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Intergenerational Mobility and Populist Attitudes in Latin America*

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between intergenerational educational mobility and populist attitudes in Latin America, a region characterized by low levels of intergenerational mobility and a long-standing presence of populist leadership. In contexts where social origin strongly predicts individual outcomes, perceptions of unfairness may create fertile ground for populist narratives. Using harmonized microdata from 18 waves of the *Latinobarómetro* survey covering individuals born between 1940 and 2000, we document a robust negative association between intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes across multiple indicators, including anti-democratic attitudes, support for military governments, anti-immigrant sentiments, and institutional distrust. These results hold when using a relative mobility measure that captures pure positional change net of structural trends, and at the cohort level when exploiting standard mobility measures from the literature. Cohort-level estimates further reveal that the effect of persistence is amplified in high-inequality contexts, suggesting that immobility and contemporaneous inequality act as complements in shaping political discontent. Decomposing inequality into opportunity and effort components, we find evidence suggesting that populist attitudes are mostly driven by inequalities of opportunity. These findings suggest that the persistent emergence of populist leadership in Latin America is linked to the region's stubbornly low intergenerational mobility and unequal access to opportunities.

JEL Codes: D72, I24, I25, P16.
Keywords: Intergenerational mobility, Populism, Democracy, Latin America

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1 Introduction

Latin America stands out for its marked economic disparities and constrained opportunities for upward mobility, where the intergenerational reproduction of socioeconomic advantages creates persistent inequality of opportunity (Alvaredo & Gasparini, 2015; Behrman et al., 2001; Brunori et al., 2025, 2013; Daude & Robano, 2015; Torche, 2014). Whether intergenerational mobility has improved in recent decades remains contested: some contributions find evidence of progress (Neidhöfer et al., 2024, 2018; Torche, 2021; Van der Weide et al., 2021), while others document stagnation or decline (Ciaschi et al., 2026; Neidhöfer et al., 2025). Beyond equity concerns, restricted mobility has been shown to hamper economic development (Hsieh et al., 2019; Neidhöfer et al., 2024).

At the same time, Latin America has a long history of populist leadership (Guriev & Papaioannou, 2022). Populism is typically conceptualized as a political discourse that positions "the people" against "the elites" and advocates for popular sovereignty concentrated in the masses (Funke et al., 2023). A defining feature of populist movements is their antagonism toward democratic institutions which they frame as mechanisms perpetuating elite dominance (Guriev & Papaioannou, 2022). Populist governance has been associated with declines in both democratic quality (Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and economic development (Funke et al., 2023), two closely related outcomes given that weak democratic institutions tend to hinder development by increasing political instability (Acemoglu et al., 2003, 2001).

In this paper, we examine the relationship between these two persistent features of the region: low intergenerational mobility and long-standing presence of populist leadership. The connection between them operates through perceptions of fairness. When individual outcomes are strongly shaped by social origin, limited mobility may foster a sense of systemic unfairness that populist discourse is particularly well suited to exploit. This idea is consistent with the view that individuals exhibit greater aversion to unfairness than to inequality per se (Roemer, 1996; Sen, 1980; Starmans et al., 2017), making persistent intergenerational disadvantage a particularly salient form of unequal opportunity. Empirical evidence further suggests that it shapes political preferences accordingly. For instance, Alesina et al. (2018) show that pessimistic beliefs about mobility reduce support for the existing economic system and fuel demand for institutional change. Moreover, Kim & Hall (2024) find that personal feelings of unfairness are a powerful predictor of populist voting across European countries. Lastly, recent contributions focusing on developed countries confirm that social mobility—more than inequality itself—predicts populist support (Daenekindt et al., 2018; Kurer & Van Staalduinen, 2022; Perelman & Pestieau, 2023; Protzer, 2021).

Our empirical strategy uses harmonized microdata from 18 waves of the *Latinobarómetro* survey covering individuals born between 1940 and 2000. These surveys include information on political attitudes and support for specific leaders, alongside retrospective parental education data that enable the measurement of intergenerational educational

mobility. We document a robust negative association between individual experiences of educational mobility and populist attitudes, beyond the effect of contemporaneous inequality and current economic conditions. An additional year of schooling relative to parents is associated with a lower probability of expressing anti-democratic attitudes of 0.13 percentage points—representing a 2.5% decrease relative to the sample mean—with consistent patterns across attitudes toward military governance, immigration restrictions, and institutional trust. These results are robust to using alternative relative and positional mobility measures, to restricting the sample to different age cutoffs, and to broader definitions of populist attitudes that include indifferent respondents. We also find an important heterogeneity by parental background: the negative association between mobility and populist attitudes is substantially stronger among children of more educated parents, consistent with the higher economic returns and greater exposure to meritocratic institutions. Additionally, using Funke et al. (2023)'s rhetoric-based classification, we show that our measures of populist attitudes are strongly related to support for populist leaders in practice.

Lastly, to further examine whether the relationship between intergenerational persistence and populist attitudes reflect inequality in general or, more specifically, perceptions of unfairness linked to unequal opportunities, we decompose educational inequality into opportunity and effort components following Ferreira & Gignoux (2014). We find that only the opportunity-driven component of inequality is positively associated with anti-democratic attitudes, while the effort component loses significance once both are jointly considered.

This paper contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it provides the first systematic evidence on the mobility-populism relationship in a developing region. The existing literature on economic determinants of populism focuses primarily on developed countries and short-run shocks such as financial crises and labor market disruptions (Algan et al., 2017; Becker et al., 2017; Dorn et al., 2020; Fetzer, 2019; Funke et al., 2016; Guiso et al., 2017; Margalit, 2019).[1] More recent studies have begun to examine the role of restricted social mobility in fueling populism, again focusing on developed settings (Daenekindt et al., 2018; Kurer & Van Staalduinen, 2022; Perelman & Pestieau, 2023; Protzer, 2021). We contribute to this literature by focusing on Latin America, a region characterized by both historically low mobility and long-standing presence of populist leadership. Second, by exploiting harmonized survey data covering 18 countries, multiple birth cohorts, and two decades, we disentangle the relationship between intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes from the effects of contemporaneous inequality. Third, we provide evidence that what drives populist attitudes is not inequality per se but specifically its opportunity-driven component.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 develops the conceptual framework, covering the definition of populism, the theoretical mechanisms linking limited

[1] Rising immigration has also been linked to populism in Europe (Becker, Fetzer, et al., 2016; Dustmann et al., 2019).

mobility to populist attitudes, and the related empirical literature. Section 3 describes the data and methodology. Section 4 presents the main results as well as robustness checks and heterogeneity analyses. Section 5 explores support for populist leaders, providing further validation of our populist attitude measures. Section 6 presents the cohort-level analysis, and Section 7 examines the role of inequality of opportunity. Finally, Section 8 concludes.

2 Conceptual Framework

2.1 Populism Definition

Populism is best understood not as a fixed ideology but as a political style or discourse—what Guriev & Papaioannou (2022) describe as a set of rhetorical devices that oppose "the people," conceived as a morally pure and homogeneous community, against "the elites," portrayed as corrupt, self-serving, and indifferent to popular sovereignty. This distinction between ideology and style is important: a left-wing populist and a right-wing populist may advocate diametrically opposed economic policies while sharing the same anti-establishment rhetoric. As Rodrik (2017) illustrates, right-wing populists tend to define their enemy along ethnic or cultural lines—often targeting immigrants or minorities—while left-wing populists define their enemy in economic terms, positioning the wealthy, corporations, and international finance as the forces working against the people. Latin America has historically leaned toward the latter (Guriev & Papaioannou, 2022), though the region has also seen the rise of right-wing populist leaders in recent decades.

A defining feature of populist movements, regardless of ideological sign, is their antagonism toward the institutions of liberal democracy. Norris & Inglehart (2019) argue that populist leaders with authoritarian tendencies systematically erode democratic norms by delegitimizing political opponents, undermining judicial independence, and eroding civil liberties. Funke et al. (2023), in an analysis of 51 populist leaders across 60 countries between 1900 and 2020, document that after 15 years of populist governance, GDP per capita is on average 10% lower than under a comparable non-populist counterfactual—a result driven by institutional deterioration and policy volatility.

Measuring populist attitudes at the individual level requires capturing this multidimensional construct. In this paper, we follow the approach common in the empirical literature (Guriev & Papaioannou, 2022; Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and use survey questions that capture different facets of populist sentiment: anti-democratic opinions, support for authoritarian alternatives (military government), distrust in democratic institutions (judiciary, Congress, government), and exclusionary attitudes toward immigrants. These indicators do not measure ideology but rather the underlying disposition to view the existing political and institutional order as illegitimate and in need of radical transformation. They capture the "demand side" of populism: the individual-level sentiments that create

a fertile ground for populist leaders and movements.

2.2 Why Might Low Social Mobility Fuel Populist Attitudes?

The connection between intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes runs through the concept of fairness. A large body of evidence in psychology and behavioral economics documents that individuals are not merely averse to inequality per se, but are strongly motivated by concerns about the fairness of the processes that generate it (Roemer, 1996; Sen, 1980; Starmans et al., 2017). People tolerate unequal outcomes when they believe those outcomes reflect effort and merit; they dislike inequality when they perceive it as the product of circumstances beyond individual control.

Intergenerational immobility is, by definition, a form of inequality that reflects inherited circumstances rather than individual effort. When individual's economic and educational trajectories are strongly determined by their parents' social position, the meritocratic promise – that hard work and talent are rewarded regardless of origin – is violated. This violation generates a specific type of grievance that is distinct from the resentment produced by high inequality alone: it is a grievance about the fairness of the rules of the game, about whether the system gives everyone a genuine shot at climbing the social ladder. Alesina et al. (2018) provide direct evidence of this mechanism: using experimental survey data across five countries, they show that pessimistic beliefs about intergenerational mobility reduce support for the existing economic system and increase demand for redistribution, particularly through equality-of-opportunity policies. Crucially, Europeans – who experience lower mobility than the US population – are more likely to perceive the economic system as unfair and to attribute poverty to structural disadvantage rather than individual failure.

This sense of systemic unfairness is precisely the kind of sentiment that populist discourse is designed to mobilize. Populism offers a narrative that names the responsible – "the elites" – and validates the frustration of those who feel the playing field is uneven. Kim & Hall (2024) provide direct empirical support for this mechanism, distinguishing between "personal unfairness" – the perception that one's own economic situation is unjust – and "social unfairness" – the perception that the distribution of resources in society is unjust. They show that personal unfairness is a particularly powerful predictor of support for right-wing populist parties, while social unfairness drives support for the populist left. Both types of unfairness, however, are amplified by the experience of economic uncertainty and limited opportunity for climbing up the social ladder.

A complementary mechanism operates through institutional trust. When individuals believe that their life chances are determined by circumstances rather than merit, they are also more likely to conclude that existing institutions—education systems, labor markets, judiciaries, legislatures—are not neutral arbiters but rather instruments that reproduce existing hierarchies. This institutional distrust is a core component of populist attitudes (Guriev & Papaioannou, 2022; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), and it connects the individual

experience of blocked mobility to the broader political demand for institutional rupture that characterizes populist movements. Protzer (2021) provides evidence consistent with this channel, showing that social mobility—rather than inequality itself—is the key predictor of populist voting, precisely because mobility shapes whether individuals perceive their society as fair and their institutions as legitimate.

These mechanisms suggest that the relationship between mobility and populism is about perceived fairness: whether individuals believe that the rules of the game give everyone a genuine opportunity to succeed. This has important implications for how we interpret our empirical results. A finding that lower mobility predicts stronger populist attitudes, even after controlling for contemporaneous inequality, would suggest that it is the inherited nature of disadvantage that drives political discontent. This is precisely what the inequality of opportunity literature formalizes: decomposing total inequality into a component attributable to circumstances and a residual attributable to effort (see, among others, Brunori et al., 2025; Ferreira & Gignoux, 2011; Roemer, 1998).

2.3 Empirical literature

The empirical literature on the economic determinants of populism has grown rapidly but remains concentrated in developed countries. Studies examining Europe and the United States have linked the rise of populism to globalization-induced labor market disruptions (Dorn et al., 2020), the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity (Algan et al., 2017; Funke et al., 2016), and the decline of manufacturing employment (Becker et al., 2017). These contributions establish that economic resentment fuel populist support, but they focus on short-run shocks rather than the long-run structural features of social opportunity.

A smaller but growing set of contributions has begun to examine intergenerational mobility as a driver of populism. Protzer (2021) shows, using cross-national data, that low social mobility is a better predictor of populist voting than inequality or cultural factors, arguing that the key mechanism is the perception of an unfair social contract. Kurer & Van Staalduinen (2022) documents that individuals whose career trajectories fall short of expectations based on their educational attainment are significantly more likely to support populist parties in Europe. Daenekindt et al. (2018) and Perelman & Pestieau (2023) provide complementary evidence linking social origin, educational trajectory, and populist attitudes in European contexts.

What is largely absent from this literature is evidence from developing regions, and Latin America in particular—despite the fact that the region combines some of the world's lowest intergenerational mobility with a long history of populist politics. This paper fills that gap, exploiting individual and cohort-level variation in educational mobility across 18 Latin American countries over more than two decades to provide the first systematic evidence on the mobility-populism nexus in a developing context.

3 Data and Methodology

3.1 Data and Sample

We use *Latinobarómetro* survey waves spanning 1998–2023, representative of 18 Latin American countries.[2] The *Latinobarómetro* surveys represent a unique opportunity for our study: they include several opinion questions that allow us to approximate populist attitudes, alongside retrospective information on the highest level of education attained by respondents' parents—our proxy for parental background, which is crucial for measuring intergenerational mobility. Importantly, while in most household surveys the education of parents and children can be linked only for people living in the same household, co-residency has been shown to be a significant source of bias in intergenerational mobility estimates (Emran & Shilpi, 2018; Emran & Shilpi, 2019). Beyond education information for respondents and their parents, the surveys include a rich set of individual characteristics such as gender, age, and employment status. While *Latinobarómetro* does not include income data, it contains an interviewer's assessment of the respondent's economic situation in four categories: 'very good,' 'good,' 'bad,' and 'very bad.'

Since intergenerational mobility is measured in educational terms, we restrict our sample to individuals aged 23 and older, who have presumably completed their educational process, born between 1940 and 2000. Survey weights are re-scaled relative to the maximum weight within each country-year cell, ensuring that results are not driven by cross-country differences in population size. Our final sample comprises approximately 303,000 observations. We obtain per capita GDP data from Bolt & Van Zanden (2020) and World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2023), measured in constant 2011 prices, as well as Gini coefficients from World Development Indicators, which serve as controls for current economic conditions in our analysis.

3.2 Variable Definitions

Populist attitudes. While populist attitudes are difficult to measure directly, the *Latinobarómetro* surveys include several opinion questions that permit us to approximate them. Our main proxy is what we term anti-democratic attitudes. To construct this variable, we exploit a question in which the respondent must choose which opinion best represents their beliefs among three options: i) "an authoritarian government may be preferable under some circumstances"; ii) "democracy is preferable to any other form of government"; iii) "for people like me, it makes no difference whether the regime is democratic or non-democratic." We define an individual as holding anti-democratic attitudes if they select option i). We further exploit several additional questions as proxies for populist sentiment: preferences for military governments over democratic ones, beliefs about

[2] It is worth noting that questions are not repeated identically every year, and some have changed over time. For this reason, data for some variables are not available for all years included in the main analysis.

immigrants taking nationals' jobs, and institutional distrust—specifically toward the judiciary, the Congress, and the government. Table A.1 in Appendix A provides detailed definitions of all variables.

Intergenerational mobility. We focus on educational mobility since parental education is the only background characteristic available for parents in the *Latinobarómetro* surveys. While this implies that our persistence estimates capture only one dimension of intergenerational transmission, previous contributions have shown that education-based measures tend to yield a lower bound of overall intergenerational persistence relative to broader composite measures, though the trends and cross-country patterns remain largely unchanged (Ciaschi et al., 2026).

At the individual level, we construct two mobility measures. The first, absolute mobility ($M2$), follows Fields & Ok (1996) and is defined as the difference in years of schooling between the respondent and their parents. This measure considers both upward and downward movements between generations as well as their magnitude. However, because years of schooling are bounded above, $M2$ may be sensitive to structural changes in educational attainment across cohorts: as average attainment rises, more recent cohorts have mechanically less room to surpass their parents in absolute terms. To address this concern, we complement $M2$ with a relative mobility measure ($M2_{rel}$), defined as the difference in education deciles between child and parent, where deciles are computed within each country and birth cohort, implicitly assuming a common age at parenthood across families. By construction, $M2_{rel}$ captures pure positional change net of aggregate educational trends, and is therefore less susceptible to the ceiling effects that affect the absolute measure.

At the cohort level, we construct standard mobility measures for country-cohort cells following Neidhöfer et al. (2018): the slope coefficient and its standardized version (β), the rank correlation (ρ), and the probability of upward mobility. These measures capture different conceptual dimensions of positional persistence and allow for direct comparison with existing contributions in the intergenerational mobility literature. Working at the cohort level also mitigates concerns about measurement error and recall bias inherent in individual retrospective reports on parental education.

3.3 Descriptive Statistics

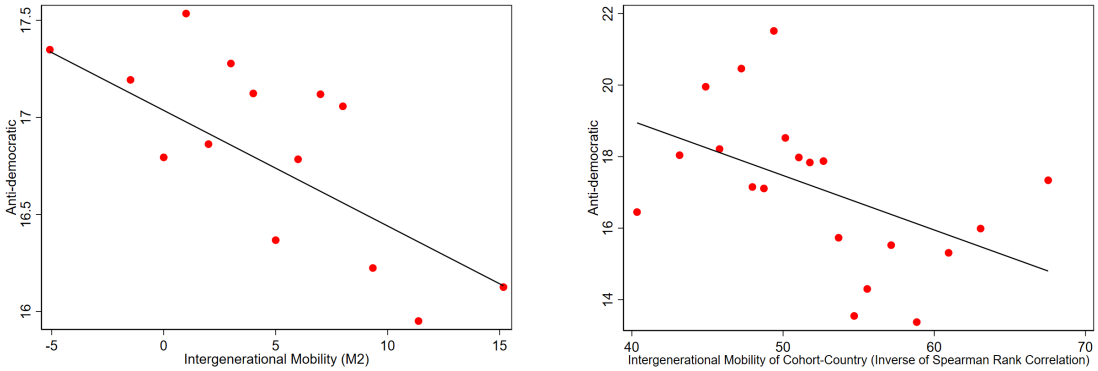
Appendix Table A.2 summarizes descriptive statistics for our individual-level sample, organized by 5-year birth cohort, even though the unit of analysis in the main results of this paper is the individual. It reports cohort-level averages purely for descriptive purposes. The table is structured into three panels – individual characteristics, populist attitude variables, and intergenerational mobility measures at both individual and cohort-country levels. It shows balanced gender representation and, as expected, age decreases with successive cohorts. Years of schooling increase steadily across cohorts for both respondents

and their parents, reflecting educational expansion over the past six decades. Parental education increased by 119% from the first to the last cohort analyzed, while children's education increased by 72%, reflecting diminishing margins for further gains. Employment status follows a clear life-cycle pattern, while socioeconomic conditions remain relatively stagnant across cohorts except for the youngest.

Table A.2 also shows that $M2$ follows an inverted U-shape across cohorts, mirroring patterns in average educational differences between children and parents and reflecting diminishing returns to absolute gains as educational expansion becomes widespread. On average, individuals in our sample achieve 3.4 more years of education than their parents, with 23% experiencing no educational change and only 12% experiencing downward mobility. In contrast, cohort-level mobility measured by the inverse of Spearman's rank correlation shows sustained growth, rising from 49.8 for the oldest cohort to 58.0 for the youngest, suggesting that positional mobility has continued to improve even as absolute gains have stagnated. Appendix Figure A.1 provides further descriptive evidence on the distribution of our two individual mobility measures. Panel A confirms the predominance of upward absolute mobility, while Panel B shows that the relative measure ($M2_{rel}$) displays a distribution closer to symmetric, with roughly similar shares experiencing upward and downward positional change. This contrast motivates the complementary use of $M2_{rel}$: the high prevalence of positive absolute mobility largely reflects aggregate increases in educational levels across cohorts rather than genuine improvements in individuals' positions along the educational ladder, and may therefore overstate the degree to which opportunities have actually expanded.

Examining populist attitudes, three of the four indicators in Table A.2 display an increase among younger cohorts, with anti-immigrant opinions being the exception. On average, 17.5% of individuals exhibit anti-democratic attitudes, while 30% express support for military government, 48% hold anti-immigration positions, and 32% distrust the judiciary. Finally, Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between anti-democratic attitudes and intergenerational mobility at the individual and cohort levels, respectively, presenting scatterplots of average populist attitudes within equal-sized bins of the mobility distribution. While purely descriptive, both figures reveal a clear negative relationship between populist opinions and intergenerational mobility.

Figure 1: Anti-democratic attitudes and Intergenerational Mobility



(a) Individual level

(b) Cohort level

Note: Each panel shows the average anti-democratic attitude across equal-sized bins of the intergenerational mobility distribution. Panel A uses absolute individual mobility ($M2$), defined as the difference in years of schooling between the respondent and their parents, with 14 bins. Panel B uses cohort-level mobility measured as the inverse of Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell, with 20 bins.
Source: Own elaboration based on Latinobarómetro.

3.4 Estimation Strategy

To evaluate the relationship between intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes, we estimate by ordinary least squares an individual-level econometric model as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} Populist_{i,c,p,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Mob_{i,c,p,t} + \beta_2 MobCoh_{c,p} + \beta_3 X_{i,c,p,t} \\ + \beta_4 Z_{p,t} + \gamma_c + \theta_t + \delta_p + \epsilon_{i,c,p,t}, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where $Populist_{i,c,p,t}$ is a binary indicator equal to one if individual i from cohort c in country p interviewed in year t expresses populist attitudes. The main explanatory variable, $Mob_{i,c,p,t}$ measures individual mobility either as the difference in years of education between the respondent and their parents (absolute mobility, $M2$), or as the difference in education deciles between child and parent computed within each country and birth cohort (relative mobility, $M2_{rel}$). To abstract the results from cohorts' average mobility performance and considering the substantial progress in educational attainment documented for Latin America (Neidhöfer et al., 2018), we include a control variable, $MobCoh_{c,p}$, which captures cohort-country mobility as the inverse of the Spearman rank correlation in years of schooling between both generations. The estimations also include a vector of individual-level controls ($X_{i,c,p,t}$): parental education, interpreted as the starting point for individual mobility; demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and age squared; and a set of variables approximating the respondent's economic situation at the time of the interview, including occupational status and subjective and interviewer's assessment of economic conditions.

Additionally, the vector $Z_{p,t}$ includes a set of country-year-level control variables intended to isolate the results from current economic performance and inequality at the time opinions are expressed: the logarithm of GDP per capita measured in constant dollars and the Gini index of household per capita income. Finally, our specifications include fixed effects at the year (θ_t), country (δ_p), and cohort (γ_c) levels. Cohort fixed effects are particularly important given that absolute individual intergenerational mobility could be mechanically affected by educational expansions as shown in Section 3.3. Finally, $\epsilon_{i,c,p,t}$ represents standard errors. Under this specification, β_1 can be interpreted as comparing individuals who started from the same educational background (i.e., same parental education) but experienced different degrees of individual intergenerational mobility, while belonging to the same birth cohort, facing similar current economic conditions, and sharing similar individual characteristics.

4 Main Results

Table 1 reports the results of estimating equation 1 using anti-democratic opinions as the outcome variable. Each column corresponds to a different model specification in which we subsequently add controls and fixed effects. The results show a robust and negative relationship between this indicator of populist opinions and individual experiences of intergenerational mobility. According to our preferred specification in column (4), an additional year of schooling relative to their parents is associated with a 0.13 percentage point (pp) decrease in the probability of expressing opinions against the democratic system. Appendix Table A.2 shows an average $M2$ of about 3.4 in our sample, so our estimates represent a 2.5% average decrease relative to the sample mean. Table 1 also shows that the coefficient associated with cohort-level mobility is negative and statistically significant: a one percentage point increase in cohort-country mobility is associated with an average decrease of 0.08 percentage points in anti-democratic attitudes. These two effects operate jointly: cohort-level mobility captures the generational dimension of the mobility-populism nexus—successive cohorts are on average less populist as intergenerational mobility improves over time—while individual mobility captures an additional, idiosyncratic dimension. That is, given the mobility experience of her generation, an individual who personally climbed the educational ladder is even less likely to hold anti-democratic attitudes than her peers who did not, suggesting that both the social environment and one's own experience of opportunity shape political preferences.

Turning to current economic conditions, the Gini coefficient of per capita income enters positively and significantly in column (4), suggesting that contemporaneous income inequality independently fosters anti-democratic sentiment. Crucially, however, the mobility coefficients remain negative and statistically significant after incorporating the Gini and log GDP per capita, indicating that intergenerational mobility affects populist attitudes through a channel that goes beyond current inequality conditions. This result motivates the more detailed analysis in Sections 6 and 7, where we exploit cohort-level

mobility measures and decompose educational inequality into opportunity and effort components to further disentangle these channels.

Table 1: Results on anti-democratic attitudes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Individual mobility (M2)	-0.0714***	-0.159***	-0.134***	-0.130***	-0.170***
	[0.0204]	[0.0252]	[0.0269]	[0.0282]	[0.0412]
Square of individual mobility					0.00472
					[0.00327]
Country-cohort Mobility				-0.0765**	-0.0771**
				[0.0346]	[0.0346]
Log GDP per capita				16.88**	16.82**
				[1.600]	[1.601]
Gini: per capita income				0.178***	0.179***
				[0.0582]	[0.0582]
Mean	17.1	17.1	17.2	17.4	17.4
Individuals controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-Year controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
N	268,260	249,313	233,493	210,569	210,569
R squared	0.000	0.001	0.022	0.023	0.023

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model in equation 1 using OLS when the dependent variable is anti-democratic attitudes. Individual mobility ($M2$) is defined as the difference in years of schooling between the respondent and their parents. Column 1 shows the simple correlation between anti-democratic attitudes and individual mobility. Column 2 includes individual-level controls, while column 3 incorporates fixed effects. Column 4 presents the full model, adding year-country-level controls. Finally, Column 5 introduces nonlinear effects of individual mobility. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 2 presents the results of the model from column (4) in Table 1 using other proxies for populist opinions: support for military governments, anti-immigrant attitudes, and institutional distrust—specifically toward the judiciary system, the parliament, and the government. The results show that our main results usually hold when considering these alternative indicators. In particular, each additional year of education relative to the individual's parents is associated with an average decrease of 0.47 percentage points (pp) in the probability of supporting military governments (1.5% of the sample mean), a 0.39 pp reduction in the likelihood of expressing negative opinions about immigrants (0.79% of the sample mean), and a 0.09 pp decrease in the probability of showing distrust of the judiciary. On the other hand, the coefficients related to distrust in the government and parliament are positive, although they are close to zero and not statistically significant. A potential explanation for this last result is that these opinions are more reactive to contemporary circumstances or broader cohort mobility performance rather than individual mobility experiences. Consistent with the findings in Table 1, the Gini coefficient is positive and statistically significant across most outcomes, with the exception of anti-immigrant attitudes, further suggesting that contemporaneous inequality independently affects populist opinions. Importantly, the mobility coefficients remain negative and significant throughout, reinforcing the previous results showing that intergenerational

mobility operates through a channel beyond current inequality conditions.

Table 2: Results on other populist opinions' indicators

	Support to military government	Anti-immigrant	Distrust in judiciary	Distrust in government	Distrust in congress
Individual mobility	-0.466***	-0.385***	-0.0921***	0.0194	0.0420
	[0.0517]	[0.0740]	[0.0330]	[0.0335]	[0.0339]
Country-cohort mobility	-0.157**	0.0742	-0.0718*	-0.0818**	-0.125***
	[0.0612]	[0.0940]	[0.0406]	[0.0405]	[0.0410]
Log GDP per capita	-9.566***	5.941	12.27***	-22.49***	9.779***
	[3.327]	[5.736]	[1.960]	[2.056]	[2.016]
Gini: per capita income	0.539***	-0.100	0.193***	0.524***	0.323***
	[0.115]	[0.211]	[0.0690]	[0.0790]	[0.0722]
Outcome mean	30.5	48.9	32.3	29.3	35.2
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-year controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	76,202	47,656	221,435	193,346	220,529
R squared	0.063	0.042	0.047	0.054	0.049

Note: The table presents the results of the full model regression (column 4 of Table 1) on alternative populist attitudes, specifically support for a military government, anti-immigrant opinions, and distrust in the judiciary, the government, and the congress. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

A potential concern with the individual absolute mobility measure used in Tables 1 and 2 is that it may partly reflect structural changes in the educational distribution rather than true intergenerational mobility. Because years of schooling are bounded above, absolute upward mobility mechanically declines for more recent cohorts: those born after major educational expansions have little room to surpass their parents in absolute terms, even if they are genuinely improving their relative standing within their generation. This ceiling effect means that the absolute measure may confound true immobility with the mechanical compression of educational gains as attainment approaches universal levels, potentially biasing the estimated relationship with populist attitudes across cohorts.

Table 3 addresses this concern by replicating the analysis of Tables 1 and 2 with an alternative measure of relative mobility. Specifically, individual relative mobility is defined as the difference between the child's and the parent's education decile, where deciles are computed separately within each country and birth cohort of the child. This implicitly treats all parents of children born in the same cohort as belonging to the same parental generation, given the absence of direct information on parents' birth year. This within-cohort standardization captures intergenerational positional change net of structural trends, making it more comparable across cohorts and less sensitive to potential ceiling effects.

The results are broadly consistent with those in Tables 1 and 2. Individual relative mobility is negatively associated with populist opinions in the same four out of six outcomes: anti-democratic attitudes, support for military government, anti-immigrant opinions, and distrust in the judiciary system. The coefficients on country-cohort mobility (ρ) are also

very similar, as are those on the Gini index and log GDP per capita. The only difference with respect to the baseline estimations is that distrust in Congress becomes marginally significant. Overall, results from Table 3 reinforce the conclusion that it is the perception of relative positional immobility, rather than the mere lack of absolute educational gains, that shapes populist political attitudes in Latin America.

Table 3: Results on populist opinions' indicators. Relative mobility

	Anti-democratic	Support to military government	Anti-immigrant	Distrust in judiciary	Distrust in government	Distrust in congress
Individual relative mobility	-0.195***	-0.733***	-0.582***	-0.0977*	0.0369	0.0886*
	[0.0434]	[0.0784]	[0.1139]	[0.0511]	[0.0515]	[0.0524]
Country-cohort mobility	-0.0771**	-0.162***	0.0729	-0.0725*	-0.0817**	-0.125***
	[0.0346]	[0.0612]	[0.0939]	[0.0406]	[0.0405]	[0.0410]
Log GDP per capita	17.007***	-9.480***	6.128	12.406***	-22.495***	9.762***
	[1.600]	[3.326]	[5.735]	[1.960]	[2.056]	[2.016]
Gini: per capita income	0.179***	0.540***	-0.0936	0.192***	0.523***	0.321***
	[0.0582]	[0.1150]	[0.2111]	[0.0690]	[0.0790]	[0.0722]
Outcome mean	17.415	30.491	48.889	32.304	29.288	35.225
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-year controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	210,569	76,202	47,656	221,435	193,346	220,529
R squared	0.023	0.063	0.042	0.047	0.054	0.049

Note: The table presents the results of the full model regression on six populist attitude outcomes: anti-democratic attitudes, support for a military government, anti-immigrant opinions, and distrust in the judiciary, the government, and the congress. Individual relative mobility is measured as the difference in education deciles between children and parents, where deciles are computed within each birth cohort of the child. Country-cohort mobility (ρ) is the rank correlation of educational attainment between generations. All specifications include individual-level controls, country-year controls, and fixed effects for year, birth cohort, and country. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

4.1 Robustness Checks

We perform several exercises to assess the robustness of our main results. First, Appendix Table A.3 shows results using a relative measure of individual mobility defined as $M2$ divided by parental years of schooling. While this measure has the advantage of giving higher weights to educational improvements for individuals whose parents had lower education, it naturally excludes those coming from parents with no formal schooling. Despite this limitation and potential sample selection, the results are in line with those presented in the main analysis. Second, we assess robustness using a more discrete individual mobility measure. Instead of years of schooling, we use a less granular classification of parental and child education into seven levels—no education, and incomplete and complete primary, secondary, and tertiary education—and compute an alternative mobility measure based on educational levels rather than years. Table A.4 shows that our main results hold when using this coarser measure.

Additionally, since the descriptive analysis in Section 3.3 shows changing patterns for recent cohorts in both intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes, we restrict the sample to exclude the youngest cohorts in order to ensure that results are not driven by life-cycle effects among individuals still in early adulthood. Appendix Tables A.5 and A.6 show that our main results hold when restricting the analysis to individuals older than 25, 30, and 35 years old. Finally, we evaluate the sensitivity of our results to a broader

definition of populist attitudes that includes indifferent respondents.[3] Appendix Table A.7 shows results similar to those in the main analysis, confirming that our findings are not sensitive to this definitional choice.

4.2 Heterogeneity by Parental Background

Beyond robustness, we explore potential heterogeneity in the relationship between intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes based on parental background, approximated by parental level of education. Figure 2 summarizes the results of estimating model 1 using $M2$ as measure of individual mobility for the four main populist attitude outcomes, dividing the sample into three groups according to whether parental educational attainment is low (up to incomplete primary education), medium (complete primary or incomplete secondary), or high (complete secondary education or higher). The figure reports the estimated coefficient on individual mobility and the corresponding 90% confidence interval.

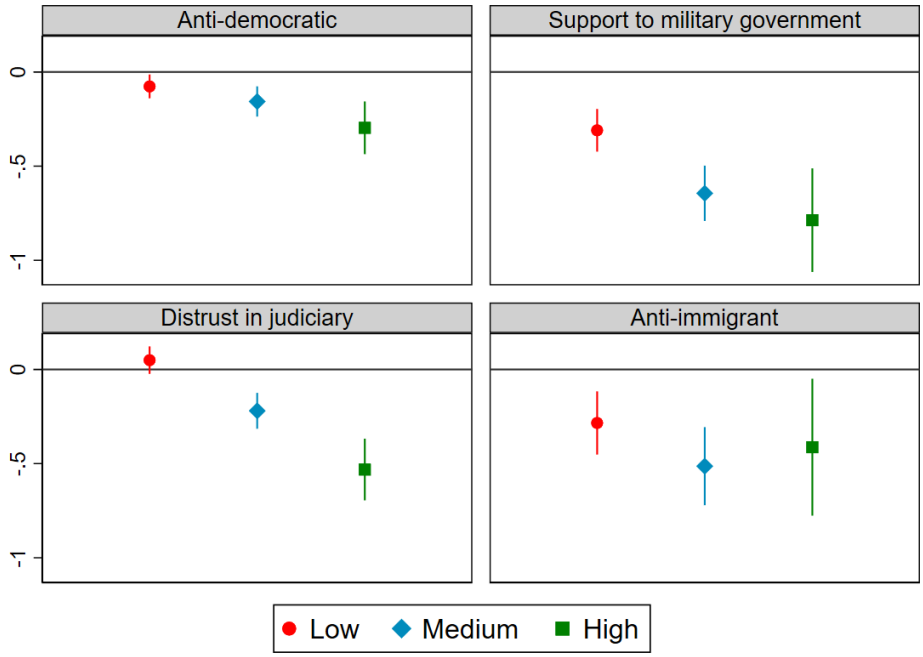
The results reveal that, for anti-democratic opinions, support for military governments, and distrust in the judiciary, the relationship between individual intergenerational mobility and populist attitudes is significantly stronger and more negative among individuals with more educated parents, while the association with anti-immigrant attitudes remains relatively stable across parental backgrounds. This heterogeneity suggests that upward mobility has differential effects depending on the educational background from which individuals start. Importantly, since our specification controls for parental education, we are effectively comparing individuals who achieved the same absolute mobility gains but started from different educational origins.

One possible interpretation is that, for children of more educated parents, upward mobility tends to involve crossing higher educational thresholds—such as completing university when parents only completed secondary school—which may yield substantially greater economic returns (Autor et al., 2020; Hungerford & Solon, 1987; Jaeger & Page, 1996; Zimmerman, 2014) and exposure to institutional environments more likely to inculcate democratic values and meritocratic beliefs (Campante & Chor, 2012; Dee, 2004; Larreguy & Marshall, 2017; Milligan et al., 2004). In contrast, children of less educated parents who experience similar absolute gains often remain in lower-tier occupations with more constrained economic returns, and may continue to be embedded in social contexts where populist attitudes are more prevalent. Consistent with this, the average $M2$ for individuals with low-education parents is 4.8 years, suggesting that while these individuals surpass their parents educationally, they may not reach the thresholds that generate more transformative improvements in opportunities or perceptions of meritocracy. The attenuated effect of mobility on populist attitudes in this group may therefore reflect both

[3] For instance, as explained in Section 3, an individual is considered to hold anti-democratic attitudes if they select the option "an authoritarian government may be preferable under some circumstances." In this alternative measure, we also classify as anti-democratic those answering "for people like me, it makes no difference whether the regime is democratic or non-democratic." We proceed similarly with the remaining populist attitude indicators.

lower material returns to education and weaker exposure to socializing environments that foster institutional trust.

Figure 2: Intergenerational mobility on populist attitudes by parental background



Note: The figure shows the coefficients associated with individual mobility and the corresponding 90% confidence intervals for the different populist attitudes, categorized by the parents' educational level. The levels are defined as follows: low = never attended school or incomplete primary education, medium = completed primary or incomplete secondary, and high = completed secondary or higher (including incomplete or complete higher education). Individual mobility ($M2$) is defined as the difference in years of schooling between the respondent and their parents.

5 Support for Populist Leaders

Here we explore the extent to which the populist attitudes analyzed in the previous sections are associated with support for specific populist leaders, based on Funke et al. (2023)'s rhetoric-based classification of political leaders.[4] The objective of this analysis is to assess whether individuals with populist attitudes also tend to have more favorable perceptions of populist leaders, thus providing an additional validation of the populist attitude proxies we employ throughout the paper. If our measures are meaningful proxies for populist sentiment, we would expect them to correlate positively with support for populist leaders and, if anything, negatively or not at all with support for non-populist ones. In this analysis, we estimate two separate specifications for populist and non-populist leaders:

[4]This classification comprises both left- and right-wing leaders. Among them, Jair Bolsonaro, Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, Cristina Fernández, Néstor Kirchner, Andrés López Obrador, Nicolás Maduro, Evo Morales, and Donald Trump are classified as populist. Non-populist leaders include Michelle Bachelet, Iván Duque, Luis Lacalle Pou, Fernando Lugo, José Mujica, Barack Obama, Sebastián Piñera, Dilma Rousseff, Álvaro Uribe, and Tabaré Vázquez.

$$SupportLeader_{i,c,p,t} = \phi_0 + \phi_1 Populist_{i,c,p,t} + \phi_2 MobCoh_{c,p} + \phi_3 X_{i,c,p,t} + \phi_4 Z_{p,t} + \gamma_c + \theta_t + \delta_p + \epsilon_{i,c,p,t}, \quad (2)$$

where $SupportLeader_{i,c,p,t}$ is a binary indicator equal to 1 if individual i supports any populist or non-populist leader, depending on the specification, and 0 otherwise. Although information on electoral voting is not available, *Latinobarómetro* includes questions regarding respondents' evaluations of contemporary political leaders, allowing for the construction of leader support variables. Specifically, respondents are asked to rate leaders on a scale from 0 ("very bad") to 10 ("very good"). We consider that an individual supports a leader if their rating is between 6 and 10, and does not support them if the rating is between 0 and 5. On average across our sample, 23.6% of respondents support at least one populist leader, a figure close to the 17.5% who express anti-democracy opinions, as shown in Appendix Table A.2. The main explanatory variable in equation 2 is $Populist_{i,c,p,t}$, which equals 1 if the individual expresses populist attitudes, measured by the main four indicators analyzed in the previous section: anti-democracy opinions, support for military government, anti-immigrant attitudes, and distrust in the judiciary. The remaining controls and fixed effects are analogous to those in equation 1.

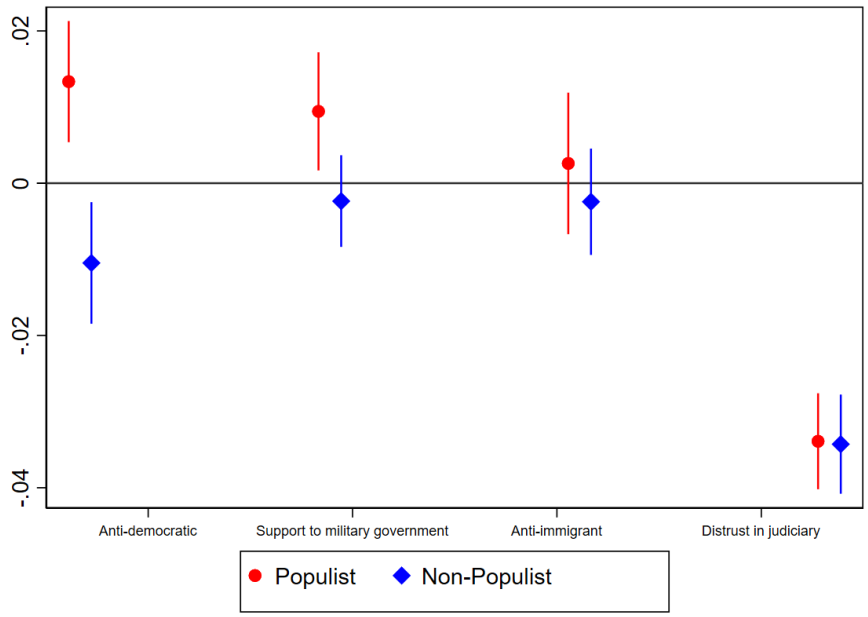
Figure 3 reports the relationship between support for populist and non-populist leaders and our measures of populist attitudes—specifically, coefficient ϕ_1 from equation 2. The results show that anti-democratic attitudes and support for military government are positively and significantly associated with support for populist leaders, while they are negatively or not significantly associated with support for non-populist leaders. This pattern suggests that populist attitudes, which we have shown in Section 4 are negatively associated with individual intergenerational mobility, translate into concrete political support for populist leaders. Consequently, individuals who experienced lower upward mobility—and thus exhibit stronger populist attitudes—are more likely to support populist leaders, establishing a clear link between mobility experiences and actual political preferences.

Regarding anti-immigrant attitudes, the point estimates shown in Figure 3 have the expected sign—positive for populist leaders and negative for non-populist ones—providing suggestive evidence consistent with the previous results, although neither coefficient is statistically significant. In contrast, we find a negative relationship between support for any type of leader and distrust in the judiciary system. This latter result aligns with the findings in Section 4, where distrust in institutions appeared to be more strongly influenced by current economic performance rather than by mobility experiences, suggesting it may reflect contemporaneous dissatisfaction rather than deep-seated populist ideology.

To ensure our results are not driven by support for only one or a few specific leaders, we examine support for each individual leader separately. Appendix Figure A.2 focuses on anti-democratic attitudes—our main populist attitude indicator—and shows a positive

association between this attitude and support for each populist leader in most cases, with the relationship being particularly strong for right-wing populist leaders. In contrast, the relationship between expressing anti-democratic attitudes and support for non-populist leaders is negative or statistically insignificant, as shown in Appendix Figure A.3. Additionally, we conduct robustness checks using alternative measurement approaches. Appendix Figure A.5 shows similar results when support for populist or non-populist leaders is measured using the weighted average of individual leader evaluations, where we consider that an individual supports these types of leaders if the average rating is between 6 and 10. As a further robustness test, we verify that results hold when considering alternative thresholds for leader support. Appendix Figure A.4 demonstrates that our conclusions remain unchanged when redefining the populist and non-populist support indicators using stricter rating ranges, such as 7-10 and 8-10 instead of 6-10, confirming that our findings are not sensitive to the specific threshold chosen.

Figure 3: Populist attitudes and Support for Populist Leaders



Note: The graph shows the coefficients of the relationship between each of the four populist attitudes and support for both groups of leaders, populist and non-populist, with their corresponding 90% confidence intervals. The regression includes individual-level controls (educational attainment of the respondent and their parents, age and age squared, subjective income, and economic situation as reported by the interviewer, gender, and occupational status), cohort-country mobility, and country-year level controls (logarithm of GDP per capita and Gini coefficient), in addition to fixed effects at the year, cohort, and country levels.

Finally, a potential caveat in these estimations is that the set of leaders included in the survey varies across years and does not always include representatives of both left- and right-wing populists. To the extent that respondents with populist opinions are asked about leaders of the opposing ideological sign only, our estimates will understate the true association between populist attitudes and leader support. We therefore interpret the

results of this section as a lower bound on this relationship; they should be read as a robustness check for our proxies rather than as a precise estimate of the link between attitudes and electoral behavior.

6 Cohort-Level estimations

Our main results show a robust negative association between individual intergenerational mobility and populist opinions, exploiting the full individual-level variation available in the *Latinobarómetro* surveys. We now complement that evidence with a cohort-level analysis, which offers some advantages. First, individual mobility captures idiosyncratic experiences that are difficult to fully control for and may reflect factors unrelated to the broader social environment in which preferences are formed. In the absence of individual panel data, we are not able to include individual fixed effects in our previous estimations. Second, working at the cohort level allows us to use mobility measures that are standard in the intergenerational mobility literature[5]—such as the persistence coefficient, rank correlation and probability of upward mobility—enabling direct comparison with previous contributions.

In this section, we use the individual-level data described in Section 3 to construct pseudo-panels at the cohort level, collapsing observations into country-cohort-year cells and obtaining an unbalanced panel of birth cohorts observed at different ages across countries and survey years. We include the age dimension since we want to control for different probabilities of populist opinions across lifetime. Then, each observation corresponds to a country-cohort-age cell, where outcomes and controls are computed as within-cell means using survey weights, following the cell-level approach standard in the scarring literature (Berniell et al., 2022; von Wachter, 2020). The panel is unbalanced because not all cohorts are observed in all survey years: younger cohorts are not observed in early waves and older cohorts in late waves.

This data structure motivates the estimation of the following equation, similar to model 1 but adapted to cohort-level data:

$$Populist_{c,p,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MobCoh_{c,p} + \gamma_a + \phi_c + \theta_p + \delta_t + \epsilon_{c,p,t}, \tag{3}$$

where $Populist_{c,p,t}$ is the share of individuals expressing populist opinions within a country-cohort-year cell (c, p, t), and $MobCoh_{c,p}$ is a measure of intergenerational educational mobility for cohort c in country p. We use four alternative measures of $MobCoh_{c,p}$, which differ in their conceptual content. The first two—the slope coefficient and its standardized version—are measures of *intergenerational persistence*: they capture the degree to which children's educational attainment is determined by parental education, so that

[5]For a discussion on cohort-level educational mobility measures and their trends for Latin America, see Neidhöfer et al. (2018) and Neidhöfer et al. (2025).

higher values indicate *lower* mobility. The third, the Spearman rank correlation, measures pure positional persistence—the extent to which a child's rank in the education distribution mirrors her parent's rank—and is similarly a measure of persistence rather than mobility. The fourth, the probability of upward mobility, is a direct measure of mobility: it captures the likelihood that a child from a low-educated family (i.e., less than completed secondary education) attains a higher educational level than her parents. Readers should therefore note that, for the first three measures, a positive coefficient on $MobCoh_{c,p}$ implies that higher persistence—equivalently, lower mobility—is associated with stronger populist attitudes, which is consistent with the negative sign found for individual mobility in Section 4. For the fourth measure, the expected sign is negative.

The model includes age fixed effects (γ_a) to control for life-cycle patterns in political opinions, cohort fixed effects (ϕ_c), country fixed effects (θ_p), and survey year fixed effects (δ_t). Although the simultaneous inclusion of cohort and survey year fixed effects may appear redundant, it is not for two reasons. First, the synthetic panel is unbalanced, as not all cohorts are observed in all survey years. Second, cohorts are defined over five-year birth intervals rather than single years, so cohort and age do not perfectly determine the survey year within a cohort cell. The combination of these four sets of fixed effects ensures that identification comes from within-country variation in mobility across birth cohorts, net of age, period, and generational trends. Standard errors $\epsilon_{c,p,t}$ are clustered at the country-cohort level.

Table 4 presents the results. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational educational mobility, with odd columns excluding country-level controls and even columns adding the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita, as in the individual-level estimations of Section 4.

The results show that the three measures of educational persistence—the slope coefficient, the standardized slope coefficient, and the rank correlation—are positively associated with populist attitudes, while the upward mobility indicator is negatively associated with them, consistent with the hypothesis that lower intergenerational mobility fosters political discontent. The non-standardized slope coefficient, however, does not reach conventional significance levels in either specification and its point estimate is substantially closer to zero than those of the other persistence or mobility measures. As discussed in Section 4, this likely reflects the fact that the slope coefficient combines structural and exchange mobility components, vanishing the signal that matters for political attitudes. The standardized slope and the rank correlation, by contrast, capture positional mobility—the degree to which individuals can climb the educational ladder relative to their parents' standing in the distribution—and it is precisely this dimension that may be more related to fairness and shapes political opinions.

Table 4 also shows that these results are robust to controlling for current economic conditions. The Gini coefficient of per capita income is positive and statistically significant across all specifications that include it, consistent with the individual-level results in Section 4: greater contemporaneous income inequality is associated with stronger populist

sentiment. Crucially, the mobility measures remain significant after the inclusion of the Gini in most specifications, indicating that at least part of the effect of intergenerational mobility on political attitudes operates through a channel distinct from current inequality. Section B.1 replicates this analysis for the remaining populist attitude outcomes. The results broadly hold across indicators, although statistical significance is weaker in some cases—particularly for anti-immigrant attitudes and distrust in the government—likely reflecting the smaller sample sizes arising from questions that are not included in every survey wave.

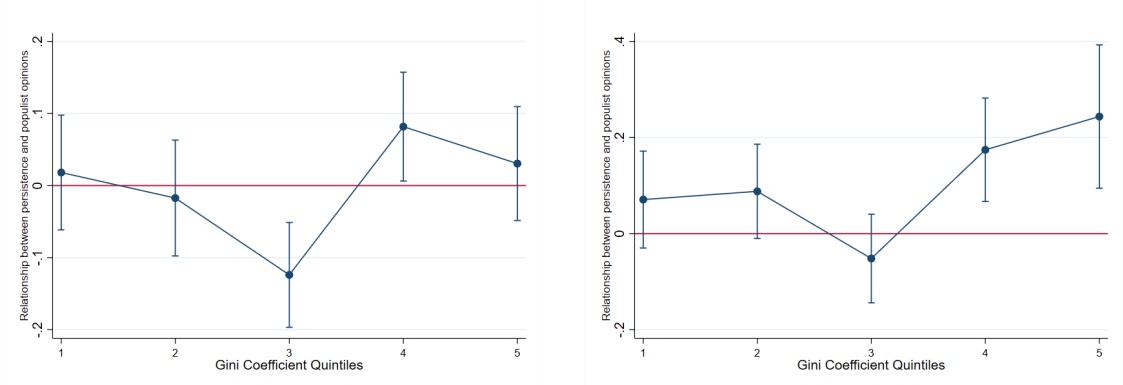
The results so far suggest that both intergenerational persistence and contemporaneous inequality independently shape populist attitudes. A natural next question is whether these two forces interact: the fairness-based mechanism we outlined in Section 2 would predict that immobility is most politically consequential precisely in high-inequality contexts, where the gap between those at the top and bottom of the distribution is largest and the consequences of being trapped in one's origin are most severe. To explore this, we expand equation 3 to incorporate an interaction term between intergenerational persistence and contemporaneous inequality. Figure 4 presents the marginal effect of intergenerational persistence on anti-democratic attitudes across quintiles of the income Gini coefficient. Panel A, which uses the slope coefficient, shows marginal effects that are statistically indistinguishable from zero across all five quintiles of the Gini distribution, consistent with the main results in Table 4. Nonetheless, the point estimates display a pattern qualitatively similar to that in Panel B. This last one, based on the rank correlation, makes this pattern starker and statistically precise: the marginal effect of intergenerational persistence is indistinguishable from zero in the three lowest quintiles of income inequality but turns positive and statistically significant in the two highest quintiles, suggesting that immobility translates into populist attitudes primarily when contemporaneous inequality is high. This finding suggests that intergenerational immobility and contemporaneous inequality reinforce each other in shaping political discontent. When inequality is low, limited mobility is not associated with populist attitudes. When inequality is high, however, the inability to surpass one's parents' standing becomes more visible: the gap between those at the top and bottom of the distribution is large, and immobility is more likely to be felt as unfair, fueling anti-democratic sentiment. The extent to which this channel is specifically linked to unequal opportunities—rather than to inequality more broadly—is examined in Section 7.

Table 4: Results on anti-democratic opinions: Cohort-level Mobility Measures

	Anti-democratic opinions							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Slope coefficient	0.015	0.005						
	[0.034]	[0.036]						
Standardized Persistence			0.085	0.080				
			[0.047]*	[0.051]				
Rank correlation					0.090	0.095		
					[0.043]**	[0.048]**		
Upward Mobility							-0.039	-0.041
							[0.021]*	[0.022]*
Gini: per capita income		0.388		0.384		0.385		0.385
		[0.073]***		[0.073]***		[0.073]***		[0.073]***
Per capita GDP (log.)		7.330		7.238		7.324		7.329
		[1.824]***		[1.828]***		[1.826]***		[1.823]***
Mean	16.92	16.92	16.92	16.92	16.92	16.92	16.92	16.92
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110
R-squared	0.424	0.446	0.424	0.447	0.425	0.447	0.424	0.447

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is anti-democratic attitudes. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational mobility: the slope coefficient (columns 1–2), the standardized persistence measure (columns 3–4), the rank correlation (columns 5–6), and upward mobility (columns 7–8). Within each pair, odd columns exclude country-level controls while even columns include the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Country-cohort clustered standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Figure 4: Anti-democratic opinions, Intergenerational Persistence, and Income Inequality



(a) Slope coefficient (β) (b) Rank correlation (ρ)

Note: Each panel shows the marginal relationship between the corresponding intergenerational persistence measure and anti-democratic attitudes across quintiles of the income Gini coefficient, estimated from a specification that interacts the persistence measure with Gini quintile indicators. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Bands represent 90% confidence intervals based on country-cohort clustered standard errors.

7 Inequality of Opportunity and Anti-Democratic Attitudes

In the previous section we showed that higher intergenerational persistence is associated with stronger populist opinions, even after controlling for contemporaneous inequality, and that this relationship is particularly pronounced in high-inequality contexts. A complementary way to assess whether populist attitudes stem from inequality in general or from a sense of unfairness is to decompose total inequality into a component attributable to circumstances beyond individual control and a residual component reflecting differences in effort, following the inequality of opportunity literature (see, among others, Brunori et al., 2025; Ferreira & Gignoux, 2011; Roemer, 1998). This distinction has proven consequential in other domains: several contributions have shown that either higher inequality of opportunity or intergenerational persistence are harmful for economic growth (Hsieh et al., 2019; Marrero & Rodríguez, 2013; Marrero & Rodriguez, 2023; Neidhöfer et al., 2024). We contribute to this discussion by evaluating whether a similar logic applies to political attitudes: do citizens develop populist opinions because inequality exists, or because they perceive that inequality reflects an uneven playing field?

While intergenerational mobility and inequality of opportunity are conceptually distinct—the former captures parent-child persistence in outcomes while the latter explicitly decomposes inequality into circumstance- and effort-driven components—they are strongly correlated empirically: Adermon et al. (2025) compare intergenerational mobility measures and inequality of opportunity indices across 126 Swedish local labor markets and find cross-region correlations above 0.8, suggesting that where mobility is low, inequality of opportunity tends to be high. This regularity provides reassurance that the cohort-level persistence estimates in the previous section and the inequality of opportunity measure presented here are highly related—though conceptually distinct—phenomena. Importantly, the two measures are computed at different levels of aggregation for substantive reasons. Intergenerational persistence is measured at the cohort-country level, as it requires observing two generations and is therefore a generational concept by nature. Inequality of opportunity, by contrast, is measured at the country-year level, as it captures the cross-sectional dispersion of educational outcomes and the extent to which that dispersion reflects inherited circumstances at a given point in time. This difference in aggregation is not a limitation but reflects the distinct temporal logic of each concept, and motivates examining both.

To address the role of inequality of opportunity, we decompose educational inequality into two components following Ferreira & Gignoux (2014). We focus on education since *Latinobarómetro* surveys do not include income questions, and our persistence estimates are also education-based. Inequality of opportunity (IOP) is measured as the share of the variance in years of schooling explained by predetermined circumstances—specifically, parental education and sex—and is therefore interpretable as the fraction of educational dispersion that individuals cannot attribute to their own choices or effort.[6] The remaining

[6]We use four categories of parental education: less than primary, completed primary, completed

component, inequality of effort (IE), captures within-type dispersion reflecting factors under individual control. Both measures vary at the country-year level, and we estimate the following regression, in which we add inequality of opportunities (IOP) and effort (IE) to equation 3:

$$Populist_{c,p,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IOP_{p,t} + \beta_2 IE_{p,t} + \beta_3 MobCoh_{c,p} + \gamma_a + \phi_c + \theta_p + \delta_t + \epsilon_{c,p,t} \quad (4)$$

Table 5 presents the results. Columns 1 and 2 confirm the findings from previous sections: populist opinions are positively and significantly correlated with inequality, both in per capita incomes and in years of schooling. The more informative results emerge from the remaining columns, where we separate the role of opportunity from that of effort. Column 3 shows that IOP alone is positively and significantly associated with anti-democratic attitudes. Crucially, this result survives the inclusion of the Gini of schooling in Column 4: the coefficient on IOP remains positive and significant, while the Gini attenuates considerably and becomes only marginally significant. This suggests that what drives political discontent is not inequality per se, but specifically the part of that inequality that cannot be attributed to individual choices.

The results for IE further reinforce this interpretation. Column 5 shows that IE is positively associated with anti-democratic attitudes when entered alone, but Column 6 reveals that this relationship reverses once total educational inequality is controlled for: conditional on the Gini, higher inequality of effort is associated with lower anti-democratic sentiment. This finding is consistent with a fairness-based mechanism: when inequality reflects differences in effort rather than circumstances of birth, individuals are more willing to accept it as legitimate and less inclined toward anti-democratic attitudes. Column 7 presents the most complete specification, including both IOP and IE simultaneously. The coefficient on IOP remains positive and statistically significant, while IE is close to zero and loses significance entirely, suggesting that anti-democratic attitudes are systematically associated with inequality of opportunity in education, independently of the inequality attributable to effort. Columns 8 and 9 address the potential concern that IOP may be capturing the effect of intergenerational mobility rather than opportunity per se, by adding cohort-level measures of persistence as additional controls – the slope coefficient in column 8 and the rank correlation in column 9. The coefficient on IOP remains virtually unchanged in both specifications. This is consistent with Adermon et al. (2025), who show that IOp and intergenerational mobility capture related but conceptually distinct phenomena: since IOP varies at the country-year level and mobility at the cohort-country level, they identify different dimensions of the same underlying process, and controlling for one does not substantially alter the estimated effect of the other. These

secondary, and completed tertiary, yielding eight types. This is the same number of types as in Marrero & Rodríguez (2013), making it unnecessary to rely on machine learning techniques used in some of the IOP literature (e.g., Brunori et al., 2023) to select the relevant circumstances.

results connect with the broader literature on inequality, opportunity, and institutional trust (Alesina et al., 2018; Corak, 2013), and point to equality of opportunity—or the lack thereof—as a key channel through which economic conditions shape political preferences. Section B.2 replicates this analysis for the remaining populist attitude outcomes. While the pattern is broadly consistent across indicators—IOP entering positively and IE losing relevance once both are included—the results are more mixed for some outcomes, and the decomposition does not always yield a clean separation between the two components, particularly for support for military governments where the signs are reversed. These findings should therefore be interpreted with some caution, and the anti-democratic attitudes result remains our most robust evidence in favor of the opportunity-based mechanism.

Table 5: Anti-democratic opinions and Inequality of Opportunity

	Anti-democratic opinions								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Educational IOP			**0.222**	**0.167**			**0.208**	**0.207**	**0.206**
			[0.040]***	[0.054]***			[0.047]***	[0.047]***	[0.047]***
Educational IE					0.061	-0.120	0.016	0.015	0.017
					[0.018]***	[0.047]**	[0.022]	[0.022]	[0.022]
Gini: per capita income	0.357								
	[0.075]***								
Gini: years of schooling		0.173		0.077		0.372			
		[0.032]***		[0.043]*		[0.082]***			
Slope coefficient								0.032	
								[0.035]	
Rank correlation									0.097
									[0.046]**
Mean	17.355	17.355	17.355	17.355	17.355	17.355	17.355	17.355	17.355
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2,713	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027
R-squared	0.468	0.460	0.462	0.463	0.456	0.462	0.462	0.462	0.463

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is anti-democratic attitudes. Column 1 includes the Gini coefficient of per capita income as the sole inequality measure. Columns 2 and 3 introduce, respectively, the Gini of years of schooling and Educational Inequality of Opportunity (IOP) separately. Column 4 includes both measures jointly. Columns 5 and 6 present results using Educational Inequality of Effort (IE) alone and together with the Gini of schooling, respectively. Column 7 shows the full specification with both IOP and IE. Columns 8 and 9 add cohort-level measures of intergenerational persistence as additional controls: the slope coefficient, defined as the OLS regression coefficient of child on parent education within each country-cohort cell, and the rank correlation, defined as Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

8 Conclusions

This paper examines the relationship between intergenerational educational mobility and populist attitudes in Latin America, a region characterized by both persistent low mobility and high inequality, and a long-standing presence of populist leadership. Using harmonized data from 18 Latin American countries spanning over two decades and covering birth cohorts from 1940 to 2000, we find robust evidence that individuals who experienced greater upward educational mobility are significantly less likely to express populist attitudes. An additional year of schooling relative to parents reduces the probability of

expressing anti-democratic attitudes by 0.13 percentage points, with consistent patterns for support of military governments, anti-immigrant sentiments, and distrust in judicial institutions. These results are robust to replacing the absolute mobility measure with a relative measure that captures positional change, net of structural trends in educational attainment that mechanically compress the scope for absolute upward mobility in more recent cohorts. We also show that our measures of populist opinions are highly related to support for populist leaders.

Cohort-level estimates reinforce these findings and add two important results. First, among the different mobility measures considered, measures of positional persistence are most robustly associated with populist attitudes. This suggests that what matters for political discontent is not the average intergenerational transmission of educational levels but rather whether individuals can climb the educational ladder relative to their parents' standing. Second, the effect of intergenerational persistence on anti-democratic attitudes is concentrated among high income inequality contexts, indicating that immobility and contemporaneous inequality act as complements: when the stakes of one's origin are high, the inability to surpass one's parents fuels political discontent in ways that do not arise in more equal societies.

Decomposing educational inequality into opportunity and effort components, we find that the opportunity-driven component is more strongly and positively associated with anti-democratic attitudes, while the effort component loses significance once both are jointly included. This result suggests that the political consequences of inequality depend critically on whether that inequality is perceived as reflecting unequal starting conditions or differences in individual choices. The analysis also reveals important heterogeneity across parental backgrounds: the negative association between mobility and populism is substantially stronger among children of more educated parents, who experience both higher economic returns to education and greater exposure to institutional environments that reinforce meritocratic beliefs. This finding suggests that the political consequences of mobility depend not only on absolute educational gains but also on the thresholds reached and the institutional contexts accessed through upward movement.

These findings carry important policy implications that extend beyond the traditional economic framing of intergenerational mobility. A growing body of evidence has established that low mobility hampers economic growth and perpetuates inequality. Our results add a further dimension to this picture: limited intergenerational mobility is also a threat to democratic stability. When individuals cannot climb the social ladder relative to their parents, and when the inequality they face reflects unequal opportunities rather than differences in effort, they are more likely to have populist opinions and support populist leaders. The persistent emergence of populist leadership in Latin America can be explained, at least in part, by the region's stubbornly low intergenerational mobility and high inequality of opportunity, and addressing these structural constraints may prove as important for democratic resilience as for economic development.

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A Appendix

A.1 Populism definitions

Table A.1: Populist attitudes

Variable	Anti-democratic	Support for military government	Anti-immigrant	Distrust in judiciary/government/parliament
Question	"Support for democracy"	"Would you support a military government replacing the democratic one if things get very difficult?"	"Immigrants take our jobs"	"Level of trust"
=1	"An authoritarian government may be preferable in some circumstances"	"I would support a military government if things get difficult"	"Strongly agree" or "Agree"	"No trust at all"
=0	"Democracy is preferable to any other form of government", "For people like us, it makes no difference whether a regime is democratic or not"	"Under no circumstance would I support a military government"	"Neither agree nor disagree", "Disagree", "Strongly disagree"	"A lot of trust", "Some trust" or "Little trust"

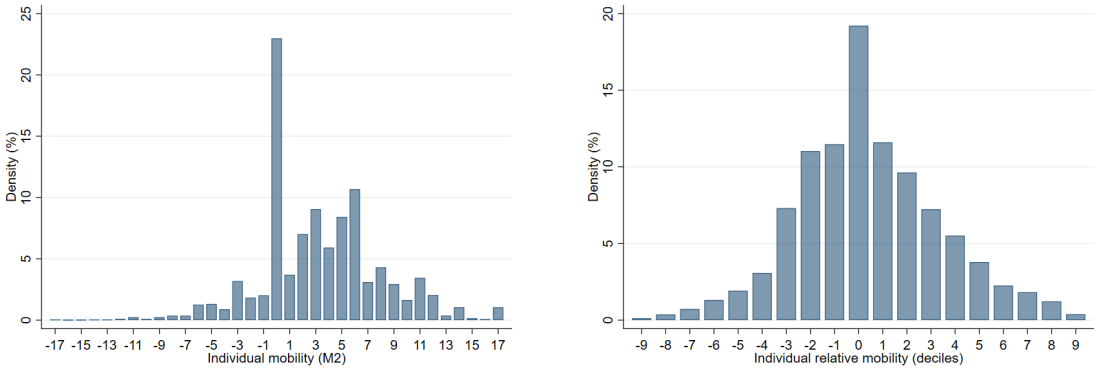
A.2 Descriptives

Table A.2: Descriptive statistics by birth cohort

	Birth cohort												
	40'-44'	45'-49'	50'-54'	55'-59'	60'-64'	65'-69'	70'-74'	75'-79'	80'-84'	85'-89'	90'-95'	95'-00'	Total
Individual characteristics													
Gender (male)	49%	48%	49%	49%	49%	48%	48%	48%	48%	48%	47%	46%	48%
Age	63.26	59.10	54.42	49.47	44.02	39.34	34.46	30.99	27.79	26.55	25.87	24.36	40.56
Years of schooling	6.31	6.77	7.52	8.22	8.72	8.87	9.28	9.25	9.40	10.00	10.53	10.86	8.67
Parents years of schooling	3.52	3.80	4.09	4.62	4.98	5.18	5.90	6.21	6.60	7.06	7.36	7.72	5.42
Employed	43%	52%	61%	66%	70%	70%	68%	65%	63%	62%	60%	56%	64%
Subjective income (% at least enough)	43%	43%	44%	44%	45%	45%	47%	48%	50%	53%	57%	56%	47%
Socioeconomic situation reported by interviewer (% at least good)	39%	40%	40%	41%	40%	40%	40%	40%	41%	44%	48%	49%	40%
Economics indicator by country-year													
GDP per capita (in 2011 constant US dollars)	10,827	10,715	10,912	10,755	10,519	10,534	10,480	10,584	10,861	11,606	12,006	11,848	10,745
Gini index	50.6	50.3	50.3	50.5	50.9	50.7	50.7	50.2	49.4	47.6	45.8	45.1	50.1
Populist attitudes (in %)													
Anti-democratic	17.78	17.81	17.38	16.86	17.18	17.45	17.65	17.46	18.21	17.03	17.61	18.75	17.51
Support of military government	30.23	31.82	31.01	30.52	30.12	29.86	29.94	29.84	30.10	30.71	32.54	35.14	30.40
Anti-immigrant	48.88	49.69	49.28	48.46	50.97	48.49	48.70	47.33	49.80	47.56	45.14	nd	48.84
Distrust in judiciary	33.08	33.19	32.88	33.79	32.99	32.12	31.67	32.31	30.23	31.25	35.08	33.84	32.33
Intergenerational mobility													
Individual mobility (difference in years of schooling or M2)	2.85	3.07	3.48	3.70	3.84	3.80	3.47	3.17	2.92	3.05	3.23	3.14	3.38
Birth cohort mobility (Spearman Rank Correlation inverse)	49.82	49.18	49.24	51.48	51.89	51.93	51.75	52.02	52.10	55.87	58.32	58.02	51.75
N	14,561	18,820	22,699	26,938	31,951	35,927	38,958	41,690	32,832	20,650	14,077	4,229	303,332

Note: Descriptive statistics are reported for each birth cohort. The sample consists of information from individuals older than 23 years, across 18 Latin American countries, for the period 1998–2023. "nd" indicates no data, as the last year with data for this variable is 2015, meaning the most recent cohort has no responses.
Source: Own elaboration based on Latinobarometro microdata. Per capita GDP are from Bolt & Van Zanden (2020), and Gini index data is obtained from WDI.

Figure A.1: Distribution of Intergenerational Mobility Measures



(a) Absolute mobility ($M2$) (b) Relative mobility ($M2_{rel}$)

Note: Panel A shows the distribution of absolute intergenerational mobility ($M2$), defined as the difference in years of schooling between individuals and their parents. Panel B shows relative mobility ($M2_{rel}$), defined as the difference in education deciles between the child and the parent, where deciles are computed within each country and birth cohort of the child. Each bar represents the percentage of the sample falling into each category. *Source*: Own elaboration based on Latinobarómetro.

A.3 Robustness checks

Table A.3: Populist opinions and relative individual mobility

	Anti-democratic	Support for a military government	Anti-immigrant	Distrust in the judiciary
Relative individual mobility	-0.237**	-0.612***	-0.693**	-0.178
(M2/father's years of education)	[0.0999]	[0.188]	[0.269]	[0.117]
Cohort-country mobility	-0.115***	-0.124*	0.0456	-0.0672
	[0.0412]	[0.0735]	[0.114]	[0.0483]
Log GDP per capita	16.23***	-10.64***	14.28**	15.17***
	[1.873]	[4.003]	[6.865]	[2.313]
Gini	0.0434	0.499***	-0.161	0.222***
	[0.0695]	[0.140]	[0.243]	[0.0817]
Outcome mean	17.415	30.491	48.889	32.304
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-country controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	155,551	54,568	34,467	161,275
R-squared	0.022	0.058	0.048	0.049

Note: The table shows the results of the full model regression (column 4 of table 1) using an alternative measure of individual mobility (M2/father's years of education). Note that this specification excludes individuals whose fathers had no formal schooling (zero years of education), resulting in a smaller sample. Robust standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.4: Populist opinions and levels-based relative individual mobility

	Anti-democratic	Support for a Military Government	Anti-immigrant	Distrust in Justice
Difference in Level (difniv)	-0.384***	-1.325***	-1.091***	-0.259***
	[0.0781]	[0.144]	[0.206]	[0.0916]
Cohort Mobility (Spearman Rank Correlation)	-0.0762**	-0.157**	0.0761	-0.0716*
	[0.0346]	[0.0612]	[0.0940]	[0.0406]
Log GDP per capita (lgdppc)	16.83***	-9.487***	5.937	12.26***
	[1.600]	[3.326]	[5.737]	[1.960]
Gini Index	0.177***	0.537***	-0.102	0.192***
	[0.0581]	[0.115]	[0.211]	[0.0690]
Mean Outcome	17.415	30.491	48.889	32.304
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year and Country Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed Effects (Year, Cohort, Country)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	210,569	76,202	47,656	221,435
R-squared	0.023	0.063	0.042	0.047

Note: The table presents the results of the full model regression (column 4 of Table 1) using an alternative discrete measure of individual mobility. Rather than computing the difference in years of schooling between child and parent, this measure is constructed as the difference in educational levels, where education is classified into seven ordered categories: no education, incomplete primary, complete primary, incomplete secondary, complete secondary, incomplete tertiary, and complete tertiary. This coarser measure is less sensitive to marginal changes in years of schooling and provides a robustness check based on a more qualitative notion of educational attainment. Robust standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.5: Anti-democratic attitudes and intergenerational mobility. Robustness to different age groups

Age ranges	Older than 25 years	Older than 30 years	Older than 35 years
Individual mobility	-0.102***	-0.0907***	-0.0853**
	[0.0293]	[0.0321]	[0.0353]
Cohort-country mobility	-0.0601	-0.0569	-0.0428
	[0.0392]	[0.0454]	[0.0512]
Log GDP per capita	16.11***	15.90***	15.49***
	[1.686]	[1.870]	[2.066]
Gini	0.171***	0.109	0.0810
	[0.0616]	[0.0686]	[0.0767]
Mean outcome	17.415	17.415	17.415
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-country controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	185,778	150,585	122,922
R-squared	0.023	0.025	0.025

Note: The table shows the results of the full model regression (column 4 of table 1) on anti-democracy opinions, for individuals older than 25 years in the first column, older than 30 in the second, and older than 35 in the third. Robust standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.6: Additional populist attitude indicators and intergenerational mobility. Robustness to different age groups

	Support for a military government			Anti-immigrant			Distrust in the judiciary		
Age ranges	+25	+30	+35	+25	+30	+35	+25	+30	+35
Individual mobility	-0.480***	-0.436***	-0.444***	-0.407***	-0.436***	-0.435***	-0.0674*	-0.0631	-0.0740*
	[0.0546]	[0.0597]	[0.0656]	[0.0785]	[0.0863]	[0.0954]	[0.0349]	[0.0384]	[0.0421]
Cohort-country mobility	-0.152**	-0.135*	-0.129	0.0795	0.123	0.178	-0.0405	-0.0130	-0.0165
	[0.0716]	[0.0817]	[0.0927]	[0.109]	[0.125]	[0.138]	[0.0469]	[0.0548]	[0.0615]
Log GDP per capita	-8.759**	-7.770**	-12.46***	1.548	2.953	3.772	12.80***	12.41***	12.82***
	[3.499]	[3.831]	[4.142]	[6.144]	[6.803]	[7.483]	[2.080]	[2.306]	[2.551]
Gini	0.533***	0.523***	0.477***	-0.189	-0.222	-0.266	0.199***	0.224***	0.287***
	[0.122]	[0.135]	[0.150]	[0.225]	[0.251]	[0.278]	[0.0734]	[0.0817]	[0.0905]
Mean outcome	30.491	30.491	30.491	48.889	48.889	48.889	32.304	32.304	32.304
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-country controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	67,474	55,119	45,324	41,821	34,235	28,004	195,350	158,304	129,284
R-squared	0.064	0.067	0.066	0.043	0.044	0.046	0.049	0.052	0.054

Note: The table shows the results of the full model regression on support for a military government, anti-immigrant opinions, and distrust in the judiciary, for individuals older than 25 years in the first column, older than 30 in the second, and older than 35 in the third. Robust standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

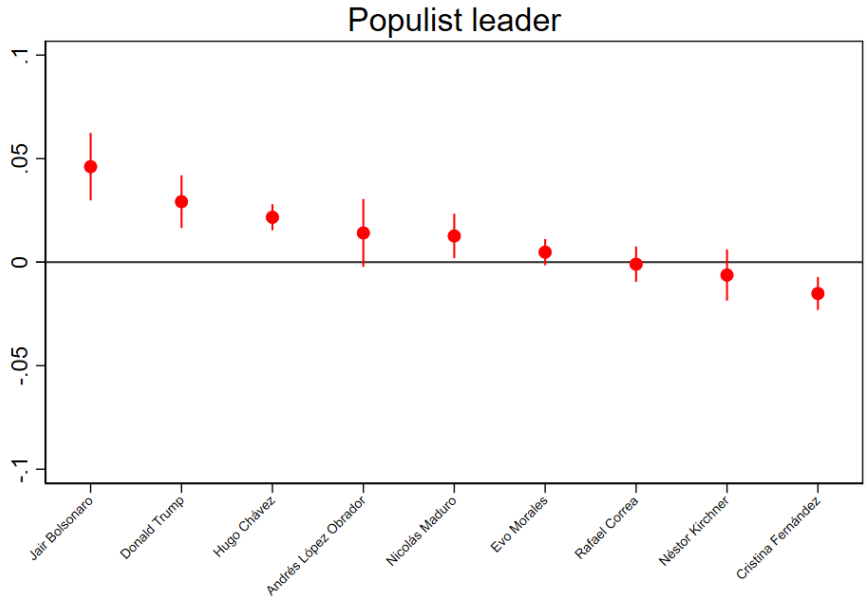
Table A.7: Anti-democratic attitudes and intergenerational mobility. Robustness to including indifferent individuals

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Individual mobility	-0.254***	-0.788***	-0.753***	-0.759***	-0.887***
	[0.0260]	[0.0318]	[0.0337]	[0.0354]	[0.0508]
Squared individual mobility					0.0152***
					[0.00404]
Cohort-country mobility				-0.0563	-0.0584
				[0.0436]	[0.0436]
Log GDP per capita				16.99***	16.80***
				[2.024]	[2.025]
Gini				0.315***	0.317***
				[0.0734]	[0.0734]
Mean outcome	37.93	37.93	37.93	37.93	37.93
Individual controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-country controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
FE (year, cohort, country)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	268,260	249,313	233,493	210,569	210,569
R-squared	0.001	0.018	0.060	0.056	0.056

Note: The table shows the results of the full model regression (column 4 of table 1) on anti-democratic attitudes, including those individuals indifferent to democracy. Robust standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

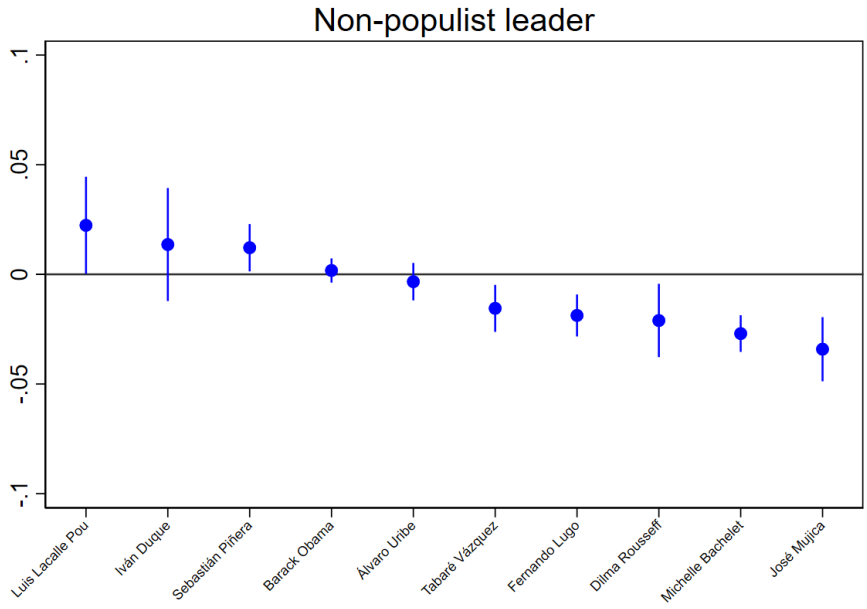
A.4 Support for populist leaders: Additional results

Figure A.2: Anti-democratic attitudes and support for populist leaders



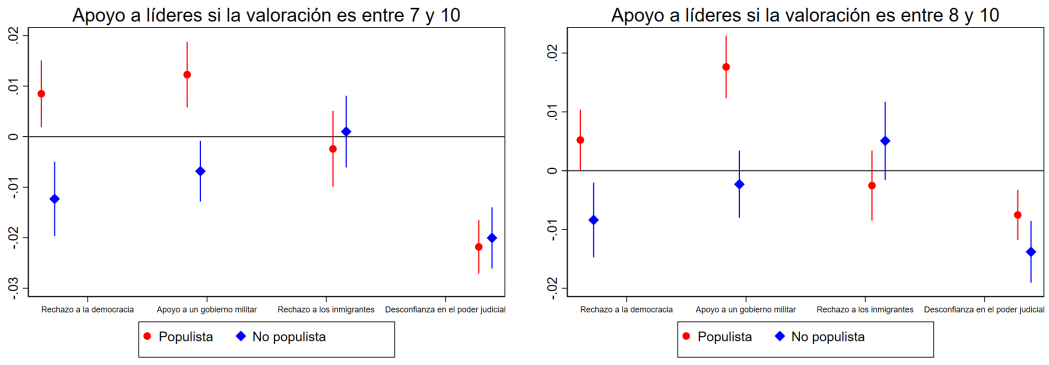
Note: The figure shows the coefficients associated with anti-democratic attitudes and support for populist leaders separately, and their corresponding 90% confidence intervals. Support for the leader used as the dependent variable is taken in the full range, from 0 to 10. The regression includes individual-level controls (educational level of the person and parents, age and age squared, subjective income and economic situation reported by the interviewer, gender, occupational status), cohort-country mobility, and year-country level controls (log of GDP per capita and Gini coefficient), along with fixed effects at the year, cohort, and country level.

Figure A.3: Anti-democratic attitudes and support for non-populist leaders



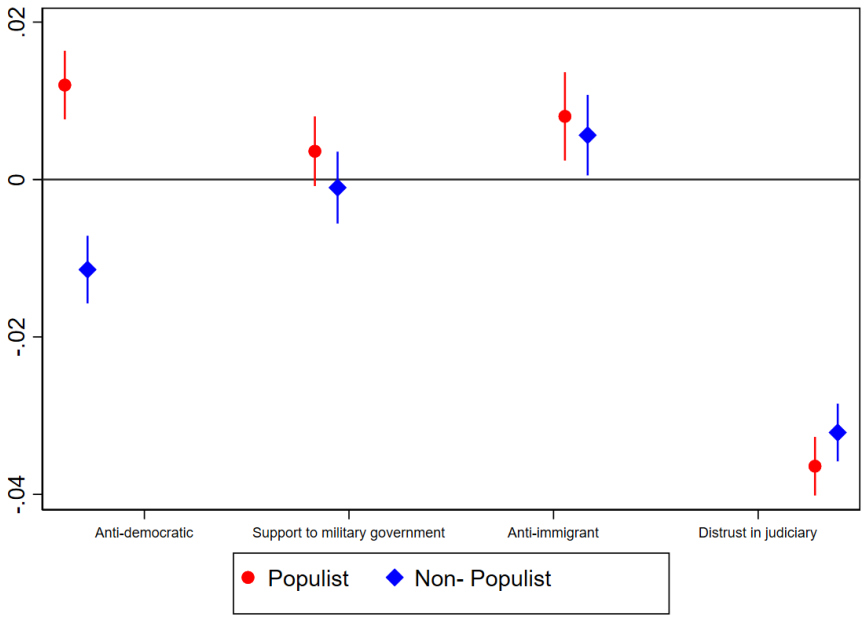
Note: The figure shows the coefficients associated with anti-democratic attitudes and support for non-populist leaders separately, and their corresponding 90% confidence intervals. Support for the leader used as the dependent variable is taken in the full range, from 0 to 10. The regression includes individual-level controls (educational level of the person and parents, age and age squared, subjective income and economic situation reported by the interviewer, gender, occupational status), cohort-country mobility, and year-country level controls (log of GDP per capita and Gini coefficient), along with fixed effects at the year, cohort, and country level.

Figure A.4: Populist attitudes and support for political leaders. Robustness to different support thresholds



Note: The figure shows the coefficients associated with each of the 4 populist ideas in model 2, on support for both groups of leaders, populist and non-populist, and their corresponding 90% confidence intervals, changing the support thresholds. In this case, instead of considering support as those who answered between 6–10 in the leader evaluation, 7–10 is used in the left figure, and 8–10 in the right one.

Figure A.5: Populist attitudes and support for political leaders. Robustness using leader approval indexes



Note: The figure shows the coefficients associated with each of the 4 populist ideas in model 2, on the index of support for each of the two groups of leaders, and their corresponding 90% confidence intervals. The regression includes individual-level controls (educational level of the person and parents, age and age squared, subjective income and economic situation reported by the interviewer, gender, occupational status), cohort-country mobility, and year-country level controls (log of GDP per capita and Gini coefficient), along with fixed effects at the year, cohort, and country level.

B Results on additional outcomes

B.1 Cohort-level estimations

Table A.8: Results on support for military governments: Cohort-level Mobility Measures

	Support for military governments							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Slope coefficient	0.063	0.096						
	[0.073]	[0.088]						
Standardized Persistence			0.114	0.182				
			[0.081]	[0.091]**				
Rank correlation					0.134	0.168		
					[0.076]*	[0.085]**		
Upward Mobility							0.013	0.030
							[0.047]	[0.052]
Gini: per capita income		0.339		0.342		0.344		0.353
		[0.160]**		[0.159]**		[0.159]**		[0.160]**
Per capita GDP (log.)		-11.790		-12.008		-11.849		-11.846
		[4.018]***		[3.991]***		[4.002]***		[4.008]***
Mean	31.814	31.814	31.814	31.814	31.814	31.814	31.814	31.814
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,284	1,074	1,284	1,074	1,284	1,074	1,284	1,074
R-squared	0.672	0.687	0.672	0.688	0.673	0.688	0.672	0.687

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is support for military governments. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational mobility: the slope coefficient (columns 1–2), the standardized persistence measure (columns 3–4), the rank correlation (columns 5–6), and upward mobility (columns 7–8). Within each pair, odd columns exclude country-level controls while even columns include the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Country-cohort clustered standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.9: Results on anti-immigrant attitudes: Cohort-level Mobility Measures

	Anti-immigrant attitudes							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Slope coefficient	0.062	0.073						
	[0.091]	[0.095]						
Standardized Persistence			0.130	0.118				
			[0.135]	[0.143]				
Rank correlation					0.010	-0.014		
					[0.118]	[0.122]		
Upward Mobility							-0.025	-0.015
							[0.067]	[0.070]
Gini: per capita income		-0.006		-0.009		-0.003		-0.004
		[0.243]		[0.243]		[0.242]		[0.242]
Per capita GDP (log.)		3.732		3.487		3.692		3.682
		[7.302]		[7.290]		[7.295]		[7.303]
Mean	47.786	47.786	47.786	47.786	47.786	47.786	47.786	47.786
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	694	641	694	641	694	641	694	641
R-squared	0.526	0.554	0.527	0.554	0.526	0.553	0.526	0.553

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is anti-immigrant attitudes. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational mobility: the slope coefficient (columns 1–2), the standardized persistence measure (columns 3–4), the rank correlation (columns 5–6), and upward mobility (columns 7–8). Within each pair, odd columns exclude country-level controls while even columns include the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Country-cohort clustered standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.10: Results on distrust in the judiciary: Cohort-level Mobility Measures

	Distrust in the judiciary							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Slope coefficient	0.039	0.058						
	[0.050]	[0.051]						
Standardized Persistence			0.019	-0.033				
			[0.062]	[0.066]				
Rank correlation					0.099	0.046		
					[0.057]*	[0.060]		
Upward Mobility							-0.034	-0.068
							[0.033]	[0.035]**
Gini: per capita income		0.240		0.247		0.243		0.239
		[0.093]***		[0.093]***		[0.093]***		[0.093]**
Per capita GDP (log.)		3.627		3.638		3.599		3.603
		[2.445]		[2.443]		[2.444]		[2.454]
Mean	35.027	35.027	35.027	35.027	35.027	35.027	35.027	35.027
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110
R-squared	0.502	0.522	0.501	0.522	0.502	0.522	0.502	0.522

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is distrust in the judiciary. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational mobility: the slope coefficient (columns 1–2), the standardized persistence measure (columns 3–4), the rank correlation (columns 5–6), and upward mobility (columns 7–8). Within each pair, odd columns exclude country-level controls while even columns include the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Country-cohort clustered standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.11: Results on distrust in the government: Cohort-level Mobility Measures

	Distrust in the government							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Slope coefficient	0.024	0.014						
	[0.063]	[0.070]						
Standardized Persistence			0.028	0.015				
			[0.082]	[0.090]				
Rank correlation					0.065	0.034		
					[0.075]	[0.081]		
Upward Mobility							-0.002	-0.029
							[0.043]	[0.046]
Gini: per capita income		1.203		1.203		1.203		1.202
		[0.152]***		[0.152]***		[0.152]***		[0.152]***
Per capita GDP (log.)		-26.174		-26.194		-26.188		-26.173
		[3.495]***		[3.495]***		[3.496]***		[3.497]***
Mean	33.355	33.355	33.355	33.355	33.355	33.355	33.355	33.355
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	3,085	2,710	3,085	2,710	3,085	2,710	3,085	2,710
R-squared	0.406	0.440	0.406	0.440	0.406	0.440	0.406	0.440

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is distrust in the government. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational mobility: the slope coefficient (columns 1–2), the standardized persistence measure (columns 3–4), the rank correlation (columns 5–6), and upward mobility (columns 7–8). Within each pair, odd columns exclude country-level controls while even columns include the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Country-cohort clustered standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.12: Results on distrust in congress: Cohort-level Mobility Measures

	Distrust in congress							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Slope coefficient	0.160	0.143						
	[0.053]***	[0.058]**						
Standardized Persistence			0.137	0.107				
			[0.070]**	[0.076]				
Rank correlation					0.132	0.098		
					[0.064]**	[0.070]		
Upward Mobility							-0.086	-0.104
							[0.040]**	[0.043]**
Gini: per capita income		0.708		0.713		0.716		0.710
		[0.113]***		[0.113]***		[0.113]***		[0.113]***
Per capita GDP (log.)		2.579		2.395		2.511		2.518
		[3.042]		[3.043]		[3.042]		[3.060]
Mean	38.069	38.069	38.069	38.069	38.069	38.069	38.069	38.069
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110	3,493	3,110
R-squared	0.436	0.450	0.435	0.449	0.435	0.449	0.435	0.450

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is distrust in congress. Each pair of columns introduces a different measure of intergenerational mobility: the slope coefficient (columns 1–2), the standardized persistence measure (columns 3–4), the rank correlation (columns 5–6), and upward mobility (columns 7–8). Within each pair, odd columns exclude country-level controls while even columns include the Gini coefficient of per capita income and log GDP per capita. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Country-cohort clustered standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

B.2 Inequality of Opportunity and populist opinions

Table A.13: Support for military governments and Inequality of Opportunity

	Support for military governments								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Educational IOP			**-0.191**	**-0.116**			**-0.234**	**-0.234**	**-0.240**
			[0.093]**	[0.117]			[0.104]**	[0.104]**	[0.104]**
Educational IE					-0.025	0.371	0.052	0.050	0.049
					[0.056]	[0.124]***	[0.063]	[0.063]	[0.063]
Gini: per capita income	0.384								
	[0.161]**								
Gini: years of schooling		-0.229		-0.147		-0.843			
		[0.103]**		[0.130]		[0.226]***			
Slope coefficient								0.059	
								[0.073]	
Rank correlation									0.144
									[0.077]*
Mean	31.457	31.457	31.457	31.457	31.457	31.457	31.457	31.457	31.457
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,056	1,266	1,266	1,266	1,266	1,266	1,266	1,266	1,266
R-squared	0.696	0.685	0.685	0.685	0.683	0.688	0.685	0.685	0.686

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is support for military governments. Column 1 includes the Gini coefficient of per capita income as the sole inequality measure. Columns 2 and 3 introduce, respectively, the Gini of years of schooling and Educational Inequality of Opportunity (IOP) separately. Column 4 includes both measures jointly. Columns 5 and 6 present results using Educational Inequality of Effort (IE) alone and together with the Gini of schooling, respectively. Column 7 shows the full specification with both IOP and IE. Columns 8 and 9 add cohort-level measures of intergenerational persistence as additional controls: the slope coefficient, defined as the OLS regression coefficient of child on parent education within each country-cohort cell, and the rank correlation, defined as Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.14: Anti-immigrant attitudes and Inequality of Opportunity

	Anti-immigrant attitudes								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Educational IOP			**0.204**	**0.104**			**0.171**	**0.169**	**0.171**
			[0.104]**	[0.111]			[0.105]	[0.105]	[0.105]
Educational IE					0.078	-0.170	0.049	0.048	0.050
					[0.050]	[0.123]	[0.049]	[0.049]	[0.049]
Gini: per capita income	0.190								
	[0.246]								
Gini: years of schooling		0.238		0.179		0.548			
		[0.109]**		[0.115]		[0.272]**			
Slope coefficient								0.049	
								[0.091]	
Rank correlation									0.006
									[0.117]
Mean	48.285	48.285	48.285	48.285	48.285	48.285	48.285	48.285	48.285
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	633	686	686	686	686	686	686	686	686
R-squared	0.561	0.538	0.536	0.538	0.535	0.539	0.537	0.537	0.537

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is anti-immigrant attitudes. Column 1 includes the Gini coefficient of per capita income as the sole inequality measure. Columns 2 and 3 introduce, respectively, the Gini of years of schooling and Educational Inequality of Opportunity (IOP) separately. Column 4 includes both measures jointly. Columns 5 and 6 present results using Educational Inequality of Effort (IE) alone and together with the Gini of schooling, respectively. Column 7 shows the full specification with both IOP and IE. Columns 8 and 9 add cohort-level measures of intergenerational persistence as additional controls: the slope coefficient, defined as the OLS regression coefficient of child on parent education within each country-cohort cell, and the rank correlation, defined as Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.15: Distrust in the judiciary and Inequality of Opportunity

	Distrust in the judiciary								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Educational IOP			**0.291**	**0.139**			**0.191**	**0.190**	**0.190**
			[0.045]***	[0.057]**			[0.048]***	[0.048]***	[0.048]***
Educational IE					0.151	0.045	0.109	0.109	0.110
					[0.023]***	[0.052]	[0.024]***	[0.024]***	[0.024]***
Gini: per capita income	0.357								
	[0.098]***								
Gini: years of schooling		0.292		0.211		0.218			
		[0.043]***		[0.055]***		[0.098]**			
Slope coefficient								0.037	
								[0.054]	
Rank correlation									0.034
									[0.060]
Mean	33.932	33.932	33.932	33.932	33.932	33.932	33.932	33.932	33.932
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2,713	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027
R-squared	0.543	0.526	0.524	0.526	0.525	0.526	0.527	0.527	0.527

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is distrust in the judiciary. Column 1 includes the Gini coefficient of per capita income as the sole inequality measure. Columns 2 and 3 introduce, respectively, the Gini of years of schooling and Educational Inequality of Opportunity (IOP) separately. Column 4 includes both measures jointly. Columns 5 and 6 present results using Educational Inequality of Effort (IE) alone and together with the Gini of schooling, respectively. Column 7 shows the full specification with both IOP and IE. Columns 8 and 9 add cohort-level measures of intergenerational persistence as additional controls: the slope coefficient, defined as the OLS regression coefficient of child on parent education within each country-cohort cell, and the rank correlation, defined as Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.16: Distrust in the government and Inequality of Opportunity

	Distrust in the government								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Educational IOP			**0.161**	**0.050**			**0.091**	**0.090**	**0.090**
			[0.062]***	[0.072]			[0.064]	[0.064]	[0.064]
Educational IE					0.176	0.213	0.162	0.161	0.162
					[0.041]***	[0.075]***	[0.041]***	[0.041]***	[0.041]***
Gini: per capita income	1.321								
	[0.171]***								
Gini: years of schooling		0.267		0.234		-0.087			
		[0.090]***		[0.105]**		[0.165]			
Slope coefficient								0.040	
								[0.068]	
Rank correlation									0.021
									[0.083]
Mean	31.351	31.351	31.351	31.351	31.351	31.351	31.351	31.351	31.351
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2,321	2,627	2,627	2,627	2,627	2,627	2,627	2,627	2,627
R-squared	0.436	0.410	0.409	0.411	0.412	0.412	0.413	0.413	0.413

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is distrust in the government. Column 1 includes the Gini coefficient of per capita income as the sole inequality measure. Columns 2 and 3 introduce, respectively, the Gini of years of schooling and Educational Inequality of Opportunity (IOP) separately. Column 4 includes both measures jointly. Columns 5 and 6 present results using Educational Inequality of Effort (IE) alone and together with the Gini of schooling, respectively. Column 7 shows the full specification with both IOP and IE. Columns 8 and 9 add cohort-level measures of intergenerational persistence as additional controls: the slope coefficient, defined as the OLS regression coefficient of child on parent education within each country-cohort cell, and the rank correlation, defined as Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A.17: Distrust in congress and Inequality of Opportunity

	Distrust in congress								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Educational IOP			**0.297**	**0.002**			**0.125**	**0.121**	**0.123**
			[0.052]***	[0.064]			[0.055]**	[0.055]**	[0.054]**
Educational IE					0.215	0.077	0.188	0.185	0.189
					[0.027]***	[0.061]	[0.029]***	[0.029]***	[0.029]***
Gini: per capita income	0.719								
	[0.116]***								
Gini: years of schooling		0.411		0.410		0.284			
		[0.053]***		[0.066]***		[0.120]**			
Slope coefficient								0.129	
								[0.057]**	
Rank correlation									0.122
									[0.069]*
Mean	37.425	37.425	37.425	37.425	37.425	37.425	37.425	37.425	37.425
Age FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth cohort FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2,713	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027	3,027
R-squared	0.480	0.472	0.465	0.472	0.471	0.472	0.472	0.473	0.472

Note: The table presents the results of estimating the model using OLS when the dependent variable is distrust in congress. Column 1 includes the Gini coefficient of per capita income as the sole inequality measure. Columns 2 and 3 introduce, respectively, the Gini of years of schooling and Educational Inequality of Opportunity (IOP) separately. Column 4 includes both measures jointly. Columns 5 and 6 present results using Educational Inequality of Effort (IE) alone and together with the Gini of schooling, respectively. Column 7 shows the full specification with both IOP and IE. Columns 8 and 9 add cohort-level measures of intergenerational persistence as additional controls: the slope coefficient, defined as the OLS regression coefficient of child on parent education within each country-cohort cell, and the rank correlation, defined as Spearman's rank correlation between parental and child education within each country-cohort cell. All specifications include age, year, country, and birth cohort fixed effects. Robust standard errors are reported in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.