

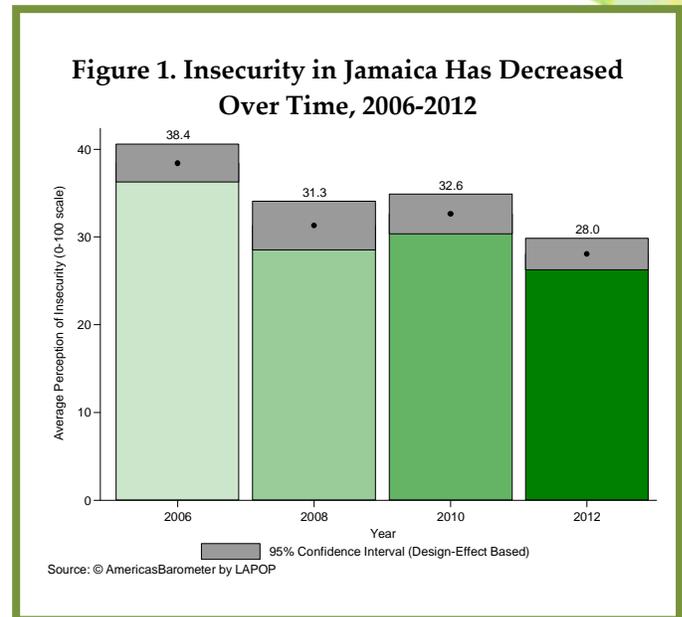
# AmericasBarometer: Topical Brief – August 19, 2013

## Police Reforms Spur Security and Trust in Jamaica

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The *New York Times* this Sunday reported on important gains in security in Jamaica, citing LAPOP's 2012 Jamaica country report, which the *Times* correspondent Damien Cave characterized (p. 6) as, "a respected study." The in-depth article took note of the support Jamaica has received from the United States' government-supported Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), a program carried out in partnership with USAID and the government of Jamaica, and important reforms to community-based policing as agents for increased security in the island country. This conclusion is in accord with our own assessment of the situation, expressed in the 2012 AmericasBarometer country report as follows: "Community policing offers much potential for building the confidence and trust of the people, transforming policing and making the JCF more effective in controlling and preventing crime (p. 192)." In this *Topical Brief* we review some of the key empirical findings related to this conclusion, based on analyses of data from our AmericasBarometer project, which has conducted national surveys in Jamaica every two years since 2006.

In each year of the AmericasBarometer survey, we have asked respondents "Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe (0), somewhat safe (33), somewhat unsafe (66) or very unsafe (100)?" (AOJ11, recoded). Figure 1 documents that



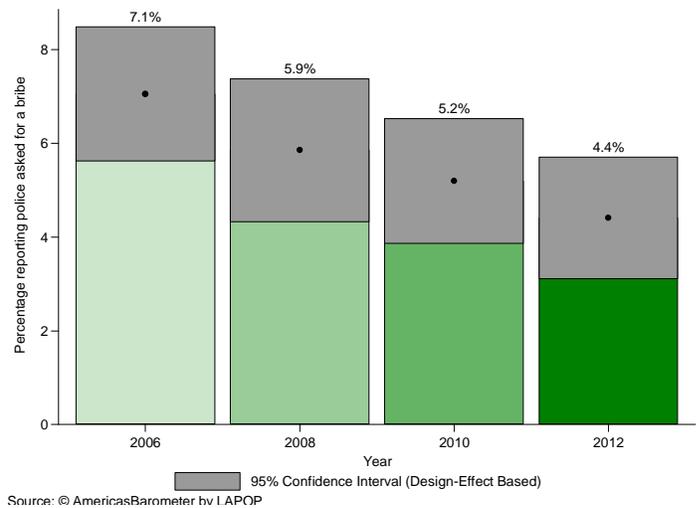
mean values on this insecurity measure have decreased steadily over time.

Some of this decrease in insecurity appears correlated with reforms to the police force. For example, we find that bribe solicitation by police officers has decreased over time exactly in step with the decreases in insecurity shown in Figure 1. In each round of the AmericasBarometer, we have asked "Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last twelve months?" (EXC2). Figure 2 shows that the percentage of individuals who responded "yes" has decreased from 7.1% in 2006 to 4.4% in 2012.

We also find evidence that trust in the police increased significantly in 2012 compared to prior years, and especially when compared to 2010, when trust levels experienced a significant dip. Each round of the AmericasBarometer has asked Jamaicans “To what extent do you trust the National Police?” (B18). Figure 3 shows these results. That the results do not track perfectly with decreases in insecurity and bribery suggests that other factors matter as well in predicting trust in the police. Some of these factors we show in our 2012 AmericasBarometer Jamaica report include age (older people are more trusting) and confidence in courts and the judicial system.

Another factor that may have helped increase trust in the police in the most recent year of the AmericasBarometer survey is the community policing efforts that have increased in the last several years. As the *New York Times* article noted, these reforms were catalyzed in part by the dramatic and deadly raid by authorities to arrest drug lord Christopher M. Coke in a Jamaican neighborhood in 2010, an event in which approximately 70 people were killed.

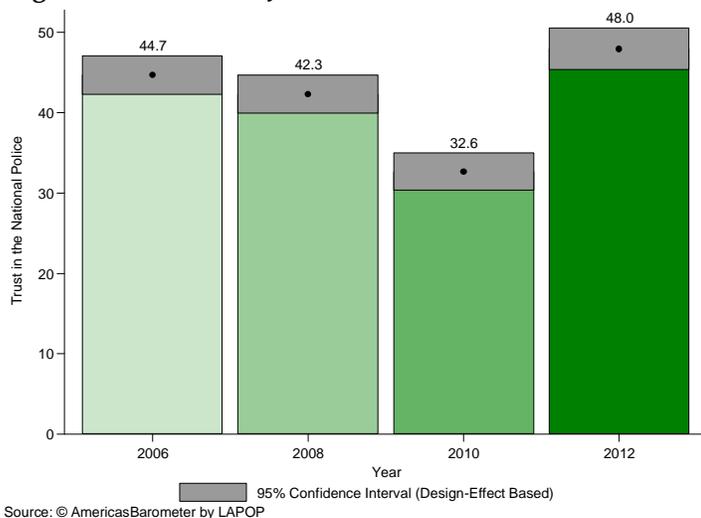
**Figure 2. Bribe Solicitation by the Jamaican Police Has Decreased Over Time, 2006-2012**



The 2012 AmericasBarometer survey in Jamaica also asked a series of questions about gangs in the country. For example, we asked respondents how they would “rate the performance of the police in their effort to dismantle gangs in your neighbourhood?” (JAMGANG9). As reported in the 2012 Jamaica country report, we find that only 17.3% report the police are doing a poor job. In contrast, 44.3% and 38.4%, respectively, believe the police are doing a fair or a good job.

The empirical evidence presented here from the AmericasBarometer project provides only a glimpse into the ways in which these data can be used to track changes in citizens’ security, experiences, and evaluations over time (and, though not shown here, across countries). Our conclusion based on analyses of the Jamaica AmericasBarometer data is that police reform and related efforts in Jamaica have had significant positive effects. Of course, there is always more work to be done. In the 2012 AmericasBarometer Jamaica country report, we drew the conclusion that deepening the reforms in the police and judicial system in Jamaica would go a long way toward continuing to build bonds of trust between the community and the police and, at the same time, help to decrease violence and increase citizen security.

**Figure 3. Trust in the Jamaican National Police, 2006-2012**



## References

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Full results of the AmericasBarometer surveys in Jamaica and the additional 25 countries surveyed in the region can be consulted on-line at [www.LapopSurveys.org](http://www.LapopSurveys.org). The full data sets are available for on-line analysis or download (in SPSS and Stata formats) at no cost.