Crossing the mental border: How public insecurity impacts individuals' willingness to migrate

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Abstract

The first barrier migrants face is psychological: the decision to migrate, which involves substantial economic, physical, and emotional costs. This article examines how public insecurity—measured through victimization, perceptions, and trust in the police—influences migration willingness. Using data from the 2023 AmericasBarometer across 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries and applying econometric analysis, the study finds that crime victimization consistently predicts willingness to migrate. However, the effects of perceptions and trust vary by country, shaped by regime, government, and community contexts. Understanding these motivations can inform policies to address the high costs and risks of unauthorized migration in the region.

Keywords: public security, crime, migration, Latin America, Caribbean.

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Leaving one's home country is rarely an easy decision. When individuals migrate, they do not only leave behind material belongings, but also essential aspects of their identity: family, friends, and a way of life. The challenges associated with migration vary significantly. Some are able to migrate legally and safely; others are less fortunate, compelled to move under unauthorized conditions, with limited resources and little certainty about what awaits them at their destination. Upon arrival, the situation does not necessarily improve. Migrants often must adapt to a new culture, unfamiliar climate, and possibly a different language—while also figuring out how to earn a living.

This combination of stress, anticipated costs, and uncertainty renders the decision to migrate a highly complex one (Massey *et al.*, 1998; Amit & Riss, 2013; Czaika *et al.*, 2021). Yet, large-scale migration continues to occur, reflecting the severity of conditions that many individuals face in their countries of origin. Mass migration and refugee crises are, unfortunately, frequent in our time. According to the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were 281 million international migrants in 2020—approximately 3.6 per cent of the global population—representing the highest number and proportion since such data have been collected by the United Nations (McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024). Additionally, an estimated 117 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide. The 2020 United Nations migration report also shows that the number of migrants to the United States—one of the main destinations for individuals from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC, hereafter)—increased by approximately 17 per cent between 2000 and 2020, with Mexico as the primary country of origin (UNPD, 2020).

Understanding why some citizens are willing to leave their country, often under dire circumstances, is essential for developing preventive policies that can mitigate human suffering and reduce associated social, political, and economic costs. This is especially true in cases of unauthorized migration, where conditions are particularly harsh.

The existing literature identifies several key factors shaping individuals' willingness to migrate. Prominent among these are poor economic conditions (Ryo, 2013; Iqbal & Roy, 2015); undemocratic regimes (Breunig *et al.*, 2012; Liu-Farrer, 2016); facilitators such as migrant networks (Dolfin & Genicot, 2010); and security-related conditions (Adhikari, 2013; Hiskey *et al.*, 2014). This article contributes to the latter body of literature.

Public insecurity is widely recognized as a major driver of migration intent. Most prior studies have focused on crime victimization as a determinant of individuals' propensity to migrate (Hiskey *et al.*, 2018; Wood *et al.*, 2018; Roth *et al.*, 2020; Chenevier *et al.*, 2021; Inkpen, 2021), while some have examined the role of security perceptions (Iesue, 2022). These works often focus on single dimensions of insecurity, particular countries, or regional aggregates. While they provide valuable insights, more granular analyses are needed—especially for policy design. This article contributes by assessing the distinct effects of three security variables—crime victimization, security perceptions, and trust in the police—on individuals' willingness to migrate. Furthermore, it explores how these effects vary across 21 LAC countries using data from the *AmericasBarometer* survey.

This analysis is grounded in utility theory, which assumes that individuals make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of different options (Davenport *et al.*, 2003). Crime victimization signals an experienced cost, likely to increase migration intentions in most contexts. In contrast, perceptions of insecurity and trust in the police capture expected security-related costs. Notably,

perceptions are more circumstantial and may shift with current events, while trust in the police reflects a deeper, institutional relationship, less prone to short-term change. Accordingly, I treat trust in the police as a stronger determinant of migration willingness than security perceptions.

Crucially, decisions about migration are not made in a vacuum. I hypothesize that subjective variables—such as security perceptions and trust—may interact with broader contextual factors. Specifically, I examine how political regime type, government performance, and community-level factors shape the influence of subjective security variables. In negative contexts (e.g., underperforming regimes or governments), even weaker signals like security perceptions may influence migration willingness. In more positive contexts, however, stronger indicators such as trust in institutions may be more predictive.

The theoretical framework underlying these expectations is detailed in the following section, along with formal hypotheses. Empirically, I test them using econometric analyses of the 2023 *AmericasBarometer* data covering 21 LAC countries (LAPOP Lab, 2023).[1] I follow a two-step strategy. First, I estimate country-level and pooled logit models to test the differential relationship between the three security variables and migration willingness. I find that crime victimization is a significant predictor in nearly all countries, with the exception of Grenada and Jamaica. However, the effects of security perceptions and trust in the police is rather heterogeneous across countries in LAC.

Second, I explore cross-country variation in these effects. I classify countries based on the statistical significance of the security variables and estimate a multinomial logit model to examine

[1] The countries in the *AmericasBarometer* for which there is complete data for the variables included in this article are: Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

how contextual factors—regime type, government approval, and community dynamics—moderate the relationship between security and migration intentions.

While the analysis is limited by data and causal identification challenges—discussed in detail in the empirical section—my findings offer strong theoretical and empirical support for a relationship between insecurity and migration willingness, even if causality cannot be fully established.

This study offers two primary contributions. First, it adds to the growing literature on the social consequences of public insecurity, particularly its impact on major life decisions. Second, it advances our understanding of migration decision-making. The emotional and psychological toll of migration often begins long before departure. By focusing on the "considering" stage of migration (Kley, 2011), this article highlights a neglected but critical point in the migration process and uncovers how different dimensions of security—and country-specific contexts—influence that decision.

In the following section, I review the literature on the determinants of migration intentions, with particular attention to public security.

Why Do People Are Willing to Leave Their Countries?

This section reviews existing research on individuals' willingness to migrate, with a particular focus on security-related determinants.

Drawing on the Rubicon model of action phases (Heckhausen, 1991; Gollwitzer, 1996; Kley, 2011, 2017), migration decision-making can be conceptualized as a multi-stage process: the *considering* (predecisional), *planning* (preactional), and *realizing* (actional) phases.[2] This article focuses on the

[2] The psychological Rubicon model describes the transition from motivational to volitional processes in determining goals and achieving them. See Heckhausen (1991) for a full description. The point of no-return in

considering stage, in which individuals weigh their preferences and assess the desirability and feasibility of migration (Kley, 2011, p. 472). At this point, intentions are formed, but no concrete action is necessarily taken. Certain events, contexts, or psychological triggers may spark the desire to migrate. Yet only a subset of individuals proceeds to the planning stage, and even fewer actually migrate. In both scenarios—staying or leaving—negative security conditions generate considerable psychological strain. Those who remain may live in fear and frustration; those who leave face the risks and costs associated with relocation.

Migration decision-making is typically non-linear and protracted. Amit and Riss (2013), studying U.S.-to-Israel migration, estimate that the consideration and planning stages may last between two and ten years. Similarly, Van Dalen and Henkens (2013) find that only 34 per cent of individuals who initially expressed migration intentions followed through within five years.

One influential theoretical approach to migration decision-making is based on utility theory, which posits that individuals migrate when the expected utility of living in another country outweighs that of remaining (Ryo, 2013; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017). Motivations may include better economic prospects (Ryo, 2013; Iqbal & Roy, 2015), improved safety (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2011; Basu & Pearlman, 2017; Adhikari, 2013), or more democratic governance (Breunig *et al.*, 2012; Liu-Farrer, 2016). Prospect theory further suggests that risk aversion influences expected utility calculations (Clark & Lisowski, 2017).

Other theories highlight initial conditions. Some individuals possess resources, social networks, or skills that facilitate migration, including legal entry (Liu-Farrer, 2016; Oliven, 2016). However, for most people, migration is fraught with challenges—particularly when legal, financial, or social

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the model is referred to the moment in which Julius Cesar decides to cross the Rubicon River in 49 BCE, leading to a civil war in Rome.

support is lacking (Kalter & Will, 2016), or when migration is triggered by crises such as war, economic collapse, or authoritarian repression. In such cases, migration may occur under unauthorized and dangerous conditions.

This article builds directly on literature examining how crime and violence shape migration decisions. Empirical research consistently finds a positive relationship between insecurity and migration. Hiskey *et al.* (2014) and Wood *et al.* (2018), using aggregate country data, report strong effects of crime victimization on migration. Chenevier *et al.* (2021) find that personal or familial victimization is a key predictor of both desire and action to migrate in Chile. Roth *et al.* (2020) and Inkpen (2021) report similar findings for Central America.

Mexico's war on drugs (Osorio, 2015) has fuelled significant internal and international migration due to rising violence (Arceo-Gómez, 2013; Ríos, 2014; Flores-Macías & Scuticchio, 2022). Yet when violence occurs along migration routes, migration may decrease (Orozco-Alemán & González Lozano, 2018). In Calabria, the presence of organized crime, the ‘Ndrangheta, has also been linked to higher out-migration (Coniglio *et al.*, 2010). Likewise, gang presence in Central America is a well-documented push factor (Cutrona *et al.*, 2022).

Perceptions of violence also play a critical role. Xie and McDowall (2008) report that both direct and indirect victimization influence neighbourhood relocation decisions. In Mexico, Fernández-Domínguez (2020) finds that perceived insecurity predicts internal migration during the war on drugs. Similarly, Iesue (2022) shows that perceptions of neighbourhood safety shape migration intentions. Manchin and Orazbayev (2018), analysing 150 countries, report a global link between local insecurity perceptions and migration intentions. Further, crime and violence can deter return migration among former emigrants (Zaiour, 2024).

Related research on civil conflict supports these findings. Adhikari (2013), studying Nepal, confirms that violence increases migration, though economic factors still play a role. Bohra-Mishra and Massey (2011) find a non-linear relationship, in which only severe violence triggers migration. Davenport *et al.* (2003) similarly show that individuals migrate when their personal safety is directly threatened. Ibáñez and Vélez (2008), studying Colombia, find that police and military protection reduce displacement, whereas economic variables have weaker effects.

In LAC, displacement due to public insecurity is widespread. Many individuals are forced to flee communities controlled by criminal organizations (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2015; McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024).

In the next section, I describe the variance on the willingness to migrate of people in LAC.

Latin Americans' and Caribbeans' Willingness to Migrate

Historically, LAC has been a region characterized by high levels of migration. Massive flows of people have both arrived in and departed from the region. Wars, ethnic and religious cleavages, ineffective and authoritarian governments, and economic hardship have prompted many individuals to consider moving abroad. Throughout history, people of various nationalities have come to and left the region. Much of the immigration has been linked to Europe, whereas emigration from LAC has largely been directed toward the United States—alongside significant intra-regional flows, such as Central Americans to Mexico, Venezuelans to Colombia, and Haitians to the Dominican Republic, among many others at various times.

Unfortunately, both insecurity and significant levels of unauthorized migration currently coincide in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The region remains the most violent in the world. According to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for 2017—the

most recent year with comparable data for most countries in the region—the average homicide rate in Latin America was 17.2 per 100,000 population, markedly higher than the global average of 6.1 for the same year (UNODC, 2019). International migration is also a pressing concern, not only due to its scale—LAC constitutes the second largest migration corridor in the world, following only Europe—but also because of its harmful drivers, including armed conflict, violent crime, authoritarian regimes, and poverty. Moreover, the conditions faced by unauthorized migrants are often perilous, compounding the humanitarian and policy challenges posed by these flows. However, it is evident that among individuals living under similar conditions, some are more willing to migrate than others—even in extreme contexts. Venezuela, for instance, presents a case of severe economic and security deterioration. While six million people have left the country during the Chávez-Maduro administration, approximately 28 million remain. Similarly, in even more extreme circumstances—such as those experienced in Aleppo during the Syrian Civil War (2012–2016)—millions were forcibly displaced, yet some residents remained in a city reduced to ruins and subjected to continuous attacks.

Most migration stories begin with individuals envisioning a relatively better future. Today, slightly more than one-quarter of Latin Americans and Caribbeans express a willingness to move to another country. Figure 1 displays the proportion of respondents in each country from the 2023 *AmericasBarometer* survey who answered affirmatively to the question: *"Do you intend to move, for living or work, to another country in the next three years?"* This question does not capture migration as mere wishful thinking, its three-year time horizon encourages respondents to consider feasibility as well. Following Kley (2011), this variable can be interpreted as reflecting the considering stage of migration decision-making, and possibly the planning stage for some.

Unfortunately, the data do not allow for a precise distinction between the two; therefore, the analysis in this article focuses on the considering stage.

[Figure 1 about here]

On average, 32 per cent of people in LAC is willing to migrate to another country. There is considerable variation across countries. At one end of the spectrum, 20 per cent or fewer respondents in Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, and Costa Rica express a willingness to migrate. At the opposite end, Jamaica stands out as a clear outlier, with over half of the population (55.7 per cent) reporting a willingness to leave the country. These are not negligible proportions of the population. This may be interpreted to mean that between one-fifth and one-half of the population is not living comfortably in their countries, which negatively affects citizens' quality of life across multiple dimensions.

Over time, the proportion of citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) expressing a willingness to migrate has increased significantly. In 2004—the first year the AmericasBarometer measured this indicator—21 per cent of respondents reported such intentions, 11 percentage points lower than in 2023. The highest level recorded in the AmericasBarometer data is 39 per cent in 2021, representing a substantial upward shift likely associated with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the next section, I develop theoretical expectations and hypotheses regarding how different dimensions of insecurity affect individuals' willingness to migrate during the considering stage.[3]

[3] Note that there is a vast literature investigating into the effect of immigration on crime at the receiving country, this is the inverse causal relationship to what this article studies. See Pickering and Ham (2017) and Unlu and Gurer (2022) for useful reviews of works on this topic.

Explaining the Relationship Between Insecurity and Citizens' Willingness to Migrate

Public insecurity is a specific type of social disorder and a symptom of state weakness—more precisely, the state's failure to maintain the comparative advantage in the use of force within its territory. When the state cannot adequately provide public security, citizens may face rising personal costs and, as a result, may become more willing to migrate to places where the state is more capable of ensuring safety. This logic applies across scales—countries, cities, neighbourhoods, and so forth.

My argument regarding citizens' willingness to migrate is grounded in utility theory (Davenport *et al.*, 2003). I assume individuals evaluate the net expected utility from migrating based on the anticipated benefits and costs relative to their current conditions, particularly those concerning public security. For the purposes of this study, I assume individuals are risk-neutral.

Public security comprises several dimensions (Xie & McDowall, 2008), each of which may affect migration decisions differently. I focus on three dimensions. The first is direct insecurity, which reflects personal experience with insecurity and is typically proxied by crime victimization. These are realized costs already suffered. The second is indirect insecurity, measured through individuals' perceptions of security, shaped by various sources—reliable or unreliable, personal or mediated (Xie & McDowall, 2008). Unlike victimization, perceptions reflect expected rather than known costs. The third dimension is trust in the police, which captures individuals' confidence in the police's procedural and outcome-related performance. Although trust, like perception, involves expectations, it is assumed to be a more enduring and relational attitude—more resistant to incidental events (Levi & Stoker, 2000).

All three variables are expected to be positively associated with migration intentions—i.e., worse security conditions should correlate with a higher likelihood of considering migration (*Hypothesis 1*). The existing literature supports this assumption for crime victimization (e.g., Hiskey *et al.*, 2014) and perceptions of insecurity (e.g., Fernández-Domínguez, 2020), though less is known about trust in the police.

Nevertheless, the specific nature of these relationships warrants deeper examination. Given that crime victimization involves experienced costs, it should have a stronger association with migration willingness than perceptions or trust, which involve anticipated costs. Expected costs may be discounted or interpreted differently depending on personal and contextual factors (*Hypothesis 2*).

Regarding the relative strength of perceptions versus trust in the police, I argue that individuals give more weight to more robust indicators—such as trust—when making migration decisions (*Hypothesis 3*). Since trust is a longer-term, relational measure, it may provide a more reliable indicator of institutional performance. By contrast, perceptions are more volatile and responsive to recent events. Therefore, when citizens trust the police, they may be less inclined to migrate even in the face of insecurity, as institutional mechanisms provide a less costly means of addressing their concerns.

Heterogeneous Effects

Hypotheses 2 and 3 suggest that the relationship between insecurity and migration willingness may vary across contexts. Thus, it is necessary to consider the heterogeneous nature of these relationships across societies. I propose that this heterogeneity is conditioned by contextual variables that mediate the effect of security dimensions on migration intentions.

Specifically, I examine three overlapping but distinct domains: the political regime, the government, and the community. Each domain introduces a contextual frame within which individuals interpret insecurity. Overall, I argue that when contextual conditions are negative, weaker security variables, such as perceptions, would suffice to incentive citizens to think about migrating; when contextual conditions are favourable, stronger variables, such as trust in the police, are needed to trigger individuals' willingness to migrate.

The political regime encompasses the institutions through which public power is obtained, exercised, and transferred (Alvarez *et al.*, 1996). It defines the normative expectations regarding the state's role in managing public affairs, including security. Dissatisfaction with the regime may lead citizens to consider migration. Migration due to authoritarianism is not uncommon (Shin, 2017), as in the current cases of Cuba and Venezuela. I argue that when dissatisfaction with the regime is high, even weaker assessments of insecurity—such as perceptions—may suffice to prompt migration considerations. In such contexts, perceptions of insecurity serve as additional marginal reasons to migrate. Conversely, in positive regime contexts, where institutional performance is viewed favourably, perceptions alone may not prompt migration. However, a stronger signal—such as distrust in the police—might still trigger migration intentions (*Hypothesis 4*).

The second contextual variable is government evaluation, which reflects a more short-term assessment of the context. While shaped in part by enduring factors such as partisanship (Bond & Fleisher, 2001), evaluations of government performance are also highly responsive to current events. My argument parallels that of regime context: under poor government performance, weaker indicators like security perceptions may be enough to influence migration decisions. In contrast,

in contexts where government performance is seen more positively, only stronger variables like trust in the police are expected to impact migration willingness (*Hypothesis 5*).

Lastly, I consider the community context. Drawing from theories of social capital, strong community engagement is expected to foster trust among individuals and reduce the fear of crime (Kang *et al.*, 2024). All else equal, in contexts with limited community engagement, even weak security signals—like perceptions—might be sufficient to prompt migration intentions. In contrast, in more cohesive and participatory communities, only stronger indicators, such as low trust in the police, are likely to drive individuals to consider leaving (*Hypothesis 6*).

How Insecurity is Related to Individuals' Willingness to Migrate

In this section, I empirically test the hypotheses presented in this article, which aim to identify the specific conditions under which various dimensions of insecurity are associated with individuals' willingness to migrate. To do so, I specify a series of econometric models using survey data from the 2023 round of the *AmericasBarometer*, covering 21 countries in LAC.[4]

The *AmericasBarometer* data were collected at different times between February 4 and October 31, 2023, depending on the country. The surveys follow a probabilistic sampling design and produce data representative of the adult population in each country. Sample sizes are relatively homogeneous across countries, ranging from 1,503 observations in Colombia to 1,660 in Trinidad and Tobago. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, which made sense given the difficulties related to obtaining reliable telephone sample framings at many countries in the region.[5]

[4] The dataset is publicly available at: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/raw-data.php

[5] For further detail on the surveys design, see the *AmericasBarometer* 2023 Technical Report, available at: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2023/AB2023-General-Technical-Report-v4.0-FINAL-eng-231121.pdf

Identification Strategy

The nature of the available data and the topics examined do not permit valid causal inference in the strict sense, particularly in comparison to an experimental design. Given how the survey data are collected, it is not possible to determine whether an individual's security condition causally influenced their intention to migrate. For instance, suppose that individual *i* was a victim of a crime at time *t*. The survey does not provide information on whether that person began considering migration before ($t–n$), during (t), or after ($t+n$) the crime event. Thus, any temporal ordering needed to establish causality remains uncertain.

Moreover, designing experimental or quasi-experimental research on this topic is far from trivial. In the case of direct victimization, ethical and legal concerns preclude any experimental manipulation of the treatment (i.e., experiencing a crime). Quasi-experimental designs also face difficulties in identifying valid counterfactual groups where treatment exposure is exogenously absent.

For perceptions of insecurity and trust in the police, experimental designs are more feasible. For example, researchers could expose individuals to information about insecurity and observe the effect on their perceptions and trust levels, and then assess the impact on migration intentions. However, conducting such experiments across 21 countries would be extraordinarily complex and expensive. Moreover, such a design would still not allow us to assess the relative effect of direct victimization—an essential variable in this analysis.

Given these challenges, I adopt a second-best strategy consisting of two sequential steps. First, I specify and estimate a logit model replicated in each of the 21 countries and in the full LAC sample. This model explores the relationship between willingness to migrate (the dependent variable) and the three dimensions of insecurity (the independent variables). This approach enables

us to assess variation in the effects of public security at both the individual and country levels and to explore heterogeneity across nations based on a huge number of potential combinations of statistical significance across the three security variables in 21 countries ($8^{\wedge 21}$).

Second, once this heterogeneity is identified, I attempt to explain it. Countries are grouped based on the specific combination of significance levels of the three security variables. This grouping is then used as a categorical dependent variable in a multinomial logit model that estimates the probability of an individual belonging to each of these country clusters, based on a set of contextual explanatory variables.

This two-step approach allows for a richer understanding of how public security relates to migration intentions. While previous studies have applied multilevel models using aggregated multi-country samples, such approaches cannot estimate country-specific variation in the coefficients of public security variables at the individual level. They only permit estimation of country-level effects for aggregate variables (e.g., national homicide or crime rates). Consequently, they are limited in explaining the country-specific relationships between insecurity and migration willingness, which is the central contribution of this article.

Although my research design cannot fully establish causality, it does offer strong inferential value. First, inverse causality—where migration willingness cause victimization, low trust in police, or negative perceptions—is highly implausible. Second, although the survey does not precisely measure when individuals began considering migration, the presence of statistically significant relationships between the security variables and migration willingness—especially when consistent across countries and aligned with the theoretical expectations—offers strong suggestive evidence of causal pathways that future research may confirm or challenge.

Step 1: How Security Is Related to Migration Intentions

I estimate a logit regression model to examine the likelihood that an individual is willing to migrate within the next three years, as specified in the *AmericasBarometer* question. The model is replicated for each of the 21 countries and for the aggregate regional sample. The probability p that an individual expresses migration willingness is modelled as:[6]

$$p = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_k X_k)}}$$

The dependent variable is *willingness to migrate*, while the key independent variables (*Xs*) measure the three dimensions of public insecurity:

- *Crime victimization* is a binary variable indicating whether the respondent was the victim of a crime in the past 12 months. Ideally, this would be disaggregated by crime type, but the survey lacks sufficient detail for that purpose.[7]
- *Security perception* is an ordinal variable with four categories: very insecure (1), somewhat insecure (2), somewhat secure (3), and very secure (4).
- *Trust in the police* is an ordinal variable with seven categories, ranging from no trust (1) to complete trust (7).

To assess potential multicollinearity, I apply the uncentered Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test (Salmerón *et al.*, 2018) across all 22 models. It could be the case that, for instance, individuals' perception of the security context is negatively influenced if they were the victims of a crime or if they have low trust in the police. Yet, no evidence of strong collinearity among the three security

[6] See Appendix A for a detailed account of the variables utilized in the models.
[7] The variable that measures the type of crime is only available on the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 (only in 2 countries), but not in the most recent rounds of the *AmericasBarometer*.

variables is found.[8] Additionally, Spearman's rho correlations in the complete sample (n=29,449) are substantively low: –0.24 between victimization and security perception; 0.12 between victimization and trust in the police; and –0.14 between perception and trust.

Control variables include:

- *Wealth*: a composite index capturing individual economic wellbeing.[9][10]
- *Trust in the state*: confidence in the state's protection of basic rights.
- *Trust in the community*: a proxy for social capital.
- *Demographics*: sex, age, and parental status.

In El Salvador, trust in the state was excluded due to excessive multicollinearity. Otherwise, all variables were uniformly included across models.

Table 1 presents the full output of the 22 regression models. In the LAC model, all three insecurity variables are significant, underscoring the relevance of insecurity in shaping migration willingness across LAC. However, disaggregated models by country reveal significant heterogeneity, suggesting a more complex picture than the general pattern predicted by Hypothesis 1.

[Table 1 about here]

To aid interpretation, Table 2 presents the marginal effects of each insecurity variable, calculated as the predicted difference in migration probability when moving from the highest to the lowest value of a given independent variable, holding all else constant. For example, in Argentina, an

[8] See Appendix B for the complete VIF tests' output.
[9] See the wealth index full explanation at: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0806en_v2.pdf
[10] I also tried models including individuals' retrospective and prospective assessments of the economy, but these variables are highly collinear with the security variables. Thus, I do not include them in the models selected for this article.

individual who experienced a crime is 10.1 percentage points more likely to express willingness to migrate than one who did not. Similarly, an individual in the Bahamas who strongly distrusts the police (1) is 15 percentage points less likely to be willing to migrate than an statistically equivalent individual that fully trusts the police (7).

[Table 2 about here]

As shown in Table 2, crime victimization is significant in nearly all countries, corroborating Hypothesis 2. The only exceptions are Grenada and Jamaica. In general, the effect of victimization is stronger in countries with high violent crime rates, such as the Bahamas and Guatemala. These findings reaffirm the severe, tangible impact of crime on migration intent and underscore the need for LAC governments to deliver substantive security improvements rather than rely on rhetoric.

In contrast, security perception and trust in the police are significant only in some countries. Where both are significant (in five countries), trust in the police consistently shows a stronger relationship with migration willingness—supporting Hypothesis 3. Trust is significant in 11 countries; perception in 9. Intriguingly, in Chile and Panama the coefficient for perception has an unexpected (positive) sign—individuals perceiving their neighbourhood as safer are more likely to consider migration. After verifying coding, distributions, and model diagnostics, no anomalies were found. This anomaly warrants further research.

Overall, these results confirm and advance earlier findings in the literature regarding the role of victimization in migration (e.g., Hiskey *et al.*, 2014; Wood *et al.*, 2018). They provide more nuanced, country-level insights, with clear implications for targeted policy interventions. Public insecurity remains a critical determinant of life plans and wellbeing in the region.

Step 2: Explaining Heterogeneous Effects by Country Clusters

While the first step illustrates that insecurity affects migration willingness, it also highlights heterogeneity across countries—particularly concerning security perceptions and trust in the police. This section aims to explain such differences testing Hypotheses 4–6, which posit that political, governmental, and communal context mediates how individuals interpret and respond to insecurity regarding migration decision-making.

To systematize the analysis, I categorize countries based on the combination of significance of the three security variables by country. Table 3 presents the eight possible combinations of significant (S) or non-significant (NS) outcomes for victimization, perception, and trust, and the countries that fall into each category. This is the dependent variable. Due to lack of cases in the remaining four combinations (e.g., where crime victimization is not significant), only the first four categories in Table 3 are analysed. Chile and Panama are excluded due to their anomalous results on security perception. Although the assignment of countries to categories is not strictly random, it results from statistically independent models with identical specifications. I therefore approximate it as quasi-random for analytical purposes. Variables that significantly explain this clustering are likely to influence the relationship between insecurity and migration intentions.

[Table 3 about here]

I then estimate a multinomial logit model predicting the probability that individual *i* belongs to a country in category *j*:

$$P_{ij} = \frac{\exp(V_{ij})}{\sum_{k=1}^{J} \exp(V_{ij})}$$

where P_{ij} is the probability that individual i belongs to the set of countries j; $V_{ij} = X'_{ij}\beta$ is a deterministic component of utility for alternative j, where X_{ij} is a vector of observed attributes and β is the parameter vector; and J is the total number of alternatives, in this case the four alternatives corresponding to the first four columns in Table 3.

The key explanatory (contextual) variables are:

- *Satisfaction with democracy* (Hypothesis 4): Four-point ordinal scale from "very satisfied" (1) to "very dissatisfied" (4).
- *Presidential approval* (Hypothesis 5): Five-point ordinal scale from "very good" (1) to "very bad" (5).
- *Community involvement* (Hypothesis 6): Frequency of participation in local meetings, ranging from "weekly" (1) to "never" (4).

Control variables include social media use, age, sex, and a placebo variable—concern with climate change—intended to test the specificity of the model. If the observed heterogeneity is truly security-related, climate change should be unrelated (unless it would also be related to security, which does not seem plausible).

Table 4 shows the results of all possible forms of the multinomial logit model using all values of the dependent variable as base category.

[Table 4 about here]

To aid interpretation, Figures 2–4 present predicted probabilities of country-category membership as a function of each contextual variable, holding all others at their mean. The predicted

probabilities for a given value of an independent variable adds to 1 across the four categories of the dependent variable.[11] It is important to note that the relevant feature to observe is the slope of the line, which is determined by the model coefficients, and not so much the level, which is a function of the within distribution of categories of the dependent variable.

Figure 2 shows that dissatisfaction with democracy increases the likelihood of falling into the (S, S, NS) category, where trust does not matter but perceptions do. This supports Hypothesis 4, suggesting that under negative regime conditions, even weaker security cues can influence migration decisions.

[Figure 2 about here]

Figure 3 shows that lower presidential approval, used as a proxy for the existing government context, is also associated with an increased relevance of security perceptions, confirming Hypothesis 5. The categories in which trust is significant (S, S, S; and S, NS, S) exhibit a negative relationship with presidential approval; that is, in scenarios of low approval, trust tends to be less important compared to scenarios in which approval is high. Interestingly, when approval is very high, all three security dimensions become significant in explaining migration intent—suggesting that high-performing governments raise the threshold for migration decisions.

[Figure 3 about here]

[11] For a detailed explanation on logit multinomial models and the estimation of predicted probabilities see StataCorp (2023).

Figure 4 provides no support for Hypothesis 6. In fact, weaker community engagement correlates with categories where all security dimensions matter (S, S, S). Conversely, active community participation appears associated with cases where trust does not matter but perception does (S, S, NS). One possible explanation is that vibrant communities also foster denser transnational networks that reduce migration costs.

[Figure 4 about here]

Finally, most control variables—including the placebo—are not significant in most versions of the model (as a function of the base category), lending credibility to the identification strategy.

Conclusions

In this article, I have examined the determinants of individuals' willingness to migrate to another country as a function of public security. Understanding this topic provides useful insights for governments and societal organizations seeking to grasp the detrimental effects of crime on citizens' lives and to devise policies to mitigate them.

I develop basic theoretical insights and hypotheses regarding the public insecurity conditions under which individuals are more likely to express a willingness to emigrate. To empirically test these hypotheses, I utilize survey data from 21 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) drawn from the *AmericasBarometer* 2023, and I apply econometric analysis to investigate the varying relationship of insecurity on citizens' willingness to migrate.

This work updates and significantly advances previous contributions in the literature—such as those by Wood *et al.* (2010), Hiskey *et al.* (2014), Roth *et al.* (2020), and Inkpen (2021)—by

offering a more comprehensive understanding of how insecurity influences individuals' migration intentions. It does so in two primary ways. First, by disaggregating the impact of various dimensions of public security—namely, crime victimization, security perceptions, and trust in the police—on migration willingness. Second, by disaggregating these effects at the country level (21 LAC countries), thereby providing greater specificity and insight.

The analysis reveals that crime victimization exerts a strong and relatively homogeneous effect on citizens' willingness to migrate across most countries in the region, with the notable exceptions of Grenada and Jamaica. Given the high crime rates in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), this effect is substantial and becomes even more concerning in light of the stagnation or deterioration of security conditions in the region. According to *AmericasBarometer* data, 22 per cent of citizens in LAC reported being victims of a crime in the 12 months preceding the 2023 survey—an increase from 18 per cent recorded eleven years earlier. Victimization rates vary significantly across countries, ranging from 36 per cent in Ecuador to 10 per cent in El Salvador. In view of these figures and the findings presented in this article, it is unlikely that migration flows from Latin America and the Caribbean will diminish in the short term.

In contrast, the effects of security perceptions and trust in the police on migration intentions are more heterogeneous across countries. By characterizing perceptions as a weaker form of security assessment and trust as a stronger one, I analyse contextual conditions—regime, government, and community—that help explain this heterogeneity. I find that adverse regime and government conditions are more prevalent in countries where perceptions play a significant role in shaping migration decisions. In contrast, when regime and government contexts are more favourable, stronger security assessments—such as trust—are needed to influence migration decisions. The community context presents a different dynamic; weaker security conditions are sufficient to

provoke migration intentions even in the presence of active community engagement. A potentially valid hypothesis for further testing is that individuals embedded in active communitarian networks may also possess denser transnational networks, thus facing lower migration costs.

One key implication of the significant and complex heterogeneity in the relationship between security dimensions and migration willingness is the necessity for differentiated policies at the country level. Such policies must address the specific conditions that prompt citizens to consider or pursue migration—often under perilous circumstances that entail high personal risks. According to the Missing Migrants Project, 11,245 migrants have gone missing in the Americas since 2014.[12]

Another important implication of this study is the need for governments to enhance their performance in public security. Crime victimization significantly increases individuals' willingness to migrate. Even when citizens express satisfaction with democracy and approve of their governments, if they lack trust in security agencies, they may still contemplate leaving their countries—with all the associated psychological, physical, and economic costs that such a decision entails.

[12] As of June 30, 2025. https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/americas

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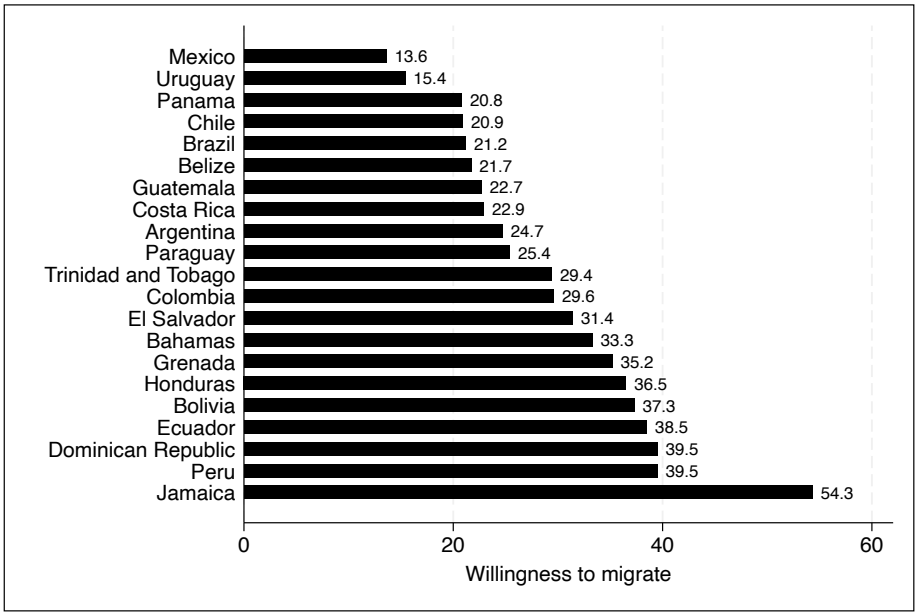
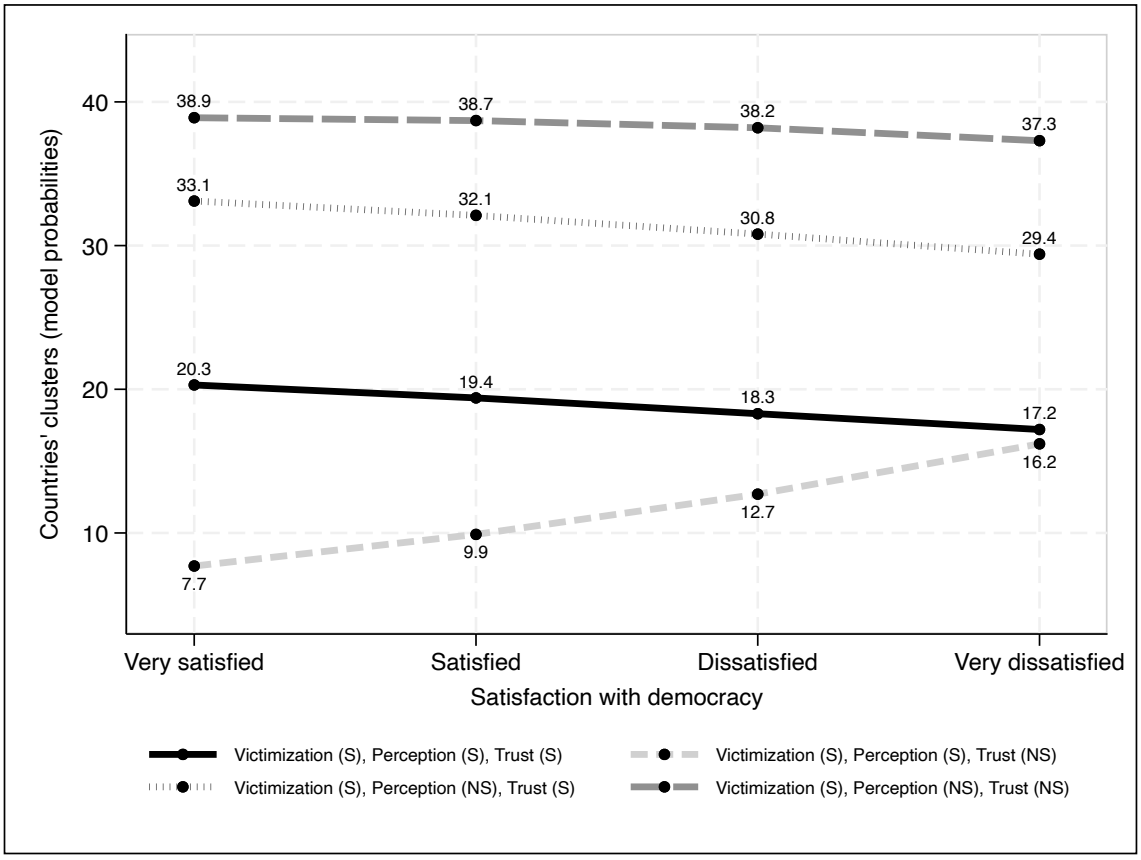
Tables and Figures

Figure 1. LAC's citizens willingness to migrate to another country in 2023 (per cent of population)



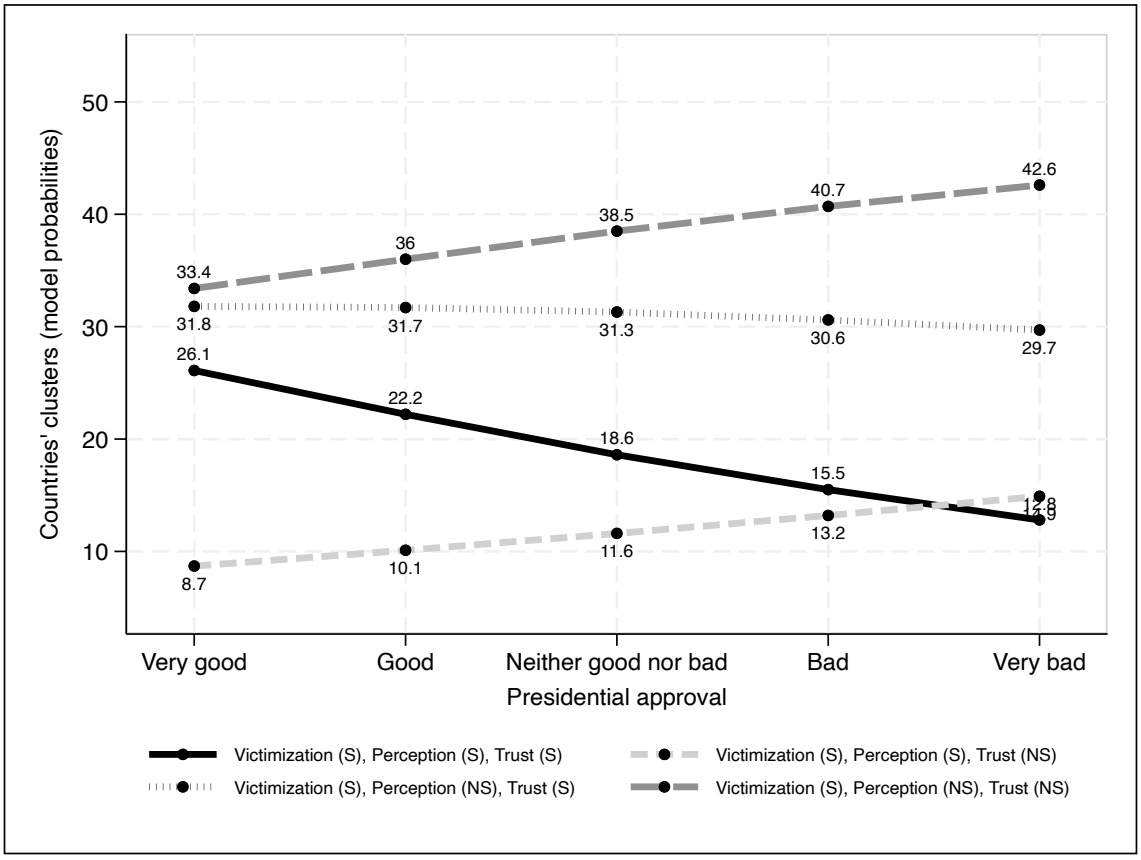
Source: The *AmericasBarometer* by the LAPOP Lab, www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop.

Figure 2. Predicted probabilities (%): Countries categories by satisfaction with democracy



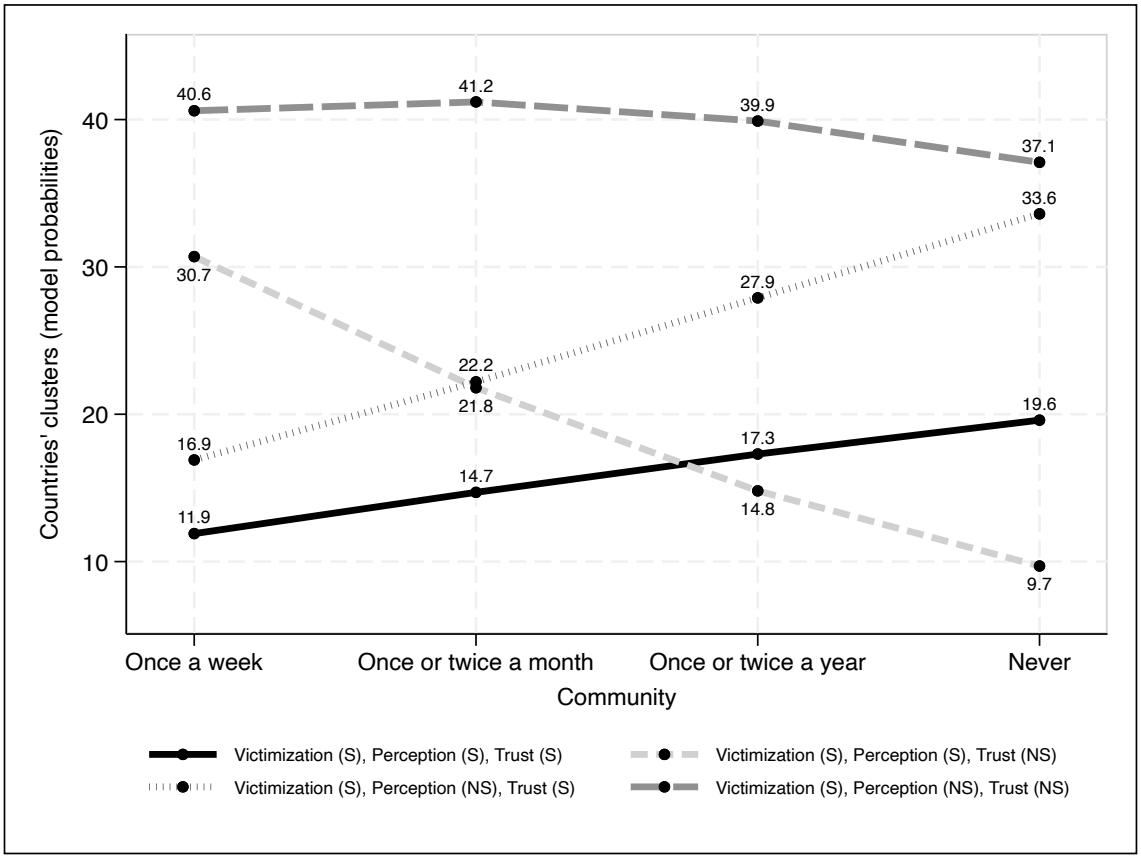
Source: Author's estimations based on the model in Table 4.

Figure 3. Predicted probabilities (%): Countries categories by presidential approval



Source: Author's estimations based on the model in Table 4.

Figure 4. Predicted probabilities (%): Countries categories by community participation



Source: Author's estimations based on the model in Table 4.

Table 1. Country regressions' output

Dependent variable: *Willingness to migrate*

	LAC	ARG	BHS	BLZ	BOL	BRA	DOM	CHL
Crime victimization	0.51***	0.59***	0.85***	0.57***	0.50***	0.65***	0.47***	0.67***
	(0.04)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.15)
Perception of security	0.07***	0.00	0.15*	0.03	0.14**	0.05	-0.04	-0.13*
	(0.02)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Trust in the police	-0.07***	-0.03	-0.12***	-0.05	-0.04	-0.06*	-0.04	-0.06
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Basic rights protection	-0.06***	-0.13***	-0.03	-0.05	-0.01	-0.09*	-0.04	-0.08*
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Woman	-0.40***	-0.22*	-0.08	-0.46***	-0.07	-0.42***	-0.50***	-0.84***
	(0.05)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.14)
Age (18-25)	2.87***	3.22***	3.28***	1.90***	2.90***	2.86***	2.14***	2.63***
	(0.17)	(0.44)	(0.42)	(0.41)	(0.38)	(0.61)	(0.30)	(0.45)
Age (26-35)	2.36***	2.75***	2.50***	1.41***	2.42***	1.94***	1.95***	2.51***
	(0.17)	(0.44)	(0.42)	(0.41)	(0.38)	(0.61)	(0.30)	(0.44)
Age (36-45)	1.89***	2.25***	2.01***	1.27***	1.97***	1.60***	1.63***	1.91***
	(0.16)	(0.45)	(0.42)	(0.40)	(0.38)	(0.62)	(0.30)	(0.45)
Age (46-55)	1.44***	1.54***	1.29***	0.47	1.67***	1.19*	1.38***	1.45***
	(0.14)	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.44)	(0.38)	(0.65)	(0.31)	(0.45)
Age (56-65)	0.86***	0.68	0.73	-0.22	0.58	0.89	0.84**	0.84*
	(0.14)	(0.53)	(0.47)	(0.53)	(0.43)	(0.68)	(0.34)	(0.50)
Personal wealth	0.04*	0.11**	-0.02	0.04	-0.01	0.24***	0.07*	0.04
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Have children	0.01	-0.19	-0.00	0.00	-0.09	0.12	-0.12	-0.17
	(0.04)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.14)
Constant	-3.67***	-3.19***	-2.55***	-2.11***	-2.76***	-3.47***	-1.69***	-2.30***
	(0.15)	(0.54)	(0.48)	(0.47)	(0.43)	(0.67)	(0.36)	(0.52)
N	30,338	1,452	1,400	1,440	1,538	1,375	1,522	1,568
Pseudo-R2	0.145	0.144	0.170	0.071	0.103	0.124	0.076	0.123

Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Dependent variable: *Willingness to migrate*

	COL	CRI	ECU	GRD	GTM	HND	JAM
Crime victimization	0.56***	0.58***	0.57***	0.09	0.75***	0.53***	-0.04
	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.20)
Perception of security	0.10	0.01	0.16**	0.07	-0.04	0.25***	0.13*
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Trust in the police	-0.08**	-0.08*	-0.10***	-0.06*	0.00	-0.04	-0.10**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Basic rights protection	-0.04	-0.11**	-0.07	-0.04	0.04	-0.11***	-0.03
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Woman	-0.58***	-0.57***	-0.49***	-0.27**	-0.24*	-0.76***	-0.20
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.14)
Age (18-25)	1.48***	4.32***	2.67***	3.12***	2.23***	3.08***	3.89***
	(0.32)	(0.73)	(0.37)	(0.39)	(0.63)	(0.44)	(0.42)
Age (26-35)	1.02***	3.80***	1.97***	2.45***	1.89***	2.66***	3.65***
	(0.32)	(0.73)	(0.37)	(0.39)	(0.63)	(0.44)	(0.41)
Age (36-45)	0.63*	3.06***	1.16***	1.72***	1.48**	2.18***	2.96***
	(0.33)	(0.74)	(0.38)	(0.40)	(0.63)	(0.44)	(0.42)
Age (46-55)	0.35	2.79***	1.15***	1.24***	1.16*	1.63***	2.22***
	(0.34)	(0.75)	(0.39)	(0.44)	(0.64)	(0.47)	(0.43)
Age (56-65)	-0.07	2.49***	0.33	0.54	0.69	1.38***	1.82***
	(0.38)	(0.76)	(0.43)	(0.45)	(0.70)	(0.49)	(0.43)
Personal wealth	0.13***	0.04	0.09*	0.07	-0.07	0.02	0.00
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Have children	0.25**	-0.20	-0.18	0.03	0.24*	0.21	0.29**
	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Constant	-1.86***	-3.70***	-2.17***	-2.36***	-2.94***	-2.76***	-2.51***
	(0.40)	(0.77)	(0.47)	(0.45)	(0.65)	(0.49)	(0.45)
N	1,434	1,444	1,415	1,363	1,453	1,410	1,276
Pseudo-R2	0.091	0.148	0.138	0.146	0.062	0.127	0.189

Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Dependent variable: *Willingness to migrate*

	MEX	PAN	PER	PRY	SLV	TTO	URY
Crime victimization	0.60***	0.44**	0.55***	0.45***	0.48**	0.38**	0.63***
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.20)	(0.15)	(0.18)
Perception of security	0.04	-0.14*	0.22***	0.05	0.13*	0.10	0.01
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.09)
Trust in the police	-0.06	-0.11***	0.01	-0.07	-0.10***	-0.17***	-0.12***
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Basic rights protection	-0.01	-0.14***	-0.12***	-0.05		-0.09**	-0.07
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)		(0.04)	(0.06)
Woman	-0.78***	-0.44***	-0.48***	-0.08	-0.35***	-0.43***	-0.43***
	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Age (18-25)	2.89***	4.08***	2.24***	2.70***	2.48***	3.31***	3.88***
	(0.63)	(0.74)	(0.31)	(0.39)	(0.36)	(0.43)	(0.59)
Age (26-35)	2.35***	3.31***	1.55***	1.87***	2.29***	2.84***	3.33***
	(0.62)	(0.73)	(0.31)	(0.40)	(0.37)	(0.43)	(0.60)
Age (36-45)	1.66***	3.19***	1.27***	1.68***	1.74***	2.05***	3.08***
	(0.64)	(0.74)	(0.31)	(0.40)	(0.37)	(0.44)	(0.60)
Age (46-55)	1.50**	2.84***	0.91***	0.69	0.98**	1.66***	2.42***
	(0.63)	(0.75)	(0.33)	(0.45)	(0.40)	(0.47)	(0.61)
Age (56-65)	1.03	1.70**	0.65*	1.11**	0.27	1.13**	1.35**
	(0.69)	(0.78)	(0.35)	(0.43)	(0.45)	(0.48)	(0.67)
Personal wealth	-0.02	0.16***	0.07*	-0.04	-0.10**	0.09**	-0.15***
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Have children	0.34**	-0.32**	0.05	-0.23	0.03	0.10	-0.22
	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.17)
Constant	-3.66***	-3.38***	-2.28***	-2.31***	-1.92***	-2.77***	-3.21***
	(0.67)	(0.77)	(0.39)	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.48)	(0.66)
N	1,554	1,460	1,491	1,329	1,476	1,485	1,458
Pseudo-R2	0.108	0.145	0.093	0.089	0.099	0.165	0.166

Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 2. Difference in probabilities between model's predictions at the maximum and minimum value of the independent variable (%)

	Crime victim (%)	Perception of security (%)	Trust in the police (%)
Latin America and the Caribbean	9.5	3.6	-7.3
Argentina	10.1	N.S.	N.S.
Bahamas	19.7	9.7	-15.0
Belize	10.4	N.S.	N.S.
Bolivia	11.7	9.4	N.S.
Brazil	10.9	N.S.	-5.8
Chile	10.6	-5.6	N.S.
Colombia	11.9	N.S.	-10.0
Costa Rica	9.1	N.S.	-6.9
Dominican Republic	11.3	N.S.	N.S.
Ecuador	13.6	11.2	-13.3
Grenada	N.S.	N.S.	-8.5
Guatemala	14.1	N.S.	N.S.
Honduras	12.5	17.2	N.S.
Jamaica	N.S.	9.5	-14.1
Mexico	6.2	N.S.	N.S.
Panama	6.3	-5.3	-8.7
Peru	13.2	15.5	N.S.
Paraguay	8.8	N.S.	N.S.
El Salvador	10.6	8.0	-13.0
Trinidad & Tobago	7.6	N.S.	-18.1
Uruguay	6.1	N.S.	-6.4

Source: Author elaboration based on the models in the Online Appendix. N.S.= Non-significant coefficient.

Table 3. Summary of heterogeneous effects across countries

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Victimization	**S**	**S**	**S**	**S**	**NS**	**NS**	**NS**	**NS**
Perception	**S**	**S**	**NS**	**NS**	**NS**	**NS**	**S**	**S**
Trust	**S**	**NS**	**S**	**NS**	**NS**	**S**	**NS**	**S**
Country	LAC	BOL	BRA	ARG		GRD		JAM
	BHS	CHL	COL	BLZ				
	ECU	HND	CRI	DOM				
	PAN*	PER	TTO	GTM				
	SLV		URY	MEX				
				PRY				

S = Significant, NS = Non-significant

Table 4. Multinomial logit model for heterogeneous effects across countries' clusters

	Base category			
Victim	**S**	**S**	**S**	**S**
Perception	**S**	**S**	**NS**	**NS**
Trust	**S**	**NS**	**S**	**NS**
Woman		0.03	-0.00	-0.02
		(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Age		0.01	-0.01	-0.00
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Climate change		-0.11	-0.05	-0.16
		(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)
Satisfaction with democracy		-0.31	-0.02	-0.04
		(0.19)	(0.24)	(0.16)
Presidential approval		-0.31	-0.16	-0.24
		(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.35)
Community		0.55***	-0.06	0.20
		(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.14)
Social media		0.62***	0.02	0.37
		(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Constant		-0.41	0.70	-0.61
		(1.54)	(1.60)	(1.61)
Woman	-0.03		-0.03	-0.05**
	(0.03)		(0.02)	(0.02)
Age	-0.01		-0.02**	-0.01
	(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)
Climate change	0.11		0.06**	-0.04
	(0.09)		(0.03)	(0.07)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.31		0.29	0.26**
	(0.19)		(0.22)	(0.12)
Presidential approval	0.31		0.15*	0.07
	(0.32)		(0.09)	(0.15)
Community	-0.55***		-0.61***	-0.35*
	(0.18)		(0.20)	(0.21)
Social media	-0.62***		-0.59**	-0.24
	(0.24)		(0.25)	(0.25)
Constant	0.41		1.11	-0.20
	(1.54)		(1.13)	(1.16)

Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

S = Significant, NS = Non-significant

Note: The countries grouped in each category of the dependent variable are listed in Table 3.

Table 4. Multinomial logit model for heterogeneous effects across countries' clusters (Cont…)

	Base category			
Victim	**S**	**S**	**S**	**S**
Perception	**S**	**S**	**NS**	**NS**
Trust	**S**	**NS**	**S**	**NS**
Woman	0.00	0.03		-0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)		(0.02)
Age	0.01	0.02**		0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)		(0.01)
Climate change	0.05	-0.06**		-0.11
	(0.09)	(0.03)		(0.08)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.02	-0.29		-0.03
	(0.24)	(0.22)		(0.19)
Presidential approval	0.16	-0.15*		-0.08
	(0.32)	(0.09)		(0.17)
Community	0.06	0.61***		0.26
	(0.12)	(0.20)		(0.17)
Social media	-0.02	0.59**		0.35
	(0.24)	(0.25)		(0.25)
Constant	-0.70	-1.11		-1.31
	(1.60)	(1.13)		(1.20)
Woman	0.02	0.05**	0.02	
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.01	
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	
Climate change	0.16	0.04	0.11	
	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.08)	
Satisfaction with democracy	0.04	-0.26**	0.03	
	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.19)	
Presidential approval	0.24	-0.07	0.08	
	(0.35)	(0.15)	(0.17)	
Community	-0.20	0.35*	-0.26	
	(0.14)	(0.21)	(0.17)	
Social media	-0.37	0.24	-0.35	
	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.25)	
Constant	0.61	0.20	1.31	
	(1.61)	(1.16)	(1.20)	
N	23,344	23,344	23,344	23,344
Pseudo-R2	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023

Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

S = Significant, NS = Non-significant

Note: The countries grouped in each category of the dependent variable are listed in Table 3.

Appendix A – Variables description

Variable (*Americas Barometer* label)	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Question wording**
Willingness to migrate (q14)	0.30	0.46	0	1	Do you have any intention of going to live or work in another country in the next three years?
Perception of security (aoj11)	2.30	1.02	1	4	Speaking of the neighbourhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe?
Crime victim (vic1ext)	0.22	0.41	0	1	Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months?
Trust in the police (b18)	3.75	1.96	1	7	To what extent do you trust the National Police?
Basic rights protection (b3)	3.54	1.76	1	7	To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of [country]?
Woman (from q1)	0.50	0.50	0	1	Interviewee sex (registered by the numerator, not asked)
Age (18-25) (from q2)	0.22	0.41	0	1	Age: 18-25 years
Age (26-35)	0.25	0.43	0	1	Age: 26-35 years
Age (36-45)	0.20	0.40	0	1	Age: 36-45 years
Age (46-55)	0.14	0.35	0	1	Age: 46-55 years
Age (56-65)	0.10	0.30	0	1	Age: 56-65 years
Personal wealth (wealth)	3.00	1.40	1	5	Individual wealth index
Have children (from q12bn)	0.52	0.50	0	1	How many children under the age of 13 live in this household? Recoded to dummy, 1 if there are children, 0 otherwise
Climate change (env2b)	1.35	0.75	1	4	If nothing is done to reduce climate change in the future, how serious of a problem do you think it will be for [country]?
Satisfaction with democracy (pn4)	2.61	0.78	1	4	Den general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?
Presidential approval (m1)	3.02	1.19	1	5	Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job performance of President [name]?
Community (cp8)	3.59	0.78	1	4	Please tell me if you attend meetings of a community improvement committee or association at least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never?
Social media (smedia1n)	0.79	0.41	0	1	Do you have any social media accounts like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tik Tok, or any other type of social media?

Appendix B – Variance inflation factor tests (VIF) for models in Table 2

	ARG	BHS	BLZ	BOL	BRA	CHL	COL
Crime victim	1.7	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.5
Perception of security	6.1	5.2	4.8	7.4	5.0	6.3	6.7
Trust in the police	5.1	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.6	6.0	5.8
Basic rights protection	4.9	6.4	6.3	6.8	4.6	5.5	6.0
Woman	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1
Have children	2.0	2.1	2.8	2.9	2.1	1.9	2.0
Personal wealth	4.4	5.2	4.9	4.9	5.2	5.6	5.4
Age (18-25)	2.6	2.4	2.7	3.2	3.4	2.4	3.2
Age (26-35)	2.6	3.0	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.1	4.2
Age (36-45)	2.4	2.3	4.0	2.8	3.0	2.5	3.2
Age (46-55)	2.3	1.7	2.2	2.8	2.1	2.3	2.9
Age (56-65)	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.8	2.0
Mean VIF	3.2	3.2	3.5	3.8	3.3	3.4	3.8

	CRI	DOM	ECU	GRD	GTM	HND	JAM
Crime victim	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2
Perception of security	5.4	5.2	7.8	4.1	6.3	4.7	4.4
Trust in the police	8.5	3.7	5.0	5.7	5.5	4.6	4.3
Basic rights protection	9.6	4.5	5.7	7.2	6.1	4.6	4.7
Woman	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.2
Have children	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.2	2.8	2.9	2.5
Personal wealth	4.7	4.6	5.3	5.2	5.3	4.6	5.0
Age (18-25)	2.5	2.7	4.2	2.9	4.7	3.5	3.0
Age (26-35)	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.1	4.5	3.6	3.1
Age (36-45)	2.2	2.8	3.0	2.5	3.8	2.9	2.4
Age (46-55)	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.7	3.3	1.8	1.6
Age (56-65)	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.7
Mean VIF	3.7	3.0	3.8	3.3	4.0	3.2	3.0

	MEX	PAN	PER	PRY	SLV	TTO	URY
Crime victim	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.5
Perception of security	6.0	5.7	7.6	5.3	4.3	4.9	5.5
Trust in the police	5.9	6.5	5.0	4.7	6.3	4.5	7.3
Basic rights protection	7.4	5.3	5.0	4.9	*	4.6	7.9
Woman	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.1
Have children	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.6	1.9	2.1
Personal wealth	5.2	4.6	4.9	5.3	4.8	4.9	4.7
Age (18-25)	2.6	2.7	3.2	3.3	3.7	2.4	1.7
Age (26-35)	3.1	2.6	3.5	3.3	3.5	2.6	2.1
Age (36-45)	2.3	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.7	2.4	2.0
Age (46-55)	2.6	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.8
Age (56-65)	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6
Mean VIF	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.2	2.9	3.4

* Variable not included in the model.