1999–2004; Wave 5, 2005–2009; Wave 6, 2010–2014; and Wave 7, 2017–2023.

labor unions, universities, major companies, banks, environmental organizations, women's organizations, charitable organizations, and regional organizations. Institutional trust items are measured on a 1–4 confidence scale, where higher values indicate greater confidence.

For Latinobarómetro, I construct analogous indices whenever possible. The institutional trust index averages trust in the armed forces, police, judiciary, government, political parties, congress, public administration, and electoral institutions. The core state trust index averages trust in the police, judiciary, government, congress, and political parties. The non-state trust index averages trust in churches, the press, television, community associations, private firms, large firms, radio, banks, newspapers, student organizations, media, labor unions, public hospitals, and private clinics. Latinobarómetro institutional trust variables are also coded on a 1–4 scale, with higher values indicating higher trust.

Because interpersonal trust and institutional confidence items are measured on different scales, I analyze interpersonal trust as a separate outcome and rely on standardized outcomes when comparing magnitudes across trust domains.

The baseline specifications include individual-level controls for age, income scale, employment status, education, marital status, race or ethnicity when available, and parental status. The WVS baseline specification includes country-year fixed effects, which absorb time-varying country-level differences in average trust. Standard errors are clustered at the country level, and survey weights are used in the baseline specifications.

A.3 Descriptive statistics

Appendix Table A.1 reports descriptive statistics for the WVS sample in LAC by gender. Men and women are broadly similar in age and marital status, but differ in employment and family composition. Women are less likely to report full-time employment and less likely to report having no children. Average interpersonal trust, institutional trust, and core state trust are slightly lower among women than among men, while non-state trust is slightly higher among women. These raw differences are descriptive; the main analysis compares gender gaps after accounting for individual controls and country-year fixed effects.

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics by Gender, Latin America and the Caribbean

	Men		Women		Total	
	Mean	Obs.	Mean	Obs.	Mean	Obs.
Age	39.681	35,538	40.254	39,102	39.982	74,640
	(16.328)		(16.240)		(16.284)	
Income scale	4.457	32,827	4.213	35,747	4.329	68,574
	(2.322)		(2.308)		(2.318)	
Full-time employment	0.415	35,366	0.217	38,888	0.311	74,254
	(0.493)		(0.412)		(0.463)	
Low education: primary or less	0.287	32,894	0.317	36,421	0.303	69,315
	(0.452)		(0.465)		(0.459)	
Middle education: secondary	0.541	32,894	0.526	36,421	0.533	69,315
	(0.498)		(0.499)		(0.499)	
High education: tertiary/university	0.173	32,894	0.157	36,421	0.164	69,315
	(0.378)		(0.364)		(0.371)	
Married	0.421	33,976	0.405	37,488	0.412	71,464
	(0.494)		(0.491)		(0.492)	
No children	0.347	32,281	0.234	35,843	0.288	68,124
	(0.476)		(0.424)		(0.453)	
Institutional trust index	2.107	35,263	2.081	38,517	2.093	73,780
	(0.660)		(0.650)		(0.655)	
Core state trust index	2.045	35,234	2.034	38,484	2.039	73,718
	(0.707)		(0.693)		(0.700)	
Non-state / associational trust index	2.450	32,555	2.473	35,709	2.462	68,264
	(0.574)		(0.568)		(0.571)	
Interpersonal trust	1.149	34,807	1.134	38,336	1.141	73,143
	(0.356)		(0.341)		(0.348)	

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for the World Values Survey sample in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), separately by gender. Trust variables are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. Education categories are harmonized across WVS waves. The baseline specifications control for parental status; the table reports the no-children indicator for descriptive purposes. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses. Observation counts correspond to non-missing observations for each variable.

B Standardized Outcomes and Magnitude Benchmarks

Table B.1: Standardized Trust Outcomes, World Values Survey

	Interpersonal Trust	Institutional Trust	Core State Trust	Non-State Trust
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	-0.014**	0.014*	0.025***	0.099***
	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)
Female × LAC	-0.006	-0.072***	-0.057***	-0.076***
	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.018)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.020**	-0.058***	-0.032**	0.023
	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.016)
Observations	278,003	264,134	263,160	258,937
R^2	0.363	0.261	0.256	0.195

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variables are standardized versions of the trust outcomes listed in the column headers, with mean zero and standard deviation one in the estimation sample. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. "Female × LAC" is the interaction between the female indicator and an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table B.2: Benchmarking the Magnitude of the LAC Gender Gap

	Benchmark coefficient	Benchmark SE	LAC gender gap	Ratio |gap|/|benchmark|
Panel A. Institutional trust				
High vs. low education	-0.0818	(0.0149)	-0.0397	0.49
Middle vs. low education	-0.0666	(0.0105)	-0.0397	0.60
One SD income	0.0251	(0.0051)	-0.0397	1.59
Ten years of age	0.0197	(0.0035)	-0.0397	2.02
Full-time employment	-0.0177	(0.0052)	-0.0397	2.25
Panel B. Core state trust				
High vs. low education	-0.0851	(0.0165)	-0.0239	0.28
Middle vs. low education	-0.0769	(0.0111)	-0.0239	0.31
One SD income	0.0288	(0.0056)	-0.0239	0.83
Ten years of age	0.0153	(0.0036)	-0.0239	1.56
Full-time employment	-0.0218	(0.0054)	-0.0239	1.10
Observations, institutional trust			264,134	
Observations, core state trust			263,160	

Notes: The table benchmarks the magnitude of the implied Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) gender gap against other individual-level correlates of trust estimated in the same World Values Survey specification. The LAC gender gap is the coefficient on "Female + Female × LAC" from the baseline model. Benchmark coefficients are from regressions that include the female indicator, Female × LAC, the benchmark variables listed in the rows, baseline individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and country-clustered standard errors. Income is standardized to have mean zero and standard deviation one. Age is measured in ten-year units. Education coefficients are relative to low education. The ratio column reports the absolute value of the LAC gender gap divided by the absolute value of the benchmark coefficient. Standard errors for benchmark coefficients are in parentheses.

C Complementary Evidence from Latinobarómetro

Table C.1 presents analogous estimates using Latinobarómetro. Since Latinobarómetro only covers LAC countries, the coefficient on Female directly measures the gender gap within the region. The results provide complementary evidence. As in the WVS, women report lower interpersonal trust, lower broad institutional trust, and lower trust in core state institutions than men. The Latinobarómetro estimates therefore support the broader conclusion that gender gaps in trust are present in LAC. At the same time, the two datasets should not be interpreted as one-to-one replications of each other: the relative size of the interpersonal and institutional gaps differs across surveys, and the component-level patterns are not identical.

The Latinobarómetro results are not identical to the WVS results, which is unsurprising given differences in survey design, question wording, country coverage, years, and outcome coding. In particular, interpersonal trust is measured on a different scale from institutional confidence items, so raw coefficients should not be directly compared across trust domains. I therefore interpret Latinobarómetro as complementary regional evidence rather than as full validation of every WVS result.

Table C.2 reports component-level estimates for Latinobarómetro. The strongest points of agreement with the WVS are trust in the armed forces, government, political parties, and electoral institutions: in both datasets, women report significantly lower trust in these institutions. For other institutions, the evidence is less consistent across surveys. For example, the WVS shows negative and statistically significant gaps for trust in the police and parliament, whereas the corresponding Latinobarómetro estimates for police and congress are small and statistically insignificant. Conversely, Latinobarómetro shows negative gaps for public administration, while the corresponding WVS civil service estimate is weaker. These differences may reflect differences in question wording, country coverage, survey years, and the set of institutional items available in each survey.

Taken together, the two datasets support the presence of gender gaps in trust in LAC, including interpersonal trust and trust in core state institutions. The most consistent component-level evidence across surveys concerns institutions of authority, political representation, and democratic legitimacy, especially the armed forces, government, political parties, and electoral institutions. The broader claim that the gender gap is especially pronounced in institutional trust rests mainly on the cross-regional WVS evidence, while Latinobarómetro provides partial corroboration within LAC.

Table C.1: Gender Gap in Trust, Latinobarómetro

	Interpersonal Trust	Institutional Trust	Core State Trust	Non-State Trust
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	-0.023***	-0.030***	-0.017**	0.008
	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.009)
Observations	393,158	396,127	396,860	240,029
R^2	0.043	0.109	0.115	0.082

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using Latinobarómetro data covering available waves from 1995 to 2023. The dependent variables are listed in the column headers and are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. Interpersonal trust measures trust in other people. Institutional trust averages trust in the armed forces, police, judiciary, government, political parties, congress, public administration, and electoral institutions. Core state trust averages trust in the police, judiciary, government, congress, and political parties. Non-state trust averages trust in churches, the press, television, community associations, private firms, large firms, radio, banks, newspapers, student organizations, media, labor unions, public hospitals, and private clinics. "Female" is an indicator for female respondents. Since Latinobarómetro covers LAC countries, the coefficient on Female reports the gender gap within LAC. Interpersonal trust is based on the generalized trust question and ranges from 1 to 2, with higher values indicating that most people can be trusted. Institutional trust outcomes are based on confidence in specific institutions and are measured on a 1–4 scale, with higher values indicating greater confidence. Because interpersonal and institutional trust are measured on different scales, coefficients are not directly comparable across these domains in levels. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. The sample includes 20 countries/clusters. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table C.2: Components of Institutional Trust, Latinobarómetro

	Armed Forces	Police	Judiciary	Government	Political Parties	Congress	Public Admin.	Electoral Institution
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Female	-0.102***	0.000	-0.008	-0.037***	-0.033***	-0.012	-0.020***	-0.035***
	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.012)
Observations	362,447	398,007	390,481	323,740	393,713	387,985	160,591	136,499
R^2	0.084	0.101	0.077	0.125	0.073	0.093	0.051	0.111

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using Latinobarómetro data covering available waves from 1995 to 2023. The dependent variables are individual institutional trust items and are listed in the column headers. All outcomes are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. "Female" is an indicator for female respondents. Since Latinobarómetro covers LAC countries, the coefficient on Female reports the gender gap within Latin America. All outcomes are measured on a 1–4 confidence scale, with higher values indicating greater trust. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. The sample includes 20 countries/clusters. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

D Additional Robustness and Heterogeneity

This appendix reports additional robustness and heterogeneity exercises for the main WVS institutional trust result.

D.1 Weighting, regional comparisons, and index construction

Appendix Table D.1 re-estimates the main specification using weights adjusted so that each country-year receives equal total weight. Appendix Table D.2 compares LAC separately with each other world region. Appendix Table D.3 uses a balanced institutional trust index restricted to respondents with all eight institutional trust items observed, and Appendix Table D.4 compares the baseline index, the balanced index, and a PCA-based index in standardized units. Across these exercises, the implied LAC gender gap remains negative and statistically significant.

Table D.1: Gender Gap in Trust with Equal Country-Year Weights, World Values Survey

	(1) Interpersonal Trust	(2) Institutional Trust	(3) Core State Trust	(4) Non-state Trust
Female	-0.006	0.009*	0.019***	0.057***
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Female × LAC	-0.003	-0.049***	-0.042***	-0.044***
	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.010)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.009**	-0.040***	-0.024**	0.013
	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Observations	278,003	264,134	263,160	258,937
R^2	0.360	0.261	0.256	0.195

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variables are listed in the column headers. Survey weights are adjusted so that each country-year receives the same total weight in the estimation. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, and standard errors clustered at the country level. "Female × LAC" is the interaction between the female indicator and an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.2: Latin America versus Other Regions, World Values Survey

	(1) North America	(2) Europe & Central Asia	(3) East Asia & Pacific	(4) Sub-Saharan Africa	(5) MENA	(6) South Asia
Female	0.009***	0.011	0.006	-0.004	0.050***	-0.012
	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.028)
Female × LAC	-0.045***	-0.046***	-0.046***	-0.035**	-0.090***	-0.023
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.029)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.036***	-0.035***	-0.040***	-0.039***	-0.039***	-0.036***
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Observations	63,932	122,613	101,454	89,403	73,787	60,720
R^2	0.154	0.220	0.346	0.187	0.190	0.226

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variable is the institutional trust index. Each column restricts the sample to Latin America and the Caribbean and the comparison region listed in the column header. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. "Female × LAC" is the interaction between the female indicator and an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC in each restricted sample. Standard errors are in parentheses. Inference in pairwise comparisons with few country clusters, especially North America and South Asia, should be interpreted cautiously. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.3: Balanced Institutional Trust Index, World Values Survey

	(1) Baseline index	(2) Balanced index
Female	0.009*	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.007)
Female × LAC	-0.049***	-0.039***
	(0.010)	(0.014)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.040***	-0.039***
	(0.009)	(0.012)
Observations	264,134	70,870
R^2	0.261	0.321

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variable in column (1) is the baseline institutional trust index, which averages available institutional trust items and is set to missing when fewer than four of the eight items are observed. The dependent variable in column (2) is a balanced institutional trust index restricted to respondents with all eight institutional trust items observed: trust in the armed forces, police, justice system, government, political parties, parliament, civil service, and elections. Both indices are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. "Female" is an indicator for female respondents. "Female × LAC" interacts the female indicator with an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Controls, fixed effects, weights, and clustered standard errors are as in Table 1. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.4: Standardized Institutional Trust Measures, World Values Survey

	(1) Baseline index (z-score)	(2) Balanced index (z-score)	(3) PCA index (z-score)
Female	0.014*	0.001	0.004
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Female × LAC	-0.072***	-0.055***	-0.052***
	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.058***	-0.055***	-0.048***
	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Observations	264,134	70,870	70,870
R^2	0.261	0.321	0.324

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using standardized institutional trust outcomes from the World Values Survey. Column (1) uses the baseline institutional trust index, column (2) uses the balanced eight-item institutional trust index, and column (3) uses the first principal component of the eight institutional trust items. All dependent variables are standardized to have mean zero and standard deviation one in their respective estimation samples. The balanced and PCA measures are restricted to respondents with all eight institutional trust items observed. "Female" is an indicator for female respondents. "Female × LAC" interacts the female indicator with an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Controls, fixed effects, weights, and clustered standard errors are as in Table 1. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

D.2 Alternative explanations and alternative institutional indices

Appendix Table D.5 adds controls for political attitudes and engagement, voting behavior, religiosity, happiness, perceived insecurity, and victimization, one at a time. The estimated LAC institutional trust gap remains negative and statistically significant in all specifications. Appendix Table D.6 reports results using alternative institutional trust indices. The gap is negative and statistically significant for political/democratic institutions and security/enforcement institutions, but small and statistically insignificant for bureaucratic/administrative trust.

Table D.5: Alternative Explanations: Additional Controls Added One at a Time

Panel A. Political attitudes and engagement

	Ideology		Interest politics		Discuss politics		Democracy important	
	Base	+ control	Base	+ control	Base	+ control	Base	+ control
Female	0.004	0.006	0.009*	0.034***	0.005	0.014**	0.013**	0.014**
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Female × LAC	-0.040***	-0.043***	-0.048***	-0.059***	-0.044***	-0.047***	-0.049***	-0.049***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Female + Female × × LAC	-0.036***	-0.037***	-0.039***	-0.024***	-0.039***	-0.034***	-0.035***	-0.035***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Observations	198,689	198,689	261,992	261,992	76,422	76,422	190,573	190,573
R^2	0.238	0.242	0.261	0.278	0.312	0.314	0.272	0.275

Panel B. Voting behavior, religiosity, and happiness

	Vote local		Vote national		Religious		Happiness	
	Base	+ control	Base	+ control	Base	+ control	Base	+ control
Female	0.012*	0.016**	0.011	0.014**	0.009	0.001	0.009*	0.006
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Female × LAC	-0.049***	-0.052***	-0.047***	-0.051***	-0.050***	-0.051***	-0.049***	-0.045***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Female + Female × × LAC	-0.037***	-0.036***	-0.037***	-0.037***	-0.042***	-0.050***	-0.039***	-0.039***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Observations	137,164	137,164	138,452	138,452	256,614	256,614	262,202	262,202
R^2	0.272	0.279	0.270	0.276	0.261	0.264	0.261	0.270

Panel C. Perceived insecurity and victimization

	Not out at night		Crime victim		Family victim		Felt unsafe at home	
	Base	+ control	Base	+ control	Base	+ control	Base	+ control
Female	0.010	0.010	0.011	0.010	0.011	0.011*	0.012*	0.012*
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Female × LAC	-0.048***	-0.048***	-0.049***	-0.050***	-0.050***	-0.050***	-0.049***	-0.048***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Female + Female × × LAC	-0.038***	-0.037***	-0.038***	-0.040***	-0.039***	-0.038***	-0.037***	-0.036***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Observations	138,624	138,624	144,206	144,206	143,226	143,226	143,963	143,963
R^2	0.265	0.265	0.276	0.276	0.276	0.277	0.275	0.275

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variable is the institutional trust index. For each additional control, the first column reports the baseline specification estimated on the same sample as the augmented specification, and the second column adds the corresponding control. Panel A adds controls for political ideology, interest in politics, frequency of political discussion, and the importance of democracy. Panel B adds controls for voting in local elections, voting in national elections, religiosity, and subjective happiness. Panel C adds controls for perceived insecurity and victimization. All specifications include the baseline individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. "Female × LAC" is the interaction between the female indicator and an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.6: Alternative Institutional Trust Indices, World Values Survey

	(1) Political/ democratic	(2) Security/ enforcement	(3) Bureaucratic/ administrative	(4) Institutional trust excl. armed forces
Female	0.005	0.009	0.017***	0.016***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Female × LAC	-0.040***	-0.069***	-0.024**	-0.040***
	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.011)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.035***	-0.060***	-0.007	-0.024**
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Observations	261,052	264,240	259,344	261,405
R^2	0.272	0.200	0.190	0.262

Notes: The table reports OLS estimates using World Values Survey data. The dependent variables are alternative institutional trust indices. The political/democratic index averages trust in government, political parties, parliament, and elections. The security/enforcement index averages trust in the armed forces, police, and justice system. The bureaucratic/administrative outcome is trust in the civil service. The final column reports the broad institutional trust index excluding trust in the armed forces. All outcomes are coded so that higher values indicate higher trust. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. "Female × LAC" is the interaction between the female indicator and an indicator for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within LAC. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

D.3 Specification, country, and year robustness

Appendix Table D.7 reports alternative specifications that vary the control set, fixed effects, and survey weights. Appendix Table D.8 excludes each LAC country one at a time. Appendix Table D.9 documents country coverage by WVS wave and region in the baseline institutional trust estimation sample. Appendix Table D.10 excludes each survey year one at a time. The estimated LAC institutional trust gap remains stable across these exercises.

Table D.7: Specification Robustness, World Values Survey

	No Controls	Baseline	Country FE + Year FE	No Weights
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	0.017***	0.009*	0.010*	0.006
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Female × LAC	-0.055***	-0.049***	-0.048***	-0.046***
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.038***	-0.040***	-0.038***	-0.040***
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Observations	409,504	264,134	264,134	264,134
R^2	0.246	0.261	0.243	0.260

Notes: The table reports robustness checks for the WVS institutional trust index. Columns vary the control set, fixed effects, and weighting. The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Standard errors are clustered at the country level and reported in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.8: Robustness to excluding one LAC country at a time

Excluded country	Female	Female × LAC	Observations	R^2
Puerto Rico	0.009*	-0.049***	262,098	0.261
Haiti	0.009*	-0.050***	262,520	0.257
Dominican Republic	0.009*	-0.048***	263,845	0.260
Trinidad and Tobago	0.009*	-0.051***	262,220	0.262
Mexico	0.009*	-0.049***	256,841	0.261
Guatemala	0.009*	-0.051***	262,158	0.257
El Salvador	0.009*	-0.049***	264,134	0.261
Nicaragua	0.009*	-0.049***	262,935	0.260
Colombia	0.009*	-0.049***	261,196	0.260
Venezuela	0.009*	-0.046***	260,828	0.259
Ecuador	0.009*	-0.049***	261,750	0.262
Peru	0.010*	-0.049***	257,893	0.250
Brazil	0.009*	-0.050***	256,931	0.265
Bolivia	0.010*	-0.047***	262,186	0.259
Chile	0.009*	-0.055***	259,437	0.264
Argentina	0.009*	-0.050***	263,312	0.260
Uruguay	0.009*	-0.045***	260,439	0.265

Notes: Each row reports estimates from a separate regression excluding the country indicated in the first column. The dependent variable is the institutional trust index. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. Standard errors are omitted for compactness. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.9: Country Coverage by WVS Wave and Region

Wave	Latin America and the Caribbean	North America	Europe & Central Asia	East Asia & Pacific	Sub-Saharan Africa	MENA	South Asia
2	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
3	8	1	14	1	2	0	2
4	4	2	7	5	4	3	2
5	7	1	15	9	7	2	0
6	9	1	15	9	5	8	1
7	13	2	15	13	7	5	2

Notes: The table reports the number of countries by WVS wave and region in the baseline institutional trust estimation sample. A country is counted in a wave-region cell if it contributes at least one observation to the baseline specification. MENA denotes Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Wave 1 does not appear because it does not contribute observations to the baseline institutional trust specification after imposing outcome and covariate availability.

Table D.10: Leave-One-Year-Out Robustness: Institutional Trust

Excluded Year	Female	Female × LAC	Observations	R^2
1990	0.009*	-0.049***	261,037	0.262
1991	0.009*	-0.051***	262,484	0.262
1995	0.010*	-0.050***	256,426	0.264
1996	0.009*	-0.047***	251,450	0.263
1997	0.010*	-0.047***	257,202	0.264
1998	0.009*	-0.049***	259,875	0.261
1999	0.009*	-0.049***	263,023	0.261
2000	0.010**	-0.047***	255,348	0.267
2001	0.011*	-0.050***	245,084	0.251
2002	0.009*	-0.049***	260,848	0.259
2003	0.010*	-0.050***	263,135	0.261
2004	0.009*	-0.051***	263,207	0.260
2005	0.009	-0.048***	253,728	0.265
2006	0.010*	-0.052***	240,230	0.253
2007	0.008	-0.048***	251,017	0.263
2009	0.009	-0.049***	263,234	0.261
2010	0.009*	-0.048***	261,425	0.262
2011	0.006	-0.045***	244,159	0.263
2012	0.012**	-0.054***	239,030	0.264
2013	0.009*	-0.048***	251,603	0.264
2014	0.008	-0.048***	257,671	0.264
2016	0.009*	-0.050***	262,520	0.257
2017	0.009*	-0.047***	255,159	0.261
2018	0.011*	-0.053***	233,211	0.253
2019	0.009*	-0.050***	259,001	0.261
2020	0.009	-0.049***	244,730	0.252
2021	0.010*	-0.050***	258,347	0.261
2022	0.009*	-0.048***	258,486	0.260
2023	0.010*	-0.049***	263,082	0.260

Notes: The table reports leave-one-year-out estimates for the WVS institutional trust index. Each row excludes one survey year. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. Standard errors are omitted for compactness. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

D.4 Heterogeneity

Appendix Tables D.11 and D.12 report heterogeneity by age and education. The institutional trust gap is present across age groups, is larger among older respondents, and is strongest among respondents with primary education or less. Appendix Table D.13 explores whether the gap varies with country-year characteristics. These exploratory tests do not provide clear

evidence of systematic macro-level heterogeneity and should be interpreted as inconclusive rather than as ruling out macro-level moderators.

Table D.11: Heterogeneity by Age, World Values Survey

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	0.013	0.008	0.008	0.021**
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Female × LAC	-0.033**	-0.049***	-0.052***	-0.074***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.021*	-0.040***	-0.044**	-0.054***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Observations	75,060	84,033	61,428	42,127
R^2	0.268	0.281	0.270	0.235

Notes: The table reports WVS estimates of the gender gap in institutional trust by age group. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) for each age group. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.12: Heterogeneity by Education, World Values Survey

	Low education	Middle education	High education
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Female	0.025***	0.006	-0.007
	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Female × LAC	-0.092***	-0.035***	-0.012
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.018)
Female + Female × LAC	-0.066***	-0.028***	-0.020
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.017)
Observations	69,252	145,219	49,663
R^2	0.262	0.284	0.212

Notes: The table reports WVS estimates of the gender gap in institutional trust by education group. Education groups are harmonized across WVS waves as primary or less, secondary, and tertiary/university. All specifications include individual controls excluding education dummies, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. The row "Female + Female × LAC" reports the implied gender gap within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) for each education group. Standard errors are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table D.13: Contextual Heterogeneity in the LAC Gender Gap in Institutional Trust

Contextual Variable	LAC Gender Gap at Mean	Change in LAC Gap Per 1 SD	Observations	R^2
Violence				
Homicides	-0.038***	-0.001	203,535	0.249
	(0.013)	(0.015)		
Institutional quality				
Rule of law	-0.037***	0.008	224,586	0.261
	(0.013)	(0.014)		
Control of corruption	-0.039***	0.002	224,586	0.261
	(0.012)	(0.016)		
Government effectiveness	-0.039***	0.002	224,586	0.261
	(0.013)	(0.015)		
Political stability	-0.040***	-0.003	224,586	0.261
	(0.010)	(0.017)		
Voice and accountability	-0.040***	0.000	224,586	0.261
	(0.008)	(0.016)		
Inequality				
Gini	-0.043	-0.002	146,679	0.240
	(0.027)	(0.016)		
Women's representation and labor market participation				
Female parliamentary seats	-0.035***	-0.005	228,215	0.273
	(0.011)	(0.010)		
Female labor force participation	-0.040***	-0.008	262,324	0.262
	(0.009)	(0.013)		

Notes: The table reports exploratory WVS estimates allowing the gender gap in institutional trust to vary with standardized country-year characteristics. Each row corresponds to a separate specification using the contextual variable indicated in the first column. "LAC gender gap at mean" reports the implied gender gap within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) when the standardized contextual variable equals zero. "Change in LAC gap per 1 SD" reports how the LAC gender gap changes with a one-standard-deviation increase in the contextual variable. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. All specifications include individual controls, country-year fixed effects, survey weights, and standard errors clustered at the country level. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.