Gender Gaps in Political Attitudes in Latin America[1]

Pablo Argote[2]

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Abstract

This article examines gender gaps in political attitudes across six Latin American countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay—using Americas Barometer data (LAPOP, 2006–2023) organized by birth cohort. I document a clear *ideological gender gap* among the young: women born after 1980 lean more left and men more right, a divergence absent in earlier generations. The puzzle, however, is what *does not* accompany this gap. When looking at specific issues, the cohort pattern does not produce a gender gap: support for reducing inequality declines sharply in the youngest cohort, but equally for both genders; approval of same-sex marriage and abortion rises for both sexes, with a stable rather than widening female advantage. Likewise, education does not mitigate the ideological gap, and supplementary Age-Period-Cohort evidence is consistent with a post-2015 period effect concentrated among men. The implication is that the modern gender gap arrives in Latin America in a distinctive form: as a divergence in left–right self-placement that is not carried by either of its usual Northern engines—neither culture-war content nor college selection. I interpret this tentatively as an *identitarian* divergence—young men and young women sorting into different ideological tribes for reasons that do not map onto the policy items.

Keywords: Gender gap, ideology, political participation, political attitudes, Latin America, LAPOP, AmericasBarometer

[1][Acknowledgements pending.] All errors are my own.

[2]Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Southern California; pablo.argotetironi@usc.edu.

Introduction

The politics of gender in Latin America has undergone profound institutional changes in recent decades. Gender quotas in formal institutions are now commonplace across the region, and female candidates have won presidential elections in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile (Jones, 2009; Tripp and Kang, 2008). Yet the question of whether men and women also *think about politics* differently, and how those differences have evolved, has received far less systematic attention in the cross-national literature on the region.

In postindustrial democracies, a well-documented transformation has reshaped the gender gap in political attitudes over the past three decades. The "traditional" gap—in which women were more conservative, and more religious than men—has given way to a "modern" gap in which younger, educated women are more left on economic and social issues (Inglehart and Norris, 2000, 2003). This reversal has been particularly dramatic in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and several Western European democracies, where the ideological preferences of young men and young women have diverged sharply since the mid-2010s (Shorrocks, 2018, 2024). Recent evidence suggests that this "great gender divergence" may be a global phenomenon: Kustov and Corti (2025) document growing gender gaps among young adults across 32 European countries, and Evans (2024) argues that social media and separate cultural ecosystems are pulling young men and young women apart ideologically worldwide.

Whether a similar transformation is underway in Latin America is an open question. Several conditions favor it: the region has experienced rapid educational expansion —with women now outpacing men in enrollment and completion across most countries (Urbina, 2022)—, rising female labor force participation, and powerful feminist mobilizations, from *Ni Una Menos* to the *Marea Verde* abortion rights movement, that may have politicized younger cohorts of women in distinctive ways (Daby and Moseley, 2022; Pousadela, 2021). Other features of the region, however, might dampen or redirect such dynamics: the persistence of Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism, the tenacity of gender gaps in the labor market, and a cultural and institutional context that differs

markedly from the post-industrial democracies (Smith and Boas, 2024; Desposato and Norrander, 2009; Morgan and Buice, 2013).

In this paper, I provide a systematic, long-run, and cross-national portrait of gender gaps in political attitudes in Latin America using the AmericasBarometer (LAPOP) from 2006 to 2023 across six countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay. I selected these countries precisely because, as middle-income nations, they are likely to exhibit the tensions between potentially liberalizing forces for women—particularly the expansion of higher education—and an otherwise traditional social reality. The analysis is organized around *birth cohort* as its primary axis, complemented by supplementary Age-Period-Cohort evidence used to probe descriptive timing. I ask two related questions: do men and women in Latin America differ in their ideological self-placement, political engagement, social attitudes, and attitudes toward redistribution; and does education mitigate those differences?

There are four main findings. First, I document a clear *ideological gender gap* in younger cohorts: women born after 1980 lean more left and men more right. The divergence is absent in older generations and robust to rake-weighting the pooled sample to country-specific population marginals on sex, age, and sex-by-education attainment. Second, there are *no gender gaps in the substantive items* LAPOP measures. Support for reducing inequality declines sharply in the youngest cohort, but the decline is shared by both genders. Approval of same-sex marriage and abortion rises in younger cohorts for both men and women, and the modest female advantage on these items is stable across generations rather than widening. In other words, there is a *generational* cooling on redistribution and a generational rise in social progressivism for both men and women. Third, the *college/non-college divide does not mitigate the ideological gap*. In postindustrial democracies, the gender gap and the education gap on ideology have grown together, with college graduates driving the divergence. In Latin America the two cleavages are decoupled: the education gap on ideology is shrinking and in some outcomes reversing in younger cohorts, while the gender gap persists within both college and non-college groups.[1] Fourth, supplementary

[1] A stricter tertiary-completion threshold yields a similar overall picture. See Robustness Checks section

Age-Period-Cohort evidence is consistent with a *post-2015 period effect*, rather than a cohort or age effect, particularly among men, suggestive of recent movement aligned in time with regional feminist mobilization. Even if this is a descriptive decomposition and cannot establish causality, it sets aside pure aging and generational-replacement stories as the primary drivers. The post-2015 timing coincides with the rise of *Ni Una Menos*, the global diffusion of #MeToo, and an intensifying public discourse around feminist demands across the region, making a backlash-style account one natural candidate. However, as I will show throughout the article with several data points, the evidence for any specific mechanism—whether cultural backlash, economic retreat, or movement-level antipathy—turns out to be weak. The timing is suggestive, but what it is suggestive *of* remains an open question the data alone cannot resolve. Based on the empirical results, men appear to be rejecting *left-wing identity* as such—reacting against what that label represents—and, in doing so, drifting toward the right as the available alternative.

Together these findings raise an interpretive puzzle. The Latin American gender gap is sharp in left–right *self-placement* but absent from the substantive issues. Young men and young women sort themselves onto different sides of the ideological map, yet they do not disagree very much about redistribution, abortion, or same-sex marriage—and what disagreement there is appears stable across cohorts rather than opening up. This divergence between *label* and *positions* is hard to read as a substantive policy gap. It is more naturally read as an *identitarian* divergence: young men and young women in Latin America increasingly identify with different political tribes—left and right as symbolic categories—for reasons that do not map cleanly onto the policy preferences. The natural candidates—a reaction to the visibility of regional feminist mobilization, the symbolic recoding of *the left* as feminist territory, the global circulation of right-coded masculine identity content—are not clearly sustained by the data, even when tested descriptively. Indeed, a pair of items fielded only in the 2023 LAPOP wave asks respondents directly about their approval of protests by groups defending women's rights and by feminist groups. Pooled across the six countries, under-25 men and under-25 women report virtually identical approval rates on both items; only in the subset of countries with the strongest recent feminist mobilizations—Argentina,

Chile, and Mexico—does a modest asymmetry emerge on the explicit "feminist groups" item, and even there its magnitude is quite small. The most direct probe available in the survey, therefore, fails to locate the ideological divergence in a backlash towards feminist movements.

These findings make three contributions to the literature. First, they bring systematic comparative evidence from Latin America into debates on the modern gender gap, which remain dominated by postindustrial democracies. Second, and most distinctively, they show that the modern gender gap need not arrive with the substantive carriers it has elsewhere. The Latin American divergence shows up in left–right *labels*, not in the underlying culture-war or redistributive items the survey measures, and it points toward an identitarian rather than a policy-based account of what is dividing young men and young women. The region is therefore not running a regional version of the Northern story; it is generating a distinct variant of the modern gender gap in which the ideological label does the work that culture-war content and college selection do in the United States and Western Europe. Third, the findings qualify expectations about education: in much of the Western literature, higher education and gender increasingly reinforce one another; here they do not. The college/non-college divide does not carry the gap, and the education gap on ideology itself is shrinking and reversing in younger cohorts.

Traditional and Modern Gender Gaps

Research on the gender gap in political attitudes distinguishes two broad patterns. The *traditional gender gap* refers to a set of regularities documented through the mid-twentieth century, where women were more likely to vote for center-right and Christian democratic parties, less likely to self-identify as left-wing, and less likely to participate in formal politics (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993). These patterns were associated with higher religiosity, lower labor force participation, and greater exposure to traditional domestic roles among women (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001).

The *modern gender gap* describes a subsequent reversal. In post-industrial democracies,

women—especially younger women—have moved to the left of men on economic redistribution, social liberalism, and support for the welfare state (Inglehart and Norris, 2000, 2003). More recent work suggests that this pattern has sharpened into a broader "great gender divergence" among young adults. Shorrocks (2018, 2024) shows that in Britain and the United States the widening gap is concentrated among younger cohorts and is especially visible on culture-war issues, feminism, and ideological identity. Kustov and Corti (2025) finds a similar pattern across Europe, documenting widening gender differences among young adults across 32 countries. Evans (2024) argues that separate digital environments and gendered media ecosystems may be pushing young men and women toward distinct political worlds. Taken together, this literature suggests that the contemporary gender gap in postindustrial democracies is not merely a residue of older socialization patterns; it is a live and widening divide in the political orientations of younger generations.

A striking feature of this recent literature is that the modern gap is not only about women moving left. In many settings it also reflects young men becoming relatively more conservative, more skeptical of feminism, and more open to populist appeals (Shorrocks, 2024; Immerzeel, Coffé and van der Lippe, 2015; Spierings and Zaslove, 2017; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015). The contemporary gender gap is therefore best understood as a two-sided divergence: women become more socially liberal and left-leaning, while men remain in place or move right. This matters substantively because it means the observed widening gap may reflect different underlying processes across the two genders, not a single common shift.

Education is one potential reason why the gap may change. If higher education diffuses egalitarian values and civic skills similarly among men and women, it could mitigate the gender gap by moving both groups in the same direction, as shown by (Edelmann and Vaisey, 2023). However, if the political meaning of college is more progressive for women than for men, it could exacerbate the gap by pushing women left more strongly. Recent work points toward this latter possibility: the ideological and partisan payoff of college often appears larger for women, especially where higher education is intertwined with progressive identity (Argote and Basil, 2025). Whether education mitigates or amplifies the gender gap is thus an open question even within the

advanced-democracy literature.

Gender Gap in Latin America

The six countries analyzed in this paper—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay—share broad structural features while differing from industrialized democracies in ways that are relevant to understanding gender gaps in political attitudes. All six have experienced democratic consolidation since the 1980s or 1990s and operate under competitive multiparty systems. This institutional and social context shapes how individual-level characteristics such as sex and education translate into political identities.

The existing cross-national evidence on Latin America points first to a persistent gender gap in political participation, with men more engaged on most dimensions, though the size of the gap varies substantially by country and is moderated by institutional features such as compulsory voting (Desposato and Norrander, 2009; Córdova and Rangel, 2017; Singh, 2025). Morgan and Buice (2013) documented important variation across the region in attitudes toward female political leadership. Studies of specific countries—most notably Chile (Morales Quiroga, 2014)—have noted an emerging ideological gap among younger cohorts, but systematic cross-national evidence covering the most recent rounds has been limited. The region thus offers a setting where several elements associated with the modern gender gap are present, but their combination may produce a pattern different from the one observed in the United States or Western Europe.

Material realities may be especially important in the Latin American case. Despite major gains in schooling and descriptive representation, women still participate less in formal labor markets, earn lower wages, and carry a disproportionate share of childcare and domestic labor (Htun and Weldon, 2010). These inequalities could shape political attitudes in several ways. They may make women more receptive to redistribution, public provision, and gender-equality claims, but they may also reduce time, resources, and opportunities for political engagement. Any account of the regional gender gap therefore has to be grounded not only in identity or values, but also in the

everyday material organization of work and care.

Two more recent developments make the question especially timely. First, the region experienced a wave of feminist mobilization without precedent in recent decades. The *Ni Una Menos* movement, originating in Argentina in 2015 in response to femicide and gender violence, rapidly diffused across the continent; the *marea verde* abortion rights campaign in Argentina (2018) subsequently spread to Chile, Colombia, and Mexico (Daby and Moseley, 2022; Htun and Jensenius, 2024; Pousadela, 2021). These movements may have reshaped the political identities of an entire generation of young women. Participation was skewed toward urban and often university-educated women, suggesting that feminist mobilization may have politicized younger women through channels that partly overlap with education (Daby and Moseley, 2022). These movements also arose partly in response to the perceived failures of left governments to advance gender equality and reproductive rights, complicating any simple alignment of gender with the left-right spectrum (Blofield, Ewig and Piscopo, 2017; Friedman, 2009). The country-level variation is important here: Argentina, Chile, and Mexico saw the largest and most sustained mobilizations, while Brazil and Colombia experienced more fragmented feminist politics, and Uruguay's smaller scale limited its visibility. This variation suggests that any emergent gender gap in values should be most pronounced in the former set of countries.

Second, the growing salience of religious identity has introduced new cultural cleavages that cut across traditional left-right divisions (Smith and Boas, 2024). Catholicism remains the dominant denomination across the six countries, but evangelical Protestantism has expanded substantially —particularly in Brazil— and both traditions have mobilized against abortion access and same-sex marriage. The expansion of LGBTQ rights in the region has proceeded unevenly, driven by courts, social movements, and political opportunities rather than uniform public opinion shifts (Corrales, 2022). These dynamics affect men and women differently, as women tend to hold more progressive views on issues of gender and sexuality (Htun and Weldon, 2010), but women's greater religious attachment may simultaneously pull in a more conservative direction, producing internally differentiated gender gaps that depend on cohort and religiosity alike.

Educational expansion also matters because it could, in principle, amplify or mute the gender gap. Women now outpace men in tertiary enrollment and completion across most of the six countries (Urbina, 2022). The "gender reversal" in educational attainment is particularly pronounced in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, where women now constitute a clear majority of university graduates; in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico the gap is narrower but growing. But educational expansion need not carry the same political implications as in postindustrial democracies. If college is not stably coded as progressive in Latin America, then it may do little to structure the gender gap at all. The analysis below therefore treats education as a possible modifier of the main gender-gap patterns, not as a separate cleavage story in its own right.

Data and Measurement

The primary data source is the AmericasBarometer, fielded by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University (LAPOP – Latin American Public Opinion Project, 2023). The LAPOP surveys are conducted approximately every two years, using stratified, multistage probability samples designed to be nationally representative of the voting-age population. I use all available waves from 2006 to 2023, excluding the abbreviated 2021 COVID-era wave in which key attitude questions were not asked. The pooled analysis sample contains 71,228 observations across six countries.[2]

The six included countries, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay, were selected based on three primary criteria. First, they provide consistent data coverage across LAPOP rounds. Second, they represent the major sub-regional contexts of the Southern Cone, the Andean region, and Brazil. Finally, they correspond to middle-income countries defined by a sharp tension between liberalizing forces for women, such as expanded access to higher education and increased labor market entry, and a persistent, traditional social reality. This reality is characterized by entrenched gender roles, where women continue to bear the primary responsibility for childcare

[2]Outcome-specific sample sizes are smaller for conditional ideology items and for questions fielded in fewer rounds, especially abortion and same-sex marriage.

amidst significant and enduring unemployment gaps (ECLAC, 2022).

I analyze nine outcome variables, organized into two groups. The first covers *ideology and political engagement*: left identification (positions 1–4 on a 1–10 left-right self-placement scale), right identification (positions 7–10), far-left identification (positions 1–2), far-right identification (positions 9–10), and interest in politics (recoded so that high values indicate greater interest). Crucially, the ideological direction measures are *conditional*: they are defined only among respondents who placed themselves on the 1–10 scale, so that the denominator excludes those who declined to answer. This separates ideological direction from the question of whether respondents identify ideologically at all—which I measure directly as the share who placed themselves on the scale. The second group covers *social and economic attitudes*: support for reducing inequality (equal to one if the respondent agrees or strongly agrees on a seven-point scale), abortion justifiability (equal to one if the respondent considers abortion justifiable; asked from 2012 onwards), and approval of same-sex marriage (equal to one if the respondent scores 6 or above on a 1–10 approval scale). The supplementary APC exercise reported below is narrower: it focuses on seven outcomes that I use for descriptive timing evidence.

The key independent variable is gender, coded separately for men and women. All outcome variables are expressed as percentages (0–100). The primary analyses organize observations by *birth cohort*, defined in five-year bins (Pre-1950, 1950–64, 1965–79, 1980–94, 1995+), and compute unweighted cell means by sex and cohort. I use unweighted cell means in the baseline figures because the goal is descriptive transparency: each observed sex-by-cohort cell contributes directly to the plotted pattern, rather than through model-based adjustment, and the pooled figures are not intended to estimate a population-size-weighted regional average. Survey-round plots use the same cell-mean approach with survey year on the x-axis; they are presented as illustration and cross-check of the cohort patterns. Confidence intervals throughout are ± 1.96 standard errors of the cell mean. A supplementary education analysis distinguishes college-educated respondents (at least one year of any higher education institution, including universities, technical institutes, and other tertiary programs; i.e., 13 or more years of education) from non-college. This broad defini-

tion is used to preserve adequate cell sizes across cohorts and countries. Appendix Figures A18 and A19 repeat the education split using a stricter threshold of 16+ years of schooling in waves with continuous education coding and completed tertiary in 2023 categorical waves.

As robustness checks, I also estimate rake-weighted versions of the key gap plots and apply Multiple Regression and Post-Stratification (MRP) to verify that the education-stratified gender gaps are not artifacts of demographic composition differences across waves. Both approaches require population-level marginals on sex, age, and education in each country. I draw on two sources: (1) *population by sex and five-year age group* from the World Bank's population indicator series, derived from the United Nations World Population Prospects (reference year 2020); and (2) *tertiary education attainment by gender* from the World Bank's educational attainment indicator, which reports the share of the population aged 25+ with at least short-cycle tertiary education, separately for males and females.[3] Data sources were retrieved via the World Bank API. I aggregate the five-year age bins into four broader categories (18–29, 30–44, 45–64, 65+) and apply age-specific adjustments to tertiary attainment rates to reflect the well-documented gradient in educational completion across generations. Appendix A6 provides full details on the poststratification table construction, including the specific World Bank indicator codes, and the resulting education rates by country and gender.

Results

Main Patterns: A Gender Gap in Ideology, Cohort Trends in Issues

Figure 1 plots the share of respondents in each ideological category and the share reporting interest in politics, by gender and birth cohort, pooling all countries and waves. The descriptive results follow the hierarchy used throughout the paper: first the gender gap in ideological self-placement, then the substantive issue items, and finally the role of education.

[3]For Argentina, where the World Bank series contains gaps, I supplement with estimates from the 2022 INDEC national census.

The first finding is ideological divergence. Across birth cohorts, men and women track closely in older generations, with the gender gap near zero throughout. Among those born after 1980, however, a visible gap opens up: women lean more to the left and men more to the right, producing an ideological gender divergence that is absent in every preceding generation. Far-left identification rises in the youngest cohorts for both genders, but to a larger extent for women. On the contrary, right identification declines by cohort, although young men are able to stop the downward slope. Interest in politics shows a stable male advantage of approximately 8–10 percentage points across all cohorts, with no sign of convergence.

Figure 2 presents the same descriptive portrait for the three social and economic attitude outcomes. The second finding is that none of these items shows a clean new *gender* gap in the youngest cohort. Support for reducing inequality is high among older and middle cohorts and *declines* sharply in the youngest, falling from over 65 % in cohorts born before 1965 to roughly 55 % among those born after 1995. The decline itself is the central fact and it is robust to the choice of weighting. The unweighted cell means hint at a male-led decline, but the rake-weighted version in Appendix Figure A21 shows the two sexes declining more in tandem; under any reasonable weighting, what we are looking at is a *generational cooling on redistribution* rather than a new gender gap on the economy. Approval of same-sex marriage rises across cohorts for both genders, with a stable rather than widening female advantage; abortion follows the same pattern. In this sense, these issue items follow a *cohort* story—a generational retreat from redistribution and a generational rise in social progressivism—but they do not contain a new *gender* cleavage to put alongside the ideological one. In the youngest cohort, support for same-sex marriage actually *exceeds* support for redistribution—a reversal that would have been unthinkable a generation ago.

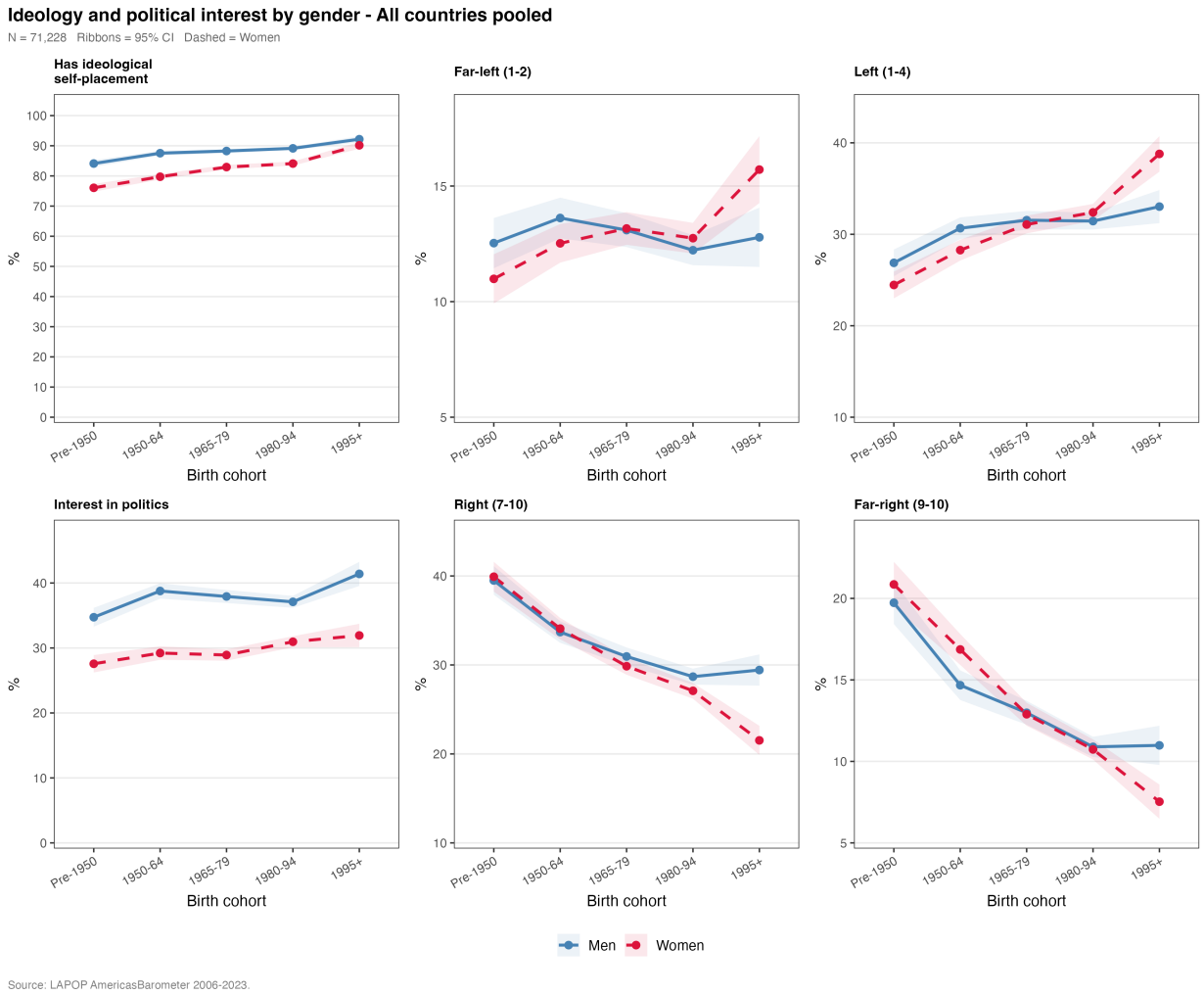

Figure 1: Ideology and interest in politics by gender and birth cohort, all countries pooled, all waves. Panels from left to right: has ideological self-placement, far-left identification (1–2), left identification (1–4), interest in politics, right identification (7–10), and far-right identification (9–10). Blue solid lines = men; red dashed lines = women. Ribbons = 95 % confidence intervals. Source: LAPOP AmericasBarometer 2006–2023.

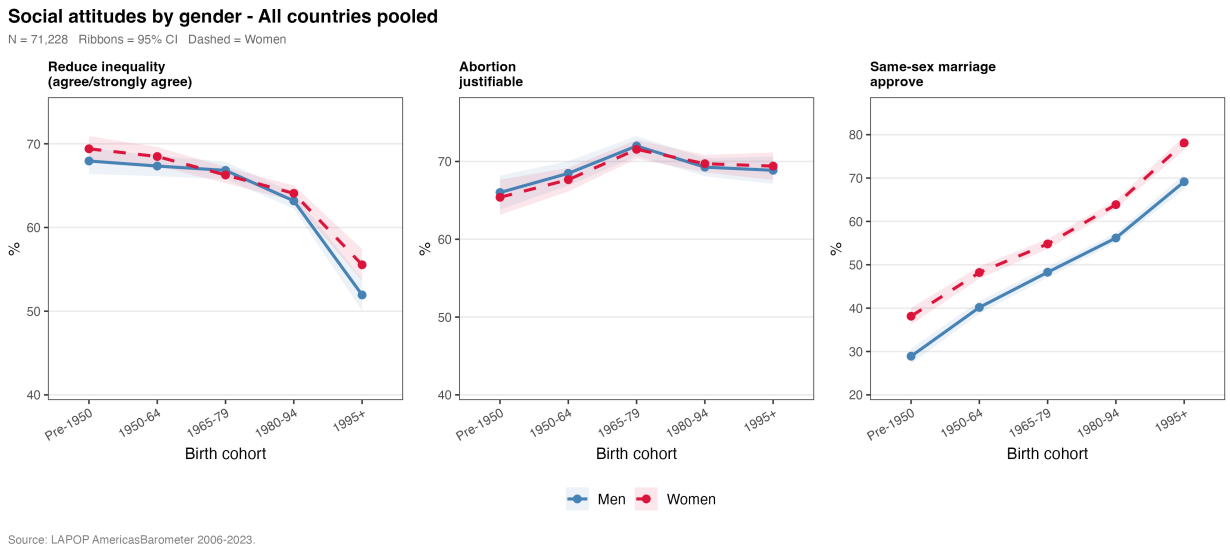

Figure 2: Social attitudes by gender and birth cohort, all countries pooled, all waves. Panels: support for reducing inequality (agree/strongly agree), abortion justifiability, and approval of same-sex marriage (scores 6–10 on a 1–10 scale). Blue solid lines = men; red dashed lines = women. Ribbons = 95 % CI. Source: LAPOP AmericasBarometer 2006–2023.

Appendix Figures A20 and A21 reproduce the cohort plots after rake-weighting the pooled sample to country-specific population marginals for sex, age, and sex-by-education attainment, drawing the targets from the World Bank 2020 series and the 2022 INDEC census for Argentina. The ideology panels are essentially the same in both versions: the youngest-cohort divergence between women on the left and men on the right is unchanged, far-left identification still rises faster among young women, right and far-right identification still decline less steeply among young men, and the persistent 10pp male advantage in interest in politics is preserved. The same-sex marriage and abortion panels are likewise unchanged, including the durable female advantage on marriage. The one panel where the substantive read shifts is support for reducing inequality. In the unweighted figure, women's support stays near 65 % while men's drops to 52 %, opening a visible economic-attitudes gender gap in the youngest cohort. In the rake-weighted version both sexes decline together to roughly 54–55 %, so the gender asymmetry on redistribution is less clear. I therefore treat the redistribution decline as a generational shift shared by both sexes, and combined with the stable female-advantage cohort patterns on abortion and same-sex marriage, this leaves

the gender gap in left–right *self-placement* as the only place where a clean new gender cleavage appears in the youngest cohort.

The asymmetry between the ideological gap and the issue panels defines the interpretive puzzle the paper tries to make sense of. Both men and women in the youngest cohort are becoming more progressive on social issues and both are becoming less attached to redistributive positions, yet only the left–right *label* shows a new gender cleavage. Young men do not look more socially conservative than older men, and the economic-attitudes divergence in the raw cell means dissolves under rake weighting. Whatever is driving men and women apart in ideological self-placement does not show up in any of the substantive items LAPOP measures. I return to this puzzle in the Discussion, where I argue it is most naturally read as an *identitarian* divergence—young men and young women sorting into different symbolic camps for reasons that operate at the level of the label rather than at the level of policy.

The same lesson applies to social attitudes. Same-sex marriage approval rises steeply across cohorts, from roughly 30 % in the oldest to over 65 % in the youngest, with women consistently—but not *increasingly*—more approving than men. Abortion justifiability follows a similar gradient, with a modest and stable female advantage. Younger Latin Americans are markedly more progressive on sexuality and gender rights than their elders, but the gender gap on these items is not what is widening in the youngest cohort. Like the redistribution panel, these are cohort gains rather than new gender cleavages.

Figure 3 distills the paper's core finding into its simplest form. Instead of levels, it plots the gender gap directly—Women minus Men—for left identification (1–4, crimson) and right identification (7–10, navy) across birth cohorts. In the oldest generation, both lines sit near zero: men and women were equally likely to identify as left or as right. Moving toward younger cohorts, the two lines diverge sharply in opposite directions, forming a scissors pattern. The crimson line rises: young women are systematically more likely to place themselves on the left than young men. The navy line falls: young men are systematically more likely to place themselves on the right than young women. Among those born after 1995, the left gap reaches roughly +6 percentage points

and the right gap approaches −8 percentage points—a symmetric, mirror-image divergence that is absent in every cohort born before 1965. This single figure captures the core empirical claim of the paper: the modern gender gap in Latin America is not a story about one gender shifting; it is a story of simultaneous divergence in both directions.

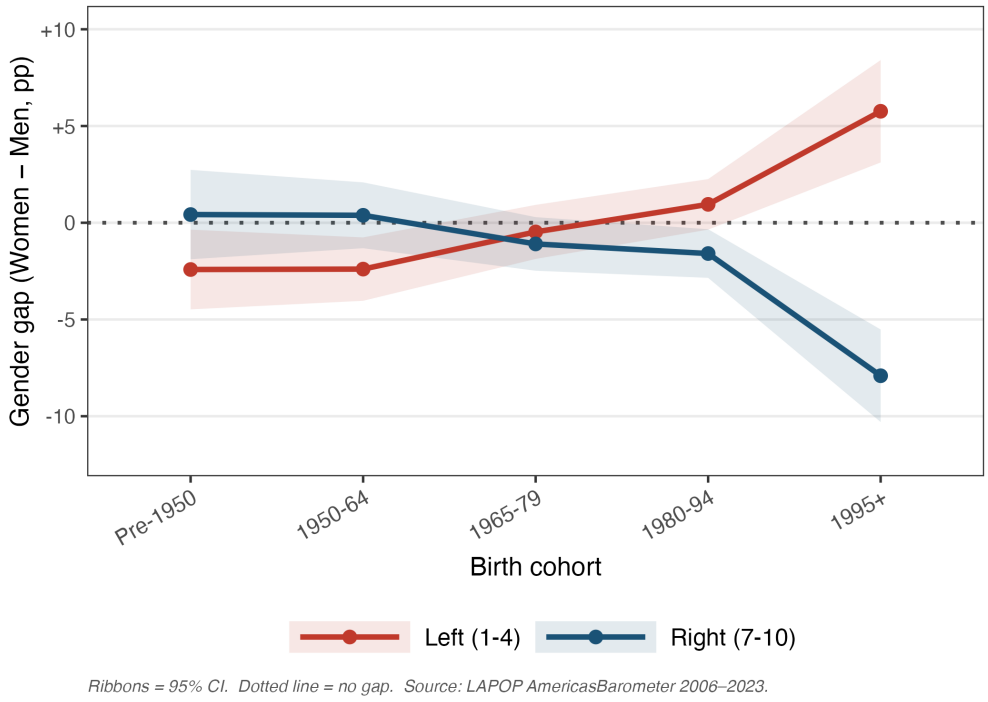

Figure 3: Gender gap (Women−Men, pp) in left identification (1–4, crimson) and right identification (7–10, navy) by birth cohort, all six countries pooled. Positive values indicate women are more likely to hold that identification; negative values indicate men are more likely. Zero line (dotted) = no gap. Ribbons = 95 % CI. Source: LAPOP AmericasBarometer 2006–2023.

Country Variation

The pooled results mask meaningful cross-national heterogeneity, so I examine country-specific cohort plots before turning to education. Appendix Figures A9 through A17 show by-country plots for each of the nine outcomes with birth cohort on the *x*-axis.

The country patterns reveal meaningful heterogeneity and are broadly consistent with the contextual discussion in the previous section, though the paper is not designed to test country-level

mechanisms. Argentina, Chile, and Mexico show the widest and most dynamic gender gaps. Chile exhibits the most pronounced left-leaning shift among younger women across birth cohorts. Argentina displays the largest gender gap in same-sex marriage approval, especially among cohorts born after 1980. Brazil, in turn, has relatively stable and small gender gaps across most political dimensions, including same-sex marriage; Colombia occupies an intermediate position; and Uruguay shows the most compressed gender differences of the six. The interest-in-politics gap is pervasive across all six countries, all cohorts, and all rounds.

This heterogeneity matters for interpretation, but the pooled patterns are not driven by any single case. Appendix Figure A26 repeats the pooled gender-gap estimates for all the outcomes while excluding one country at a time. The sign and broad shape of the youngest-cohort divergence remain stable across these leave-one-out samples, even though the magnitude varies somewhat.

Education Does Not Mitigate the Gap

Figure 4 breaks down ideological levels by both gender and education group across birth cohorts. The figure reveals that the gender gap is present *within both education groups*. Among college-educated respondents, women lean more left and men more right in the youngest cohorts—and the same directional pattern holds among non-college respondents. This does not imply that education has no moderating role whatsoever. It does show, however, that a broad college/non-college split does not mitigate the gender divergence visible in the youngest cohorts.

This is notable because it makes the most obvious compositional story less plausible: that women's leftward shift is simply an artifact of women attending college at higher rates, and college liberalizing them. If that were the mechanism, the gender gap should be concentrated among college respondents and absent among non-college respondents. Instead, the gap appears in both groups. Appendix Figures A18 and A19 show a similar overall picture under a stricter education measure that requires completed tertiary schooling rather than any tertiary exposure, though the youngest high-education subgroup is smaller and noisier.

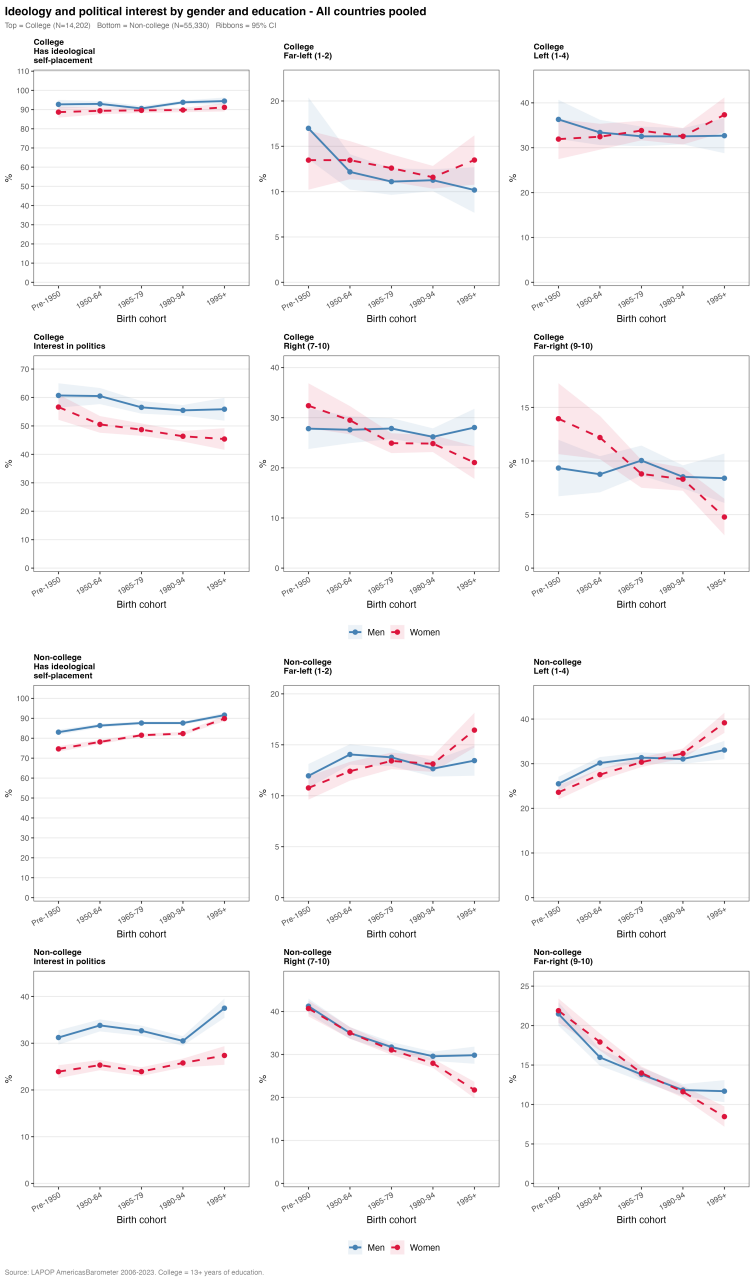

Figure 4: Ideology and political interest by gender, education, and birth cohort, all countries pooled. Top row = college-educated; bottom row = non-college. Panels: far-left (1–2), left (1–4), interest in politics, right (7–10), far-right (9–10). Blue = men; red dashed = women. Source: LAPOP AmericasBarometer 2006–2023.

Figure 5 places the gender gap and the education gap side by side across birth cohorts. It offers a possible explanation for why the gender gap persists across educational lines: the two gaps are

moving in opposite directions, suggesting they are driven by different and in some ways competing forces.

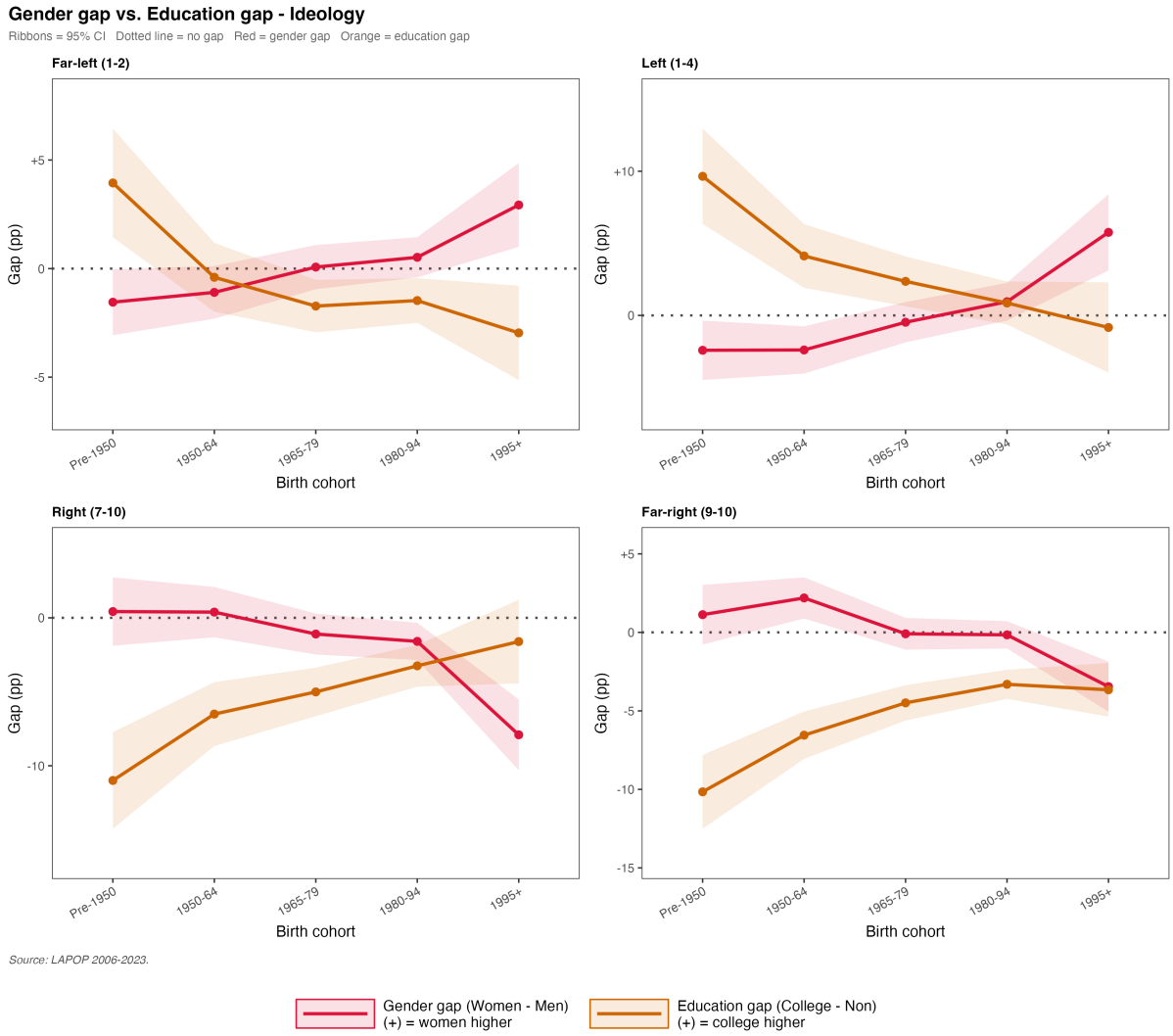

Figure 5: Gender gap (Women−Men, red) and education gap (College−Non-college, orange) in ideological identification by birth cohort, all countries pooled. Panels: far-left (1–2), left (1–4), right (7–10), far-right (9–10). Positive values indicate that women (or college-educated) are higher. Zero line = no gap. Source: LAPOP AmericasBarometer 2006–2023.

The gender gap (red) grows in younger cohorts: women move left, men move right. The education gap (orange) moves in the opposite direction. In older cohorts, college-educated respondents lean substantially more left than non-college respondents—the traditional Latin American pattern

of university-based progressive politics. In younger cohorts this advantage not only shrinks but reverses: college-educated respondents in the 1980–94 and 1995+ cohorts lean *more to the right* relative to older college cohorts, while non-college respondents have shifted less. The college–non-college ideological divide, which pointed left for the oldest generations, is trending rightward in the youngest. Unlike postindustrial democracies—where the college gap has grown with generational replacement, degree-holders moving further left (Gethin, Martínez-Toledano and Piketty, 2022; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Edelmann and Vaisey, 2023)—in Latin America it is shrinking and in some outcomes reversing.

This divergence clarifies what is *not* driving the gender gap: it is not simply that college is selectively liberalizing women. In the youngest cohorts, the broad college signal is no longer consistently leftward. That conclusion is reinforced by the stricter tertiary-completion robustness checks in Appendix Figures A18 and A19. Appendix Figures A5 and A8 show the same pattern in survey-wave plots and for social attitudes.

Supplementary Descriptive Evidence

Appendix Figures A3 and A4 replicate the main analyses with survey round on the x-axis (2006–2023); Appendix Figures A5 and A6 show the corresponding gender and education gaps over time. These figures serve as supplementary illustration of the same underlying story in calendar time. The wave plots confirm that the ideological gender gap remains near zero until the most recent waves, then opens sharply after 2015, while the same-sex marriage gap is comparatively stable even as approval rises for both sexes. In other words, the wave plots are consistent with the supplementary timing evidence below: what looks like cohort divergence in ideology is also associated with recent-period change, especially among men.

Robustness Check I: Stricter Education Threshold

The 13+ years education threshold used in the baseline education-split figures is broad by design, in order to preserve adequate sample size across cohorts and countries. Appendix Figures A18

and A19 replicate the education-split figures using a stricter threshold of completed tertiary education (16+ years in continuous-year waves; completed tertiary in the 2023 categorical waves). The overall pattern remains similar, though the youngest high-education subgroup is, by definition, smaller and noisier. The rake-weighted gap figures used as a complement to the rake-weighted level plots in Appendix Figures A20 and A21 are reported in Appendix Figures A22 and A23; they confirm that the gender gap and education gap series shown in Figure 5 are not artifacts of the unweighted cell-mean approach.

Robustness Check II: Multilevel Regression and Poststratification

I deliberately reserve MRP for the education-stratified gap analysis rather than apply it to every figure. The pooled cohort plots in Figures 1 and 2, and the country-by-cohort plots in the appendix, rest on cell sizes that are large by survey-research standards: each sex-by-cohort cell averages several thousand observations once countries and waves are pooled, and the rake-weighted versions in Appendix Figures A20 and A21 confirm that simple compositional reweighting leaves those plots essentially unchanged. Layering education on top of sex, cohort, country, and wave is what makes the cells thin: the youngest college subgroup in the earliest waves and the smallest countries can fall below 50 respondents, which makes raw cell means unstable precisely where the substantive question of whether college selectively liberalizes young women is sharpest. MRP's partial pooling (Kastellec, Lax and Phillips, 2016) addresses exactly that thin-cell problem and aligns the resulting gap estimates with the census distribution on sex, age, and education simultaneously, which neither raw means nor rake weighting can do for an interaction.

MRP works in two stages. In the first stage, I fit a multilevel logistic regression for each outcome, including interactions between sex, education, and age group, and random intercepts for age group, country, and survey wave. The model borrows strength across sparse cells through partial pooling: rather than estimating each sex-by-education-by-age-by-country cell independently, the random effects shrink cell estimates toward the overall trend, stabilizing estimates where sample sizes are thin. In the second stage, predicted probabilities from the model are aggregated to

population-level estimates using a poststratification table (sex × age group × education × country; 96 cells) weighted by World Bank/UN Population Prospects population counts. Cell predictions are then mapped to birth cohort, mirroring the structure of the descriptive analysis.[4]

The partial-pooling property of the multilevel model has a predictable consequence: MRP tends to attenuate the sharpest features of the raw cohort plots. The youngest cohort (1995+) appears in early waves (2006–2012) only as a small, sparse cell; the model shrinks those early-wave young-cohort estimates toward the overall mean rather than taking them at face value. This compression is a feature, not a bug—it is precisely what makes MRP a useful robustness check. If a trend survives the smoothing, it is unlikely to be driven by noisy estimates in thin cells. If it does not, it was likely a sparse-data artifact to begin with.

Appendix Figures A27 and A28 present the MRP-adjusted gender gap (Women−Men) alongside the raw education gap (College−Non-college) by birth cohort—the same two-gap layout as Figures 5 and A8. The adjusted gaps confirm the paper's hierarchy of findings. For *ideological self-placement*, the gender gap is near zero in older cohorts and opens up among those born after 1980—the same pattern as the raw figures, with the MRP trend slightly attenuated but directionally identical. For *same-sex marriage*, the gender gap in the youngest cohorts is positive and robust after reweighting. For *political interest*, the male advantage is consistent and education-invariant across all cohorts. The education gap patterns are likewise stable: the college–non-college ideological divide shrinks in younger cohorts and the same-sex marriage education gap collapses toward zero, both surviving demographic adjustment.

[4]The poststratification table uses population marginals from the World Bank 2020 reference year, applied uniformly across all survey waves. This is a simplification: tertiary attainment rates were lower in 2006 than in 2023, so the 2020 targets overestimate the college share in early waves. The direction of the resulting bias is to exaggerate the apparent trend—early waves receive too much weight on college-educated respondents (where gaps are smaller in older cohorts), making the raw trend look steeper than it is. The MRP estimates are therefore likely somewhat steeper than estimates based on truly wave-specific population targets would be. Full poststratification details are in Appendix A6.

Supplementary Timing Evidence: Age, Period, and Cohort

MRP addresses compositional threats to the gap estimates. A separate issue whether the ideological gender gap is explained by *lifecycle* effect (young people being more liberal at any age), a *cohort* effect (something related to a birth-cohort), or a *period* effect (something associated with recent survey years). To distinguish the three effects, I apply an Age-Period-Cohort decomposition as supplementary evidence. I use it to ask whether the apparent cohort divergence is at least consistent with recent-period movement, not to adjudicate definitively between cohort replacement and period change.

The Age-Period-Cohort decomposition uses both lenses simultaneously to separate the three components. The key is that repeated cross-sectional data—many cohorts observed at many waves—create a two-way cross-classification: each cohort appears at multiple periods, and each period contains multiple cohorts. This overlap is what makes a descriptive separation possible. A pattern that is common to *all cohorts* at a given wave is a period effect. A pattern that *tracks a cohort across waves* regardless of calendar year is a cohort effect. A pattern that follows the respondent's *age* regardless of which cohort or wave they belong to is an age effect. The HAPC model exploits this structure by treating period and cohort as crossed random intercepts, estimated jointly from the full panel of waves and cohorts, with age entered as fixed effects. Under this specification, residual variation associated with survey years is summarized as a period component and residual variation associated with birth-cohort bins is summarized as a cohort component, net of age and the other time dimension. This is therefore a hierarchical APC approach, not a constraint-based APC regression, intrinsic-estimator, or median-polish specification.

I apply a Hierarchical Age-Period-Cohort (HAPC) model (Yang and Land, 2008), fitting a multilevel logistic regression for each outcome separately for men and women, with age group as fixed coefficients and period (LAPOP survey round) and cohort (five-year birth cohort) as crossed random intercepts. Using survey rounds rather than raw field years ensures that staggered interviews from the same AmericasBarometer wave—for example, 2007 interviews in the 2006 round

or 2018 interviews in the 2019 round—are treated as belonging to the same period. The partial-pooling structure breaks the perfect collinearity by assuming that period and cohort deviations are drawn from distributions centered at zero. This is a descriptive decomposition, not a causal identification strategy: it attributes variation to age, period, and cohort components, but cannot establish what produced them. Its identifying restrictions come from the grouped age specification and from treating period and cohort as partially pooled random effects rather than as fully unrestricted sets of coefficients.

Appendix Figures A29–A35 report the age, period, and cohort coefficients separately for men and women for each outcome included in this supplementary exercise. The main takeaway is deliberately modest. For *left identification* and *right identification*, the period coefficients are consistent with recent movement among men after 2015, while several cohort components are comparatively small and in some specifications strongly shrunk toward zero. I therefore read the APC results only as suggestive timing evidence: the raw cohort divergence is compatible with a recent-period story, especially for men.

For *same-sex marriage*, the pattern reverses: the gender gap is not the main source of change. The central movement is a broad liberalization in support shared by both sexes. Women remain more approving than men, but the gap itself is comparatively stable in both the cohort and period components. What changes sharply over time is the level of support, not the size of the gender gap. The raw plots therefore show two things at once: strong upward movement in approval for both men and women, and a durable female advantage. For *interest in politics*, both cohort and period gaps are small and flat, confirming the engagement gap is a structural constant rather than a generational or historical phenomenon.

Appendix Section A7 presents the full decomposition for each of the seven outcomes included in this supplementary timing exercise, reporting the age, period, and cohort coefficients separately for men and women and detailing how the APC specification is constructed and interpreted.

Discussion

The results establish a clear empirical pattern: a gender gap in ideological labels, emerging after 2015, that has no matching counterpart in the substantive items the survey measures. Young men and young women in Latin America are increasingly placing themselves on different sides of the left–right scale, but they are not disagreeing more about redistribution, abortion, or same-sex marriage. The question that organizes this discussion is therefore: what is the left–right label capturing, if not policy positions?

The Northern literature offers two main candidates. A cultural-backlash reading expects young men to look more conservative on social issues than older men—but they do not. Same-sex marriage and abortion approval rise across cohorts for both sexes, and the modest female advantage on these items is stable rather than newly widening. An economic-retreat reading expects a male-led drop in redistribution support—but that asymmetry dissolves under rake-weighting, leaving a shared generational cooling rather than a gendered one. Supplementary HAPC evidence is consistent with a post-2015 period effect concentrated among men, and the timing aligns with the rise of *Ni Una Menos* and *marea verde* across the region, but the evidence stops at timing: the 2023 probe items discussed below show that even explicit approval of feminist protests does not cleanly divide young men from young women in the pooled sample. Neither the cultural nor the economic reading of the Northern literature, therefore, fits the Latin American data well.

The pattern is more naturally read through the lens of symbolic versus operational ideology (Ellis and Stimson, 2012; Mason, 2018). People can identify with one side of the political map—through in-group attachment, out-group distaste, or the cultural and demographic cues attached to each label—without holding correspondingly divergent policy preferences. The Latin American data fit that mold. The substantive cohort trends—less redistribution, more social progressivism—move men and women in the same direction; what is moving them apart is the *label* they accept for themselves on the left–right scale. Plausible candidates for what is loading onto the label include the visibility of regional feminist mobilization after 2015, the symbolic recoding of *the left* as

feminist territory, and the global circulation of right-coded masculine identity content via social media. Actually, the LAPOP 2023 wave allows us to have a glimpse on whether a backlash towards feminist mobilization is causing the action.

The 2023 asked respondents to rate, on a 1–10 scale, their approval of protests by groups defending women's rights and by feminist groups. If the ideological gap in the youngest cohort were carried by a young-male antipathy to feminism as a movement, we would expect under-25 men to report measurably lower approval on these items than under-25 women. Appendix Figures A24 and A25 report the rake-weighted cross-tabulation by sex and age group (under 25 vs. 25 and older), first pooled across all six countries and then country by country.

Pooled across the six countries, the data do not show a clean backlash pattern. On approval of women's-rights protests, under-25 men and under-25 women report nearly identical approval rates—about 83 and 82 % respectively, well above the 76 and 75 % rates among 25-and-older respondents of either sex. On approval of explicitly feminist protests the pooled gap is also tiny: under-25 men report 65 % approval and under-25 women 66 %, again with both groups well above their older counterparts (58 and 54 %). On the pooled cells, whatever differences exist on these items are between age groups, not between sexes within the youngest cohort.

The country-level breakdown tells a more uneven story on the explicit "feminist groups" item, and the heterogeneity is itself informative. In the three countries with the strongest recent feminist mobilizations—Argentina, Chile, and Mexico—under-25 women approve feminist protests at roughly 63 %, against about 56 % among under-25 men, while older men and older women in those same countries have a similar gap (52 vs. 46 %). Mexico is the most striking single case: young Mexican women (62 %) report markedly higher approval than young Mexican men (52 %), and young Mexican men's approval is, uniquely in the sample, no higher than that of older Mexican men. Argentina shows a similar young-women-over-young-men gap of about eight points. Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay look different: there, the under-25 gap on the feminist-groups item is either essentially flat or runs in the opposite direction, with under-25 men slightly more approving than under-25 women. Because these two groups of countries roughly cancel, the pooled cells

flatten the asymmetry out—so the country heterogeneity is not a footnote but part of the finding. A modest asymmetry on the explicit feminist-groups item emerges where feminist politics has been most politically visible over the past decade.

I read this as mixed but suggestive support for the broader puzzle rather than as a single-item vindication of any specific mechanism. Pooled across the region, no striking young-male-driven gender gap appears on either item. In the subset of countries where feminist movements have been most visible, a very small asymmetry emerges on the explicit feminist-groups item, although the gap is small and similar to older cohorts. The bulk of that ideological gap continues to look like a label-level divergence rather than a movement-level backlash. A further caveat is worth flagging: items asking respondents to approve or disapprove of feminist protests are unusually exposed to social desirability pressures, and the direction of bias may itself differ by sex and country—another reason to read these cells as a probe rather than as a definitive test.

Education Does Not Mitigate the Gap

The most theoretically consequential finding concerns the role of education. In postindustrial democracies, the gender gap and the college–non-college ideological divide have grown together: both are large and both are concentrated in the youngest cohorts (Gethin, Martínez-Toledano and Piketty, 2022; Norris and Inglehart, 2019), producing an interaction in which college women are dramatically more left than all other groups (Edelmann and Vaisey, 2023; Argote and Basil, 2025). In Latin America, the two axes are more weakly aligned.

The gender gap follows the Western trajectory: absent in older cohorts, visible and growing among those born after 1980. The education gap, instead, moves in the opposite direction. Among older generations, college-educated respondents leaned substantially more left than their non-college counterparts—the traditional Latin American pattern of university-based progressive politics. In younger cohorts this advantage has disappeared and in some outcomes reversed: college-educated respondents in the 1995+ cohort lean more to the right relative to older college cohorts, while the non-college group has not shifted as sharply. The education gap that pointed left

for the oldest generations is trending rightward in the youngest.

Why does education fail to moderate the gap? A plausible structural account centers on the material conditions that college-educated and non-college women share in Latin America. Despite their different levels of schooling, women across education groups face strikingly similar challenges: they remain the primary providers of childcare, eldercare, and domestic labor; they confront persistent gender pay gaps even in professional occupations; and they navigate labor markets where female employment remains more precarious and informally organized than in postindustrial democracies (ECLAC, 2022). These shared material realities may produce similar political leanings regardless of education level, making the college/non-college distinction a weaker axis of political differentiation for women than it is in settings where college opens a qualitatively different set of life circumstances. For men, the picture is symmetrical in a different way: college-educated young men in Latin America are not being pulled left as strongly as their counterparts in the United States or Western Europe, and the traditional association between university attendance and progressive politics has weakened or reversed in younger cohorts. If college no longer reliably codes as progressive for either sex, it cannot serve as the selective mechanism that concentrates the gender gap among the educated—which is partly why the gap appears at similar magnitudes in both groups.

Electoral Consequences

The attitudinal divergence documented here is not confined to survey responses: available evidence from recent elections in the region suggests it translates directly into voting behaviour. In Argentina's 2023 presidential runoff, polling data show that among voters aged 18–25, approximately 56 % of young men voted for Javier Milei (La Libertad Avanza) against only 34 % of young women—a gap of roughly 22 percentage points, wider than the overall male–female margin of around 18 points for Milei that was reported across the electorate as a whole.[5] In Brazil's

[5]First-round estimates by the firm Analogías, published by Arena Pública (October 2023); overall gender breakdown by Zuban Córdoba, reported in Infobae (November 2023).

2022 election, Datafolha surveys of voters aged 16–29 found young women backing Lula at 58 % against Bolsonaro's 16 %, while young men split 44 % to 24 %—a 14-point gap that commentators described as "the greatest voting divergence between the sexes since the end of the military dictatorship."[6] Chile's 2021 runoff offers a third data point: 68 % of women under 30 voted for Gabriel Boric against 64 % of similarly aged men, and a 16-point gender gap in *turnout*—young women participated at 63 %, young men at only 47 %—amplified these preferences into the margin that decided the election.[7] Likewise, a recent study analysing Chile 2021, Brazil 2022, and Argentina 2023 jointly concludes that ideological self-identification and feminist identity—rather than demographic composition or specific policy positions—are the primary drivers of these voting gaps (Reyes-Housholder and Schwindt-Bayer, 2025), a finding consistent with the identitarian interpretation proposed here. An instructive exception is Mexico's 2024 presidential election, where both major candidates were women. Exit surveys found that Claudia Sheinbaum actually ran slightly stronger among men (62%) than among women (57%), although her support remained very high across both demographics.[8] Taken together, these electoral snapshots confirm that the gap in ideological labels detected in the survey data has downstream consequences large enough to shift election outcomes.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a systematic, cross-national portrait of gender gaps in political attitudes in Latin America using LAPOP AmericasBarometer data from 2006 to 2023 across six countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay—combining birth-cohort comparisons with supplementary Age-Period-Cohort evidence to probe descriptive timing. Four findings define the paper's contribution.

[6] Datafolha, published in *Brasil de Fato* (July 2022); overall female vote reported by CNN en Español (October 2022).

[7] Table-level vote tallies processed by the Decide Chile platform from Servel data, reported in *La Tercera* and *El Mostrador* (December 2021).

[8] Mitofsky exit poll and post-election analysis by Expansión Política, June 2024.

First, there is a clear ideological gender gap that appears among the youngest cohorts. Both the raw and the rake-weighted cohort figures show women born after 1980 leaning more left and men more right. Second, this ideological gap does *not* have a matching counterpart in any of the substantive items the survey measures. Support for redistribution drops in the youngest cohort, but for both sexes once the sample is rake-weighted; same-sex marriage and abortion approval rise for both sexes, with a stable rather than widening female advantage. The issue panels contain genuine *cohort* stories—a generational cooling on redistribution, a generational rise in social progressivism—but no new *gender* cleavage. Third, the gap is not carried by the broad education divide: it is of similar magnitude within college and non-college groups, and the education gap on ideology is itself shrinking and reversing in younger cohorts. A stricter tertiary threshold yields a similar overall picture. The structural conditions that women face in Latin America—childcare, eldercare, precarious employment—cut across education levels, which may explain why college does not selectively concentrate the gap as it does in the North. Fourth, supplementary APC evidence is consistent with a post-2015 period effect concentrated among men, and the timing aligns with the rise of regional feminist mobilization. Yet when that backlash interpretation is probed directly—using 2023 items on approval of protests by feminist groups—it does not hold up cleanly: pooled across the six countries, under-25 men and under-25 women report virtually identical approval rates, and even in the subset of countries with the strongest feminist movements the asymmetry is modest. The gap sits in the left–right label rather than in any of the substantive or movement-level proxies the survey can measure.

Put together, these results describe a modern gender gap that travels in pure label form, without either of the substantive carriers that the Northern literature has emphasized—neither culture-war content nor college selection. The most natural reading of that pattern is that ideology in the youngest Latin American cohort is doing identitarian rather than positional work, with young men and young women aligning with different sides of the left–right map for reasons that operate on symbolic rather than policy grounds. This distinctively Latin American profile—where the gender gap emerges in a region with weaker partisan sorting, different cleavage structures, and

a recent wave of feminist mobilization that has no precise Northern analogue—suggests that the phenomenon is not a simple diffusion of the U.S. or European pattern but a parallel development shaped by local political context.

Several limitations bear noting. The descriptive analysis documents net gaps but cannot separately identify the three mechanisms—identity alignment, differential engagement, and issue salience—proposed in the theoretical literature. Doing so would require individual-level panel data or experimental designs that trace how political identity formation differs by sex and education. Pooling six countries conceals substantial heterogeneity: Chile's recent leftward shift among women, Argentina's widening marriage-equality gap, Mexico's uniquely sharp asymmetry on approval of feminist mobilization, and Brazil's relative stability all suggest that country-level factors shape the expression of the gender gap in ways that aggregate trends cannot fully capture, even though the leave-one-country-out exercise shows that the main pooled patterns are not driven by any single case. The education measure is coarse in the baseline figures, even though the stricter-threshold robustness checks mitigate that concern. And the 2023 items on feminist protests are unusually exposed to social desirability pressures, limiting how far they can be pushed as a test of mechanisms.

These limitations point toward a clear research agenda. Future work should incorporate survey instruments that can distinguish symbolic from operational ideology—such as feeling thermometers toward political labels and movements, questions about the cultural associations respondents attach to left and right, and batteries measuring identification with feminism as a movement versus agreement with specific feminist policy demands. Panel designs tracking young men and women as they enter the electorate would help settle whether the ideological divergence observed here is a durable generational shift or a life-cycle effect that attenuates with age. And expanding the country scope beyond these six cases to the broader region would test whether the patterns documented here are specific to the largest and most surveyed Latin American democracies or generalize more widely. Whether this label-level divergence eventually aggregates into a substantive partisan gender gap—as it did in Western democracies over a longer time horizon—is one of the

most consequential open questions in comparative political behavior.

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