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Explanatory factors for the dissemination and control of fake news in the Latin American context

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This article analyses the reasons why citizens are in favour of controlling the publishing of fake news even though this curtails freedom of expression, which was the dependent variable. This is the first time a study of this nature is conducted in Latin American countries as so far the only existing scientific contributions are from the Global North. Our starting hypothesis was that it is political variables that have the greatest explanatory potential for this dependent variable. In order to conduct this study, the 2023 questionnaire of the *Latinobarometro* for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru was used. An analysis was conducted based on inferential (six regressions) and descriptive statistics answering seven research questions. A total of 44 variables grouped into four large blocks were used for the models: social and demographic variables, political and economic situation variables, political culture and institutions variables and mass media variables. In most countries, regression models achieved high levels of explanation, over 40% in Brazil, Chile or Mexico, resulting in a common pattern in all the countries in the region. The variables of behaviour, attitudes and political culture were the ones that recurrently increased the probability of supporting news control measures: supporting the governing party or candidate, (little) satisfaction with democracy, a preference for authoritarian societies or military regimes (Chile and Argentina) or little interest in politics. But also, other sociodemographic variables or those linked to the mass media have proven significant in the models, including social class or the level of trust in these media. These results have contributed to focusing the study of misinformation, its control and its effects on circumstantial, political aspects and on the confidence citizens have in democratic institutions.

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Introduction and state of the art

Studying misinformation and fake news in the Latin American context. Misinformation as a more general notion and more specifically, fake news have gained relevance over the last few years in Political Science, Communication Sciences or Social Sciences as a whole. In fact, it has become one of the most recurrent topics in monographs, journals or research projects. Experts define misinformation as fake and misleading information. They do not agree, however, on the importance of intent (disinformation) as it may be difficult to operationalise (El Mikati et al. 2023). They do not agree either on what its constituent elements are (Altay et al. 2023). While misinformation is not confined to any medium (including traditional media), the massive spread of this type of information in social networks has remained a phenomenon of study that has led to some inconsistent definitions for a single issue (Wu et al. 2019). In this regard, there have been many reviews of literature that have sought to categorise the types of misinformation to conclude that the most common ones have to do with politics and pseudoscience (Kapantai et al. 2021). Similarly, this type of reviews has successfully described a pattern of behaviour from a tentative typology of characteristic fake news and denials as well as the preferred channels of distribution (Molina Cañabate et al. 2020). In any case, what is apparent is that there are multiple actors involved in misinformation, including citizens, mass media or political parties (Lecheler and Egelhofer, 2022) and their main byproduct is fake news. Thus, the main characteristic of misinformation is conveying confusing or inaccurate data or ideas with the implicit or explicit intention of deceiving and thus changing the behaviour or the perceptions citizens have of a given event (Fallis, 2015; Rodríguez-Pérez 2019; Guallar et al. 2020). This notion of misinformation is what has prompted the reaction of governments in the face of its consequences, as it has become a relevant problem for public opinion.

In the case of Latin America, many studies have addressed misinformation and fake news in a region where citizens have proportionally low trust in news (Newman et al. 2021). Besides, this region is characterised by a media system that may be described under the category of ‘captured liberal’, adapting the seminal work by Hallin and Mancini (2004), with low regulatory efficiency and a high degree of political instrumentalization of the information role of the media (Guerrero, 2017).

These studies, however, have a very segmented scope whether because they are focused on a very specific geographic area (typically a country) or because they are constrained to a specific period of time (electoral campaigns), or because they look at a very specific aspect of disinformation or address a specific medium because of its easy access (social networks). In this regard, several systematic reviews of the literature within the Latin American framework have yielded several conclusions (López-López et al. 2023), beyond underscoring the interest in the regional space of Latin America. Firstly, there is an excess of studies on the social network X/Twitter. While it is the space where the debate between political parties and mass media takes place, it only actually shows a partial glimpse (an echo chamber) ignoring the fact that disinformation is a more complex and cross-cutting phenomenon, also in its political and media dimension. Similarly, increased attention has been paid to the ways in which fake news is combated by fact-checking platforms and organisations, with some comparative studies, for instance between Argentina and Spain (Ferrández Mas and López-López, 2022) but with little methodological refinement. The region has almost fifty active verification platforms (Chequeado or Lupa), mostly linked to the mass media themselves, universities or run by some independent project (Rúas-Araújo et al. 2024). Thirdly, the focus has been placed on the study of far-right political parties

and candidates or populist radical right (Mudde, 1996; Mudde, 2016), which have become increasingly popular in the area, as well as other studies looking at protest and mobilisations. On the other hand, besides some studies on other Latin American conservative leaders such as Kast, Milei or Bukele (Rivera Magos and González Pureco, 2024), the campaigns of Jair Bolsonaro have been the ones that have attracted the most analyses (Ferreira Marquez et al. 2024). In fact, over half of the publications of the Brazilian far-right politician included fake information or partially true information (Colussi and Moura, 2019). This was also true of the protests in Colombia or Chile in 2019, which generated a very favourable context for the dissemination of misinformation linked to violence, its actors and consequences combined with a difficult context on the streets (Rodríguez-Pérez et al. 2021; Bachmann et al. 2022; Rúas-Araújo et al. 2024). The latest trend in the region is the addition of TikTok and the study of conservative groups which, through fake news, stir up a violence that initially goes unnoticed (Cuevas Calderón et al. 2022). Finally, another major group of researchers has been working on the automatization of processes, robotisation or the use of artificial intelligence (Barredo et al. 2021) linked to misinformation, albeit very modestly.

The tension between freedom and the control of fake news is it about democracy?

It follows from the above that misinformation has become an increasingly present political problem with clear consequences for democratic functioning because of its effects, including polarisation (Vicario et al. 2019). This poses a major challenge as misinformation undermines democracy and contaminates the public space. This theorization on the consequences for democracy, however, has been questioned by several authors (Jungheer and Schroeder 2021) on the grounds that it is not underpinned by any empirical evidence, and that misinformation is not consumed by the population at large.

The responses to the major problem that the dissemination of fake news poses—besides the proposal for media literacy or fact-checking tools—have been those aimed at adding context within the medium (as the community does in X); verifying the sources (as META does); or even government regulation, which many see as restricting freedom of expression (Vese, 2022). This regulation would mainly affect technological companies (Balkin, 2021), which should prevent those contents that may disinform and undermine peaceful coexistence from going viral. In any case, this entails several ethical problems. One such problem is that the decision is delegated in technological companies whose interests need not coincide with those of a public service. Indeed, an important part of the debate has to do with the key role of private actors, specifically technological companies. Moderating this content grants even more power, if possible, to this type of corporations (Gielow Jacobs, 2022).

Helm and Nasu (2021) reported that several national authorities opted for different regulatory approaches, which may be summarised in three on the basis of their reach and control: requiring information to be correct, content blocking or deletion, or even imposing criminal penalties. The authors indicated that, contrary to what one may think, criminal penalties, if adopted in a cautious way to protect fundamental rights, may prove effective. In this line, Brown (2023) holds that democratic governments have grounds to ‘forbid’ fake news and that this is perfectly compatible with freedom of expression on the premise that correct information is the basis of the effective exercise of this freedom. Indeed, the justification for restricting fake news is ultimately based on considering that disinformation is detrimental to the realization of other rights, such as the right

to communication or the right to be correctly informed (Vannuchi, 2018).

Thus, the use of a restrictive legislation is probably the solution most frequently proposed on this matter. It relies on notions such as the 'right to communication' (Vannuchi, 2018; Vianna and Carvalho-Mendonça, 2021) or considerations on the need to introduce limits on the right to freedom. This regulatory model has also been questioned by other literature that argues that the right to free expression is threatened by any attempt at controlling fake news because the definition of fake news is very vague and because such restriction undermines a fundamental human right. In view of this, what is proposed is self-regulation and the development of 'reliability indexes' by the very social networks platforms (Vese, 2022). In this line, the doctrine of the European Court of Human Rights, and other national courts such as those of the USA or the UK, hold that there is much uncertainty on the notion of fake news and that there is often an absence of evidence as to the damage it poses and such restriction may go against the assurances of freedom of expression (Katsirea, 2018).

In the European Union, the phenomenon has been approached from a 'soft' perspective through its Action Plan against Misinformation, where emphasis has been on self-regulation by the platforms themselves. A plan that has also been criticised for its constraints by the very European Court of Auditors in a special report (2021). In any case, according to several official reports, EU citizens consider misinformation a problem and call for political actions against fake news, including regulation and control (Luena Lopez et al. 2021; Evangelista Pintado 2021). Even a majority of US citizens (55%) were in favour of governmental restriction of fake news in 2023, as opposed to 42% who prioritized freedom of expression (Pew Research Center, 2023)

The Latin American constitutions address this dilemma between freedom or regulation from two different stances (Hallin and Echeverría, 2024). First, with a negative view of the freedom of the press (very similar to the US first amendment): secondly, discussing the right to information and the positive conception of the State, more like the social democratic approach or the NWICO of the 70s and 80s (Rebouças, 2021), with a deep questioning of free market. For this reason, this struggle between control and freedom of the social networks cannot be understood in isolation. It should be approached as one conditioned by political (political culture) and government issues (depending on who is governing) rather than as a debate on rights, laws or the quality of democracy. In fact, in similar studies within the Spanish context, the fact of being leftist, supporting the incumbent government, or trusting the president may be variables that contribute to taking a stance in support of the control of fake news (Valera-Ordaz and Doménech-Beltrán, 2020). Similarly, other studies in the same country suggest that age is a determining factor (people aged between 30 and 49 are the ones who have the most trust in the different mechanisms to combat fake news). The same is true of education, since trust increases as the level of education increases (Casero-Ripollés et al. 2023). At an international level, there is another study that underscores the level of trust in institutions, suggesting that in the countries with the higher confidence in institutions, citizens may show greater support to news control measures (Lim and Perrault, 2021). Indeed, aspects such as confidence in institutions, media credibility or supporting democracy, in the case of Germany, increase the support to restrictive and misinformation regulation policies (Freiling, Stubenvoll and Matthes, 2023), focusing the analysis on political variables, or, within them, on political culture. Besides, a study conducted in Mexico, South Korea, the USA and the UK points towards media variables: the perception of mass media influence on one's own opinions is a strong

predictor of the intention of taking measures to correct misinformation (Chung, 2023). This is related to an old dilemma as the support of the regulation of information is linked to the response citizens give to the messages they consider undesirable, including negative political advertising or political attacks (Jang and Kim, 2018).

The debate on the control, surveillance and censorship of the Internet, therefore, goes back to the beginning of 21st century (Puyosa and Chaguaceda, 2017). The fact is that, contrary to what may happen in Europe, in Latin America the control mechanisms are introduced by hybrid regimes, without meeting democratic standards (Freidenberg and Saavedra, 2020). One of the most apparent examples of the tension between control and free dissemination was the court order issued in Brazil ordering the deletion of profiles on the grounds that they misinformed as they disseminated antidemocratic and hate discourses (Wedderburn et al. 2024). Given the refusal of social network X to remove them and upon refusing to appoint a legal representative, the network was closed for over a month. This affected over 40 million users. An opinion poll made by pollster AtlasIntel showed a divide in Brazilian society with similar percentages of people supporting and rejecting this decision, with a slight advantage in the case of the latter (Oxford Analytica, 2024).

The political scenario in the countries under study. At the time of conducting the survey used for this study (Latinobarometro Corporation, 2023), the political scenario in the region revealed some major patterns that impacted both electoral processes and the perceptions citizens have in relation to their everyday problems (Freidenberg, 2024): a crisis of representation and the emergence of new anti-system actors, particularly from the right; the intensive use of electoral polarisation, social networks and misinformation as a mechanism of electoral mobilisation or the questioning of the very electoral institutions with several allegations of fraud. This situation inevitably has had consequences for the reading of political, contextual and political culture variables of each country analysed. To this, we should add a scenario of genuine use of the social networks in the region. This is relevant as social networks are where fake news has the greatest dissemination. In Latin America, the universalisation of mobile devices and digital alphabetization led to a significant increase in the use of social networks between 2017 and 2020. In contrast, 2023 saw certain stagnation and a change in the use of social networks that is explained by different migrations rather than to new users, Facebook and Instagram being the most widely used in the region. As to the profile of the user of social networks for political purposes, it corresponds to an educated male (except for Argentina, where it is a female), an extreme leftist, except in Mexico where he is a far-right supporter (López-López, 2025). Similarly, to be able to understand the models presented below, as well as the general context of Latin America, some notes on the specific context of each country are given.

In the case of Argentina, economically, the last few years have been characterised by galloping inflation (economic situation) and politically by the loss of power by Kirchnerism following countless disagreements among its factions, evidencing the long agony of Peronist Argentina (Donghi, 2024). The presidential elections in late 2023 gave the power to *outsider* Javier Milei, a phenomenon resulting from two concurrent aspects: the deterioration of the economic situation with no clear response by the main political parties and, at the same time, the emergence of a populist, radical right, or far right which has also emerged in other parts of the world and which relied on social networks (Kulfas, 2024; Caruncho, 2024).

In Brazil, in the last two years, the government has experienced a profound crisis of legitimacy and also a constitutional crisis. Like in the USA a few years ago, there was an assault on the Congress on 8 January 2023 by supporters of Bolsonaro, who did not accept the victory of progressive candidate Lula da Silva (López Burian, 2023). This is ultimately a questioning of democracy, which was already an issue during the Bolsonaro administration, and which could impact on the confidence citizens have on their political leaders and institutions, in line with what previous studies have discussed (Leal et al. 2023). As far as other aspects of political culture are concerned, although the management of the pandemic notably affected the Brazilian context, results showed a wide stability in the political and democratic culture variables, suggesting that, although the crisis impacted politics, values were less affected (Moraes and Moisés, 2022).

On its part, the Chilean political cycle has been characterised by the so-called “estallido social” or social outburst—demonstrations and protests that took place in 2019 and 2020, coinciding with the pandemic and with a high degree of student participation and digital activism. This social outburst crystallised due to the considerable discontent regarding political representation, a lack of confidence in institutions and the rise in the price of some public services (Morales Quiroga, 2020). This resulted in the victory in 2021 of a new political generation led by President Gabriel Boric, who defeated ultra-right candidate José Antonio Kast. However, the management of the constitutional reform and the political defeat of the governing party in the 2022 plebiscite partly explain the evolution of the political situation and the discrediting of the figure of the president before the citizens (Sazo, 2023).

The last decade of Colombian politics has been marked by the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP and the resulting referendum (in which the No option won by a very narrow margin) with its implications for the field of electoral behaviour, violence and polarization (Gómez Betancur, 2022). A peace agreement that evolved towards the concept of ‘total peace’ put forward by Petro (focused on a comprehensive approach that includes economic and social reforms to achieve a lasting peace). Petro’s rise to power was the consequence of a deep discontent with the management of the COVID-19, and certain irritation by the traditional, mainly conservative, political elites like for instance Iván Duque or Rodolfo Hernández (Pastrana Buelva and Valdivieso Collazos, 2023; Durán-Martínez and García-Villamizar, 2024; Kessler et al. 2024). Like in Chile (albeit at a different scale), several demonstrations were held in 2021 (the ‘outburst’) against the management of the pandemic or the tax reform proposed by Duque. This ‘Great National Strike’ was also conditioned by a great deal of fake news in the social networks (Rodríguez-Pérez et al. 2021).

In the year when the survey was conducted, the political situation in Mexico was, unlike the rest of the countries in the region, fairly stable following the victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the 2018 presidential elections. This victory of the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena) resulted in a major loss of support for the three traditional political parties (PAN, PRI, PRD), leading to a change in the party system (Jiménez, 2019; Prud’homme, 2020): party misalignment, some deinstitutionalisation or changes in political competition (and consequently in fragmentation affecting competitiveness). Other circumstantial aspects of relevance in Mexican politics have been the management of the COVID health crisis by the president, with some initial denial, which may have exacerbated certain political identities (Falomir and Lucca, 2020); Similarly, corruption, the

government links to drug trafficking or systemic violence, have been recurring topics in Mexican national politics.

Finally, unlike the previous case, Peru has seen in the last few years great instability as a result of the gradual deterioration of institutionality, with a substantial loss of confidence on the part of citizens in their institutions and the weakness of the party system (Ponce, 2023). Indeed, since 2016, it has had six presidents and has seen twice the (irregular) dissolution of the Congress. In fact, the impeachment of Pedro Castillo was surrounded by major cases of corruption and violence, ceding the presidency to his second vice-president, Dina Boluarte, whose legitimacy in office was questioned from the outset for her incipient neo-Fujimorism (Contreras and Gonzales, 2024). This has affected the already poor socio-economic indicators, particularly since the COVID-19 crisis (Perdomo, 2023). This crisis generated an intermediation vacuum that was filled by the autonomy of certain media and the social networks that operate between citizens and the political class (Macassi, 2025).

Materials and methods

As we have seen, misinformation and fake news are a global phenomenon that is not new. It has, however, acquired relevance over the last few years as a result of the massive consumption of digital social networks by all strata of society. In the case of the Latin American continent, although there is still a digital gap (López-López, 2025), its use has spread across all regions and age brackets. In this regard, this study used several questions made in the 2023 wave of the *Latinobarometro*, a non-for-profit, private, independent organisation that has been conducting surveys and publishing their report-based results for over two decades. It has the support of political and social actors in Latin America.

For this exploratory study, a sample from the following countries was used (Table 1): Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Four criteria, listed in order, explain this choice: a) the weight of their population, using the latest data available from the World Bank (2023): Argentina, 45.5 million inhabitants; Brazil, 211.1 million; Chile, 19.6 million; Colombia, 52.3 million; Mexico, 129.7 million and Peru, 33.8 million.; b) their subregional distribution in North America, the Andean Community and the Southern Cone; c) their analogous distribution of media consumption; d) distinctive elements of political culture (mainly confidence in institutions and their satisfaction with democracy).

In this context, the main objective of this study was to gain an understanding of both the common and differential aspects explaining that citizens are in favour of controlling the publication of fake news, even though this curtails freedom of expression. This assertion is the dependent variable of the study and corresponds to code P46N of the questionnaire. The secondary objective was to know the social, demographic and political profile for each country of the persons who opt for freedom or the control of fake news, focusing on communicative and political aspects as well as on political culture. This study is unparalleled, as results have not been exploited in this way. There are, however, precedents in the Ibero-American domain, especially in relation to the great dissemination of fake news by reason of the COVID19 pandemic (Salaverria et al. 2020; Valera-Ordaz and Doménech-Beltrán, 2020). It is therefore the first study with these characteristics seeking to generate models within the Latin American context to explain the reasons why citizens prefer fake news control over free dissemination (or the liberal doctrine). The starting hypothesis is that it is the political situation and culture variables that have more explanatory power. The research questions are listed below.

Table 1 Methodology Latinobarometro 2023.

Country	Company	No. of cases	Date when conducted in 2023	Sampling error	Representativeness	Sampling stages
Argentina	Isonomía Consultores	1200	20/02 to 01/04	+/-2.8%	91%	3
Brazil	IPEC	1204	03/03 to 14/03	+/-2.8%	100%	4
Chile	MORI Chile	1200	20/02 to 09/03	+/-2.8%	100%	3
Colombia	Centro Nacional de Consultoría	1200	20/02 to 20/03	+/-2.8%	100%	5
Mexico	Moreno & Sotnikova	1200	20/02 to 07/03	+/-2.8%	100%	4
Peru	Ipsos Opinión y Mercado	1200	21/02 to 25/03	+/-2.8%	100%	4

Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

Q1: In what media is there a greater perception of circulation of fake news?

Q2: What does the Latin American public opinion prefer: information control or freedom of expression even though that means disseminating fake news?

Q3: Are there any differences based on social and demographic variables?

Q4: Are the more far-right Latin American citizens the ones who most promote the liberal doctrine of free dissemination?

Q5: Are ideology or the variables of political culture present in all explanatory models?

Q6: Is voting the ruling party the main explanatory factor in supporting the control of fake news?

Q7: Are the similarities or differences between models conditioned by the subregion of the continent they are in?

The study started with a descriptive analysis made using SPSS 21 software, where the main variables were the country and the second the response to the P46N question: *which of the two statements are closer to your way of thinking? 'Freedom of expression must be assured even though fake news is disseminated' or 'fake news should be controlled even though this restricts freedom of expression'*. Both were crossed for social and demographic factors (age and education) or political and political culture factors (ideology and satisfaction with democracy). Also, a description of P46N and of question P53N (*Generally speaking, and in relation to social networks, do you think that in social networks there is (1) much (2) some, (3) little or (4) no fake news? And what about TV? And radio? And the written press?*) Finally, an inferential statistic was made from binary logistic regression models for each country, where the dependent variable, previously recorded as *dummy variable*, was question P46N of the questionnaire, giving value 1 to control of information and 0 to assurance of freedom of expression.

The independent variables used in the regression modes were those included in the following table (Table 2). The independent variables selected for testing were approximately 30% of those in the questionnaire and selection was based on the extensive empirical literature available on the study of behaviour, including the classic groups, subsequently extended and reviewed, of the three schools of political behaviour: Columbia, Michigan and Rochester (Barreiro Rivas et al. 2015), and proposals made by authors regarding the notion of political culture (Almond and Verba, 1963).

The models were adjusted by removing the variables that were not significant to achieve maximum explanatory level in each of

them. The final, adjusted model is given in Tables 3–8. In reading the results, ordinals follow a scale where (1) indicates Much and (5) Little.

Results

Perception regarding the dissemination of fake news and its consequences. Circulation of fake news by country and medium (coded using the antagonistic values ‘much’ and ‘no’ and removing the categories of ‘some and ‘little’) shows several interesting aspects. In all six countries, social networks were, by far, the medium where dissemination of fake news was perceived to be higher, although there were notable differences between Brazil, where three out of four respondents stated so and Chile where the percentage was 46%. Similarly, second in the pecking order with ‘much’ dissemination of fake news was television, which in Brazil also reached over 52% and 44% in Colombia. We cannot fail to be struck by the fact that the other media such as the radio or the written press were perceived as having a low level of misinformation (in Chile as few as 18.5% believed that much fake news is disseminated on the radio) which is explained on the basis of the parameters of credibility, consumption and trust. Another characteristic aspect has to do with the fact that the ‘volume’ compared between media and countries is correlative: in those places where there was a perception of dissemination of fake news, this occurred in all media, albeit with different degrees. This finding means that there were other variables functioning as exogenous factors. Finally, the most remarkable percentages with regard to the no dissemination of fake news were found in Mexico in both the written press (12.3%) and the radio (11.8%).

Table 9 shows the opinion of the citizens of all six countries analysed on whether the dissemination of fake news should be regulated. Generally, in all states, most citizens believed that fake news should be controlled even though this restricts freedom of expression. Three countries particularly stand out: Colombia (70.4%), Chile (68.5%) and Brazil (66.7%). The explanation of these percentages may be found, in the case of Colombia and Brazil, in aspects of political juncture. In the case of Chile, the explanation has to do with aspects of political culture. Mexico (40.5%) and Argentina (38.1%) were the countries that showed a greater willingness to assure freedom of expression, also for different reasons. In the former case, it might be due to the very institutionality of Mexico. In the latter case, it may be due to the ideological combat of the incumbent party. In any case, data show certain consistency with findings elsewhere, including the European Union and the USA. In the case of the latter, the data are very similar to those of Mexico, which may perhaps be explained by geographic proximity (Pew Research Center, 2023).

Some social and demographic factors: sex, age and education.

Some studies have highlighted that social and demographic variables may prove determinant when spreading fake news of

Table 2 Independent variables used in the regression model.

VARIABLES	CLASS	CODING
Social and demographic variables		
Sex	Dichotomous cat.	1: Male/ 0: Female
Age	Number	
Level of Education	Ordinal	1: Illiterate-7: Complete higher ed.
Worker	Dichotomous Cat.	1: Self-employed, public or private employee/ 0: temporarily unemployed, retired/annuitant/homemaker; student
Student	Dichotomous Cat.	1: Student/ 0: Self-employed, public or private employee; temporarily out of work; retired/annuitant/ homemakers; student
Social Class	Ordinal	1: High-5: Low
Internet access at home	Dichotomous Cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Cell/mobile phone/smartphone	Dichotomous Cat	1: Yes/ 0: No
Economic and political situation		
Assessment of personal and family economic situation - future	Ordinal	1: Very good-5: Very bad
Trust in president	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Trust in government	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Trust in political parties	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Approval of govt. performance	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Political culture-institutions		
Ideology	Scale (0-10)	0: Left-10: Right
Closeness to a party	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Agree/Disagree: I wouldn't mind that an undemocratic government came to power if it solved problems	Dichotomous	1: Very much agree—2-4: 0
I would support a military government if things get very tough	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
There cannot be democracy without political parties	Dichotomous	1: Yes/ 0: No
Interest in politics	Dichotomous	1: Much interested—2-4: 0
How often do you talk politics with your friends	Dichotomous	1: Very often—2-4: 0
Discussing the situation of your country has negative consequences for you	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
There cannot be democracy without political parties	Dichotomous cat.	1: Without political parties there cannot be democracy/ 0: Democracy can work without parties
Conservative society	Dichotomous cat.	1: I prefer a society that defends our customs/0: I prefer a diverse society that is open to all kinds of customs
Satisfaction with democracy	Dichotomous	1: Very satisfied—2-4: 0
Preference for authoritarianism	Dichotomous cat.	1: Under certain circumstances, an authoritarian government may be preferred to a democratic one/0: Democracy is preferable over any other form of government; or to people like me, it makes no difference whether the government is democratic or not
Leader assessment		
Voted for the ruling party	Scale (0-10)	0: Very bad-10: Very good
Mass media	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Agreement/disagreement: In the event of difficult times, it is good that the president controls the mass media	Dichotomous	1: Very much agree—2-4: 0
Agreement/Disagreement: so that democracy works, a diversity of sources of information in the media must be assured	Dichotomous	1: Very much agree—2-4: 0
Trust: radio	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Trust: the written press	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Trust: television	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Trust: social networks	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Social networks have a positive impact on politics	Dichotomous	1: Improves politics—2-3: 0
Fake news: radio	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Fake news: press	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Fake news: television	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Fake news: social networks	Dichotomous	1: Much—2-4: 0
Social networks you use: YouTube	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Social networks you use: Twitter	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Social networks you use: WhatsApp	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Social networks you use: Instagram	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No
Social networks you use TikTok	Dichotomous cat.	1: Yes/ 0: No

Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

Table 3 Logistic regression model for Argentina.

	B/(SE)	Exp(B)
Sex (male)	-0.541*** (0.147)	0.582
Class	0.304*** (0.086)	1.356
Worker	0.535*** (0.161)	1.708
Internet access at home	0.754*** (0.204)	2.126
What the economic situation will be like for you and your family in twelve months	0.306*** (0.070)	1.357
Degree of trust in the president	-1,518*** (0.333)	0.219
Support to a military government	-0.510** (0.170)	0.600
Conservative society	0.617*** (0.147)	1.854
Negative consequences of discussing politics	-0.667*** (0.149)	0.513
Degree of confidence: radio	-0.598* (0.254)	0.550
Social networks have a positive impact on politics	-0.443* (0.221)	0.642
Social networks you use: Instagram	0.415** (0.151)	1.514
Assessment of Alberto Fernández	-0.044*** (0.004)	0.957
Approval of government performance	-0.572** (0.191)	0.565
Voted for the ruling party	0.644** (0.204)	2.105
Constant	-7.732 (0.911)	0.000
-2 Log likelihood	1433.822	
Cox and Snell R ²	0.092	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.352	

Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

any kind. Also determinant with regard to political themes are the very confidence in the news shared with others, the trust in the media and aspects that have to do with the credibility of the news outlet itself (Montero-Liberona and Halpern, 2019). In fact, these differences may, to a certain extent, explain citizens' position on the freedom of expression-information control debate: women are less involved in the dissemination of fake news, the young disseminate fake news much more than older people, or people who devote less than an hour a day to keep up with the news disseminate more fake news than those who spend more time getting information (Balakrishnan, 2022).

In an intensive study among the young, demographic factors such as sex, age, habitat, or education proved relevant factors in determining how news was received (Calderón et al. 2023). Among other things, demographics showed that the older they were, and the higher their habitat and education, the more aware they were of the existence of fake news and they more they contrasted information.

In the case of the six countries under discussion, most of them did not show substantial differences regarding sex, except for of Brazil and Colombia. In the former case, 72.7% of women were in favour of some kind of restriction to the free dissemination of news, as opposed to 60.3% of men. In the case of Colombia, the difference was slightly lower, but still relevant: almost three out of four women (74%) as opposed to 66.5% of men.

As to age groups (Fig. 1), 'trends' did emerge within the countries themselves. As a consequence, three blocks of countries can be defined. First, the countries in the Southern Cone (Argentina and Chile), where the support to news control increased with age (a 10-point gap between the younger and the older bracket), except for the 26-40 bracket in Chile (where perhaps a political variable may provide an explanation). Secondly, Brazil, where age-related differences were almost negligible, with the exception a slight decrease among those over 61 years old. Finally, the third block, consisting of Colombia, Mexico and Peru (countries of the Andean community). In these countries, it was the youngest who clearly positioned themselves in favour of a greater control of news. In contrast, the older

Table 4 Logistic regression model for Brazil.

	B/(SE)	Exp(B)
Social class	0.446*** (0.085)	1.562
Worker	-0.673*** (0.150)	0.510
Internet access at home	0.986*** (0.217)	2.679
Has a mobile phone	-0.659* (0.282)	0.517
What the economic situation will be like for you and your family in twelve months	-0.369*** (0.085)	0.692
Degree of trust in the government	-0.610** (0.220)	0.543
Degree of trust in the president	0.762*** (0.200)	2.142
Degree of satisfaction with democracy	-1.676*** (0.481)	0.187
Frequency with which you discuss politics	0.602** (0.224)	1.827
I would not mind if a non-democratic government came to power if problems were solved	0.741*** (0.193)	2.098
Degree of interest in politics	-0.592** (0.227)	0.553
Conservative society	-0.602*** (0.162)	0.548
Close to any party	-0.831*** (0.153)	0.436
Negative consequences of discussing politics	0.382* (0.151)	1.465
To ensure that democracy works, diversity of sources must be assured in the news spread by the media	0.445** (0.158)	1.560
Fake news: social networks	0.453* (0.182)	1.573
Fake news: TV	0.486** (0.180)	1.626
Fake news: written press	-0.404* (0.188)	0.668
Social networks you use: Facebook	-0.394* (0.175)	0.674
Social networks you use: YouTube	-0.380* (0.169)	0.684
Social networks you use: Twitter	-0.588** (0.216)	0.555
Social networks you use: Instagram	1.090*** (0.180)	2.974
Approval of government management	0.792*** (0.241)	2.209
Voted for ruling party	0.887*** (0.231)	2.427
Assessment of Jair Bolsonaro	-0.030*** (0.005)	0.971
Assessment of Luis Ignacio da Silva "Lula"	-0.022*** (0.006)	0.978
Constant	-4.136 (0.546)	0.016
-2 Log likelihood	1360.717	
Cox and Snell R ²	0.111	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.407	

Significance: + $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

brackets were in favour of greater freedom of expression. The biggest difference was found in Mexico, with a ten-point gap. Age operated as a significant independent variable in the models of Chile, Colombia and Mexico, as shown below, where we need to resort to political variables to explain trends and exceptions. In the case of Chile's unrest, in the 26-40 age bracket (75.2% of people were in favour of controlling fake news), there is also the fact that it is a generation politicised by the students' protest of the previous decade where the current president was a leading figure. This may be an explanatory factor.

As to the level of education (Fig. 2), the literature on Ibero-America, especially in the case of Spain (Valera-Ordaz and Doménech-Beltrán, 2020) identifies the lower educational levels (primary and secondary education or vocational training) as the more inclined to curtailing misinformation. Those with higher education, however, are more inclined to uphold free dissemination of news. Even so, in all categories it remained lower than the control option. The results in all six countries partially challenge prior literature, with the sole exception of Argentina, where the more educated are less in favour of restrictions than illiterates and respondents who did not complete secondary education. In the rest of the countries, to a lesser or greater extent, it was people

Table 5 Logistic regression model for Chile.

	B/(SE)	Exp(B)
Age	0.024*** (0.006)	1.024
Level of education	0.348*** (0.071)	1.416
What the economic situation will be like in twelve months	0.350*** (0.097)	1.419
Degree of trust in the congress	-2.415* (0.961)	0.089
Degree of interest in politics	-1.797*** (0.387)	0.166
Preference for authoritarianism	0.741*** (0.209)	2.097
Closeness to a political party	0.660** (0.241)	1.935
Degree of trust in the radio	0.782* (0.316)	2.186
Degree of trust in the written press	-1.142* (0.486)	0.319
Social networks have a positive impact on politics	-1.400*** (0.395)	0.247
Social networks you use: Twitter	0.812*** (0.228)	2.252
Voted for the ruling party	0.731*** (0.221)	2.076
Assessment of Gabriel Boric	-0.060*** (0.011)	0.942
Constant	-7.161 (0.666)	0.001
-2 Log likelihood	730.480	
Cox and Snell R ²	0.078	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.408	

Significance: + *p* < 0.10 **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.
Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

Table 6 Logistic regression model for Colombia.

	B/(SE)	Exp(B)
Age	0.014** (0.005)	1.014
Level of education	0.294*** (0.050)	1.341
Student	0.948** (0.308)	2.581
What the economic situation of the country will be like in twelve months	0.210** (0.074)	1.234
What the economic situation will be like for you and your family in twelve months	-0.204* (0.084)	0.815
Degree of trust in the congress	-0.901* (0.406)	0.406
There cannot be democracy without political parties	-0.382* (0.683)	0.683
Self-placement on a Left-Right scale	-0.053* (0.025)	0.949
Discussing politics has had negative consequences for you	0.837*** (0.169)	2.309
Degree of trust: social networks	-1.032** (0.380)	0.356
Fake news: social networks	0.639*** (0.176)	1.894
Fake news: written press	-0.387* (0.175)	0.679
Voted for the ruling party	1.132*** (0.173)	3.102
Assessment of Gustavo Petro	-0.040*** (0.003)	0.961
Constant	-5.164 (0.503)	0.006
-2 Log likelihood	1263.264	
Cox and Snell R ²	0.086	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.345	

Significance: + *p* < 0.10 **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.
Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

with complete or uncomplete higher education or complete secondary education that were in favour of greater restrictions, with a growing trend as their educational level increases, albeit with exceptions (Chile). In Brazil (16 points), Chile (18 points) or Peru (12 points) there were significant differences between categories.

Political and political culture factors. Generally, it is prior political beliefs that typically explain the positioning of an individual before the phenomenon of fake news, regardless of

Table 7 Logistic regression model for Mexico.

	B/(SE)	Exp(B)
Age	-0.021*** (0.005)	0.979
Sex (male)	-0.490** (0.158)	0.612
Subjective social class	0.205* (0.086)	1.228
Level of education	-0.233*** (0.053)	0.792
Internet access at home	0.720*** (0.188)	2.054
What the economic situation in the country will be like in twelve months	0.180* (0.073)	1.197
Degree of trust in the radio	-0.744* (0.367)	0.475
Degree of trust in political parties	1.217*** (0.353)	3.379
Degree of satisfaction with democracy	-1.203** (0.408)	0.300
Frequency with which you discuss politics	-1.355** (0.466)	0.258
Degree of interest in politics	-0.803** (0.305)	0.448
I would support a military government	0.727*** (0.167)	2.070
There cannot be democracy without political parties	-0.890*** (0.162)	0.411
Preference for authoritarianism	0.434** (0.166)	1.543
Conservative society	-0.617*** (0.167)	0.540
Self-placement in a Left-Right scale	-0.092*** (0.026)	0.912
Negative consequences of discussing politics	-1.071*** (0.165)	0.343
So that democracy works, diversity of sources must be ensured in the news spread by the media o that democracy works	-0.605* (0.240)	0.546
Degree of trust: radio	-1.511*** (0.326)	0.221
Degree of trust: social networks	0.827** (0.272)	2.286
Social networks you use: YouTube	-0.698*** (0.185)	0.498
Social networks you use: Instagram	-0.894*** (0.215)	0.409
Social networks you use: Tik Tok	-0.961*** (0.240)	0.383
Voted for the ruling party	0.804*** (0.173)	2.234
Assessment of Manuel López Obrador	-0.040*** (0.004)	0.961
Constant	0.241 (0.583)	1.272
-2 Log likelihood	1175.643	
R ² Cox	0.133	
R ² Nagelkerke	0.41	

Significance: + *p* < 0.10 **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.
Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

Table 8 Logistic regression model for Peru.

	B/(SE)	Exp(B)
Sex (male)	0.814*** (0.238)	2.256
Level of education	0.420*** (0.081)	1.521
Student	0.890* (0.353)	2.436
Internet access at home	-0.567* (0.025)	0.567
Preference for authoritarianism	-1.401*** (0.431)	0.246
Conservative	-0.733** (0.251)	0.480
Self-placement on the Left-Right scale	0.090* (0.039)	1.094
Discussing politics has had negative consequences for you	0.798 (0.252)	2.220
Degree of trust: TV	-1.225 (0.599)	0.294
Voted for the ruling party	-2.563 (0.426)	0.077
Constant	-6.171	0.002
-2 Log likelihood	704.427	
Cox and Snell R ²	0.034	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.227	

Significance: + *p* < 0.10 **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.
Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

exposure to them (Anthony and Moulding, 2019). In any case, several experiments have shown that ideology is indeed a relevant phenomenon when it comes to believing, spreading and taking a position on fake news (Baptista et al. 2021; Gupta et al. 2023).

Table 9 Assuring freedom of expression or news control by country.

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Mexico	Peru
Freedom of expression must be assured even though fake news is disseminated	38.1%	33.3%	31.5%	29.6%	40.5%	36.6%
Fake news must be controlled even though this curtails freedom of expression.	61.9%	66.7%	68.5%	70.4%	59.5%	63.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

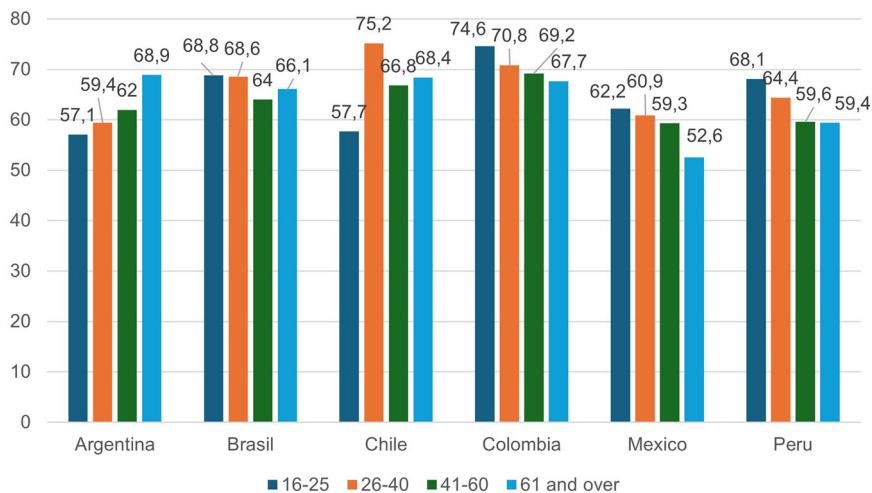


Fig. 1 The publishing of fake news must be controlled even though this curtails freedom of expression by age. Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

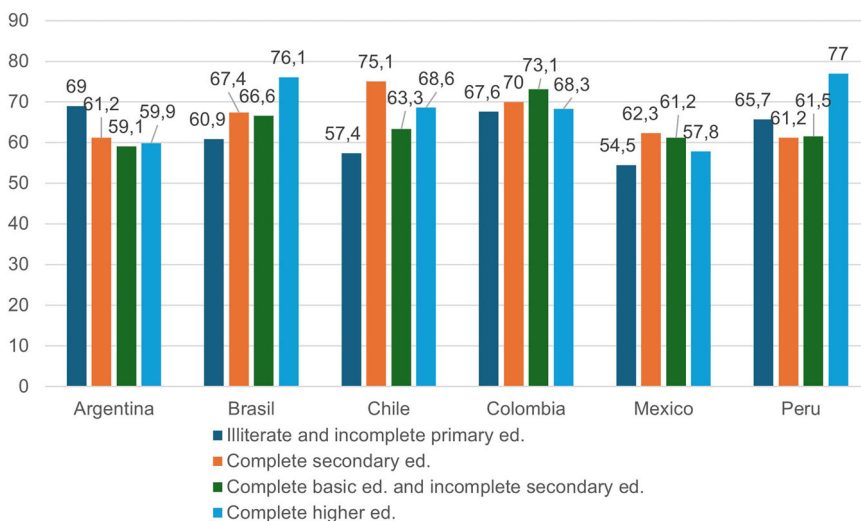


Fig. 2 The publishing of fake news must be controlled even though this curtails freedom of expression by level of education. Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation, 2023.

Thus, right-wing individuals are more likely to take fake news at face value (regardless of whether news is pro-right or pro-left) and therefore they subjectively perceive that the volume of fake news is lower. A link has also been identified, in this case in Brazil (Castillo et al. 2022), between the position of an individual on fake news and political culture, such a trust in public institutions, distrust of mass media or discontent with democracy.

In any case, the results in all six Latin American countries showed differences with the findings in prior literature that should be underscored, the most significant difference being: as

we moved to the right, generally citizens' position leant towards control, with the exceptions Argentina and Brazil (Fig. 3). In these two countries, it was extreme left wingers who were more in favour of news control whereas in the case of right-wingers, freedom of expression took precedence. This fact may be strongly conditioned by a *Latinobarometro* conducted very close to the electoral campaigns of Javier Milei and Jair Bolsonaro. This could also be explained by the more liberal stance of some lefts such as the Chilean left. This would account for the differences of almost twenty points between those at each side of the political spectrum.

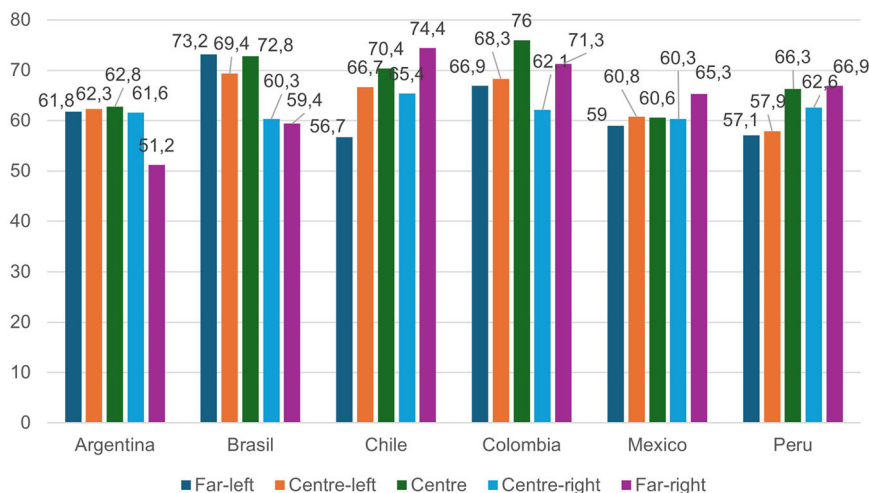


Fig. 3 The publishing of fake news must be controlled even though this curtails freedom of expression by ideology. Source: own preparation from Latinobarometro Corporation 2023.

An exception to this centrifugal perspective is Colombia, where those placing themselves on the centre were the ones who more strongly demanded restrictive measures (76%).

As far as satisfaction with democracy as a political culture variable is concerned, several relevant aspects emerged. In Argentina, Colombia or Peru, this seemed to have no influence on the control-freedom dichotomy. As to Brazil, there was indeed a divide between those who were 'very' or 'quite satisfied' and those who were not and more categorically expressed their predilection for control. This may be due to their 'advocacy' for democracy. Chile is the country with the biggest differences: those very satisfied were overwhelmingly in favour of freedom of expression, while those who were not at all satisfied were in favour of control (83.2%). A similar situation, albeit with less marked differences, was found in Mexico, where freedom of expression took precedence for those who were very satisfied with democracy. In contrast, those who were not very satisfied or not at all satisfied showed their preference for control, although the percentage was lower. Be as it may, the difference between categories was relevant (25 percentage points).

Controlling fake news in different countries. The sections below detail the variables by country that influence citizens' willingness to opt for a model where fake news is controlled even though this curtails freedom of expression.

Argentina. In Argentina (Table 3) the level of explanatory power of the dependent variable was relevant (35.2% of global explanation). Based on the exponential values of the beta coefficients of each of the variables of the model presented (an extensive model that includes social, demographic, contextual, political and media categories), we underscore the role of significant variables of different nature. Also interesting are the contextual variables, such as the personal economic situation (a negative balance may contribute to explain the dependent variable).

Thus, working and having Internet access at home, both demographic variables, significantly contributed to the explanation. The same was true of subjective social class: belonging to a lower class positively influenced opting for the control of fake news. Similarly, being a woman increased support for controlling this type of news. As to the variables linked to confidence in the institutions, the negative effect of trusting the president should be noted. This may help us to understand how the fact of having voted for the ruling party had a positive effect although the

opposite effect occurred with the assessment of his performance and that of Alberto Fernández. Also interesting was to identify how the preference for a conservative society increased the probability of being in favour of greater control. At the same time, being in favour of a military government (under difficult situations) reduced the probability of supporting the control of fake news.

As to media variables, those showing high confidence on the radio as a medium and those who consider that social networks have a positive impact on politics showed a lower probability of supporting the control of fake news. Finally, having an Instagram account had a positive effect on the probability of favouring the control of misinformation.

Brazil. Brazil (Table 4) presented good explanatory levels, at 40.7% of global explanation for the model. Firstly, having Internet access stood out as a significant variable in a place where there are still information society gaps, which also manifest in gender, class and territorial gaps. Another relevant social and demographic variable was subjective social class. Belonging to a lower social class increased the probability of expressing a stronger preference for the control of information. Similarly, those who showed greater confidence in their future personal economic situation were more likely to be in favour of controlling fake news.

The aspects connected to political culture also played a key role. Those who were dissatisfied with democracy or those who had little or no interest in politics were more likely to be in favour of controlling fake news. In this vein, we found that a high degree of consensus with the statement that they would not mind that an undemocratic government came to power if problems were solved indicates a higher probability of supporting the control of fake news. In this case, however, the variable 'conservative society' had a negative impact. Those showing no support to a conservative society were in favour of this news control. These respondents were also more likely to have voted for the ruling party.

As to the variables corresponding to the mass media, we found that the identification of social networks and television as disseminators of fake news had a positive impact on explaining support to the control of fake news. In the case of the written press, however, the opposite was true. We also noted that the defence of diversity of sources of information for the good functioning of democracy positively impacted on the dependent variable. Continuing with the effect of the media variables, we identified that having Instagram as opposed to not having it, like in the previous model, had a positive effect on the dependent

variable. Having Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, however, worked in the opposite direction.

Chile. In Chile (Table 5), the model presented also had notable levels of global explanation (40,8%). Like in the previous models, it was social and demographic, contextual and political variables as a whole that mostly explained the behaviour of the dependent variable. In this case, the age variable was particularly noteworthy. As age increased, the probability of being in favour of a stronger control of fake news also increased. As to contextual variables, a negative assessment of the personal economic situation resulted in a greater likelihood that the respondent supported the control of this type of news. In another block of variables, in this case on political culture, we can see how among the individuals who manifested low confidence in congress, low interest in politics or a preference for authoritarianism, there was a tendency towards the control of fake news.

Similarly, having Twitter was a variable that impacted on the predisposition to regulating fake news. Also linked to this effect were little confidence in the written press or the radio in contrast to the questioning on the positive contribution of the social networks to politics. Lastly, the effect of other political variables should be noted. Closeness to a political party had a positive effect on the probability of being in favour of greater control of misinformation as well as having voted for the ruling party or a low assessment of Boric.

Colombia. Based on the value of the pseudo R^2 of the model presented for Colombia (Table 6), the degree of explanation of the statement 'the publishing of fake news must be controlled even though it curtails freedom of expression' was 34.5%. This model is in itself interesting because, beyond the level of explanation achieved, the variables that may prove significant reinforce other aspects that are also present in other models. It may also lead to drawing general conclusions that are relevant to this article. That is the case of the variables grouped around four large blocks. As to the assessment of the personal economic situation and the assessment of the economic situation of the country in the future, inverse logics emerged. Thus, as the prospective assessment of the country increased, respondents were more likely to be in favour of stronger control, whereas with the current assessment of the personal situation the opposite occurred. Likewise, respondents with higher education levels and older age were more favourable to supporting the control of fake news.

As to variables linked to political culture, considering that discussing politics may have negative consequences for the respondent increased the probability of being in favour of controlling misinformation. We also identified distrust towards the congress as well as the questioning of the need for parties for good democratic functioning as variables that help us to explain the trend towards the control of fake news. An interesting fact in this model, as far as political variables are concerned, is the emergence of the significant effect of ideology of the respondent. It was more likely that respondents were in favour of controlling misinformation as their ideological positioning leant towards the left of the spectrum. As to these variables, voting for the ruling party and the positive assessment of Gustavo Petro had a negative effect on the control of misinformation.

Finally, as far as the mass media variables are concerned, we noted that believing that fake news is disseminated in social networks increased the probability of being in favour of controlling social networks. In this line, low confidence in social networks was identified, thus obtaining specific variables that may prove most useful for future studies focused on this country.

Mexico. The adjusted modelling for Mexico has a level of global explanation of 41.0% (Table 7). Like the rest of the countries

analysed, we found a set of independent variables of different nature with points of coincidence with other countries that allowed us to outline the relevance of some of them for Latin American. We also found specific variables that were the consequence of the dynamics of political competition or of the economic or social context of Mexico. Again, we see that the age variable (this time looking at the youngest bracket), sex, social class and Internet access worked in the same direction. The education variable this time worked in the opposite direction, though. This shows the relevance of the social and demographic variables in the models presented. We also identified the same logic as in the previous model with regard to the economic assessment of the country.

Stating that there can be democracy without parties increases the explanation of the dependent variable, which is curious if we consider it in relation to the degree of confidence towards political parties. This reading should also be supplemented with distrust toward the congress, the preference for alternatives to social conservatism in certain situations, which is in line with the role of those dissatisfied with democracy. In this case, we also found that ideology played a role. As we moved towards the left, the positive effect on the dependent variable increased. In this case, there was also the positive effect of voting for the ruling party.

Finally, we should note the positive and negative effects of the variables 'much confidence' in social networks and the radio on the control of misinformation as well as the negative effect that using YouTube or the social networks Instagram and TikTok has on confidence. Similarly, we underscored the relativization of the importance of the existence of different sources of information. In other words, not considering the assurance of this diversity fundamental for democracy increased the probability of supporting the control of fake news.

Peru. The value of pseudo R^2 of the model presented for Peru, albeit the lowest of all adjusted models, was moderately satisfactory (0.227). In this case, we see again the relevance of social and demographic variables. As far as sex is concerned, however, we can see a change in the trend with regard to the models of the rest of the countries studied. In this case, the greater probability of leaning towards regulation was among males. Besides, as we have explained, education became a recurring explanatory variable in almost all models, also in this case, with a positive effect on the need to control fake news. In addition, having Internet access at home decreased the probability of being in favour of controlling misinformation.

As to political variables, a recurrent variable emerged in academic literature: ideology. Thus, in the case of Peru, as respondents positioned themselves more towards the right, the probability of adhering to the control of fake news increased. We also noted a preference for alternatives to social conservatism and a non-preference for authoritarian regimes. In other words, the individuals who were more open to a pluralistic, alternative society and those who under no circumstance preferred an authoritarian regime over a democratic one were more likely to be in favour of controlling fake news.

Finally, unlike in the previous models, in this case, having voted for the ruling party had a negative effect on the dependent variable, thus reducing the probability of being in favour of controlling misinformation.

Discussion and conclusions

This article, for the first time in the regional framework of Latin America, looks at the reasons explaining why citizens are in favour of controlling the publishing of fake news even though

this curtails freedom of expression, which was the dependent variable. The notable levels of explanation achieved in almost all the countries, which were in excess of 40% in Brazil, Chile and Mexico, led us to draw relevant conclusions from common variables as well as to describe the social, demographic and political profile of each of them.

As to the first research question (Q1), we see that social networks and television are the media where there was the highest perception of fake news being disseminated. It should be noted, however, that there are two relevant aspects within the Latin American context that contribute to an understanding of the differences between both countries and the media. The first is that the very configuration of the media system and the media regulations adopted by several countries in the region, mainly promoted by governments (Becerra, 2014), could help to understand some political variables of the explanatory model. Secondly, the existence of an intense political parallelism, although not in the way it happens in Europe. As no solid party system has consolidated, politics operates through coalitions around strong political figures. Media align not so much with ideologies but with power groups (Waisbord, 2000). A third aspect has to do with trust in traditional and digital media, which may be an explanatory factor in the distribution of consumption between the different media, and which is considered as an element that needs to be discussed. Be as it may, the fact that fake news is perceived with greater or lesser intensity has been a significant media variable in some of the models adjusted, which strengthens the argument for their inclusion. For instance, in Brazil, citizens' perception that fake news circulated in social networks and TV resulted in an increased probability of being in favour of regulating news. This perception of presence of fake news, therefore, acted in a negative sense. The same is true for the model proposed for Colombia.

Similarly, Latin American societies are generally favourable to controlling fake news, although this curtails freedom of expression (Q2). This was true of almost all age brackets, although with some qualifications and differences. In contrast with some previous literature, it was people with the higher level of education (except for Argentina) who were more predisposed, with varying levels of intensity, to restricting dissemination. Something similar may be said of age, where 'trends' emerged, but which in some sense were inverse. In the democracies of the Southern Cone, this fact increased with age. In Colombia, Mexico and Peru, it was the young who more strongly supported restrictions (Q3).

Responses, however, might be conditioned by the historical role of the state in regulating and structuring the mass media and news. Thus, somewhere between the liberal notions underpinning the relations of the state with the media in terms of independence and control, and the European social democrat notions that support the positive role of the state when defining a pluralistic and free system of media, a genuine Latin American model of media has emerged that is very conditioned by the political regimes and the lack of a strong public broadcasting service.

As far as the fourth question is concerned (Q4: Are the more far-right Latin American citizens the ones who most promote the liberal doctrine of free dissemination?), it was refuted. As we move to the right, citizens generally were more in favour of control (except for Argentina and Brazil). However, to understand the study of the political variables and of political culture of Latin America we should bear in mind that they are strongly conditioned by the political instability in the region and dictatorships, the lack of strong political parties, their strong presidential nature, cross-sectional populism and the weakness of the left-right cleavage and of democracies. Besides, we cannot ignore that this is conditioned by their relationship with the system of

media and news. Indeed, the Latin American system of media is characterised by volatility (where the alignment of the regimes with the media often changes). This may somewhat explain the behaviour of this variable.

Similarly, from the observation of the exponentials of the beta coefficients in all six models, several aspects of interest emerged. In all countries studied there was a series of variables that explain the increased support to the control of fake news. These variables may be grouped as a function of their explanatory powers, with some clear exceptions. Firstly, something that is confirmed by previous literature (Valera-Ordaz and Doménech-Beltrán, 2020), is the support to the ruling party (Q5), very positively affecting the dependent variable in all models, except for Peru (which was negative, but which is explained by the current political juncture). This shows trust in the incumbent figure, as this figure will ultimately define how this control will be implemented. This variable was supplemented with others such as assessment, ideology or identification.

Secondly and in relation to Q6, other sets of variables grouped around political culture should be noted. These variables also strongly contributed to explaining the support to measures restricting freedom of expression. (Little) satisfaction with democracy had a strong explanatory power and the same was true of low interest in politics. Something similar happened with the support to authoritarian or conservative societies as well as for the support to military governments, particularly in Chile and Argentina. This fact may be explained by the not-too-distant military dictatorships. In the next level we find social and demographic variables, such as the fact of being a woman in Argentina or Mexico or subjective social class. Finally, a further group of variables with positive effect had to do with technology (having Internet access) or with mass media and social networks. In the latter case, the level of trust in the different media proved relevant. We should also highlight the prospective variables in a negative sense: the citizens who believe that things will get worse were the most favourable to controlling news. As to the seventh research question (Q7), whether the similarities or differences between the models are conditioned by the subregion of the continent, the answer was no. We are before structurally similar models, except for Peru, that partially diverts from the norm.

This exploratory study has several limitations in its development. Firstly, its dependence on secondary data (Latinobarómetro) prevents the introduction of other variables that may be significant. Secondly, the scarce (or non-existent) literature in the Latin American domain on the object of study. This has prevented us from positing a clearer, more focused starting hypothesis. Thirdly, the very dependent variable, which does not specify the manner and the place to implement this control of information, or who would oversee this control. The conclusions of this study fill a gap in previous literature and open new avenues for research, mainly one looking at the tension between freedom-news control within the framework of Latin America, which is strongly conditioned by cultural and political variables.

Data availability

The data used is available on the Latinobarómetro Corporation website (<https://www.latinobarometro.org/latContents.jsp>). The survey used is from 2023. All files are available in PDF format, and are available for use in SPSS, Stata, SAS, or R. The questionnaire is also public. This survey collects data confidentially, ensuring the privacy of participants. All data is anonymous.

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Author contributions

PCLL contributed the state of the art, the explanation of the dependent variable, the conclusions and the writing of the manuscript. MPL was in charge of processing statistical data. EJG contributed the methodology and modeling. NLD reviewed the manuscript, the theoretical framework and the conclusions. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical approval

This study has used secondary data from the 2023 survey of the Latinobarometro Corporation. Every procedure used in conducting this study was in accordance with the ethical standards of our university, those of the different national research committees as well as those of the Declaration of Helsinki or other comparable international ethical standards. As this study did not involve direct involvement with human participants, no formal ethical approval was required.

Informed consent

This study analysed secondary data from the 2023 Latinobarometro survey, conducted by the non-for-profit Foundation Latinobarometro Corporation. This survey collects data confidentially, ensuring the privacy of participants. All data are anonymous. Therefore, informed consent of respondents was not required.

Additional information

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