

# TV, Comedies, and Redistribution: The Impact of Telenovelas on Preferences for Redistribution in Latin America

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# Motivation

- Perceptions about inequality are central to understanding the **preferences for redistribution policies** (Stantcheva, 2021)
- Perceptions are shaped by your exposure to inequality:
  - Upward Mobility (Alesina et. al., 2018)
  - Neighborhood (Domènec-Arumí, 2023)
  - Media:
    - Inequality coverage in newspapers lowers social trust (Matthias et. al., 2017)
    - Exposure to *Game Shows* improves upward mobility perceptions (Kim, 2019)

# Focus on telenovelas in Latin America

- Publicly and freely accessible during prime time
- Central to Latin American culture (Lopez, 2002)
  - Local telenovelas are popular among Chilean teens (Antezana, 2022)
- Exposure to telenovelas has been linked to:
  - Lower fertility rates (La Ferrara et. al., 2012)
  - Higher divorce filings (Chong and La Ferrara, 2009)
  - LGBTQ+ disapproval (Gulesci et. al., 2023)

## Research questions

- Does the exposure to telenovelas displaying **social class differences** change people's preferences for redistribution?

## Preview of the Results

## Plan ahead

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## Preview of the Results

- Exposure to this type of telenovelas lowers people's preferences for redistribution in Chile
  - Driven by those with higher income

## Plan ahead

## Research questions

- Does the exposure to telenovelas displaying **social class differences** change people's preferences for redistribution?

## Preview of the Results

- Exposure to this type of telenovelas lowers people's preferences for redistribution in Chile
  - Driven by those with higher income

## Plan ahead

- Generalize this analysis for Latin America
  - Gather telenovela data for other countries
  - Categorize telenovelas with social class differences

# Case study: Pobre Rico

*a Chilean comedy inspired by “The Prince and the Pauper”*

# Case study: Pobre Rico

Extract from the synopsis:

**Freddy Pérez** and **Nicolás Cotapos** have led a normal life until now. They are two happy boys and are very comfortable in each of their worlds. Meanwhile, *El Rucio*, as Freddy is known, lives with his mother Eloísa and his sister Megan in **poorer economic conditions**. Nicolás lives with his parents Máximo and Virginia, and with his sister Julieta, in a **wealthy family**. The Cotapos are **owners** of the Cotapos Holding and Cotapos Airlines, while the Pérez are **workers at a gas station**.

\*Translation by Google Translate

# How does Pobre Rico displays inequality?



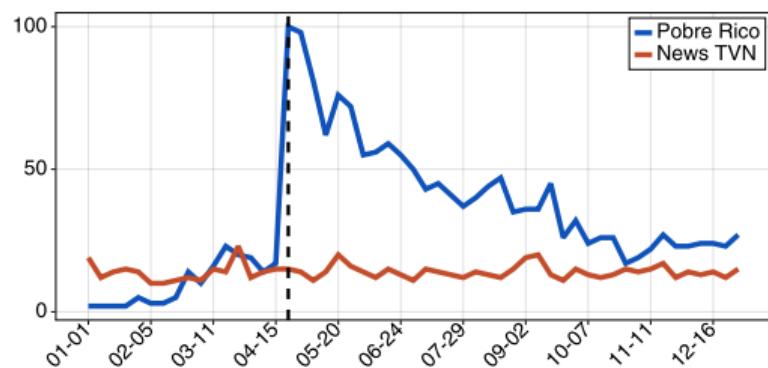
(a) The Cotapos (rich)



(b) The Pérez (poor)

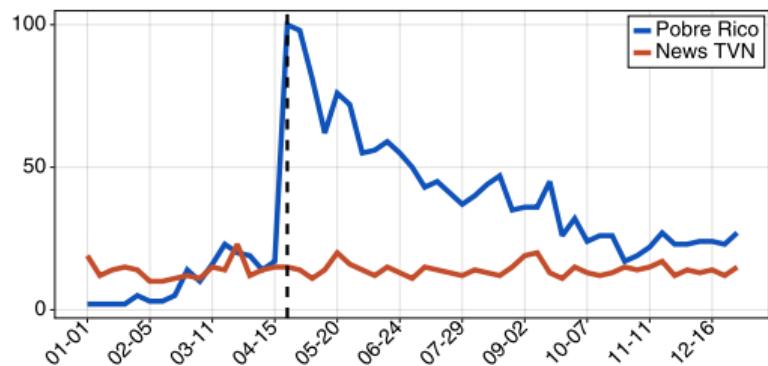
# *Pobre Rico's popularity*

Google Trends (2012)



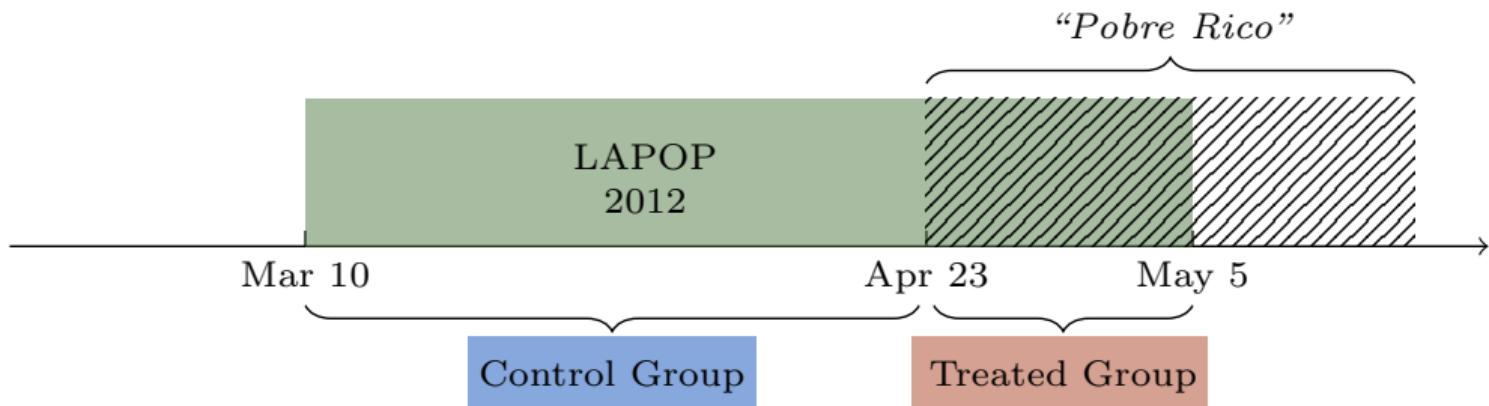
# *Pobre Rico's* popularity

Google Trends (2012)



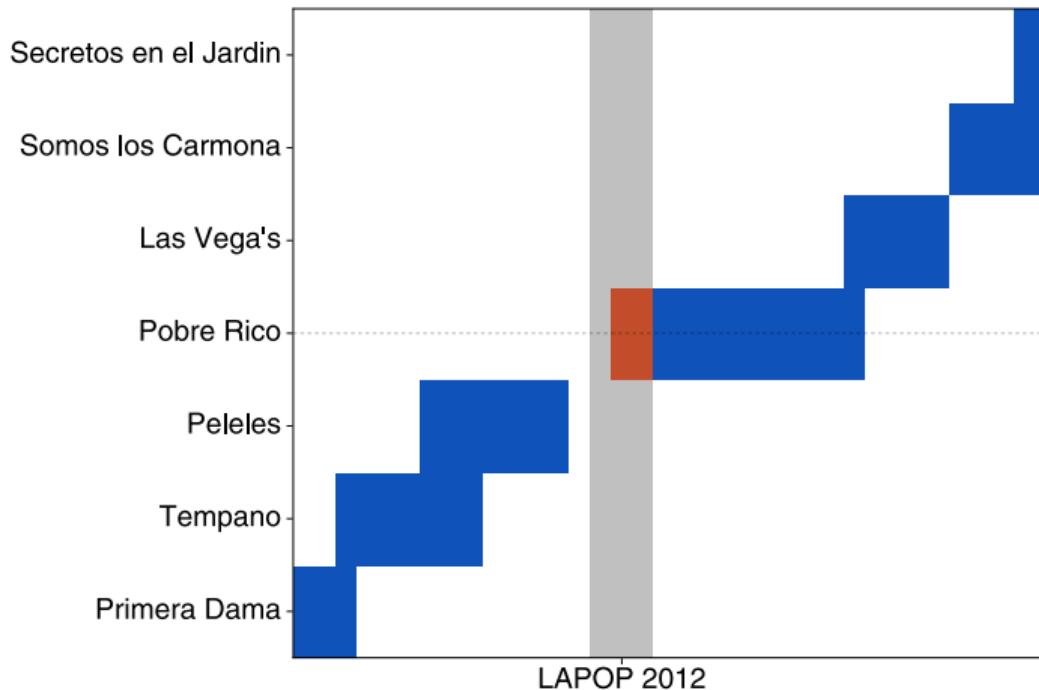
	TV rating
<u><i>Pobre Rico</i></u>	
Premiere	33.1
Overall	19.0
<u>Other telenovelas</u>	
Competitors at premiere (for same time-slot)	8.0
Chilean Sample	16.0
<u>Soccer finals</u>	
Chile (U vs Colo-collo)	24.1
Argentina (River vs Boca)	37.0

# Empirical strategy



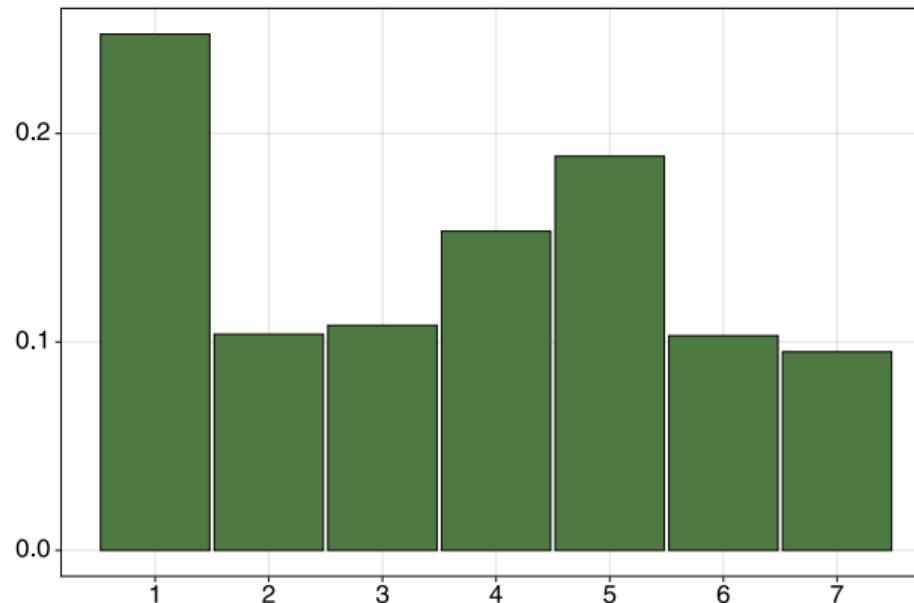
# Why *Pobre Rico* is an ideal case study?

Duration of *social class* telenovelas



# Preferences for redistribution outcome

*Q: Would you be willing to pay more taxes so that the gov. can help the poor?*



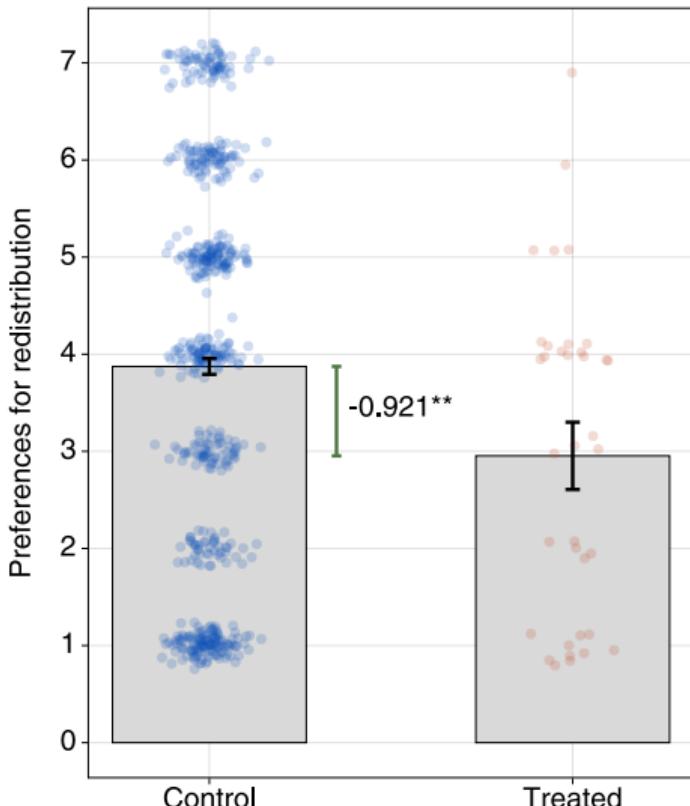
# Balance table

	Treated N=36	Control N=614	Diff.	T-stat
Female	0.611	0.495	0.116	1.383
Age	42.361	42.436	-0.075	-0.042
Education	11.889	11.546	0.343	0.529
Catholic	0.583	0.664	-0.081	-0.961
Married	0.583	0.564	0.020	0.234
Employment status	0.944	0.927	0.018	0.447
Urban	0.611	0.906	-0.294	*** -3.581
Income decile	6.611	7.404	-0.793	*
				-2.019

▶ interview timing

▶ geo

# Results



- 0.92 point decrease in approval
- 23% decrease

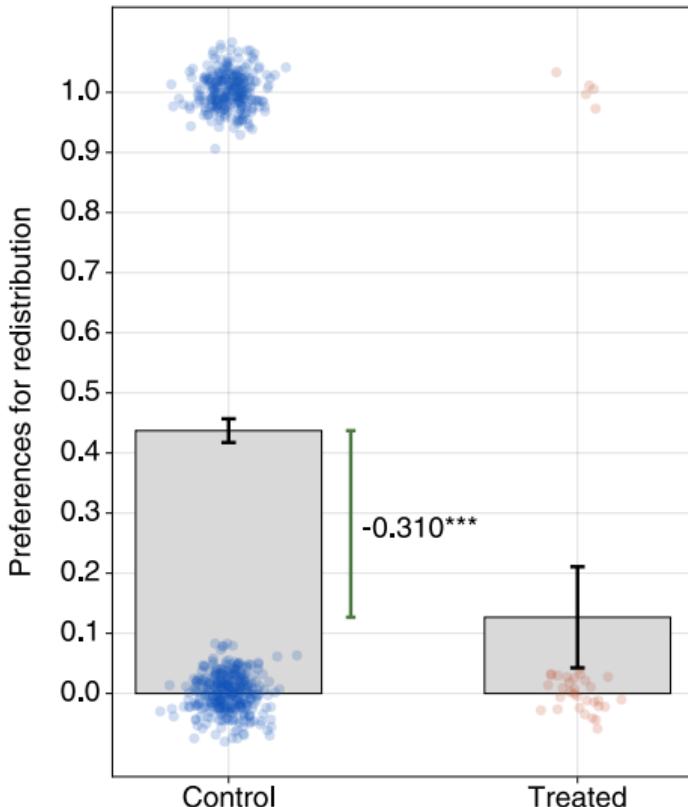
Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

▶ full table

▶ around air date

▶ time trends

# Results: approval ( $\geq 5$ )



- 30 p.p. decrease in approval
- 70% decrease

Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

▶ full table

▶ around air date

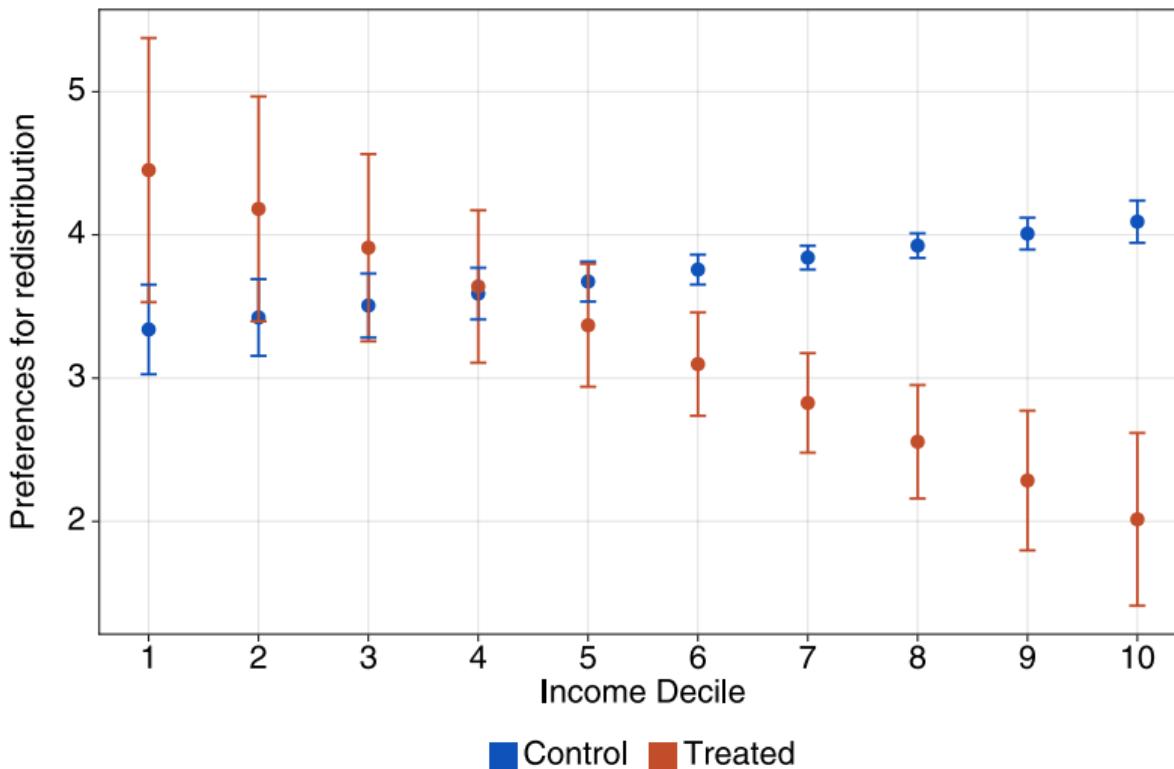
▶ time trends

# Placebo test

	Chile	others
	(1)	(2)
Exposure to Pobre Rico	-0.1258* (0.049)	0.0005 (0.029)
Country Fixed Effects		Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	579	1,524
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.019	0.057
Control mean	0.198	0.231

The outcome variable here is: *Would you be willing to pay more taxes than you do currently so that the government can spend more on [income transfer program specific to the country]?* with a yes or no answer. The correlation between this question and the one used previously is  $\rho = 0.3$ . Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, education, religion, income, and marital status. The regression in column (2) excludes Chile from the sample.

# Heterogeneity: income



**Generalize** Pobre Rico

# Categorization of Telenovelas

- I need to identify which televénovelas display social class differences
- Use Natural Language Processing (NLP)
  1. Dictionary
  2. Cluster analysis or Topic Modeling

# NPL: Dictionary

Assign points to words that appear in the synopsis

wealthy, rich, poor, injustice, discrimination, economic, class, privileged, etc

## Example:

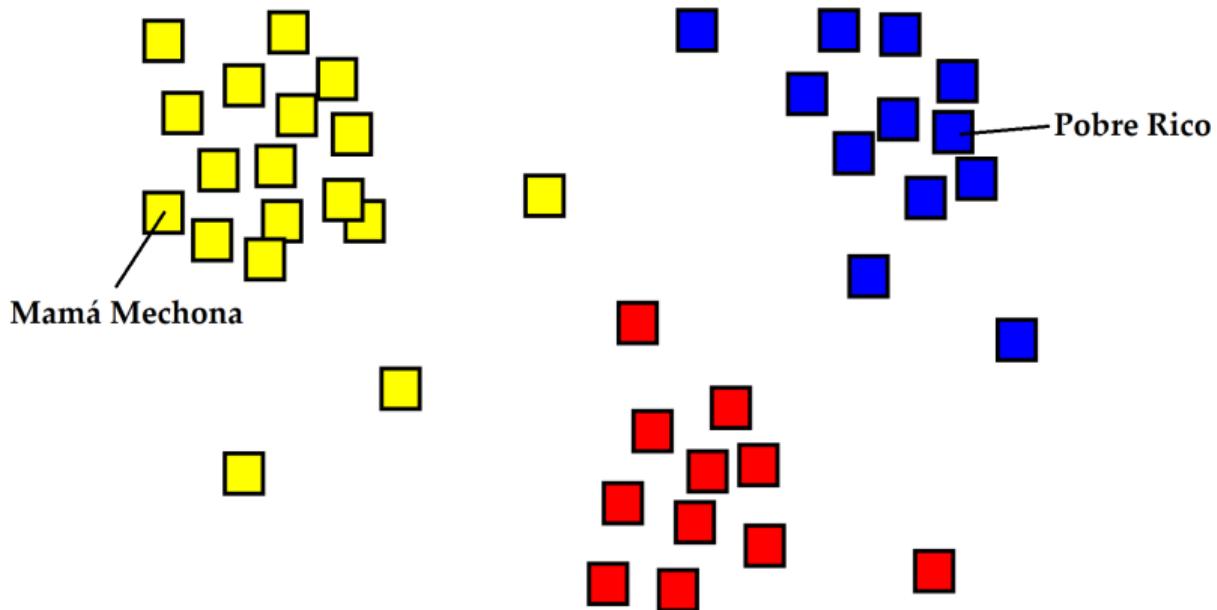
Pobre Rico (3 points)

Freddy in **poorer economic**  
conditions...Nicolás lives...in a  
**wealthy** family. The Cotapos are  
owners...

Mamá Mechona (0 points)

Macarena is now a student... Her  
husband... one who most  
opposes... because her wife puts  
off her children

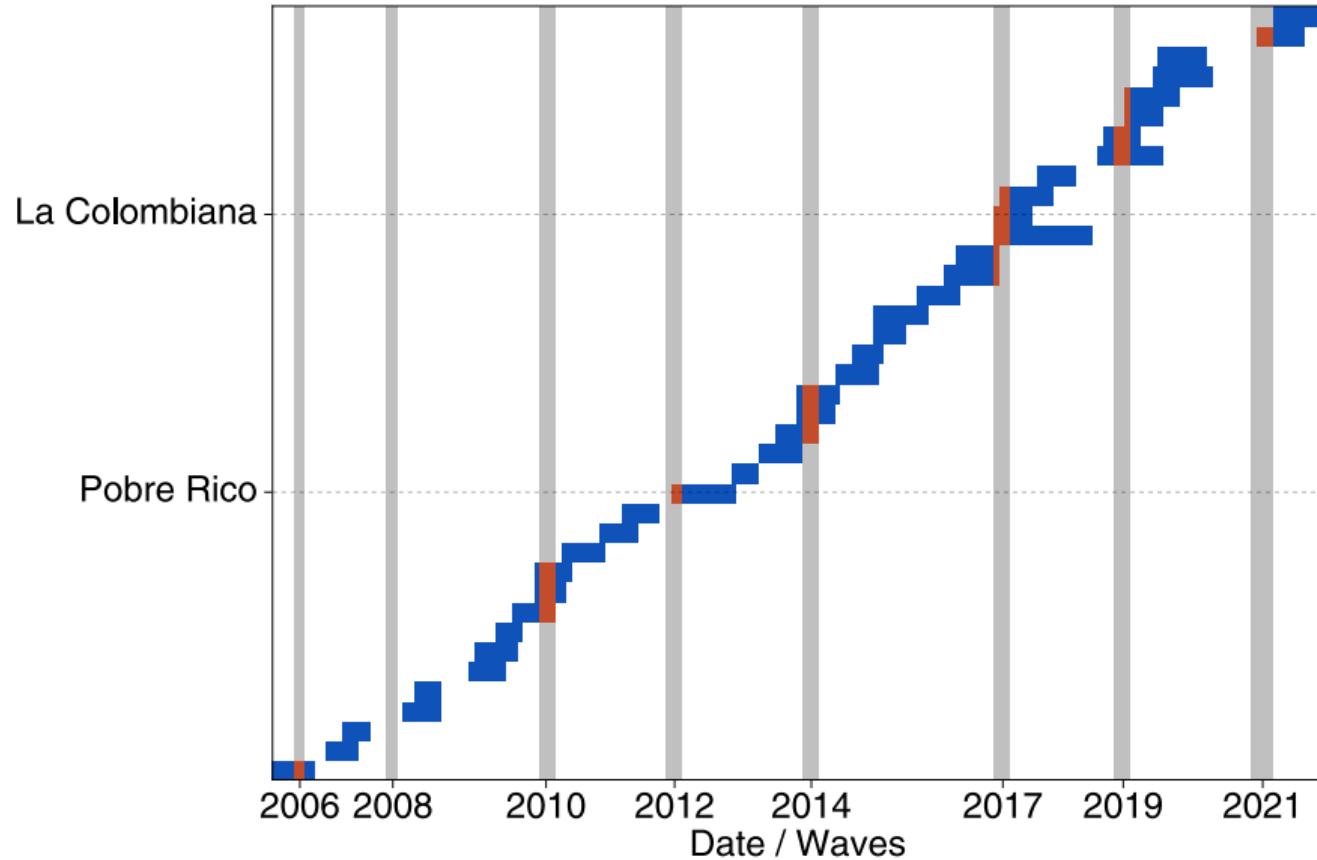
# NPL: Cluster Analysis



# Appendix

# Data

- Latino Barometro/LAPOP/World Value Survey
  - covers most of LATAM and representative at the country level (at least 2002-2023)
  - individual-level data on political behavior and attitudes
- Telenovela data
  - Chilenovelas: a subset of telenovelas aired in Chile between 1988-2021 ✓
  - Teledramaturgia: a subset of telenovelas aired in Brazil between 1969-2021
  - Wikipedia: has list of telenovelas aired the other LATAM countries



# Empirical Model

individual  $i$ , in country  $c$ , interview date  $d$ , at survey-wave  $t$ .

$$Y_{idct} = \alpha + \gamma \text{Exposure telenovela}_{dc} + \beta X_i + \delta_{ct} + \epsilon_{icdt}$$

- *Exposure telenovela<sub>dc</sub>* is the number of telenovelas with social class differences that you are **currently exposed** at interview date  $d$  in country  $c$
- $Y_{idct}$  is an outcome that depends on the survey

$$Y_{idct} = \alpha + \gamma \text{Exposure telenovela}_{dc} + \beta X_i + \delta_{ct} + \epsilon_{icdt}$$

- Outcomes ( $Y_{idct}$ ) :

- LAPOP:
    - *Would you be willing to pay more taxes than you do currently so that the government can spend more on [income transfer program specific to the country]?*
    - *Are you willing to pay more taxes if this will go to help those with less money?*
  - WVS and Latino Barometro:
    - *Do you agree that governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor?*
    - *Do you think the government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for?*
    - *How fair do you think income distribution is in (country)?*

# Results

		Pay more taxes to help the poor?				
		1-7	Strongly approve	Approve	Disapprove	Strongly disapprove
Exposure to Pobre Rico		-0.921** (0.306)	-0.092** (0.030)	-0.310*** (0.063)	0.120 (0.093)	0.083 (0.079)
Controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N		650	650	650	650	650
R <sup>2</sup>		0.040	0.030	0.037	0.040	0.028
Control mean		3.871	0.117	0.436	0.410	0.223

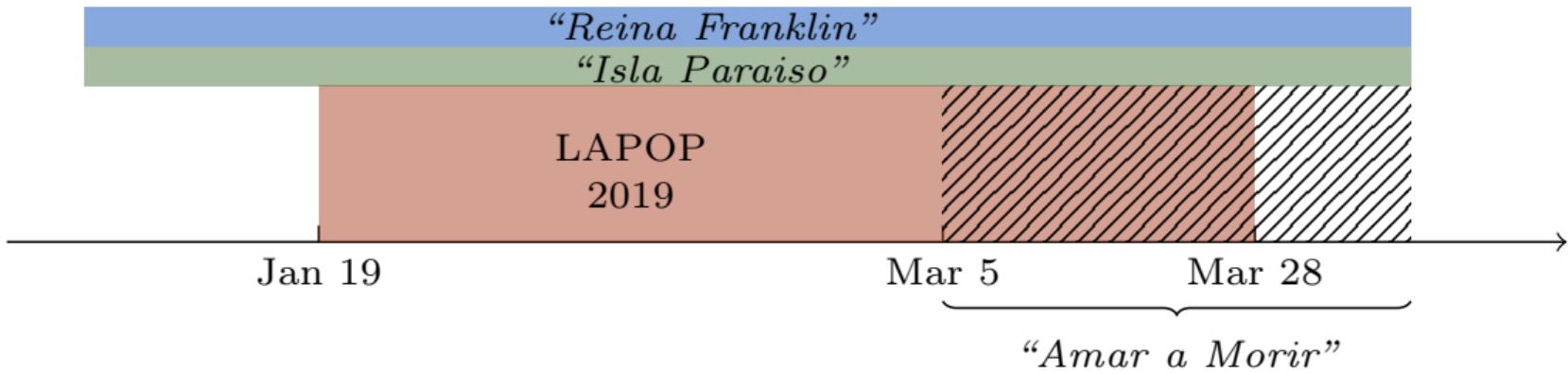
Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status. The outcome variable is measured from 1 to 7. A rating of Strongly approve is denoted by those who answered 7. Approve ( $\geq 5$ ) corresponds to a score of 5 or more. Disapprove ( $\leq 3$ ) indicates a score of 3 or less. Strongly disapprove indicates a score of 1.

Income decile reference point:	Top 10%	
	Pay more taxes to help the poor?	
Exposure to Pobre Rico	-0.921** (0.306)	-2.078*** (0.368)
Distance to rich	-0.061 (0.045)	-0.084 (0.047)
Exposure to Pobre Rico x Distance to rich		0.355*** (0.097)
Controls	Yes	Yes
N	650	650
R <sup>2</sup>	0.040	0.048
Control mean	3.871	3.871

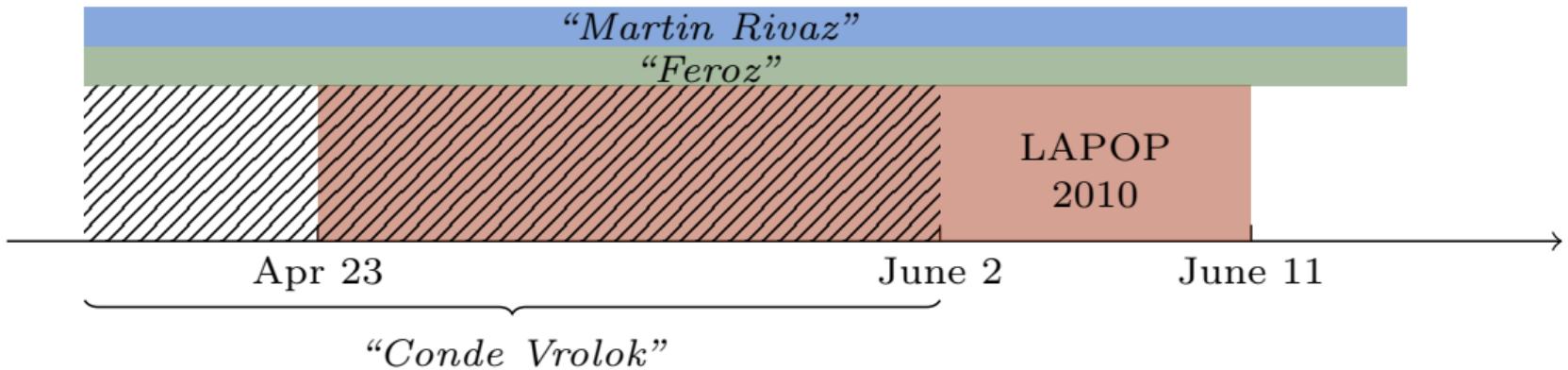
Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, education, religion, and marital status.  
 Distance to the rich is the distance in income decile of the individual from the top or the inverse of the income variable.

In column (2) a person in the 2th decile is not affected by the exposure to Pobre Rico.

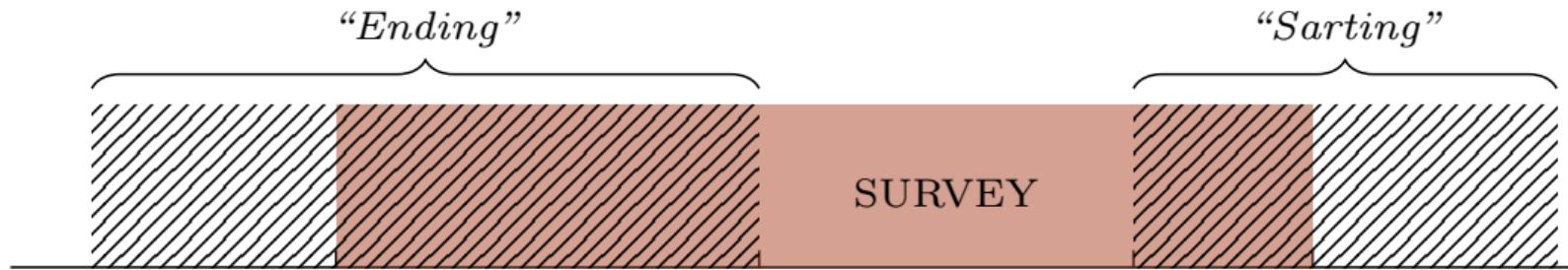
# Empirical Strategy: 2019



# Empirical Strategy: 2010



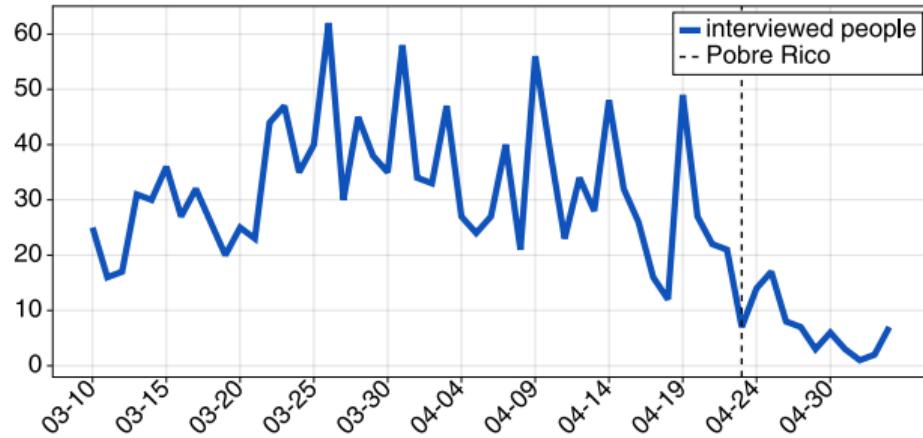
# Empirical Strategy: 2017



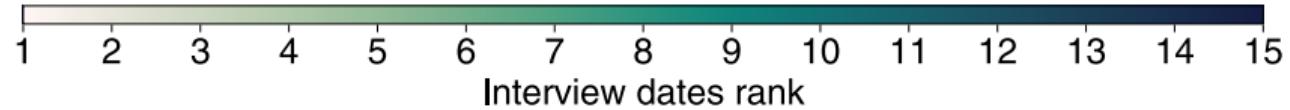
current: 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

end: 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

start: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1



► empirical strategy



▶ empirical strategy

# Political Leaning

	Political Leaning			
	1-10	left	right	middle
Exposure to Pobre Rico	0.579 (0.432)	-0.057 (0.061)	0.024 (0.069)	0.034 (0.085)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	551	551	551	551
R <sup>2</sup>	0.060	0.027	0.043	0.015
Control mean	4.845	0.157	0.122	0.721

Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

# Government Trust

	Trust in gov to fight...	
	inequality	poverty
Exposure to Pobre Rico	-0.417* (0.206)	-0.751** (0.274)
Controls	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	675	676
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.030	0.043
Control mean	6.028	3.589

Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

# Days away from the first episode

Days away from 1st episode	12	7	5	
Pay more taxes to help the poor?				
Exposure to Pobre Rico	-0.921** (0.306)	-0.590 (0.370)	-0.818* (0.381)	-1.100** (0.392)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	650	170	101	87
R <sup>2</sup>	0.040	0.068	0.110	0.137
Control Mean	3.871	3.388	3.197	3.246

Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

# Control for time trends

		Pay more taxes to help the poor?			
		1-7	Strongly approve	Approve	Disapprove
Exposure to Pobre Rico		-0.426 (0.318)	-0.081* (0.036)	-0.195** (0.067)	-0.004 (0.095)
Time Trend		0.031*** (0.007)	0.001 (0.001)	0.007*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)
Controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N		650	650	650	650
R <sup>2</sup>		0.070	0.031	0.066	0.073
Control mean		3.871	0.117	0.436	0.410

Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

# Placebo: Outcomes

	Main concerns is	Trust in the	Running for office...	
	violence	Catholic Church	LGBTQ+	gov. critic
Exposure to Pobre Rico	0.070 (0.137)	0.090 (0.081)	-0.015 (0.081)	-0.071 (0.088)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	336	667	647	647
R <sup>2</sup>	0.025	0.102	0.082	0.029
Control mean	0.318	0.332	0.700	0.578

Controls: gender, age, urban, employment, income decile, education, religion, and marital status.

