

CHAPTER 5:

Students' perceptions of social cohesion and diversity

Chapter highlights

Most students in ICCS 2016 Latin American countries said they would not be bothered by having members of different social minority groups as neighbors.

- More than four fifths of students on average reported that they would not be bothered by having members of minority groups as neighbors. (Table 5.1)
- Students in Chile and Colombia showed relatively higher levels of acceptance of neighborhood diversity, while students from the Dominican Republic and Peru expressed lower levels. (Table 5.2)
- Students who were female, students who attended school in urban areas, and students who had higher levels of civic knowledge were the students most likely to express acceptance of neighborhood diversity. (Table 5.2)

Most students across the ICCS 2016 Latin American countries expressed positive attitudes toward homosexuality.

- While majorities of students in all Latin American countries expressed support for questionnaire items concerning equal rights of homosexual individuals, there was less consensus regarding issues related to same-sex marriage and rights to adopt children. (Table 5.3)
- In Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, the proportions of ICCS 2016 students expressing support for same-sex marriage were much higher than in 2009. In the Dominican Republic, however, the percentage of students expressing this view was significantly lower than in the previous cycle. (Table 5.3)
- The average percentages of Chilean and Mexican students who had positive attitudes toward homosexuality were significantly higher than the Latin American average. Students in the Dominican Republic and Peru, however, held significantly less positive attitudes. (Table 5.3)
- Female students, students attending school in urban areas, and students with higher levels of civic knowledge tended to have more positive attitudes than the other students toward homosexuality. (Table 5.4)

Students from ICCS 2016 Latin American countries perceived a varying degree of discrimination against different social groups.

• On average, the people whom the highest number of students thought were most discriminated against were homosexuals. The lowest percentages of perceived discrimination were for younger and older people. (Table 5.5)

In this chapter, we discuss the views that the students in the five ICCS 2016 Latin American countries held in relation to social cohesion and diversity. Our focus is on aspects of ICCS 2016 Research Question 4: What beliefs do students in participating countries hold regarding important civic issues in modern society and what are the factors associated with their variation? More specifically, the analyses in this chapter address the following issues:

- To what extent are students from Latin America bothered by having members of social minorities as their neighbors?
- To what extent do Latin American students accept homosexuality?
- To what extent do Latin American students perceive discrimination against different social groups in their country?

The chapter relies primarily on data collected from the ICCS 2016 Latin American student questionnaire. We report percentage responses for item sets and, where possible, refer to scores on the Item Response Theory (IRT) scales derived from those item sets. The scales are described in more detail in the ICCS 2016 technical report (Schulz & Friedman, 2018). Item maps describing the scales can be found in Appendix C.

Students' acceptance of social minorities

Discrimination against minority groups is seen as a deeply entrenched problem worldwide. Encouraging tolerance for different groups in society is therefore commonly regarded as important for the wellbeing of people in society (see, for example, Côté & Erickson, 2009). Reviews of common elements of civic and citizenship educational policies across Latin American countries have revealed considerable emphasis on encouraging students to demonstrate tolerance toward diversity (Ainley, Schulz, & Friedman, 2013). One prominent example is the Colombian Program of Citizenship Competencies (Colombian Ministry of Education, 2004; Chaux, Lleras, & Velásquez, 2004), which includes a content dimension encompassing pluralism, identity, and respect for diversity as well as issues related to discrimination and exclusion.

The ICCS 2009 Latin American regional questionnaire included a set of items that measured students' acceptance of different social minority groups as neighbors. While the 2009 students generally said they were not bothered by living near people of a different nationality, people from another region in the country, or people with a different skin color, they expressed more concern about living near people who were homosexuals or lesbians and those who had AIDS.

Question 6 of the ICCS 2016 Latin American questionnaire used a modified version of this question. It asked students to respond to each of the following eight statements with a "yes" or "no." Each statement began with this stem: "Would it bother you having neighbors belonging to the following groups": (a) persons with different skin color than yours; (b) persons of a different social class than yours; (c) persons of a different religion than yours; (d) persons who come from another region of the country; (e) persons with physical disabilities; (f) persons with mental disorders; (g) persons from a different country; and (h) persons of indigenous origin.

When reviewing the percentages of students who indicated that they would not be bothered by having each of the social groups as neighbors (see Table 5.1), we found clear majorities of students in all countries expressing this attitude. The average percentages of students who were not bothered across the five Latin American countries participating in ICCS 2016 ranged from 83 percent to 88 percent, depending on the group. Of the eight different groups, persons with mental disorders and those of a different religion were the groups that students said would most bother them if they were neighbors. However, the proportions of students expressing this attitude were still low. Students said they would not be bothered by having persons of a different religion as neighbors; only 15 percent of students on average indicated this group would concern them. On average,

students were least bothered (percentages of students saying this were between 87% and 88%) by having neighbors from these groups: a different social class; a different country; of indigenous origin; different skin color; physical disabilities; and another region of the country.

We used the eight items from this question to derive a scale on students' attitudes toward neighborhood diversity. The scale had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90) on average across the five participating countries, and the higher scores on it correspond to higher levels of acceptance of neighborhood diversity. Scale scores for Chile and Colombia were significantly higher than the ICCS 2016 Latin American average (indicating more positive attitudes), whereas scale scores for the Dominican Republic and Peru were significantly lower.

We also compared, in each participating country, students' acceptance of neighborhood diversity by their gender, school location, and civic knowledge (see Table 5.2). In all countries, female students were more accepting than male students of neighborhood diversity. Except for Chile, students who attended schools in urban locations were more likely than students attending schools in rural locations to have more positive attitudes toward social minorities as neighbors. This finding may be partly explained by more homogenous social contexts in rural areas. The largest difference we recorded was in Peru, where there was a four-point scale score difference in favor of students attending urban schools.

Students from all participating countries with civic knowledge scores at or above Level B on the civic knowledge scale expressed higher levels of acceptance of neighborhood diversity than students with civic knowledge scores below Level B. On average, we observed a difference of five scale score points between the two comparison groups. The largest differences across this sub-group were those in the Dominican Republic and Peru (differences of eight and six scale points respectively). These two countries also had the relatively highest proportions of lower achieving students among the Latin American countries as well as lower levels of acceptance of neighborhood diversity.

Students' attitudes toward homosexuality

Surveys in Latin America of public attitudes toward homosexuality, particularly the issue of same-sex marriage, have shown a deep division that appears to be influenced by contextual factors such as gender, age, education, and religious beliefs (Kelley, 2001; Maldonado, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2014). There is also evidence of considerable differences in perceptions across countries of the region (Latinobarómetro, 2009).

The ICCS 2009 students from Latin America were given a question designed to capture their attitudes toward people with different sexual orientations. The question asked them to rate the extent of their agreement with several statements about people with a homosexual orientation. While no scale was derived from these items during the survey of ICCS 2009 Latin American countries, the results indicated that the majority of students in those countries expressed positive attitudes for four of the five items (Chaux & León, 2016; Schulz, Ainley, Friedman, & Lietz, 2011). The only item where less than half of the students expressed agreement on average across the six ICCS 2009 Latin American countries was the item relating to marriage equality.

The ICCS 2016 student questionnaire contained a modified version of the question on attitudes toward homosexuality (all items were worded positively, for example). It asked students to express their agreement or disagreement ("strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," "strongly disagree") with the

¹ ICCS 2016 measured students' civic knowledge using a test consisting of 87 items. Outcomes were reported on a described scale with the following levels: students working at Level D demonstrate familiarity with concrete, explicit content and examples relating to the basic features of democracy; students working at Level C engage with the fundamental principles and broad concepts that underpin civics and citizenship; students working at Level B typically demonstrate some specific knowledge and understanding of the most pervasive civic and citizenship institutions, systems, and concepts; and students working at Level A demonstrate a holistic knowledge and understanding of civic and citizenship concepts and demonstrate some critical perspective.

Table 5.1: National percentages and scale scores indicating students' acceptance of neighborhood diversity

Country	Percentag	Percentages of students who would not be bothered by having members of the following social groups as neighbors:	would not be both	ered by having mer	mbers of the follow	ing social groups a	s neighbors:	Average scale scores
	Persons with different skin color than theirs (%)	Persons of a different social class than theirs (%)	Persons of a different religion than theirs (%)	Persons who come from another region of the country (%)	Persons with physical disabilities (%)	Persons with mental disorders (%)	Persons from a different country (%)	indicating students' acceptance of social minorities as neighbors
Chile	93 (0.4) Δ	90 (0.5) △	92 (0.5) Δ	94 (0.4) Δ	94 (0.4) △	89 (0.5) Δ	93 (0.4) △	52 (0.1) Δ
Colombia	91 (0.6) Δ	89 (0.6) △	∇ (9.0) 68	91 (0.5) Δ	92 (0.4) Δ	86 (0.6) Δ	0.0) 06	51 (0.2) Δ
Dominican Republic	80 (1.1) ∇	81 (0.9) ∇	79 (1.0) ∇	81 (1.0) ∇	80 (1.1) ∇	73 (0.9) ∇	80 (1.0) ∇	47 (0.3) ∇
Mexico	△ (9.0) 98	(9.0) 98	84 (0.7)	87 (0.6)	(9.0) 88	87 (0.6) Δ	87 (0.7)	50 (0.2)
Peru	88 (0.7)	86 (0.7)	83 (0.9) ∇	87 (0.7)	87 (0.8)	79 (0.8) ∇	86 (0.7) ∇	49 (0.3) ∇
Latin American ICCS 2016 average	88 (0.3)	87 (0.3)	85 (0.3)	88 (0.3)	88 (0.3)	83 (0.3)	87 (0.3)	50 (0.1)

National ICCS 2016 results are:

▲ More than 10 percentage or 3 score points above Latin American ICCS 2016 average

△ Significantly above Laun American ICCS 2016 average
▼ Significantly below Latin American ICCS 2016 average
▼ More than 10 percentage or 3 score points below Latin American ICCS 2016 average

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

Table 5.2 National average scale scores indicating students' attitudes toward neighborhood diversity by gender, school location, and level of civic knowledge

Country	Sca	Scale score average by gender g	nder group	Scale	Scale score by school location		Scale score avera	Scale score average by level of civic knowledge	knowledge
	Male students		Female students	Rural school		Urbanschool	Civic knowledge below Level B (below 479)		Civic knowledge at or above Level B (479 and above)
		9 6 9 6	6-	۰,	9 0 0	~	6.	9 0 0	6.
Chile	52 (0.2)		53 (0.2)	52 (0.3)		52 (0.2)	51 (0.2)		53 (0.1)
Colombia (r)	50 (0.3)		52 (0.2)	51 (0.3)		52 (0.2)	49 (0.3)		53 (0.1)
Dominican Republic (r)	45 (0.4)		49 (0.3)	47 (0.4)		48 (0.5)	46 (0.3)		54 (0.3)
Mexico	49 (0.3)		51 (0.2)	50 (0.3)		51 (0.3)	48 (0.4)		52 (0.2)
Peru	49 (0.3)		50 (0.3)	48 (0.3)		52 (0.3)	47 (0.3)		53 (0.2)
Latin American ICCS 2016	49 (0.1)		51 (0.1)	50 (0.2)		51 (0.1)	48 (0.1)		53 (0.1)

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Score averages that are significantly larger (p < 0.05) than those in the comparison group are displayed in **bold**. An "(r" indicates that data are available for at least 70% but less than 85% of students.

following five statements): (a) "Persons of the same sex should have the right to get married;" (b) "Two persons of the same sex should have the right to adopt children;" (c) "Homosexuals should have the same rights as all other citizens;" (d) "All schools should accept homosexuals;" and (e) "Homosexuals should have the right to hold any political or public position."

On average, most students from the participating ICCS 2016 Latin American countries tended to express agreement (strongly agree or agree) with the positively worded items concerning the rights of people with a homosexual orientation (see Table 5.3). The item containing the statement "Persons of the same sex should have the right to get married" was administered using the same wording as in ICCS 2009, making it possible to compare the responses to this item for each cycle. Consideration of the results for these items need to acknowledge that in recent years more countries have introduced a legal basis for same-sex marriage, and that more countries may make changes to their laws on this matter in the near future. These developments are likely to influence public debate as well as public opinion, so young people's attitudes toward marriage equality may soon be subject to further changes.

On average across the participating countries, 61 percent of the students surveyed in ICCS 2016 expressed agreement with marriage equality. Interestingly, we observed some notable changes for those countries that participated in both cycles of the study. Students from Chile (where partners of the same sex may register their relationships as civil unions but cannot legally marry) had the highest level of agreement across countries for this item (increasing from 58% agreement in ICCS 2009 to 79% agreement in ICCS 2016). We also recorded large increases in agreement over time for this item in Colombia (49% in 2009, 63% in 2016) and Mexico (64% in 2009, 78% in 2016). Colombia made same-sex marriage legal in in 2016, whereas only some of the Mexican states had legalized it at this time. In the Dominican Republic, only 38 percent of the ICCS 2016 students expressed support for same-sex marriage, which meant a drop of 11 percentage points from the 49 percent of students who agreed with same-sex marriage in 2009. In Peru, which participated for the first time in ICCS in 2016, just under half of its students (48%) expressed support for this type of marriage.

Almost four fifths of students on average across the ICCS 2016 Latin American countries agreed that "People who identify as homosexuals should have the same rights as other citizens," and this was the highest level of agreement among the five items. Agreement ranged from 63 percent in the Dominican Republic to 88 percent in Mexico. A large proportion of students thought that "All schools should accept homosexual students" and that "Homosexuals should have the right to hold any political or public position;" on average, these items attracted agreement levels of 72 and 70 percent respectively. The statement attracting the lowest level of agreement across the five countries was "Two persons of the same sex should have the right to adopt children." Agreement ranged from 43 and 45 percent in the Dominican Republic and Peru, respectively, to 76 and 77 percent in Chile and Mexico.

During ICCS 2016, we used these five items to derive a scale reflecting students' attitudes toward homosexuality. The scale had a high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88) on average across the participating countries, with the higher scores on it representing more positive attitudes toward homosexuality. Scale scores for students from both Chile and Mexico were significantly higher than the Latin American ICCS 2016 average, while scores for students from the Dominican Republic and Peru were significantly lower. We also compared the scores on this scale across dichotomous sub-groups based on student gender, school location, and student level of civic knowledge (see Table 5.4).

In all countries, female students expressed more positive attitudes than male students toward homosexuality (with an average difference of more than three scale points). The largest difference that we observed was in Chile (a difference of about six scale points). We also found statistically significant differences between students at urban schools and students at rural schools.

Table 5.3: National percentages and scale scores indicating students' attitudes toward homosexuality

Country		А	ercentages of stu	Percentages of students who agreed with the following statements:	ith the following sta	atements:		
	Persons of the same sex shoul	sex should have the r	d have the right to get married	Two persons of the same sex should have the right to adopt	Homosexuals should have the same rights as all other critizens	All schools should accept homosexuals	Homosexuals should have the right to hold any political or public position	Average scale scores indicating students' acceptance of homogeniality
	%2016	% 2009	Difference	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
Chile	▼ (6.0) 62	58 (1.1)	20 (1.4)	76 (1.0) ▲	86 (0.7) Δ	84 (0.8)	83 (0.8)	55 (0.3) \triangle
Colombia	63 (1.2) \triangle	49 (1.2)	14 (1.6)	59 (1.1)	85 (0.7) Δ	80 (1.0) \triangle	72 (0.9) A	50 (0.2)
Dominican Republic	38 (1.1) ▼	49 (1.4)	-11 (1.8)	43 (1.3) ▼	63 (1.2) ▼	51 (1.3) 🔻	50 (1.2) ▼	45 (0.2) ∇
Mexico	▼ (0.0) 87	64 (0.9)	15 (1.2)	▼ (0.0) 77	88 (0.6)	■ (0.8)	83 (0.7)	53 (0.2)
Peru	48 (1.4) ▼	1	ı	45 (1.2) ▼	71 (1.1) ∇	61 (1.1) ▼	63 (1.0) ∇	46 (0.2) ∇
Latin American ICCS 2016 average	61 (0.5)			60 (0.5)	79 (0.4)	72 (0.4)	70 (0.4)	50 (0.1)
Common countries average	65 (0.5)	55 (0.6)	(8.0) 6					

National ICCS 2016 results are:

▲ More than 10 percentage or 3 score points above Latin American ICCS 2016 average

△ Significantly above Lauri American ICCS 2016 average ▼ Significantly below Latin American ICCS 2016 average ▼ More than 10 percentage or 3 score points below Latin American ICCS 2016 average

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent. Statistically significant changes (p < 0.05) between 2009 and 2016 are displayed in **bold**. No comparable data available.

Table 5.4: National average scale scores indicating students' acceptance of homosexuality by gender, school location, and level of civic knowledge

Country	Scale	Scale score average by gender g	der group	Scale so	Scale score by school locations	suc	Scale score average by level of civic knowledge	by level of civic	knowledge
	Male students		Female students	Rural school		Urban school	Civic knowledge below Level B (below 479)		Civic knowledge at or above Level B (479 and above)
	6	6.00		6	9 0 9	6.	6 9	9.	6.
Chile	52 (0.3)		58 (0.3)	54 (0.4)		55 (0.3)	53 (0.3)		56 (0.3)
Colombia (r)	48 (0.2)		52 (0.3)	50 (0.3)		51 (0.4)	49 (0.2)		52 (0.3)
Dominican Republic (r)	44 (0.3)		46 (0.3)	45 (0.3)		45 (0.5)	45 (0.2)		46 (0.5)
Mexico	52 (0.2)		55 (0.2)	53 (0.3)		54 (0.3)	52 (0.2)		55 (0.2)
³ eru	45 (0.2)		48 (0.3)	46 (0.2)		48 (0.5)	45 (0.2)		48 (0.4)
atin American ICCS 2016	48 (0.1)		52 (0.1)	50 (0.1)		51 (0.2)	49 (0.1)		51 (0.2)
average									

Difference between comparison groups not statistically significant at p < 0.05. Difference between comparison groups statistically significant at p < 0.05.

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Score averages that are significantly larger (p < 0.05) than those in the comparison group are displayed in **bold**. An "(r)" indicates that data are available for at least 70% but less than 85% of students.

On average, students attending schools in urban locations had scale scores that were about one point higher than the scores of students at schools in rural locations. These differences were statistically significant in all countries except the Dominican Republic. In addition, students who had higher levels of civic knowledge (at or above Level B) tended to express more positive attitudes than their less knowledgeable peers toward people with a homosexual orientation. On average across the participating countries, the difference was about three scale points, and it was as high as four scale points in Mexico. The only country not to record a significant difference between these two groups of students was the Dominican Republic.

Students' perceptions of discrimination in society

As in many other parts of the world, research shows that a large degree of discrimination still exists toward groups of people in Latin America based on factors such as poverty (Ñopo, Chong, & Moro, 2010), gender (Morgan & Bruce, 2013), and ethnicity (Seligson, Smith, & Zechmeister, 2012). In addition, perceptions of these types of discrimination are often influenced by an individual's background (e.g., skin color and ethnicity) and by contextual factors (Canache, Hayes, Mondak, & Seligson, 2014).

The ICCS 2016 student questionnaire included a new question that asked students to consider 11 groups of people and then to rate how much they thought their countries discriminated against each group (response categories "a lot," "to some extent," "a little," "not at all"): (a) women; (b) young persons; (c) homosexual persons; (d) unemployed persons; (e) persons with a disability; (f) persons of African origin; (g) religious minorities; (h) poor people; (i) older people; (j) immigrants; and (k) persons of indigenous origin.

Students participating in ICCS 2016 across Latin America perceived these groups of people as being discriminated against to varying degrees in their countries (see Table 5.5). In all countries, the group that the largest proportion of students perceived as being discriminated against (a lot or to some extent) were those with a homosexual orientation. On average across the participating countries, 81 percent of students reported a lot or some discrimination in their respective countries, ranging from 86 percent of students in Chile to 70 percent in the Dominican Republic. Interestingly, we found that students in the latter country were the students least likely to see this group as being discriminated against yet were also the students who held the least positive attitudes toward homosexuality.

Persons with a disability were perceived as the second-most discriminated against group in the five countries; the cross-national average percentage of students holding this view was 61 percent. The students most likely to think persons with disabilities experienced discrimination were those in Chile and Colombia; the least likely were those in Peru and Mexico.

On average, between 59 and 61 percent of students across Latin America thought that persons from an African origin, poor people, persons of indigenous origin, and women were all discriminated against. Of note is the finding that in Chile only half of the students perceived poor people as being discriminated against. This proportion was 11 percentage points below the average for all participating countries. While in this context it is worth mentioning that Chile's GDP per capita is higher compared to the GDPs of the other participating Latin American countries, Chile also has high levels of income inequality (United Nations Development Programme, 2016), and there may be other factors influencing students' perceptions of discrimination against poor people in this country.

The groups that students thought experienced the least discrimination were immigrants, members of religious minorities, unemployed persons, young persons, and older persons. On average across the five countries, between 43 and 51 percent of students thought that these groups were discriminated against. In the Dominican Republic, the percentages of students who thought that young persons, unemployed persons, immigrants, and older people were discriminated against were more than 10 percentage points above the regional ICCS 2016 average.

Table 5.5: Students' perceptions of discrimination against social groups in their country

Country		Percentages of stud	lents who perceived a lot	Percentages of students who perceived a lot or a certain extent of discrimination against:	crimination against:	
	Women	Young persons	Homosexual persons	Unemployed persons	Persons with a disability	Persons of African origin
Chile	49 (0.9) ∇	33 (0.9) ∇	86 (0.6)	35 (0.9) ∇	56 (1.0) ∇	54 (0.7) ∇
Colombia	57 (1.1) ∇	39 (0.9) ∇	85 (0.7) Δ	39 (0.9) ∇	58 (0.9) ∇	64 (1.0) \triangle
Dominican Republic	66 (1.1) \triangle	60 (1.3)	70 (0.9) 🔻	57 (1.2)	63 (0.9)	56 (1.0) ∇
Mexico	63 (0.8)	45 (0.9) A	83 (0.6) Δ	47 (0.9) Δ	∇ (0.0) 89	∇ (6.0) 69
Peru	61 (1.1)	39 (0.9) ∇	80 (0.9)	44 (0.9)	64 (1.0) \triangle	61 (0.9)
Latin American ICCS 2016	59 (0.4)	43 (0.4)	81 (0.3)	44 (0.4)	62 (0.4)	61 (0.4)
average						

Country		Percentages of students who perceived a lot or a certain extent of discrimination against:	perceived a lot or a certain ex	tent of discrimination against	
	Religious minorities	Poor people	Older people	<lmmigrants></lmmigrants>	Persons of indigenous origin
Chile	38 (1.0) ∇	50 (1.1) ▼	33 (0.9) ∇	52 (1.0)	55 (1.0) ∇
Colombia	46 (0.9) ∇	58 (0.8) ∇	37 (1.0) ∇	44 (1.1) ∇	54 (1.1) ∇
Dominican Republic	52 (0.9)	67 (1.0) \triangle	57 (1.1) ▶	61 (1.0)	T
Mexico	54 (0.9)	65 (0.9) Δ	45 (0.9) A	52 (0.9)	68 (0.8)
Peru	45 (1.1)	63 (1.0) \triangle	42 (1.0)	45 (0.8) ∇	63 (1.0) \triangle
Latin American ICCS 2016	47 (0.4)	61 (0.4)	43 (0.4)	51 (0.4)	60 (0.5)
average					

National ICCS 2016 percentage:

More than 10 percentage points above Latin American ICCS 2016 average
Significantly above Latin American ICCS 2016 average
Significantly below Latin American ICCS 2016 average
More than 10 percentage points below Latin American ICCS 2016 average

Notes: () Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent

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