

**AMERICAS QUARTERLY SOCIAL INCLUSION INDEX 2014:
AMID GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT, PATTERNS OF EXCLUSION REMAIN**

*Slow economic growth impairs social inclusion in the United States;
Uruguay, Argentina, and Costa Rica top Index;
The Northern Triangle ranks at the bottom of the pack.*

New York, July 29, 2014—The United States kept its regional ranking in this year's *Americas Quarterly* Social Inclusion Index, an annual survey released today by Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA) showed. The country kept its regional ranking held back largely because of slow GDP growth coming out of the 2007 Great Recession, but ranked first in the Americas in percent of GDP spent on social programs, financial inclusion, and public perception of personal empowerment.

The *Americas Quarterly* Social Inclusion Index 2014 ranks 17 countries on 21 variables from GDP growth to government responsiveness, bringing a multidimensional approach to the way development is traditionally measured in the region. In its third year, the Index evaluates countries on access to public and private goods, popular attitudes toward empowerment and government responsiveness, and the protection of basic civil, political, and human rights. In 2014, the Index adds two new variables: disability rights and access to justice.

The United States is not a leader in the region in areas of LGBT and women's rights due to the failure of the federal government to report on national femicide rates, despite high scores in other areas such as mortality rights, reproductive rights, and assistance for family care. The country also lags in public perceptions of government responsiveness by gender (where it is last in the region) and by race (where it is 14th)—both likely reflections of the popular frustrations of politics and concerns over economic security.

Uruguay ranked first in the Index, improving its score from a year earlier in several areas such as economic growth, political rights, and access to adequate housing. Argentina and Costa Rica tied for the second place due to gains in GDP spent on social programs and women’s rights, among other indicators. The Index shows that slow economic growth and extremely unfavorable attitudes toward government responsiveness continue to hobble social inclusion in the United States, the fourth country in the ranking.

“This is the third year we have collected this information and scaled each country, and there have been improvements and declines across variables. What stands clear is that the issue of social inclusion—unlike GDP growth and even increases in income—is difficult to change in the short term. It is deeply embedded in historical, structural, and even attitudinal conditions,” said AS/COA Senior Director of Policy and *Americas Quarterly* Editor-in-Chief Christopher Sabatini.

The Northern Triangle—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador plus Nicaragua—continues the trend from the previous years’ indices by ranking at the bottom of the pack across the majority of indicators. This year’s Index exposes a toxic mix of high poverty rates, lack of opportunities, gender and race disparities, and very low access to formal jobs and education, which is at the root of the growing numbers of unaccompanied youth from Central America entering the United States.

“In Honduras, only 10.8 percent of women and 5.1 percent of males have access to a formal job. In Guatemala, while numbers are slightly higher, there are substantial discrepancies when looking at race and ethnicity—there is a huge gap between minority and non-minority access to formal jobs,” said AS/COA Director of Policy and *Americas Quarterly* Senior Editor Alana Tummino. “We need to continue to push the idea to governments that a more inclusive society will lead to greater gains in social, political, and economic growth.”

Country Snapshots

- **Chile** placed fifth in the Index due to government spending on health and education—where it ranks among the lowest in the region, below Mexico, Nicaragua, and Bolivia—and the lack of improvement in women’s and LGBT rights.
- **Peru** improved its ranking (sixth) in the Index with advances in women’s rights and one of the highest rates of GDP growth in the region. However, its levels of social spending remain one of

the lowest, contributing in part to low scores in other areas such as secondary school enrollment and access to adequate housing.

- **Brazil**, in spite of impressive middle class growth and its eighth overall ranking in the Index, shows gaps in areas of women's rights, between minority and non-minority levels of poverty and access to public services, and perceptions of personal empowerment and government responsiveness.
- **Colombia** ranked eleventh this year having made gains in GDP growth, girls' enrollment in secondary school, political rights, percent of people living on more than \$4 per day, access to adequate housing, and access to formal jobs.
- **Mexico** made no gains in its overall ranking (twelfth) despite improvements in poverty reduction and strong scores in women's and LGBT rights. Access to formal jobs remains one of the greatest challenges for social inclusion in the country.

About the *Americas Quarterly* Social Inclusion Index

Through its comprehensive approach, the *Americas Quarterly* Social Inclusion Index measures populations' ability to have equal access to goods and services without regard to race, ethnicity, and gender. The 2014 Index is calculated using countries' census data and data from the International Monetary Fund, the UNDP Human Development Report, Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2013* survey, Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) *AmericasBarometer* survey, the World Bank's Global Financial Inclusion (Global Findex) Database, and researchers Joan Caivano from the Inter-American Dialogue, Jane Marcus Delgado from CUNY, and Javier Corrales from Amherst College. The Index produces one ranking that includes 21 variables and has race and ethnicity data across 9 countries, and a second which ranks 17 countries against each other across the 10 variables from which all data is available.

Access the *Americas Quarterly Social Inclusion Index 2014* at:

<http://www.americasquarterly.org/charticles/socialinclusionindex2014/>

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Access the *Americas Quarterly Social Inclusion Index 2013* at:

http://americasquarterly.org/charticles/Social_Inclusion_Index_2013/index.html

Access the *Americas Quarterly Social Inclusion Index 2012* at:

http://www.americasquarterly.org/charticles/Charticle-The_Social_Inclusion_Index.html

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