Pandemic Changing Us: A Comparison of Changes in Trust and Cyberpolitics, among European and American countries

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Abstract

- The coronavirus pandemic may have had a strong impact on social trust.
- Somehow, the pandemic turned the planet into a “laboratory”; demonstrating how, in the face of an external shock, important and sudden changes can occur (when altering or modifying) our reliable references.
- This research paper seeks to identify the changes in trust towards the media that occurred between 2019 and 2021, by comparing nine countries: four Latin American, the United States, and four European countries.
- Changes of trust in news, came together with changes in cyberpolitics’ uses and ideological polarization, for analyzed countries.
Research Questions

RQ1: How is the use of cyberpolitics related to trust in media?

RQ2: Are there differences in trust for the USA, Latin American and European countries, before and after the pandemia?

RQ3: How does ideological polarization affect the relationship between cyberpolitics and trust?
Methodology

Using questions from DNR (Digital News Report. 2019, 2021), 3 indexes were built on a scale of 0 to 1

1. **Cyberpolitics** through two dimensions: infopolitics (level of news consumption in the media) and cyberactivism (level of participation in communication platforms).
2. **Trust in News** (measured by individuals' perception of trust in news in general)
3. **Ideological polarization** (derived from political self-positioning)

These indexes allowed a comparison, through a mean difference test between the nine countries, before and after the pandemic, in order to weight the changes observed.
Findings

Intensity of internet is up, but cyberpolitics is down…

As for the US the difference might be explained because of the electoral year.
Drop in cyberpolitics is observed for every country (2019 vs 2021)

More marked in the USA and Latin America (5%*). For Europe was 2%
Findings

Cyberpolitics is falling everywhere… but most in cyberactivism than infopolitics
Findings: Trust in news is falling

6 out 9 countries dropped their trust in news (2019 to 2021)

More intense in Chile and Mexico (6%), and Spain (3%)

US very low levels in 2019 to its lowest
A categorization

OLD FASHION TRUSTED
High Trust,
Low Cyberpolitics

OLD FASHION SUSPICIOUS
Low Trust in Media,
Low Cyberpolitics

TRUSTED 2.0
High Trust,
High Cyberpolitics

SUSPICIOUS 2.0
Low Trust in Media,
High Cyberpolitics
Country position by categories (2019)

More Trust

OLD FASHION TRUSTED
High Trust, Low Cyberpolitics

TRUSTED 2.0
High Trust, High Cyberpolitics

Old Fashion Suspicious
Low Trust, Low Cyberpolitics

SUSPICIOUS 2.0
Low Trust, High Cyberpolitics

Less Cyberpolitics

Less Trust
Pospandemia showed an increase ideologization in Europa, both left and right.

For Latin America ideological change benefits leftists ideologies.

The US showed a decreased ideologization, both left and right, moved to the center (Median Voter)

Findings: ideological polarization
Findings: Ideology matters…
There is not uniformity intra countries

Similar behavior between different ideologies for Italy, Portugal, Brasil.

Middle distance for Spain, Mexico, Chile, Argentina

Long distance between levels of trust and cyberpolitics for leftist and righties in the USA and Germany
Moving toward OLD FASHION zone is a common pattern (with or without trust in media)

Hypothesis: Burn out?

Findings: Trust, cyberpolitics, and polarization

2019

Trust in News

Cyberpolitics

[Graph showing trust and cyberpolitics for various countries, including Alemania, Portugal, Italia, España, México, USA, Chile, Brasil, Argentina.]
Conclusions and practical implications

1. Between 2019 and 2021 there was a significative recession in the use of cyberpolitics, for analyzed countries.
2. A drop in trust in news, also was noticed for selected countries. 6 out 9 countries dropped their trust in news (2019 to 2021)
3. These changes occurred together with changes in ideological polarization, observing an increase in leftist self-positioning for Latin Americans, an increase of ideological polarization (both left and right) for Europeans, and a centrification of the American voters.
4. A categorization of countries, based in their levels of trust in news and cyberpolitics was made: Confident 2.0, Confident Old Fashion, Distrustful Old Fashion and Distrustful 2.0.
5. There are countries with strong internal differences in their levels of trust in media, depending on ideology (i.e. Germany and USA). It implies a risky situation, since trust in media is needed to effectively implement public policy health
Thanks!!!

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