

# Institutional distrust and inequality in Peru: A longitudinal analysis of the socioeconomic factors that shape citizen perception

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## Abstract

This study analyzes how socioeconomic characteristics influence Peruvian citizens' perception of governance, democracy, and transparency, using data from the National Household Survey (ENAH) between 2014 and 2021. The results reveal a deep crisis of confidence in state institutions: more than 60% of citizens distrust Congress, the judiciary, and political parties, with even more critical levels among urban and educated populations. Poverty and the educational gap correlate with a lower understanding of democracy (only 17.51% of the poor know about it, compared to 47.35% in the non-poor) and greater institutional distrust. Likewise, it was identified that citizens with more education tend to negatively evaluate democratic functioning and are more exposed to getting involved in acts of corruption (9.3% in postgraduate studies, 2014). Urban residence is also associated with more critical perceptions, while older age reduces trust in institutions. These findings underscore the erosion of democratic legitimacy in Peru, linked to structural inequalities and a lack of transparency. The study concludes with recommendations for public policies that strengthen civic education, accountability, and socioeconomic inclusion, essential for rebuilding citizen trust and consolidating democratic governance.

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**Keywords:** Institutional trust, Socioeconomic inequality, Perception of corruption, Democratic crisis, Public policies

## 1. Introduction

Peruvian politics in the late 20th and early 21st centuries were marked by deep instability and a crisis of legitimacy. In the 1980s, governments like that of Alan García faced hyperinflation and insurgent violence, leaving the state weakened. The 1990s brought Fujimori's authoritarian regime, which, while achieving economic stability, collapsed in 2000 due to massive corruption networks led by Vladimiro Montesinos, eroding trust in institutions. The new century continued with fragile governments and scandals, such as the Odebrecht bribes, which implicated nearly every former president since 2001, revealing how corruption had become systemic.

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This succession of political, economic, and ethical crises explains the current citizen distrust. The alternation between ineffective governments, corrupt leaders, and a political class disconnected from social demands has perpetuated the perception that the state does not work for ordinary citizens. Additionally, impunity in high-profile cases and media polarization have worsened skepticism toward institutions like Congress and the Judiciary, seen as spaces of privilege rather than public service. Thus, Peru's recent history not only contextualizes this distrust but also reveals a pattern of failed governance that still awaits resolution.

Institutional distrust and socioeconomic inequality are interconnected phenomena that erode democratic legitimacy in Latin America, particularly in Peru. Recent studies highlight that citizen perceptions of governance, transparency, and democracy are profoundly influenced by factors such as educational level, poverty, and place of residence [1], [2]. In the Peruvian case, this dynamic has worsened in the last decade, with more than 60% of the population distrusting key institutions such as Congress, the Judiciary, and political parties [3], [4]. This crisis of trust reflects not only institutional failures but also structural gaps that perpetuate inequality.

The existing literature indicates that education plays a dual role in shaping institutional perceptions. On the one hand, more educated citizens tend to critically evaluate democratic functioning, which may reflect greater civic awareness [5]. On the other hand, paradoxically, this group also shows greater exposure to involvement in acts of corruption, as evidenced by the 9.3% of people with postgraduate studies who admitted to having participated in bribery in 2014 [6]. These contradictions underscore the complexity of the link between human capital and political culture in contexts of high inequality.

Socioeconomic inequality emerges as another determining factor. Longitudinal data reveal that only 17.51% of Peruvians living in poverty understand the concept of democracy, compared to 47.35% of the non-poor [7]. This gap translates into greater distrust of institutions, especially in rural areas and among aging populations [8]. Furthermore, urban residence is associated with more critical perceptions, possibly due to greater access to information and accountability networks [9].

Perceived corruption is a central issue in this crisis. Previous research shows that a lack of transparency and recurring scandals have undermined the credibility of institutions [3]. In Peru, this manifests itself in a growing tendency to question the effectiveness of the democratic system, particularly among educated groups who demand higher standards of accountability [10]. This phenomenon not only affects political stability but also social cohesion, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Despite abundant qualitative evidence, there are gaps in longitudinal quantitative studies that explore how these factors interact over time. This article seeks to fill this gap by analyzing data from the National Household Survey (ENAHU) between 2014 and 2021, applying econometric models to identify patterns and causalities. The choice of this period allows us to capture changes before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, a critical event that tested institutional resilience [11].

This study contributes to the literature in three key aspects: (1) robust empirical evidence on the intersection between inequality and institutional mistrust; (2) analysis of temporal trends in a fragile democratic context; and (3) data-driven public policy recommendations. The findings are relevant not only to Peru but also to global debates on governance in highly unequal societies [12]. The article concludes with proposals to strengthen civic education, improve transparency, and reduce socioeconomic gaps, essential pillars for rebuilding citizen trust.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Perception of governance, transparency, and democracy**

Public perceptions of governance, democracy, and transparency are influenced by factors such as personal experience, media information, and social interactions [13]. Studies in Peru have shown that perceptions of corruption and lack of political representation can erode trust in democratic institutions [14]. In the Peruvian

context, citizens' perceptions of governance, democracy, and transparency play a crucial role in the country's political stability and socioeconomic development.

Governance refers to the ability of governments to make effective decisions, implement public policies, and maintain political and social stability. According to [15], governance is affected by citizen participation, accountability, and the quality of government institutions. Studies such as that of [16] have shown that the perception of governance is influenced by socioeconomic factors, such as educational level and access to basic services.

Governance refers to the capacity of the state to make decisions, implement policies, and maintain political and social stability. According to [17], the perception of governance can vary according to the socioeconomic position and educational level of citizens. In addition, studies such as that of [18]. They have shown that factors such as age and geographic location can influence people's trust in government institutions.

Transparency refers to the accessibility of public information and the ability of citizens to monitor the actions of public officials. According to [19], transparency is essential to combat corruption and promote trust in government institutions. Studies such as that of [20] have shown that the perception of transparency is influenced by socioeconomic factors, such as income level and education, as those with greater resources tend to have more access to information and the means to assert their rights.

Transparency refers to the accessibility of public information and the ability of citizens to monitor the actions of public officials. According to [21], the perception of transparency can be influenced by social variables such as educational level and access to technology. In addition, studies such as that of [22]. They have examined how ethnicity and geographic location can affect citizens' confidence in the transparency of government institutions.

Democracy is characterized by citizen participation, the protection of individual rights, and the accountability of political leaders. According to [23], democracy requires a high degree of participation and civic engagement on the part of citizens. Research such as that of [24] has found that socioeconomic status influences the perception of democratic quality, since individuals with greater resources tend to participate more actively in politics and have a more critical view of democratic institutions.

Democracy implies citizen participation, the protection of individual rights, and the accountability of political leaders. Socioeconomic variables such as income level and education can affect the perception of democratic quality [25]. Likewise, studies have highlighted the importance of gender and ethnicity in political participation and the perception of democracy in the Peruvian context [26].

Thus, these concepts have a direct relationship with the level of trust that exists in public institutions and the perception of corruption. Researchers [18] identified some factors that can shape perceptions of governance, transparency and democracy beyond direct experiences and these are: a) increasing public awareness of "important" issues through "advanced measures"; b) the channels through which they learn; (c) the level of interest in participation in political life, in particular the question of the loyalty of a specific citizen or political party; d) perception of sensitivities and perspectives at the economic level; (e) political literacy, which is related to knowledge; and (f) the educational level. These factors have an impact on:

- The importance of sociodemographic factors since they generated greater awareness of governance, transparency, and democracy, showing greater tolerance, improving the opinion of the indices of governability, transparency, and democracy.
- Show more interest in politics and improve the country's ability to recognize governance, transparency, and democracy.
- Improve the associativity of political parties, since the perception of governability, transparency, and democracy among citizens is decreasing, either due to acts of corruption that are shown by them.

Perceptions of governance, transparency, and democracy are often captured through cognitive surveys, which provide accessible indices by collecting subjective assessments. As noted by researchers in [27], these are

referred to as forms of "cognitive relativism," reflecting real-world situations and allowing for analytical conclusions about these categories. However, as [28] points out, the Citizen Perception Index has been theoretically and empirically questioned in some instances, particularly regarding the methodology and application of such surveys, as also noted by [29]. In fact, [30] accuses these surveys of having an "innate bias" when analyzing perceptions, and emphasizes the importance of incorporating local perspectives. Meanwhile, [31] highlights the relevance of citizens' knowledge about governance, transparency, and democracy, suggesting that such understanding plays a critical role in shaping perception. According to [32], addressing various influencing factors can enhance our understanding of public perception and its implications. Similarly, [33] argues that analyzing citizens' views on governance, transparency, and democracy is crucial, as these perceptions can influence political engagement and policy outcomes. As [34] concludes, subjective perceptions may evolve into objective indicators, thereby offering valuable insight into the actual state of public affairs. The authors [35] mention that there are biased perceptions about public affairs, which can have a harmful effect on the governance, transparency, and democracy of a country [36]. They mention that this situation creates a culture of mistrust within a democratic context.

The study of [37] identifies that economic, political, area of residence, individual, and collective cognitive analysis factors produce more accurate results when compared when analyzing the level of trust in governance, transparency, and democracy, showing a bad reputation of politicians immersed in corrupt acts with individual and material values. Some endogenous factors of people influence perception, such as socioeconomic factors, gender stereotypes, culture, and occupation, whether public or private [38].

It turns out that most of them did not identify governance, transparency, and democracy as something important, and their economic characteristic is low income [39]. Another study by [40] is more general and summarizes an analysis of corruption and its influence on governance, transparency, and democracy, understood as a social and political problem, resulting in an internal, regrettable, and depreciated ethic in a society.

## **2.2. Theory of institutionality**

Institutions are those rules of the game in a society or, more formally, they are the humanly created limitations that structure human interaction [41]. There are two types of institutions: the formal ones those which can be identified and established through written documents, such as laws and regulations, and the informal ones, which are those where uncoded norms of behavior influence individual behavior and social relationships.

The roles of institutions establish rules and norms that guide the behavior of individuals and organizations. These facilitate coordination and social cooperation by reducing uncertainty about the actions of others. Institutional changes can be driven by historical events, external challenges, or social movements [42].

Institutional continuity is often explained by the inertia and persistence of established structures.

This theoretical framework provides a solid basis for understanding the theory of institutionality and its application in various areas of study. Citations and bibliographic references support each section, which strengthens the validity and robustness of the theoretical framework. The theory of institutionality is a broad field that encompasses different disciplines such as sociology, economics, political science, and public administration. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding how institutions influence individual and collective behavior, as well as the functioning of organizations and society as a whole.

## **3. Research method**

This study employed a quantitative approach based on secondary data from the National Household Survey (ENAHU) of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) of Peru, covering the period 2014-2021. A longitudinal analysis was carried out to evaluate trends in citizen perception of key institutions (Congress, Judiciary, political parties) and their relationship with socioeconomic variables.

Variables: Dependent variables: Perception of trust in institutions (ordinal scale: "not at all", "little", "enough", "quite a lot").

Independent variables:

- Socioeconomic: educational level, monetary poverty, poverty gap, residence (urban/rural), age, gender.
- Politics: perception of corruption, functioning of democracy.

Statistical analysis:

- Normality tests: Jarque-Bera and Kolmogorov-Smirnov to evaluate the distribution of the data.
- Multinomial logit models: To estimate the influence of socioeconomic variables on the perception of institutional trust.
- Significance tests: Z statistic for individual coefficients and Likelihood Ratio (LR) for joint significance.
- Chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2$ ): To examine associations between educational level and perception of corruption/trust.
- Data visualization: Graphs and comparative tables (e.g., Figure 1-4, Tables 4-25) to present trends and patterns.

Limitations: Data are self-reported, which can introduce social desirability biases, and ENAHO does not capture qualitative nuances behind perceptions.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Socioeconomic aspects that influence citizens' perceptions of governance, democracy, and transparency

Previously, the Jarque-Bera normality test (JB) and the non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S) were applied. At a significance level of 1%, the null hypothesis of normality of the data is rejected Table 1.

Table 1. Normality test of socioeconomic characteristics

| Variable                                   | Normality tests (Ho: normality) |       |                    |       |
|--|---------------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|  | Jarque- Bera                    | Prob. | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | Prob. |
| Poverty (yes=0 and no=0)                   | 7200.0                          | 0.0   | 0.75               | 0.0   |
| Place of residence (urban=1, rural=0)      | 3370.0                          | 0.0   | 1.00               | 0.0   |
| Sex (male=1, female=0)                     | 3168.0                          | 0.0   | 1.00               | 0.0   |
| Confidence in the Congress of the Republic | 15000.0                         | 0.0   | 1.00               | 0.0   |
| Age of citizens                            | 613.7                           | 0.0   | 1.00               | 0.0   |
| Level of education                         | 863.9                           | 0.0   | 1.00               | 0.0   |

Then, the individual significance test was applied – Z statistical test, it is a contrast similar to the t-test, it serves to see the level of individual significance of the coefficients, under the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \beta_i = 0$ , from Table 1 and the three specifications or estimates (political parties, Congress of the Republic and Judiciary). The results show that the estimated coefficients of the variable age of the citizen, years of education, place of residence, and sex of the citizen were significant or different from zero. However, the coefficients of the variables monetary poverty and poverty gap were not statistically significant (the  $H_0$  at p-value of 0.05 is not rejected).

Likewise, the joint significance test – Likelihood Ratio Test was applied; this test contrasts the null hypothesis that the coefficients of the model are all equal to zero, except for the constant. The LR test is another way of carrying out the hypothesis about parameters, it is analogous to the F-test. The LR statistic is distributed as a Chi2 with  $q$  degrees of freedom. It is calculated with the following formula:

$$LR = -2(LnL_R - LnL_I) \quad (1)$$

The null hypothesis is:  $H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \dots = \beta_q = 0$ ; in the present study, the likelihood ratio was ( $LR \chi^2(6) = 149.05$  with  $prob.=0.00$ ); therefore,  $H_0$  with a significance level of 1% is rejected. Consequently, the coefficients of the multinomial logit model are globally significant in statistical terms (1).

Table 2. Influence of socioeconomic characteristics on the perception of trust in State institutions – 2014-2021

| Variables                                   | Political Parties |           | Congress of the Republic |           | Judicial power |           |
|---|-------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
|   | Coef.             | Std. err. | Coef.                    | Std. err. | Coef.          | Std. err. |
| Monetary poverty (1=poor and 0=not poor)    | -,04723           | ,0735     | ,2591***                 | ,0707     | ,2774***       | ,0677     |
| Age of the citizen                          | -,0086**          | ,0011     | -,0095**                 | ,0011     | -,0117***      | ,0011     |
| Household monetary poverty gap              | -,03363           | ,2441     | -,6958***                | ,2221     | -,8783***      | ,2102     |
| Years of citizen education                  | -,0015***         | ,0041     | -,0039                   | ,0040     | ,00027         | ,0039     |
| Habitual residence (1=urban and 0=rural)    | -,29043**         | ,0389     | -,2096***                | ,0395     | -,1150***      | ,0380     |
| Gender of the citizen (1=male and 0=female) | ,156***           | ,0339     | ,0937***                 | ,0338     | ,0257          | ,0324     |
| Reason for plausibility                     | 149.05***         |           | 156.96                   |           | 16891          |           |
| Pseudo R2                                   | 0.0057            |           | 0.0054                   |           | 0.0084         |           |
| Number of observations                      | 17616             |           | 17375                    |           | 16891          |           |

Note. National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH0) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

Table 2 shows the results of the multinomial logit model, citizens who come from poor households in relation to non-poor households are those who trust nothing or little in State institutions, such as political parties, Congress of the Republic and the judiciary; likewise, as citizens are older ( $p<0.05$ ), it decreases the likelihood of trusting government institutions. Similarly, the greater the poverty gap, the greater the distrust in State institutions, and the more years of education the more distrust increases ( $p<0.01$ ). Those citizens who reside in urban areas are those who distrust political parties, Congress of the Republic and the Judiciary ( $p<0.05$ ). These results imply that State institutions are increasingly weak and have lost legitimacy, and that education can play a crucial role in the formation of attitudes towards government institutions.

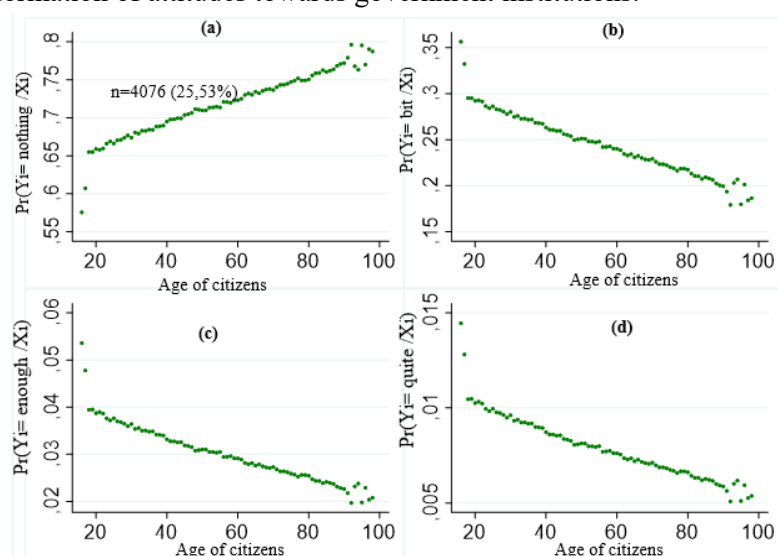


Figure 1. Relationship between citizens' perception of trust in political parties and citizens' age

Note. National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH0) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The data show that 39.73% of citizens trust "nothing", 36.34% trust the Judiciary "a little". From the point of view of a normative conception of the Judiciary, it can be said that its main function is to administer justice and guarantee legal stability, stability is an important property of a political system that consists of the maintenance of its identity through the tendency of those in power to guide their behavior in accordance with the basic norms of the system [43]. From figures 1b, 1c, and 1d, it can be deduced that the poorest citizens or those with the largest monetary poverty gap, for this group, the probability of trusting decreases, that is, there is a tendency and a pattern of data to trust the judiciary less and less.

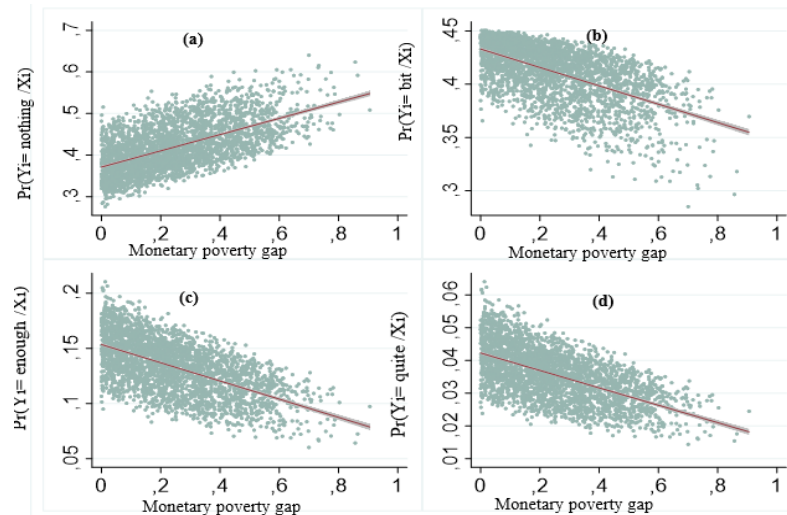


Figure 2. Citizens' perception of trust in the Judiciary and the poverty gap-2014

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH0) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The data show that 47% of citizens trust "not at all", 30.68% trust "a little" in the Congress of the Republic. The Congress of the Republic is supposed to be one of the institutions that exercises political control and democratically represents the voice of the majority population. However, there is an evident permanent institutional deterioration, the population has less and less confidence in a Congress of the Republic that has little oversight and the delivery of the bills that are approved are little oriented to the economic, political and social development of the country. Representative democracy does not seem to work and represent the majority population. In Figures 2b, 2c, and 2d, an inverse relationship can be seen between the probability of trust and the monetary poverty gap, these results reveal that the greater the monetary poverty gap, the lower the probability of trust on the part of citizens in the Congress of the Republic.

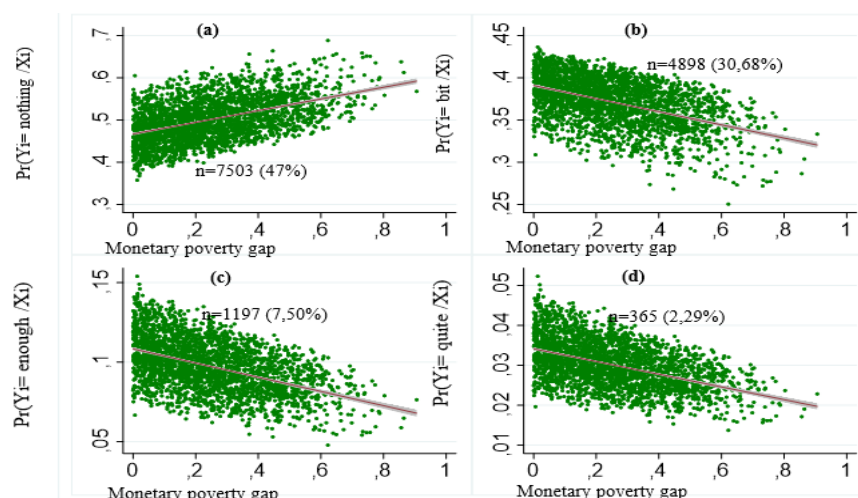


Figure 3. Citizens' perception of trust in the Congress of the Republic and the poverty gap-2014-2021

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH0) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The probability of trusting the Congress of the Republic decreases when citizens are older (Figure 3), and there is a pattern of data that is repeated repeatedly. However, in the group of citizens who answered never trust, which represents 47% of the total sample, in this group, the probability increases when the citizens are older, which is reasonable.

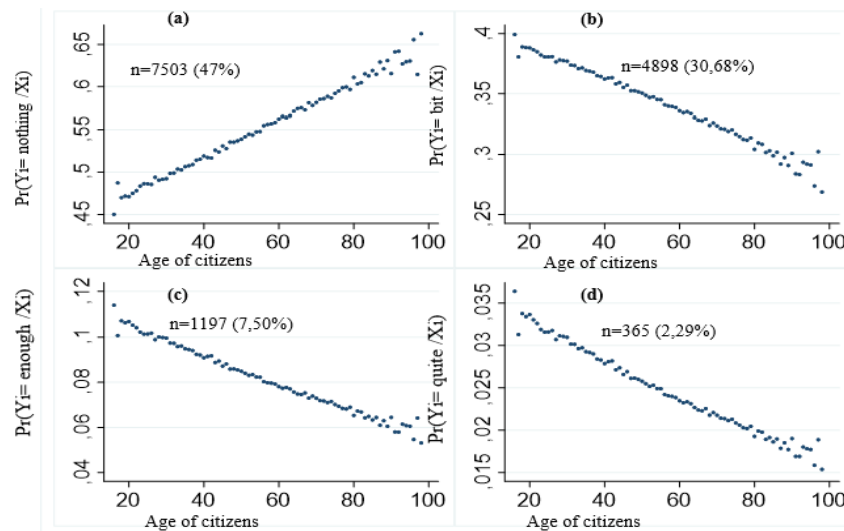


Figure 4. Citizens' perception of trust in the Congress of the Republic and the age of citizens

There is a significant correlation between the educational level of individuals and their trust in state institutions, those citizens with higher levels of education tended to have greater trust in government and other political institutions [44]. For its part, [45] investigated the relationship between educational attainment and trust in state institutions, found that individuals with higher levels of education tend to have greater trust in government and other political institutions, suggesting that education plays a crucial role in perceiving and evaluating the effectiveness of state institutions. Likewise, income level can also influence the perception of trust in state institutions. Individuals with higher incomes tend to express higher levels of trust in government and other government entities compared to those with lower incomes [46]. Social and economic characteristics, such as educational attainment, income, and demographics, significantly influence the level of trust in state institutions [12].

## 4.2. Discussion

In Peru, political parties participate in the election of political authorities democratically, within the framework of the Political Constitution of the State and the Law on Political Organizations No. 28094 (01/11/2003). As people get older, the probability of trusting political parties decreases (Figure 1b, 1c, 1d). This shows that older people handle more information and can perceive better the performance of political parties.

From the point of view of a normative conception of the judiciary, it can be said that its main function is to administer justice and guarantee legal stability, stability is an important property of a political system that consists of the maintenance of its identity through the tendency of those in power to guide their behavior in accordance with the basic norms of the system [43].

In Peru, during the last decades, the population perceives a serious political crisis within the Congress of the Republic. On several occasions there was evidence of a political discrepancy between the executive represented by the central government and the legislative by the Congress, there are few signs of an institutional solution. The crises are reflected in the permanent revelations of corruption that especially implicate the congressmen who represent the country's political class. On repeated occasions, the majority of the population supports the closure of Congress. Although it is true that the institutionality was not interrupted, there is a permanent loss of prestige and values caused by the Peruvian political class itself. There is also a potential risk of growth in social conflicts. These facts demonstrate the limited institutional leadership of Congress in its efforts to improve its



credibility and public confidence. The structural problems remain unresolved and continue to be a source of instability for democracy in Peru [47].

#### 4.2.1. Identification of social factors in citizens' perception of governance, democracy, and transparency

In the first place, the data on perception has been systematized in quartiles, in fact, in the first quartile are the State institutions with the lowest levels of trust, in 2014, 56.89% of citizens trust "nothing" in political parties (Tables 3 and 4), it is evident since the end of the twentieth century, the crisis of the political party system and the fragility of the system, in each electoral process political actors appear and disappear. Only 1.11% of citizens trust a lot, this low perception reflects the fragility of the political system. On the other hand, 47% of citizens trust the Congress of the Republic "at all". Institutional analysis and the change of institutions are issues that arouse great controversy [48].

Table 3. Level of trust of citizens in State institutions in 2014

| Quartile | Order | Institutions   | Nothing          | Little           | Enough           | Pretty much     | Doesn't know     | Total           |
|----------|-------|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1        | 1     | Political Parties  | 9083<br>(56.89%) | 4566<br>(28.60%) | 718<br>(4.50%)   | 178<br>(1.11%)  | 1420<br>(8.89%)  | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 2     | The Congress of the Republic   | 7503<br>(47.0%)  | 4898<br>(30.68%) | 1197<br>(7.50%)  | 365<br>(2.29%)  | 2002<br>(12.54%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 3     | The Regional Government  | 6436<br>(40.31)  | 5515<br>(34.54%) | 1691<br>(10.59%) | 456<br>(2.86%)  | 1867<br>(11.69%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 4     | The National Police of Peru  | 6375<br>(39.93%) | 5880<br>(36.83%) | 2148<br>(13.45%) | 697<br>(4.37%)  | 865<br>(5.42%)   | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 5     | The Judiciary (Courts, Justice of the Peace, etc.)                         | 6343<br>(39.73%) | 5801<br>(36.34%) | 1777<br>(11.13%) | 468<br>(2.93%)  | 1576<br>(9.87%)  | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 6     | The Provincial Municipality  | 5795<br>(36.30%) | 6000<br>(37.58%) | 2235<br>(14.00%) | 672<br>(4.21%)  | 1263<br>(7.91%)  | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 7     | The District Municipality  | 5622<br>(35.21)  | 6258<br>(39.20%) | 2434<br>(15.25%) | 768<br>(4.81%)  | 883<br>(5.53%)   | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 8     | The Written Press  | 4783<br>(29.96%) | 6992<br>(43.80%) | 2097<br>(13.13%) | 384<br>(2.41%)  | 1709<br>(10.70%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
| 2        | 9     | The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office                                    | 4665<br>(29.22%) | 5076<br>(31.79%) | 1405<br>(8.80%)  | 386<br>(2.42%)  | 4433<br>(27.77%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 10    | The Armed Forces   | 4595<br>(28.78%) | 5566<br>(34.86%) | 3243<br>(20.31%) | 1167<br>(7.31%) | 1394<br>(8.73%)  | 15965<br>(100%) |
| 3        | 11    | Public Prosecutor's Office – Attorney General's Office                     | 4230<br>(26.50%) | 5774<br>(36.17%) | 1700<br>(10.65%) | 432<br>(2.71%)  | 3829<br>(23.98%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 12    | The High-Level Anti-Corruption Commission                                  | 4194<br>(26.27%) | 4924<br>(31.11%) | 1494<br>(9.36%)  | 365<br>(2.29%)  | 4988<br>(31.24%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 13    | The National Jury of Elections - JNE                                       | 4076<br>(25.53%) | 6232<br>(39.04%) | 2358<br>(14.77%) | 575<br>(3.60%)  | 2724<br>(17.06%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 14    | National Superintendence of Customs and Tax Administration (ADUANAS-SUNAT) | 3993<br>(25.01%) | 5101<br>(31.95%) | 2359<br>(14.78%) | 468<br>(2.93%)  | 4044<br>(25.33%) | 15965<br>(100%) |
|          | 15    | Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic                          | 3877<br>(24.28%) | 5176<br>(32.42%) | 1738<br>(10.89%) | 362<br>(2.27%)  | 4812<br>(30.14%) | 15965<br>(100%) |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH0) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

Table 4. Level of trust of citizens in State institutions in 2021

| Quartile | Order | Institutions   | Nothing           | Little            | Enough           | Pretty much      | Doesn't know     | Total           |
|----------|-------|--|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1        | 1     | Political Parties  | 12474<br>(65.61%) | 4446<br>(23.39%)  | 553<br>(2.91%)   | 145<br>(0.76%)   | 1393<br>(7.33%)  | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 2     | The Congress of the Republic   | 11355<br>(59.73%) | 4939<br>(25.98%)  | 833<br>(4.38%)   | 250<br>(1.32%)   | 1634<br>(8.60%)  | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 3     | The Regional Government  | 8674<br>(45.63%)  | 62228<br>(32.76%) | 1446<br>(7.61%)  | 350<br>(1.84%)   | 2313<br>(12.17%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 4     | The Provincial Municipality  | 8073<br>(42.46%)  | 6973<br>(36.68%)  | 1911<br>(10.05%) | 501<br>(2.64%)   | 1553<br>(8.17%)  | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 5     | The Judiciary (Courts, Justice of the Peace, etc.)                         | 7989<br>(42.02%)  | 6605<br>(34.74%)  | 1790<br>(9.42%)  | 509<br>(2.62%)   | 2118<br>(11.14%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
| 2        | 6     | The District Municipality  | 7976<br>(41.95%)  | 7242<br>(38.09%)  | 2121<br>(11.16%) | 538<br>(2.83%)   | 1134<br>(5.96%)  | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 7     | The Written Press  | 7923<br>(41.68%)  | 7456<br>(39.22%)  | 1510<br>(7.94%)  | 333<br>(1.75%)   | 1789<br>(9.41%)  | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 8     | The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office                                    | 6785<br>(35.69%)  | 5940<br>(31.25%)  | 1383<br>(7.27%)  | 367<br>(1.93%)   | 4536<br>(23.86%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 9     | The High-Level Anti-Corruption Commission                                  | 6421<br>(33.78%)  | 5452<br>(28.68%)  | 1390<br>(7.31%)  | 272<br>(1.43%)   | 5476<br>(28.80%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 10    | Public Prosecutor's Office – Attorney General's Office                     | 6346<br>(33.38%)  | 6643<br>(34.94%)  | 1683<br>(8.85%)  | 400<br>(2.10%)   | 3939<br>(20.72%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
| 3        | 11    | The National Jury of Elections - JNE                                       | 6338<br>(33.34%)  | 7045<br>(37.06%)  | 1989<br>(10.46%) | 582<br>(3.06%)   | 3057<br>(16.08%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 12    | The National Police of Peru  | 6649<br>(33.02%)  | 8329<br>(41.37%)  | 3212<br>(15.95%) | 992<br>(4.93%)   | 953<br>(4.73%)   | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 13    | National Registry of Identification and Civil Status - RENIEC              | 2728<br>(32.35%)  | 6150<br>(32.35%)  | 6641<br>(34.93%) | 2208<br>(11.61%) | 1284<br>(6.75%)  | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 14    | National Superintendence of Customs and Tax Administration (ADUANAS-SUNAT) | 6111<br>(32.14%)  | 6111<br>(32.14%)  | 2071<br>(10.89%) | 437<br>(2.30%)   | 4281<br>(22.52%) | 19011<br>(100%) |
|          | 15    | The National Office of Electoral Processes - ONPE                          | 6050<br>(31.82%)  | 7305<br>(38.43%)  | 2382<br>(12.53%) | 630<br>(3.31%)   | 2644<br>(13.91%) | 19011<br>(100%) |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAHU) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The judiciary is not only a power of the State, but also an institution that is responsible for administering justice. The relationship between the level of education and the perception of trust in the judiciary is statistically significant at a significance level of 1% (Table 5).

Table 5. Relationship between the level of education and trust in the judiciary

| Years | Level of education          | Do you currently have confidence in the judiciary? |        |        |             |              | Total  | Chi2 (4) | Prob. |
|-------|-----------------------------|--|--------|--------|-------------|--------------|--------|----------|-------|
|       |                             | Nothing  | Little | Enough | Pretty much | Doesn't know |        |          |       |
| 2014  | Without level               | 32.10  | 20.34  | 6.76   | 2.65        | 38.15        | 100.00 | 2500.0   | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 66.67  | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00        | 33.33        | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 40.07  | 28.71  | 11.36  | 4.00        | 15.87        | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 40.11  | 36.61  | 11.85  | 4.63        | 6.81         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 40.08  | 41.19  | 11.39  | 3.80        | 3.53         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 40.80  | 42.91  | 11.71  | 1.78        | 2.80         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 40.85  | 41.08  | 13.38  | 3.29        | 1.41         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 43.28  | 43.38  | 11.38  | 0.65        | 1.31         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 41.56  | 43.51  | 12.55  | 1.08        | 1.30         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 41.03  | 45.73  | 12.29  | 0.32        | 0.64         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 41.32  | 47.52  | 9.09   | 1.65        | 0.41         | 100.00 |          |       |
| 2021  | Without level               | 29.73  | 18.16  | 4.86   | 1.79        | 45.46        | 100.00 | 2900     | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 50.00  | 21.43  | 14.29  | 0.00        | 14.29        | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 41.69  | 28.16  | 7.69   | 3.53        | 18.93        | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 43.44  | 33.17  | 9.43   | 3.72        | 10.23        | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 42.89  | 37.52  | 9.64   | 3.48        | 6.47         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 44.93  | 39.33  | 9.44   | 2.20        | 4.10         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 42.60  | 40.83  | 11.39  | 2.07        | 3.11         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 42.70  | 43.49  | 10.62  | 1.13        | 2.06         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 40.14  | 40.31  | 15.14  | 2.55        | 1.87         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 44.22  | 39.57  | 13.24  | 1.20        | 1.77         | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 37.62  | 43.89  | 13.86  | 3.30        | 1.32         | 100.00 |          |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH0) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

Our results show that about 40% of citizens do not trust the judiciary and more than 45% trust little, these results reveal that education plays an important role in the level of trust and the integrity of the human development of people and constitutes the basis for the democratization process of a modern society [5]. In a democratic country, the higher the level of education of the people, the greater the control and surveillance of the functions carried out by the powers or institutions of the State. The level of education is a social need that must be addressed, addressed and addressed by educational institutions, and the actors of the current educational context are among the main agents for social change [49].

Approximately 30% of citizens did not trust the Public Prosecutor's Office, and more than 50% did not trust them much. These results show an institutional weakness; the educational level influences the perception of trust with a significance level of 1% (Table 6).

Table 6. Relationship between the level of education and trust in the public prosecutor's office

| Years | Level of education          | Do you currently have confidence in the Public Prosecutor's Office? |        |        |             |              | Total  | Chi2<br>(4) | Prob. |
|-------|-----------------------------|---|--------|--------|-------------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------|
|       |                             | Nothing   | Little | Enough | Pretty much | Doesn't know |        |             |       |
| 2014  | Without level               | 15.81   | 10.93  | 3.64   | 2.06        | 67.55        | 100.00 | 3200        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 0.00  | 0.00   | 33.33  | 0.00        | 66.67        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 26.78   | 23.49  | 6.86   | 3.63        | 39.25        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 28.78   | 33.63  | 10.76  | 3.61        | 23.21        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 27.95   | 42.14  | 11.45  | 3.80        | 14.66        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 28.30   | 46.79  | 13.43  | 1.81        | 9.67         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 30.28   | 44.60  | 14.32  | 3.76        | 7.04         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 27.43   | 53.26  | 14.74  | 0.93        | 3.64         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 26.62   | 52.60  | 14.50  | 1.95        | 4.33         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 27.24   | 54.38  | 16.45  | 0.75        | 1.18         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 24.79   | 53.72  | 18.18  | 1.65        | 1.65         | 100.00 |             |       |
| 2021  | Without level               | 20.46   | 10.42  | 3.64   | 1.21        | 64.26        | 100.00 | 3700        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 21.43   | 28.57  | 0.00   | 0.00        | 50.00        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 31.88   | 24.61  | 5.73   | 2.50        | 35.28        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 35.22   | 32.51  | 7.69   | 2.58        | 22.00        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 35.71   | 37.38  | 7.97   | 2.64        | 16.29        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 36.91   | 40.85  | 9.56   | 1.99        | 10.69        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 34.17   | 46.15  | 11.54  | 1.92        | 6.21         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 34.66   | 48.80  | 11.02  | 1.59        | 3.92         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 32.82   | 43.54  | 16.16  | 1.53        | 5.95         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 32.99   | 46.71  | 16.77  | 1.36        | 2.17         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 27.72   | 50.83  | 18.15  | 1.98        | 1.32         | 100.00 |             |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAHU) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The educational level influences the perception of trust [50]. Likewise, [51] found the relationship between educational level and trust in the Peruvian Public Prosecutor's Office from the citizens' perspective. The educational level of citizens affects the perception of trust in the Public Prosecutor's Office in Peru from a socio-political perspective [10]. Another study corroborates how the educational level of university students influences the perception of trust in the Public Prosecutor's Office [52].

Table 7 corroborates the existence of a statistical relationship between educational level and the perception of citizens' confidence in the Congress of the Republic, with a significance level of 1%. Unfortunately, more than 60% of citizens did not trust the Congress of the Republic, which is confirmed as one of the powers of the State most questioned for its bad democratic practices.

Table 7. Relationship between the level of education and trust in the Congress of the Republic

| Years | Level of Education             | Do you currently have confidence in Congress? |        |        |                |                 | Total  | Chi2<br>(4) | Prob. |
|-------|--------------------------------|---|--------|--------|----------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|-------|
|       |                                | Nothing                                       | Little | Enough | Pretty<br>much | Doesn't<br>know |        |             |       |
| 2014  | Without level                  | 31.45   | 13.99  | 5.11   | 1.23           | 48.21           | 100.00 | 3200        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education                | 33.33   | 33.33  | 0.00   | 0.00           | 33.33           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary             | 43.44   | 24.03  | 7.34   | 3.80           | 21.39           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary               | 46.50   | 32.96  | 8.62   | 3.61           | 8.31            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary<br>school | 48.10   | 35.28  | 8.44   | 3.11           | 5.06            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary<br>school   | 52.45   | 35.97  | 7.47   | 1.22           | 2.90            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 53.99   | 36.38  | 7.28   | 1.41           | 0.94            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 53.64   | 37.13  | 7.84   | 0.56           | 0.84            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 53.68   | 35.71  | 9.31   | 0.43           | 0.87            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 53.63   | 38.68  | 6.94   | 0.43           | 0.32            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.               | 56.20   | 38.43  | 4.96   | 0.00           | 0.41            | 100.00 |             |       |
| 2021  | Without level                  | 39.45   | 14.32  | 2.81   | 1.41           | 42.01           | 100.00 | 3200        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education                | 35.71   | 50.00  | 0.00   | 0.00           | 14.29           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary             | 55.54   | 23.06  | 3.97   | 2.12           | 15.32           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary               | 61.05   | 25.20  | 4.73   | 1.81           | 7.21            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary<br>school | 60.68   | 29.41  | 4.40   | 1.63           | 3.87            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary<br>school   | 64.80   | 28.45  | 4.19   | 0.75           | 1.80            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 64.64   | 27.07  | 6.51   | 0.89           | 0.89            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 63.35   | 30.68  | 4.78   | 0.46           | 0.73            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 64.97   | 28.23  | 4.93   | 0.85           | 1.02            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 66.13   | 26.97  | 5.46   | 0.48           | 0.96            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.               | 59.41   | 33.99  | 3.96   | 1.65           | 0.99            | 100.00 |             |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAHU) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The level of education of citizens empirically influences the perception of the trust of the Congress of the Republic [53] and [49]. In the same direction, [54] and [8] find in detail that the level of education influences the perception of confidence in the Congress of the Republic.

In 2021, about 70% of Peruvian citizens did not trust political parties, these figures have increased in recent years, evidencing a permanent crisis of political organizations with national and regional representation, political parties have a presence in the Congress of the Republic and in the executive branch, therefore, they are politically responsible for public policy decisions and the development of the country. The data have shown that there is a relationship between educational level and the perception of trust, with a significance level of 1% (Table 8).

Table 8. Relationship between the level of education and trust in political parties

| Years | Level of Education             | Do you currently have confidence in political parties? |        |        |                |                 | Total  | Chi2<br>(4) | Prob. |
|-------|--------------------------------|--|--------|--------|----------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|-------|
|       |                                | Nothing  | Little | Enough | Pretty<br>much | Doesn't<br>know |        |             |       |
| 2014  | Without level                  | 40.33  | 16.99  | 3.53   | 1.65           | 37.51           | 100.00 | 2600        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education                | 100.00   | 0.00   | 0.00   | 0.00           | 0.00            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary             | 54.46  | 24.48  | 4.56   | 1.90           | 14.59           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary               | 59.14  | 28.82  | 5.27   | 1.32           | 5.46            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary<br>school | 60.02  | 30.96  | 4.69   | 1.42           | 2.90            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary<br>school   | 60.78  | 33.14  | 4.15   | 0.30           | 1.65            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 63.62  | 31.92  | 3.52   | 0.23           | 0.70            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 61.19  | 33.12  | 4.66   | 0.37           | 0.65            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 61.04  | 32.47  | 5.63   | 0.43           | 0.43            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 59.72  | 34.94  | 4.59   | 0.53           | 0.21            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.               | 60.33  | 35.12  | 3.31   | 0.00           | 1.24            | 100.00 |             |       |
| 2021  | Without level                  | 44.31  | 14.96  | 2.37   | 1.41           | 36.96           | 100.00 | 2900        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education                | 42.86  | 42.86  | 7.14   | 0.00           | 7.14            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary             | 60.89  | 21.46  | 3.37   | 1.14           | 13.15           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary               | 67.63  | 23.04  | 3.10   | 0.90           | 5.33            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary<br>school | 69.70  | 24.04  | 2.11   | 0.92           | 3.21            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary<br>school   | 70.68  | 24.94  | 2.39   | 0.40           | 1.59            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 71.01  | 23.82  | 3.99   | 0.59           | 0.59            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 69.12  | 27.16  | 2.99   | 0.20           | 0.53            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 66.33  | 28.40  | 3.74   | 0.17           | 1.36            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 69.10  | 25.68  | 4.01   | 0.40           | 0.80            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.               | 67.33  | 27.39  | 2.31   | 1.32           | 1.65            | 100.00 |             |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAH) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

Similar works by [55] and [56] were able to demonstrate that educational level influences the perception of trust in political parties. Similar results were found [7] and [57], which compare and ratify the influence of educational attainment on perceptions of trust in political parties, also using perception survey data.

Table 9 shows the results of the functioning of democracy in relation to the educational level of citizens ( $p < 0.01$ ). Between 2014 and 2021, the higher the level of education of citizens, the perception of very bad and bad categories increased significantly. In 2021, at the graduate level, the perception of very bad was 20.46%; this pattern of behavior was repeated in 2014 (Table 9).

Table 9. Relationship between the level of education and the functioning of democracy

| Years | Level of Education          | In Peru, does democracy work? |       |       |           |              | Total  | Chi2<br>(4) | Prob. |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------|--------------|--------|-------------|-------|
|       |                             | Too bad                       | Bad   | Ok    | Very well | Doesn't know |        |             |       |
| 2014  | Without level               | 2.53                          | 19.28 | 33.04 | 0.94      | 44.21        | 100.00 | 3100        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 0.00                          | 66.67 | 33.33 | 0.00      | 0.00         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 4.05                          | 34.20 | 40.66 | 1.90      | 19.18        | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 6.02                          | 40.97 | 42.93 | 2.11      | 7.98         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 7.38                          | 45.62 | 40.72 | 2.53      | 3.74         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 6.75                          | 49.33 | 40.61 | 1.71      | 1.61         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 8.92                          | 50.23 | 37.79 | 1.88      | 1.17         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 7.00                          | 51.40 | 39.83 | 0.84      | 0.93         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 8.01                          | 49.78 | 39.61 | 1.52      | 1.08         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 8.55                          | 52.99 | 36.75 | 1.18      | 0.53         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 13.22                         | 48.35 | 36.36 | 1.65      | 0.41         | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Without level               | 3.52                          | 22.06 | 24.94 | 1.66      | 47.83        | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Early education             | 14.29                         | 28.57 | 21.43 | 14.29     | 21.43        | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 6.38                          | 40.39 | 31.67 | 1.98      | 19.58        | 100.0  |             |       |
| 2021  | Complete primary            | 8.01                          | 46.15 | 32.16 | 1.64      | 12.04        | 100.0  | 3600        | 0.00  |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 9.82                          | 51.78 | 30.25 | 2.11      | 6.03         | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 13.52                         | 53.29 | 28.85 | 1.71      | 2.62         | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 11.54                         | 59.32 | 26.48 | 0.89      | 1.78         | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 13.75                         | 58.10 | 25.90 | 1.06      | 1.20         | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 16.67                         | 53.40 | 27.55 | 1.36      | 1.02         | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 17.66                         | 54.74 | 25.28 | 1.61      | 0.72         | 100.0  |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 20.46                         | 51.16 | 27.72 | 0.33      | 0.33         | 100.0  |             |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAHU) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

The majority of Peruvian citizens believe that democracy works badly. However, there is a growing social awareness and criticism of the role of civic education in the functioning of democracy [58]. Likewise, [59] maintains that Education is linked to the functioning of democracy as a political event and improves processes and social development. From the educational point of view, liberal conceptions about the functioning of democracy are questioned [60]. In fact, it is assumed that citizens with a higher level of education tend to have a conduct of sufficient political maturity to question and object to the functioning of democracy.

Applying the Chi2 test, there is a statistical dependence relationship between the level of education and the opinion about democracy (Table 10). Between 2014 and 2021, more than 80% of citizens over 18 years of age believed that democracy in Peru was not at all or unimportant in the categories; these figures reveal the distrust and discontent of citizens about the exercise and functioning of democracy.

Table 10. Relationship between the level of education and opinion on the importance of democracy

| Years | Level of education             | In your opinion, democracy in Peru is: |           |             |                      |                 | Total  | Chi2<br>(4) | Prob. |
|-------|--------------------------------|--|-----------|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|-------|
|       |                                | Very<br>important                      | Important | Unimportant | Nothing<br>important | Doesn't<br>know |        |             |       |
| 2014  | Without level                  | 3.82                                   | 7.00      | 48.91       | 4.00                 | 36.27           | 100.00 | 380.0       | 0.00  |
|       | Early education                | 0.00                                   | 0.00      | 100.00      | 0.00                 | 0.00            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete<br>primary          | 3.97                                   | 10.17     | 63.28       | 8.50                 | 14.08           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary               | 3.50                                   | 10.95     | 68.32       | 12.64                | 4.59            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete<br>secondary school | 2.90                                   | 9.23      | 67.93       | 18.09                | 1.85            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete<br>secondary school   | 2.30                                   | 8.06      | 66.01       | 22.90                | 0.72            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 1.17                                   | 9.39      | 59.86       | 29.11                | 0.47            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 1.96                                   | 8.86      | 56.53       | 32.28                | 0.37            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 2.81                                   | 9.09      | 60.39       | 27.49                | 0.22            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 3.10                                   | 9.29      | 52.99       | 33.97                | 0.64            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.               | 4.55                                   | 7.02      | 48.76       | 39.67                | 0.00            | 100.00 |             |       |
| 2021  | Without level                  | 4.03                                   | 6.39      | 46.29       | 4.67                 | 38.62           | 100.00 | 4200        | 0.00  |
|       | Early education                | 0.00                                   | 7.14      | 57.14       | 21.43                | 14.29           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete<br>primary          | 4.43                                   | 9.21      | 64.77       | 8.50                 | 13.09           | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete primary               | 3.13                                   | 10.44     | 67.80       | 11.76                | 6.86            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Incomplete<br>secondary school | 2.99                                   | 8.59      | 66.93       | 18.01                | 3.48            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Complete<br>secondary school   | 2.25                                   | 7.48      | 61.94       | 27.02                | 1.31            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 1.48                                   | 7.84      | 58.43       | 31.80                | 0.44            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior no univ.              | 2.92                                   | 6.31      | 57.17       | 33.13                | 0.46            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 2.55                                   | 6.29      | 52.89       | 38.27                | 0.00            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Superior univ.                 | 2.41                                   | 6.02      | 50.32       | 40.77                | 0.48            | 100.00 |             |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.               | 3.63                                   | 4.62      | 44.22       | 47.19                | 0.33            | 100.00 |             |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAHU) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

Approximately only 3% of citizens thought that democracy was very important; this figure is quite low in relation to other democratic countries. However, according to *The Economist*, Peru in recent years has shown a hybrid regime for the second consecutive year.

Table 11 shows the results of the question: if in the last 12 months, did you and/or any member of your household have been requested, felt obligated or voluntarily given gifts, tips, bribes, bribes to a worker or official of the State. The table concludes that between 2014 and 2021, citizens with a higher level of education were more involved in acts of corruption.



Table 11. Relationship between the level of education and perception of corruption

| Years | Level of education          | Have you and/or any member of your household been solicited, felt obligated, or voluntarily given gifts, tips, bribes, or gratuities to a worker or official of the State? |        |   | Total  | Chi2 (4) | Prob. |
|-------|-----------------------------|--|--------|---|--------|----------|-------|
|       |                             | Yes  | No     | Did not make use of the services of the State |        |          |       |
| 2014  | Without level               | 0.73   | 95.92  | 3.35  | 100.00 | 325.29   | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 0.00   | 100.00 | 0.00  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 1.56   | 96.75  | 1.69  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 1.82   | 97.23  | 0.95  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 2.50   | 96.46  | 1.05  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 3.75   | 95.43  | 0.81  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 5.33   | 93.78  | 0.89  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior not univer.        | 5.29   | 94.36  | 0.35  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 7.26   | 92.14  | 0.60  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 6.89   | 92.61  | 0.50  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 9.30   | 90.70  | 0.00  | 100.00 |          |       |
| 2021  | Without level               | 0.96   | 92.71  | 6.33  | 100.00 | 107.5    | 0.00  |
|       | Early education             | 0.00   | 100.00 | 0.00  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete primary          | 1.60   | 93.59  | 4.81  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete primary            | 1.08   | 92.83  | 6.09  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Incomplete secondary school | 2.16   | 92.43  | 5.42  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Complete secondary school   | 2.60   | 90.74  | 6.66  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 3.99   | 90.68  | 5.33  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior no univ.           | 3.85   | 91.83  | 4.32  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 3.06   | 91.16  | 5.78  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Superior univ.              | 3.45   | 90.21  | 6.34  | 100.00 |          |       |
|       | Post-Grade Univ.            | 4.62   | 88.45  | 6.93  | 100.00 |          |       |

*Note.* National Survey of Households and Living Conditions (ENAHU) of 2014-2021 carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI).

In 2014, 9.3% of citizens with postgraduate studies were involved in acts of corruption, while, in 2021, this figure was reduced to 4.62%. It is highlighted that in 2021, compared to 2014, the number of cases of involvement was reduced at almost all levels of education. One of the possible causes of this reduction could be the presence of the health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, as citizens did not make direct use of public services.

To counter corruption, measures are required to promote transparency and accountability at all levels of government, as well as the effective implementation of anti-corruption policies and the strengthening of control and oversight institutions [6], [10].

Distrust in institutions in Peru is explained not only by the socioeconomic data presented in the study, but also by historical sociopolitical factors, such as political instability. Peru has had six presidents in the last five years (2018-2023), many of whom were removed from office or investigated for corruption [61]. This reflects a crisis of governability that erodes trust in institutions. Peruvian parties lack solid ideological foundations and are often

seen as vehicles for personal interests. The study indicates that only 1.11% of citizens trust them "a lot" (Table 3), and traditional political and economic elites have dominated institutions, generating a perception that they do not serve the public interest. Furthermore, rural areas (with greater poverty and less access to education) perceive that institutions are designed to benefit urban areas. The study shows that urban residence correlates with greater distrust (Table 2), but this could reflect greater access to critical information. There are also systemic corruption scandals, with emblematic cases such as the Lava Jato case (Odebrecht); between 2016 and 2021, it was revealed that almost all former Peruvian presidents since 2001 received bribes from this company [62]. The judiciary and Congress were singled out for covering up cases. Another aspect is judicial impunity and slowness, as only 11.13% of respondents have "some" confidence in the judiciary (Table 3).

Also taken into account is the influence of the media, which focuses on scandals without context. This can generate cynicism among the population and polarization in media aligned with political groups that present opposing narratives, confusing citizens [63]. Therefore, distrust in Peru is a multi-causal phenomenon.

#### **4.2.2. Education and distrust in democratic functioning**

Citizens with higher education have access to more information and analytical tools, allowing them to critically evaluate the performance of institutions. This can lead to greater distrust when they identify systemic failures. Education can raise expectations about how democratic institutions should function [64]. When reality falls short of these expectations, frustration translates into distrust, and educational environments, especially universities, can foster critical discourses toward the political system, reinforcing distrust. Evidence of this is that only 17.51% of the poor understand the concept of democracy, compared to 47.35% of the non-poor (Table 9). This suggests that education broadens political knowledge but also dissatisfaction with its implementation, and citizens with higher education are more likely to rate the functioning of democracy as "very poor" (20.46% in postgraduate studies, Table 9).

Educated citizens have more interactions with public institutions, which increases their exposure to requests for bribes or corrupt practices [65]. Education could provide information on "how the system works," including informal channels of corruption. Educated individuals tend to have higher incomes, making them targets for extortion. Evidence indicates that, in 2014, 9.3% of citizens with postgraduate degrees admitted to having participated in acts of corruption (Table 11), and urbanization (associated with higher education) correlates with more critical perceptions (Table 2).

If poverty is taken into account, it limits access to basic services and political participation, generating alienation from institutions [66]. The poor rely more on non-institutional mechanisms (e.g., political favors), which reinforces the perception that institutions do not serve their interests. Institutions can be perceived as distant or elitist, especially in rural areas. Thus, the poverty gap is associated with lower trust in Congress and the Judiciary (Table 2), and only 1.11% of respondents trust political parties "a lot" (Table 3). Therefore, education not only increases civic knowledge but also exposes citizens to the contradictions of the system, reducing trust. Poverty, for its part, limits access to information and participation, perpetuating mistrust. Both factors interact with an institutional context perceived as corrupt and unrepresentative, which calls for policies that combat inequality and improve transparency.

## **5. Conclusions**

More than 60% of Peruvian citizens distrust key institutions such as Congress, the Judiciary, and political parties, with a worsening in the 2014-2021 period. This erosion reflects weakened democratic legitimacy and a dissatisfaction with accountability.

One of the critical socioeconomic factors is education; citizens with more formal education show greater skepticism towards institutions, associated with greater critical awareness. However, they are also more exposed to getting involved in acts of corruption (e.g. 9.3% in postgraduate studies, 2014), in terms of poverty and the educational gap they correlate with less understanding of democracy (only 17.51% of the poor know it vs.

47.35% in non-poor people) and greater distrust in terms of age, an advanced age reduces confidence, while urban residence is associated with more critical perceptions.

The perception of corruption is endemic, especially in interactions with public officials. A lack of transparency exacerbates mistrust, particularly in educated groups that demand greater accountability.

As for the implications for public policies, it is necessary to strengthen civic education with programs that promote political literacy and democratic values, especially in rural areas and among poor populations. Moreover, it is important to improve the transparency and effectiveness of institutions, with robust mechanisms of accountability and citizen participation, as well as to reduce poverty and inequality gaps to mitigate structural discontent.

This study provides robust empirical evidence on the intersection between socioeconomic inequality and the crisis of democratic legitimacy in Peru, highlighting the urgency of addressing both structural and cultural factors to rebuild citizen trust. The findings are relevant to global debates on governance in contexts of high inequality.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial or non-financial competing interests in any material discussed in this paper.

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### Author contribution

Conceptualization, A.M.-F. and D.E.B-Q, T.L.B-Q.; methodology, A.P.C-M.; software, A.P.C-M. and J.A-T.; validation, N.S.V-A., A.C-T, and V.A-A.; formal analysis, Y.M-M. and S.L.C-L.; investigation, E.Z-C., A.M.-F. and D.E.B-Q.; resources, A.P.C-M. and J.A-T.; data curation, A.M.-F. and D.E.B-Q, T.L.B-Q.; writing—original draft preparation, A.M.-F. and D.E.B-Q, T.L.B-Q.; writing—review and editing, S.L.C-L, and E.Z-C.; visualization, A.M.-F. and D.E.B-Q, T.L.B-Q.; supervision, A.P.C-M. and J.A-T.; project administration, A.M.-F. and D.E.B-Q, T.L.B-Q.; funding acquisition, A.M.-F. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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