



Indigenous Community Recognition, Identity, and Democracy: Evidence from Peru

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Motivating Questions

Today nearly half of countries recognize forms of indigenous governance in their constitutions and more do so through legal provisions. How does collective indigenous recognition impact identity and views of government among indigenous communities?

- Peru: How has indigenous community recognition impacted self-identification, views of democracy, and confidence in government? How do the effects vary among age groups within communities?

Indigenous Community Land in the Americas



Source: Landmark:
The Global
Platform of
Indigenous and
Community Lands

Debate Over Collective Indigenous Recognition

Advantages

- Deepen democracy by expanding rights and resources for disadvantaged groups and provide political space for non-dominant group self-identification
- Carries deep symbolic importance given histories of discrimination, oppression, and inferiority
- Can enhance confidence in government and renew enthusiasm for political participation and engagement

Limited Empirical Evidence

There is a rich empirical literature on subnational identity but far less on collective indigenous recognition

- No work that directly address dynamics and variation among individuals within communities themselves in a way that generalizes

Importance of Looking Within and Across Communities

There is wide unexplained variation within communities and even within families in patterns of self-identification and views of government (e.g., Postero 2007)

State recognition of indigenous communities can affect cohorts differently in ways that are both persistent and that can strongly shape patterns of identity and views of government within society

This is intimately tied to a common scarcity: land access

Indigenous Communities in Peru

- One of the largest indigenous populations in the Americas
- Communities have territorial claims, are administered by community authorities, and are locus of customary practices like communal landholding and reciprocal work arrangements
- Disrupted by Spanish colonialism: taxed, land and labor appropriated, etc.
- Deeply disadvantaged within Peru: suffer far higher rates of poverty than people of European descent and appearance, face discrimination



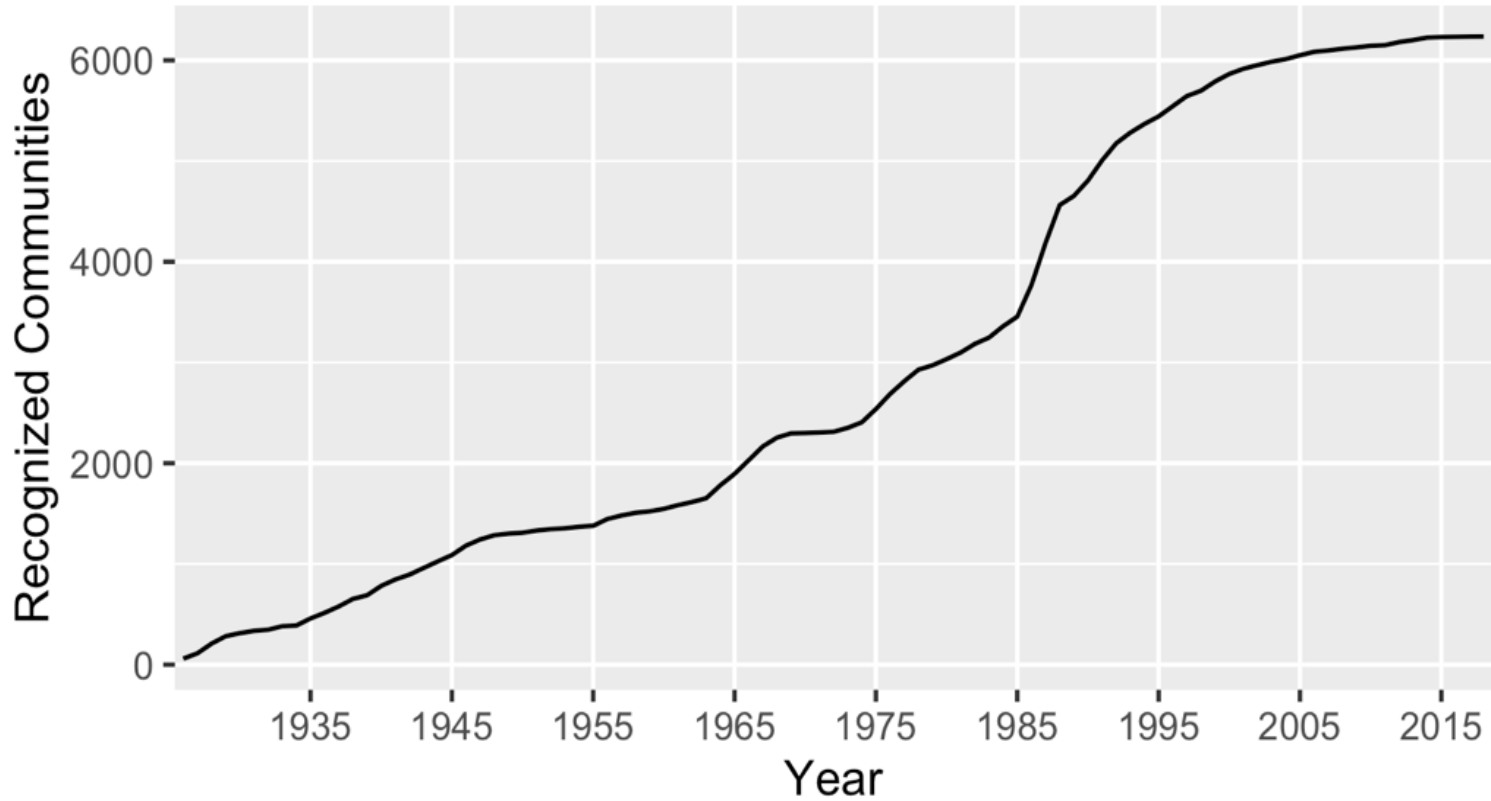
Community Recognition

- Official state recognition of communities ongoing since 1920s
- Legal status recognizes collective land rights, provides tax benefits, gives a consultative voice in rural policies, and enhances bargaining power with outsiders
 - Rights and benefits have generally strengthened over time
- There are now over 7,000 communities; ~6,100 are recognized communities in the highlands and coast
 - Contain close to 20% of the country's population

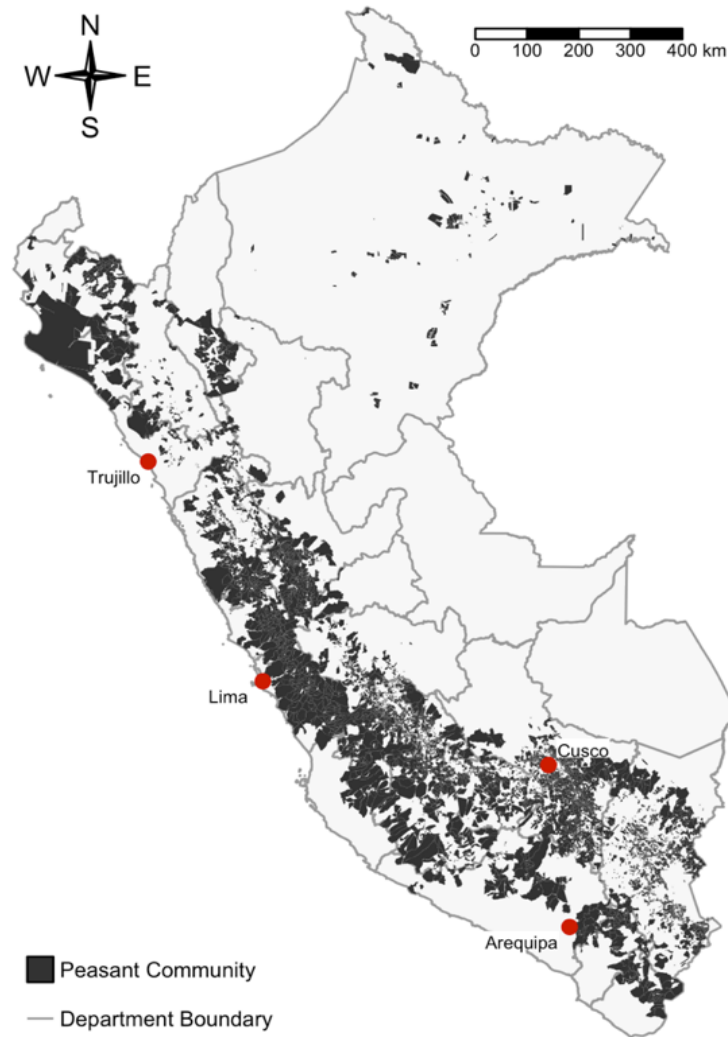
Harin, Cusco



Community Recognition



Indigenous Communities Across Peru



Land is Central to Recognition – and Scarce

- Communities have ancestral links to land and members disproportionately live in rural areas
- Land appropriated from communities during colonization and post-independence periods
- Land further made scarce and insecure by indigenous population growth over the last century and informal property rights

Land Scarcity Shapes Impacts of Recognition

- Community recognition makes land more secure and desirable and increases potential for benefits, driving up demand for land and investment in community life
- This has critical intergeneration consequences: those best positioned to quickly claim valuable and scarce community resources do so while others (especially the young) cannot

Hypotheses

Compared to younger or post-recognition cohorts, adults and near-adults at time of recognition are more likely to:

- Self-identify with indigenous community over other identity
 - Formally inscribe as community members
 - Report feeling democracy works well
 - Report higher trust in regional government
- Mechanism: Land access and investment in community life

Data

To test the effects of community recognition on self-identification and views of democracy and government, I examine data on

- Timing of community recognition
- Community territorial extent
- Individual self-identification and views of democracy and government

Unit of analysis: individuals

Outcomes

1) Self-identification with an indigenous community over other groups

- Individuals can indicate closest identification with (i) their department, province, district, or town; (ii) their ethnicity or race; (iii) their peasant or indigenous community; (iv) their religious group or position; (v) other

2) Inscription in an indigenous community

3) Views of how well democracy functions

- Ranges from very poorly (1) to very well (4)

4) Confidence in regional government

- Ranges from very little (1) to a lot (4)

Estimation Framework: Age Cohort Analysis

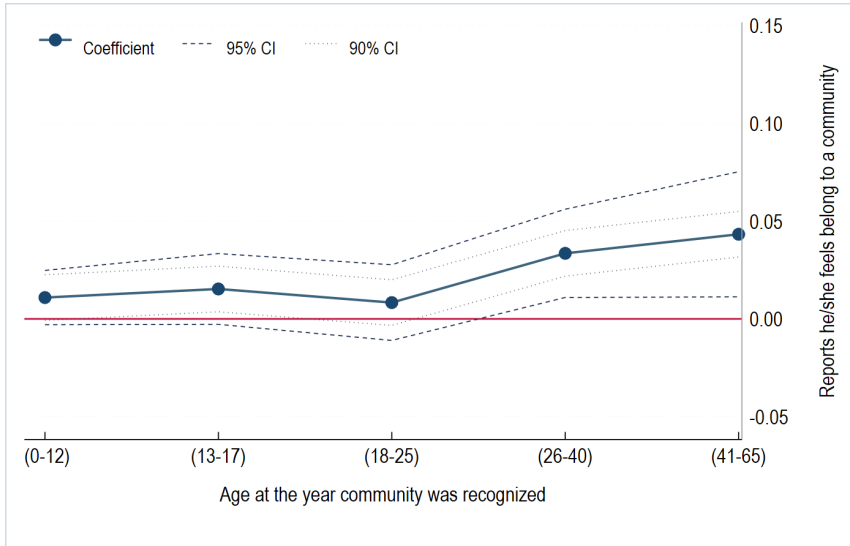
- I combine pooled data from large-scale nationally representative household surveys (2007-2020) with data on the timing and location of community recognition
- This enables the estimation of a regression specification in which an individual's location and date of birth jointly determine their exposure to recognition
- Control for district FE and year of birth FE to ensure results not driven by unobserved spatially-linked heterogeneity or time/generational trends more broadly

Exposure to Recognition Across Age Cohorts

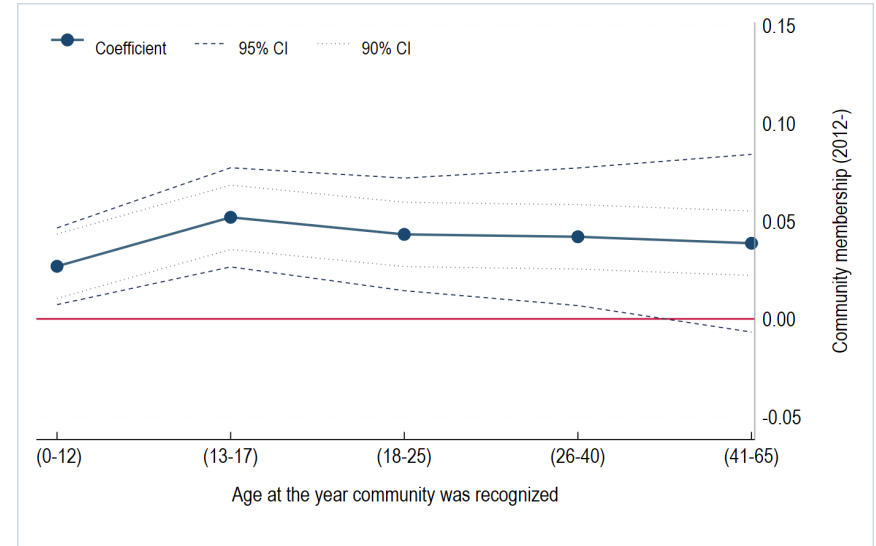
- Post-recognition: Individuals born into recognized communities
 - Young children (0-12) at recognition
 - Teenagers (13-17) at recognition
 - Young adults (18-25) at recognition – reach *comunero* status
 - Mature adults (26-40) and older adults (41-65) at recognition
-
- Impact of recognition estimated based on differences in outcomes between cohorts born before recognition and those born after it
 - Hypothesis: I anticipate strongest effects among **adults and near-adults** at recognition; they are best positioned to quickly win access to scarce community land and invest in community life

Effects of Recognition on Identity and Views of Democracy

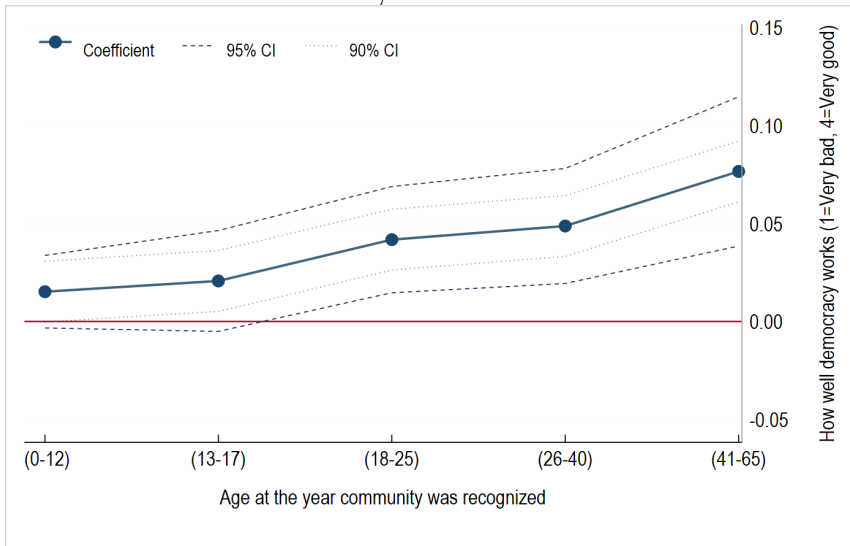
Self-Identifies with Community



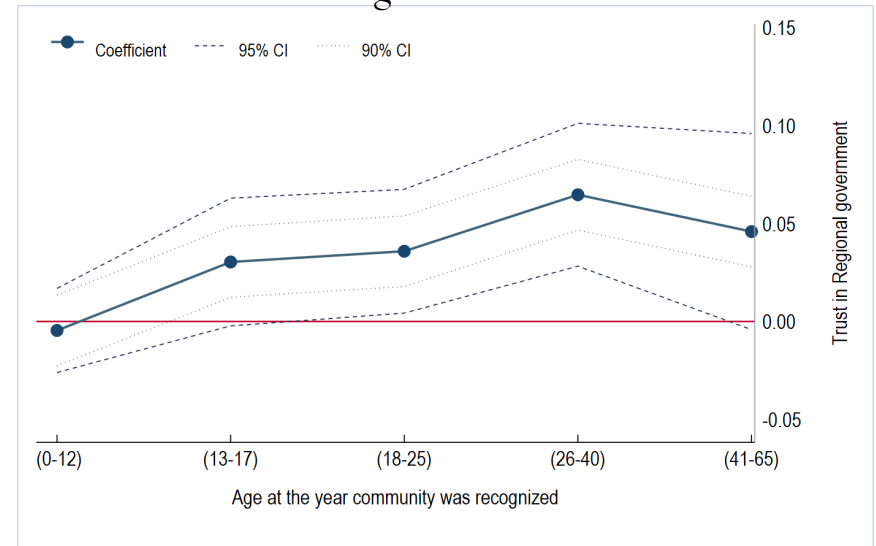
Community Member



Feels Democracy Works Well



Trust in Regional Government



Mechanism: Land Access and Investment in Community Life

Official recognition increases demand for land and investment in community life. Adults and near-adults are positioned to most quickly act on this in the years immediately following recognition as they make choices about living and employment. More likely to:

- Hold larger plots of land and work in agriculture
 - Receive land directly from community and hold it as such
 - Participate in core community life, like *rondas campesinas*
- Shapes self-identification and community participation over time

Conclusion & Implications

- Community recognition can support indigenous community self-identification and positive views of democracy and government
 - Impacts may differ sharply across generations, particularly where recognition operates through land and community life
- Core resources in many communities are scarce due to dispossession and domination, truncating opportunities and preventing reconstitution of vibrant community identities
- Key for debates on restitution and intergenerational support; may suggest fleeting consequences of recognition

Household Survey Data

- Compiled individual-level data for a pooled sample of households from 2007-2020
- Slightly over 1 million individuals; 182,000 live in communities
- Contains detailed information about where individuals live, their date of birth, where they were born, how they self-identify, views on democracy and government, and a host of other characteristics like gender, education, native language, landholding, and income and expenses

Source: Peruvian National Household Survey (ENAHO)

Estimating Equation

I estimate the following regression specification:

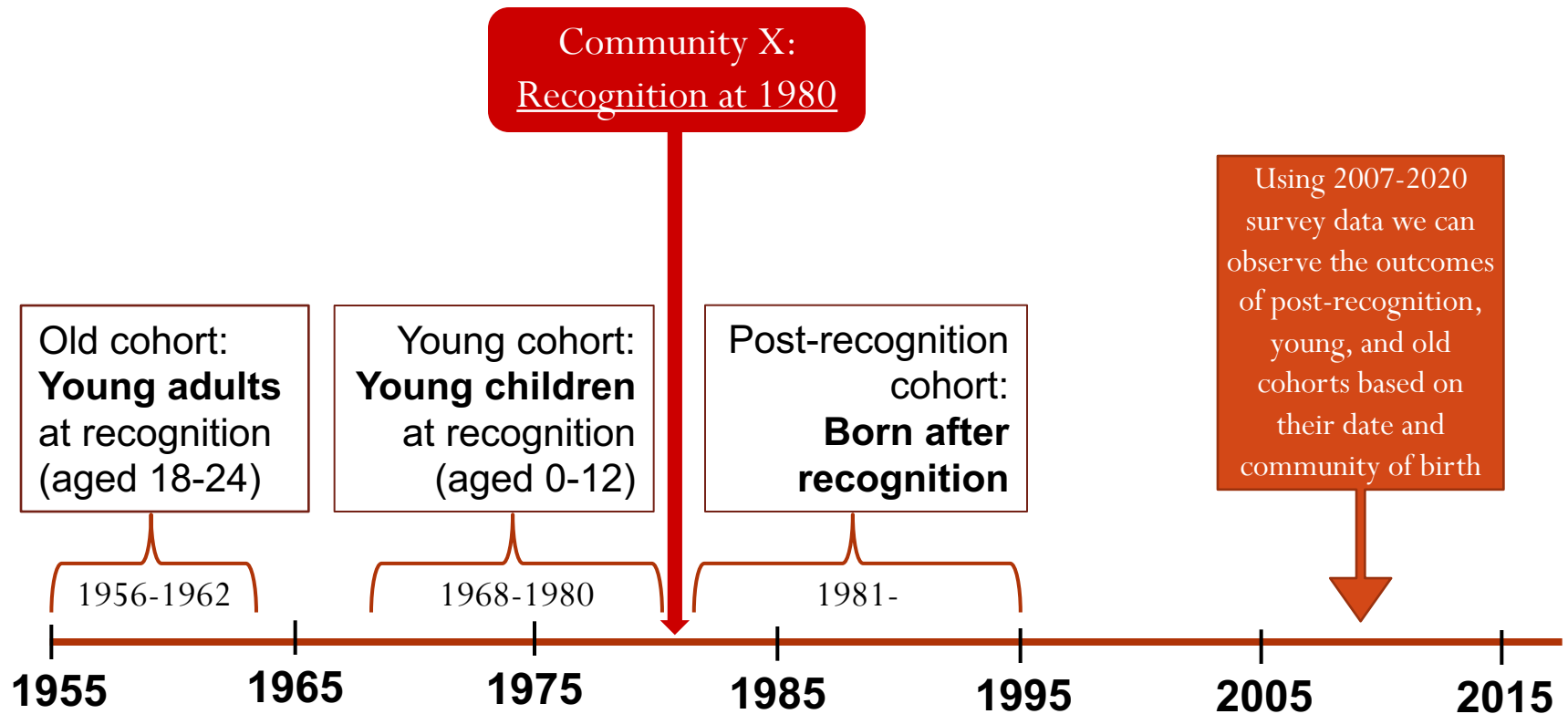
$$y_{ijt} = \alpha + \sum_{l=-80}^{65} d_{ijl} \beta_l + X'_{ijt} \delta + \omega_d + \varphi_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}$$

where y_{ijt} is the outcome of interest for individual i located in community j in year t . d_{ijl} is a dummy that indicates whether individual i in community j is age cohort l in the year of community recognition. I group ages into cohorts groups. Individuals born after community recognition form the control group, and this dummy is omitted from the regression. X_{ijt} is a vector of individual characteristics, including mother tongue, gender, and years of education. ω_d are district fixed effects, where j is in d , and φ_t are year of birth fixed effects.

- Each coefficient β_l can be interpreted as an estimate of the impact of community recognition on a given birth cohort
- I generate estimates using a linear probability model

Estimation Framework: Age Cohort Analysis

Identifying an individual's year and location enables calculating how old each individual was at the time of recognition and therefore their exposure



The impact of recognition across groups is estimated based on observed differences in outcomes between cohorts born before recognition and those born after

Robustness

Results are robust to the following:

- Restricting the control group to individuals born in the decade after recognition
- Restricting to individuals born in the same district
- All communities and predominantly rural ones
- Including community-level controls for geography, agricultural suitability, road access, mining presence, and prehispanic ceremonial sites

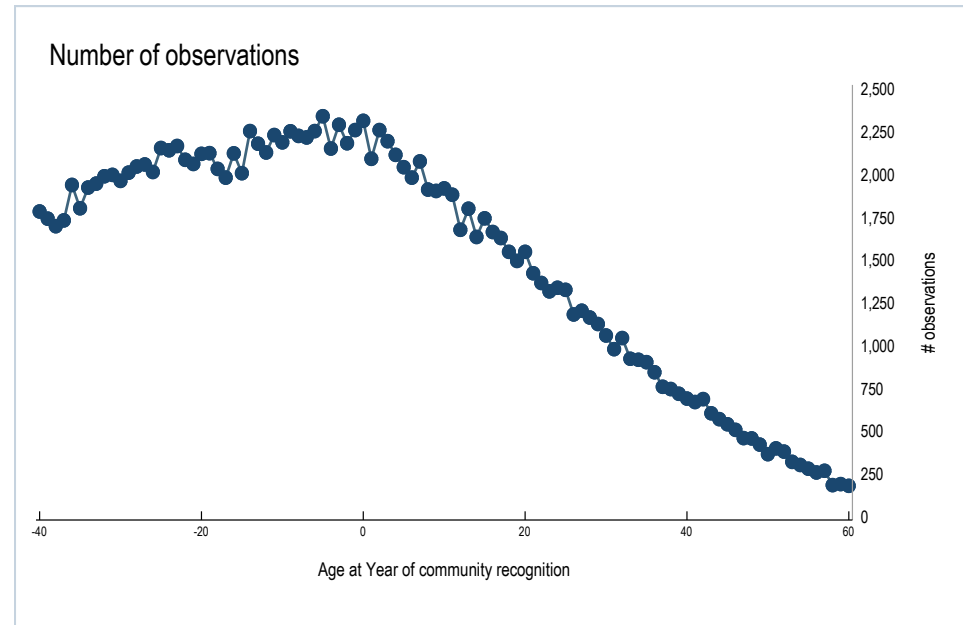
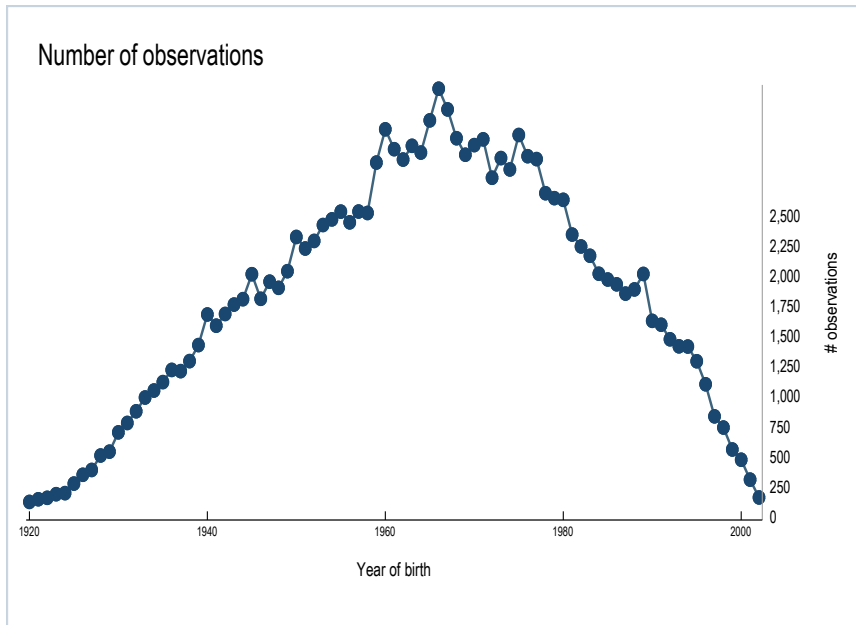
Broader Effects of Recognition

- The results indicate intergenerational heterogeneity in the effects of recognition consistent with a land access mechanism, but what are the broader effects of recognition on communities as a whole?
- To examine this, I compare individuals (of similar cohorts) who live within indigenous communities to rural individuals from the same district sampled by ENAHO who live outside of communities
- Findings echo previous age-based effects within communities and underscore their importance even when compared to broader population-level effects

Alternative Explanations

- **Wealth:** Recognition may position adults and near-adults to capture other material benefits, shifting identity and civic engagement for instrumental, attitudinal, or value reasons
- **Societal acceptance:** Recognition may reduce discrimination and enhance pride in community identity and life by boosting respect for adult cohorts that “win” recognition
- **Democratic “learning”:** Recognition may make adults and near-adults more sensitive to importance of democracy in fulfilling demands; younger cohorts don’t have this lived experience

Survey Respondents by Year of Birth and Age at Time of Recognition



Process of Recognition

- Both bottom-up and top-down: requires action from a community, but critically depends on favorable national environment
- Most processes take years; not easy to anticipate timing of final outcome
 - Example: Chalco: 10 years to gain recognition

7 pasos para obtener el reconocimiento de una comunidad campesina

1.- El presidente de la comunidad solicita a la DRA el reconocimiento de su comunidad, para ello adjunta los documentos requeridos (ver primera página)

2.- Publicación de la solicitud, permitiendo que terceros puedan efectuar observaciones al trámite.

3.- Inspección en campo por la DRA para la verificación de los datos proporcionados por la Comunidad.

4.- LA DRA elabora un informe técnico con los resultados de la inspección en campo.

5.- La DRA emite una Resolución Directoral de Reconocimiento como comunidad campesina.

6.- La DRA inscribe en sus registros a la comunidad reconocida.

7.- La DRA envía la Resolución a SUNARP para la inscripción de la comunidad como Persona Jurídica.

Requisitos para iniciar el trámite de reconocimiento de una comunidad campesina

Antes de iniciar el proceso de titulación, la comunidad tiene que estar reconocida como comunidad campesina por la Dirección Regional Agraria (DRA) de su gobierno regional. Para ello, el presidente de la comunidad debe presentar una solicitud dirigida a la DRA, adjuntando los siguientes documentos:

- Copias legalizadas de las actas de Asamblea General, donde se acuerda solicitar su inscripción como Comunidad Campesina, precisando el nombre; la aprobación del Estatuto de la Comunidad y la elección de la Directiva Comunal.
- Copia del DNI del presidente comunal elegido por asamblea
- Censo de poblacional: Padrón o lista de todas familias que viven en la comunidad.
- Croquis del territorio comunal con indicación de linderos y colindantes.

Con este documento de reconocimiento, la comunidad tiene que registrarse como persona jurídica en SUNARP. Luego, los comuneros deben comunicar a la DRA que su comunidad aún no tiene un título, para que el Gobierno Regional asigne fondos al proceso de deslinde y titulación de su comunidad.

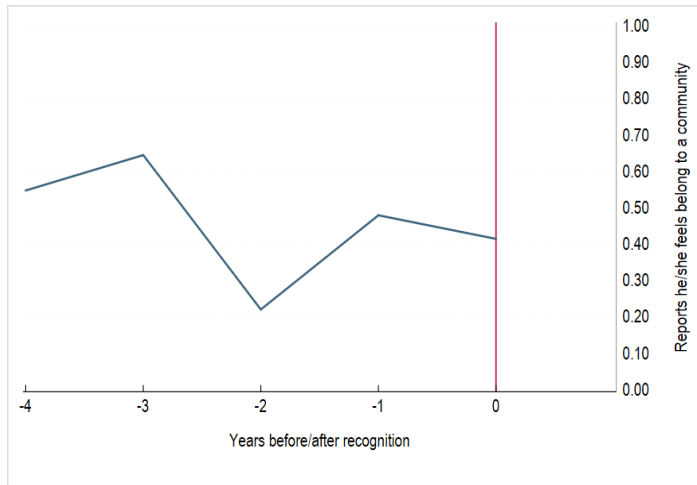
Placebo Test: Recognition Without Land Title

	Self-Identifies with Community	Community Member	Feels Democracy Works Well	Trust in Regional Government
<i>Age at Recognition</i>				
Young (0-12)	0.017 (0.021)	0.062* (0.037)	-0.032 (0.042)	-0.040 (0.035)
Teenagers (13-17)	0.030 (0.028)	0.101* (0.055)	-0.031 (0.064)	0.004 (0.049)
Young adults (18-25)	-0.006 (0.032)	0.063 (0.058)	0.025 (0.072)	0.015 (0.056)
Adults (26-40)	0.017 (0.031)	0.077 (0.075)	0.018 (0.066)	0.104* (0.059)
Adults (41-65)	0.010 (0.049)	0.084 (0.094)	0.048 (0.080)	0.046 (0.060)
<i>Controls</i>				
Native mother tongue	0.057*** (0.016)	0.059*** (0.021)	0.005 (0.017)	-0.013 (0.025)
Female	-0.013** (0.006)	-0.024*** (0.006)	-0.009 (0.009)	-0.014 (0.011)
Years of education	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)
Constant	0.545** (0.273)	0.483** (0.224)	3.041*** (0.092)	2.147*** (0.061)
Year of birth FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
District FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	16,265	11,521	13,200	13,134
R-squared	0.143	0.540	0.089	0.093
Districts	135	131	135	135

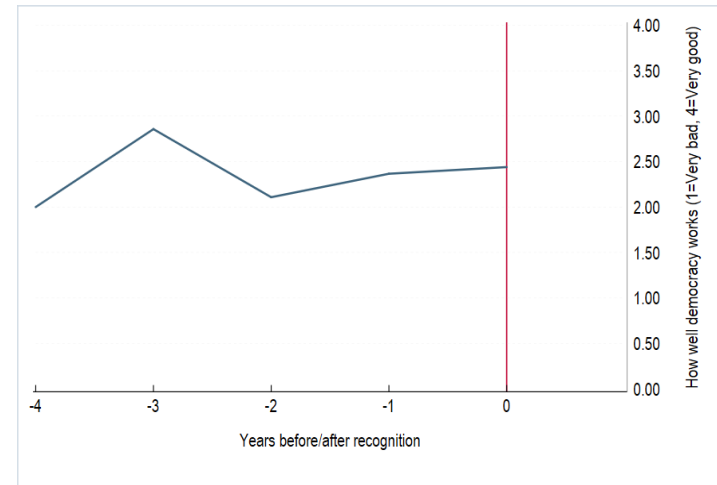
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.

Pre-Treatment Trends

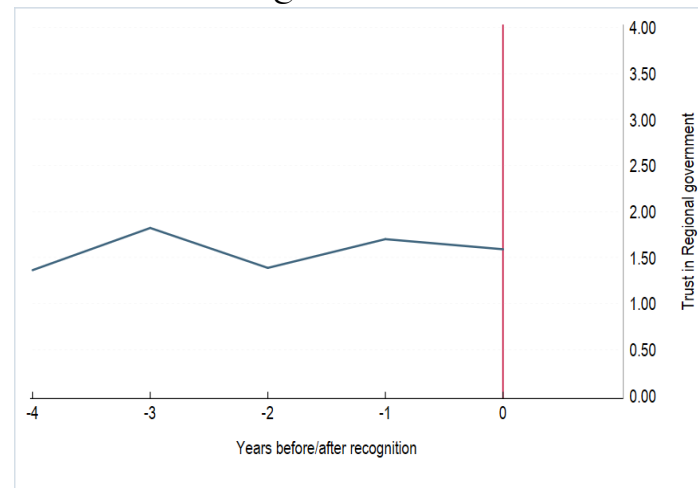
Self-Identify as Member of Indigenous Community



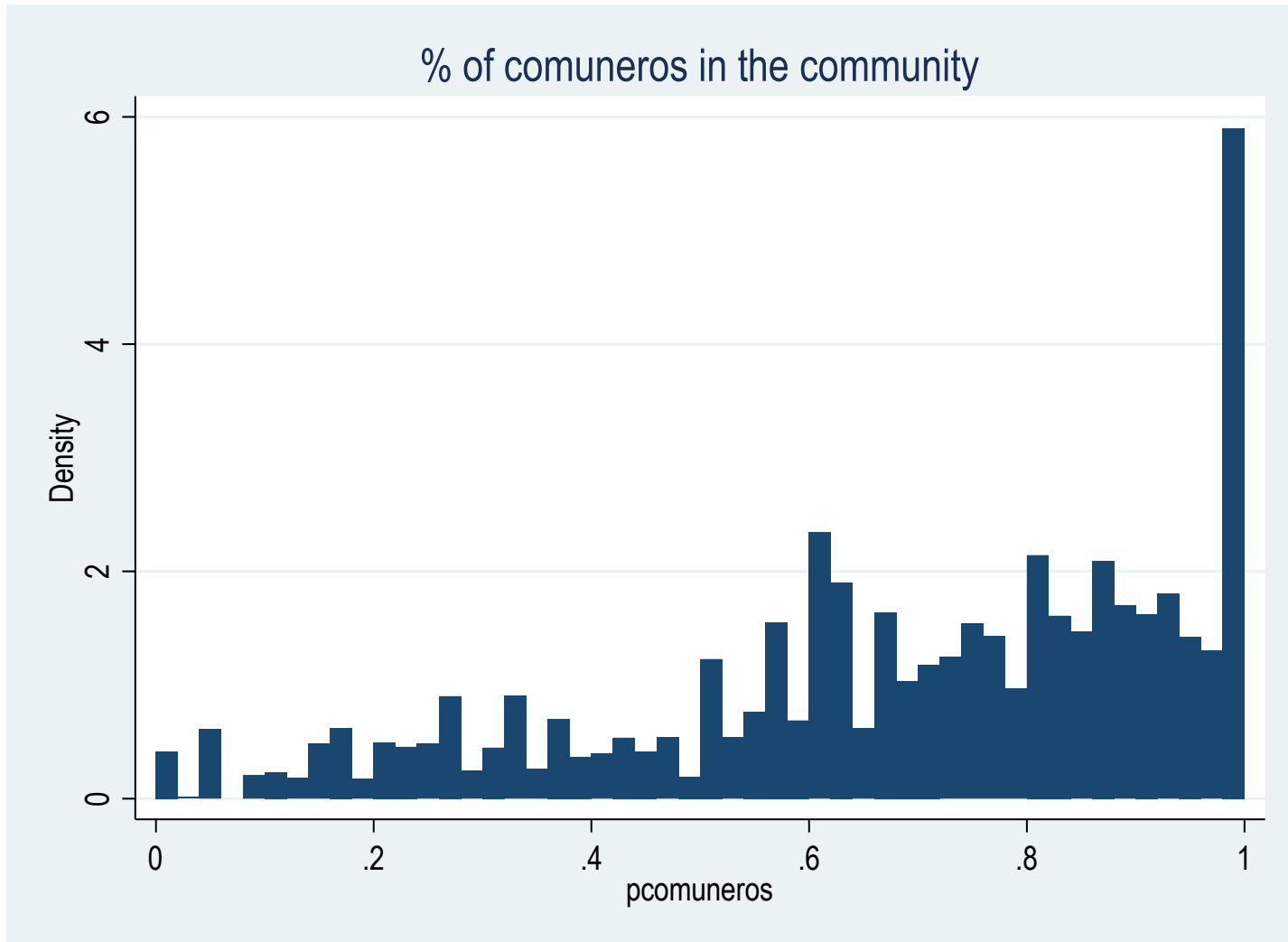
Feels Democracy Works Well



Trust in Regional Government



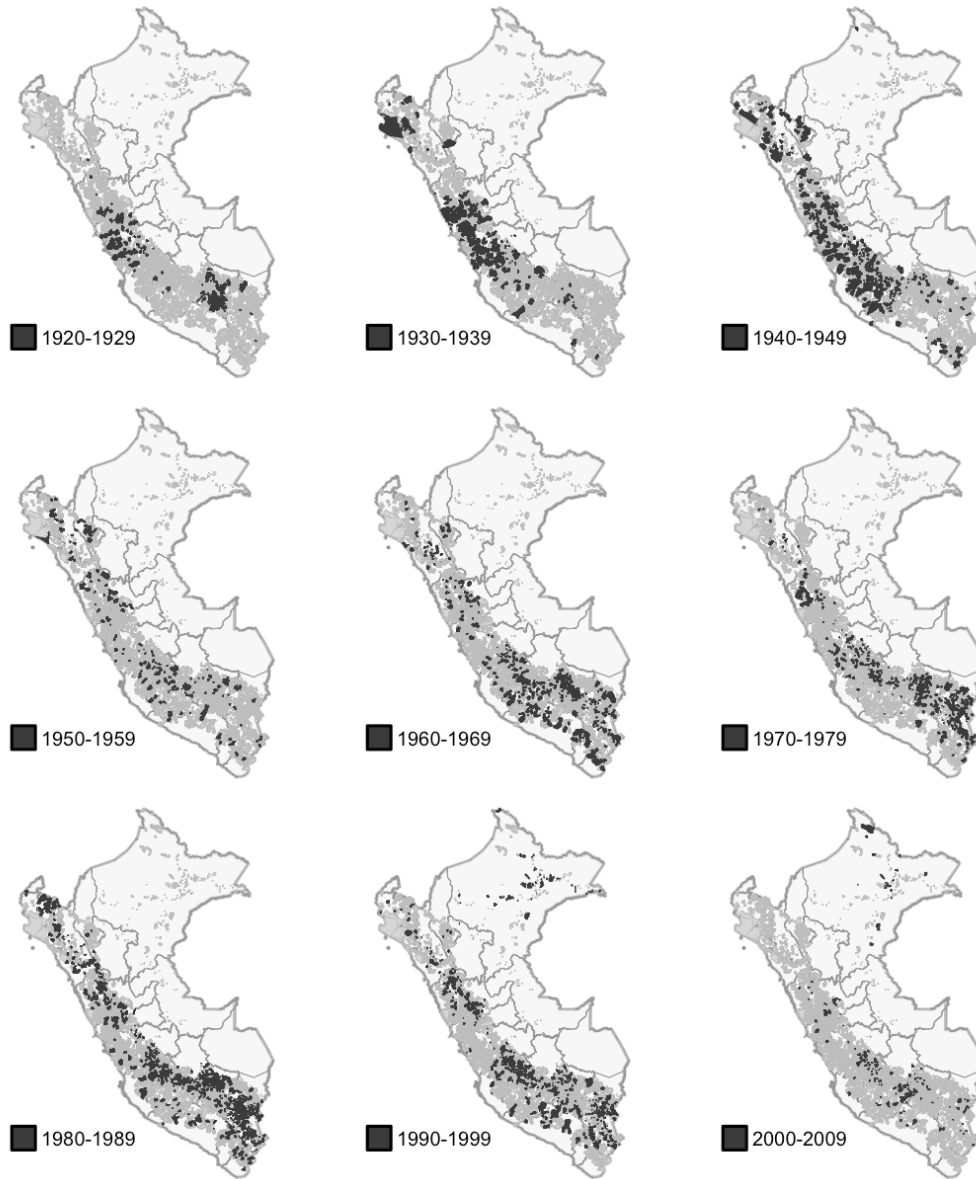
Population Composition of Communities



Impact of Recognition on Ethnic Identification

- Within communities, less than 2% of individuals identified first with their ethnicity or race whereas over 34% identified with their community
- Given weak ethnic ties and cross-community interaction in Peru, community identity is the lens into indigenous identity
- Nonetheless, I also examined the effects of recognition on ethnic self-identification, coding indigenous self-identification for respondents who identified as Quechuan, Aymaran, native to the Amazon, or from another indigenous group in Peru. This question was asked in ENAHO from 2012-2020 and in the 2017 census
 - Results were sensitive to model specification, varying from statistically insignificant to a small 1-2% boost in indigenous self-identification for adults and near-adults compared to the youngest cohorts at the time of recognition.

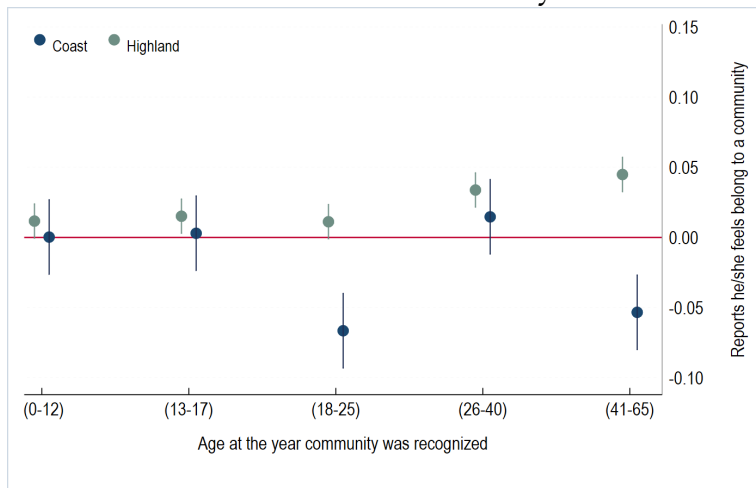
Timing of Indigenous Community Recognition



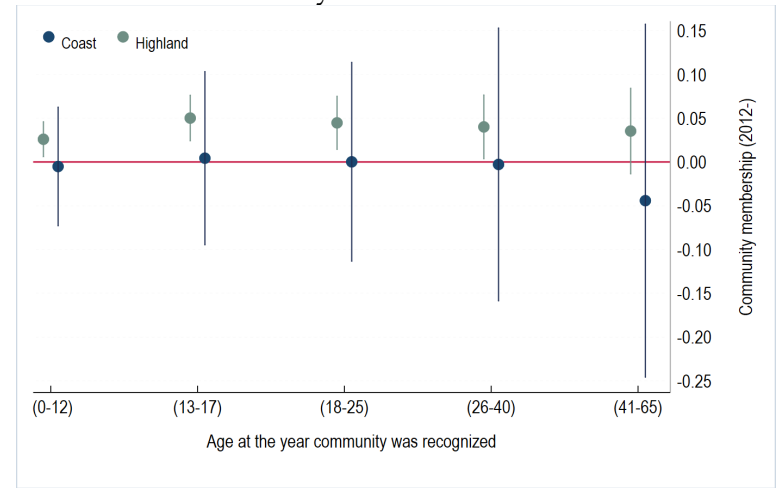
Evidence Linked to Land Access and Community Life

Highlands vs. Coast

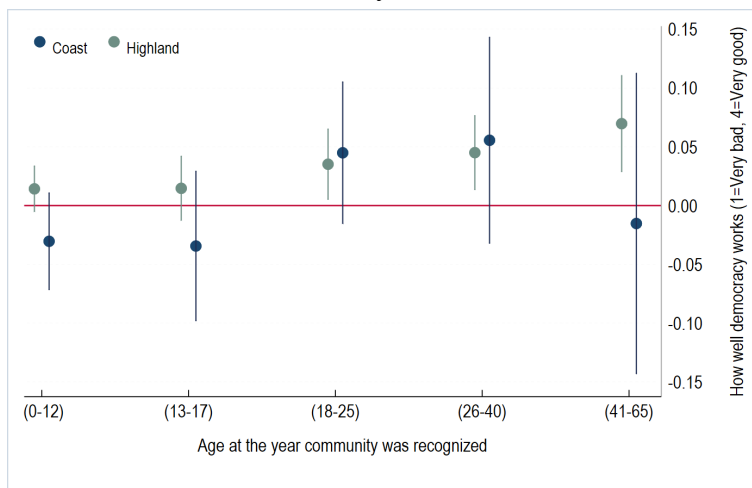
Self-Identifies with Community



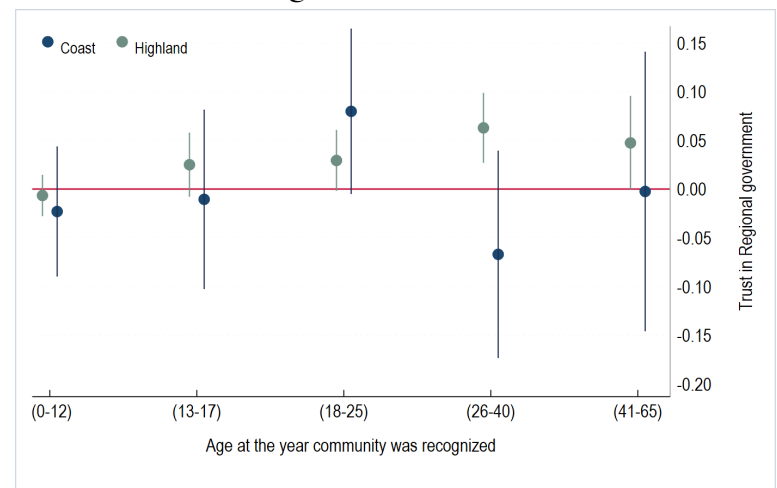
Community Member



Feels Democracy Works Well



Trust in Regional Government



Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
How well democracy works (1=very bad, 4=very good)	134,869	2.44	0.66	1	4
Trust in regional government (1=none, 4=a lot)	133,107	1.70	0.78	1	4
Self-identifies with community	166,623	0.34	0.47	0	1
Community member	121,090	0.58	0.49	0	1
Lives in Coast	181,578	0.14	0.35	0	1
Lives in Highlands	181,578	0.83	0.38	0	1
Lives in Amazon	181,578	0.03	0.17	0	1
Born after community recognized	181,578	0.62	0.49	0	1
Young (0-12) when community recognized	181,578	0.15	0.35	0	1
Teenagers (13-17) when community recognized	181,578	0.05	0.21	0	1
Young adults (18-25) when community recognized	181,578	0.06	0.24	0	1
Adults (26-40) when community recognized	181,578	0.08	0.27	0	1
Adults (41-65) when CC was recognized	181,578	0.05	0.21	0	1
Log household annual expenditure (soles)	181,578	9.39	0.75	4.8	12.2
Log size of land owned (hectares)	181,578	0.57	0.74	0	6.9
Works on agricultural activities dummy	181,578	0.72	0.45	0	1
Belongs to a ronda campesina	172,678	0.05	0.22	0	1
Experienced any form of discrimination	38,293	0.11	0.31	0	1
Importance of democracy (1=not important, 4=very important)	143,213	2.96	0.63	1	4
Native mother tongue	181,578	0.51	0.50	0	1
Female	181,578	0.52	0.50	0	1
Years of education	181,578	6.49	4.86	0	21

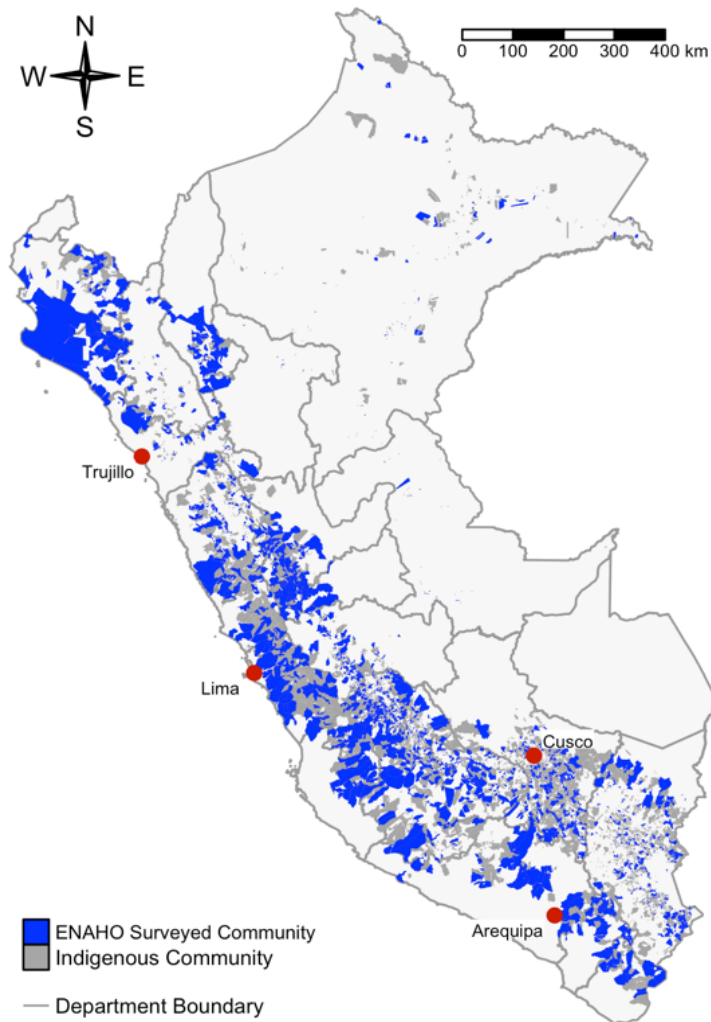
ENAHO Survey Questions

- Self-identification with community: “With which group (community) do you feel most identified with? (1) Your department, province, district, or town; (2) Your ethnicity or race; (3) Your peasant or indigenous community; (4) Your religious group or position; (5) Other.”
- Community member: “Are you or is one of the household members inscribed in a peasant community?” (Y/N)
- Feels democracy works well: “In the country, democracy functions: (4) very well; (3) well; (2) poorly; (1) very poorly; (5) don’t know.”
- Trust in regional government: “Do you have confidence in regional government? (4) a lot; (3) some; (2) little; (1) none; (5) don’t know.”

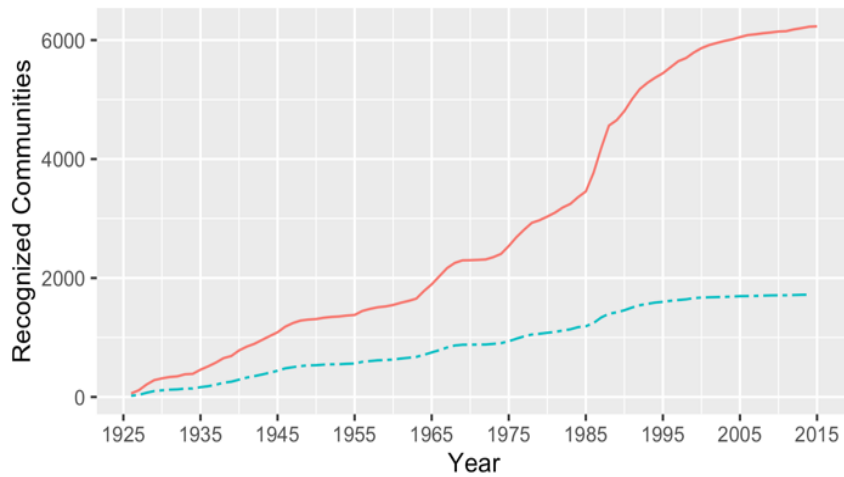
ENAHO Sample of Communities

- ENAHO is conducted using stratified random sampling based on population areas and is independent in each of Peru's 24 departments. The sampling frame used for selection is based on complete census information along with current cartographic information.
- In urban areas, the primary sampling units are towns with more than 2,000 inhabitants; the secondary units are local groupings that have on average 120 houses; the tertiary units are individual households.
- In rural areas, there are two primary sampling units: towns with 500-2,000 individuals and blocks of rural areas that have on average 100 houses. The secondary units are accordingly twofold: in the first set, local groupings that have on average 120 houses; in the second set, individual households. The tertiary units for the first group are in turn individual households.

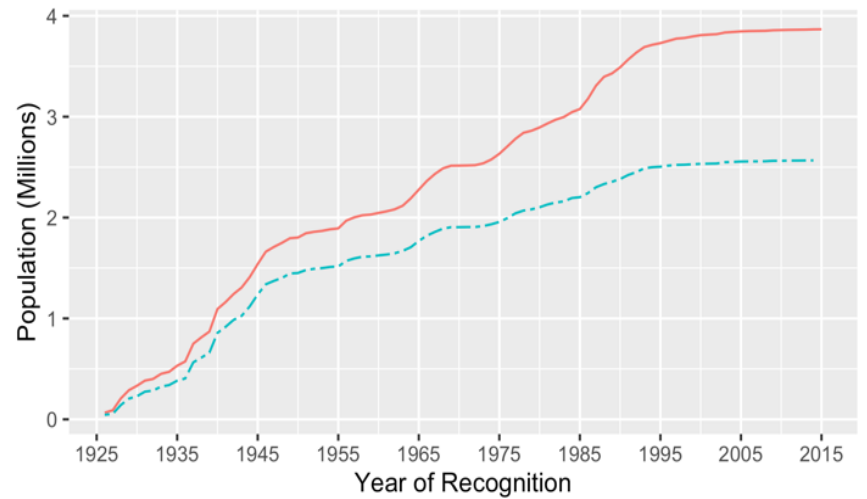
ENAHO Sample of Communities



ENAHO Sample of Communities



Legend — All Communities — ENAHO Sampled Communities

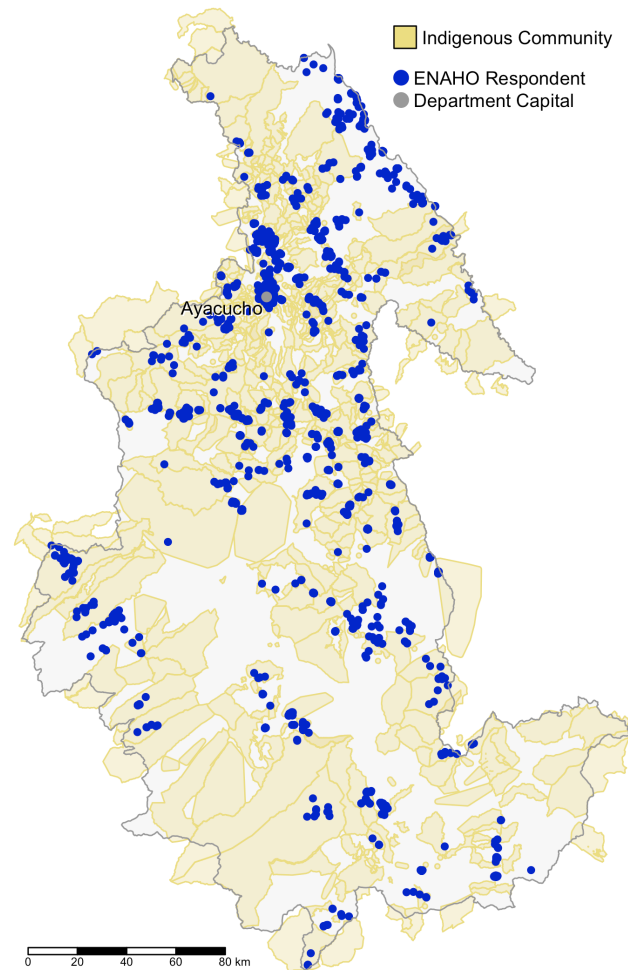
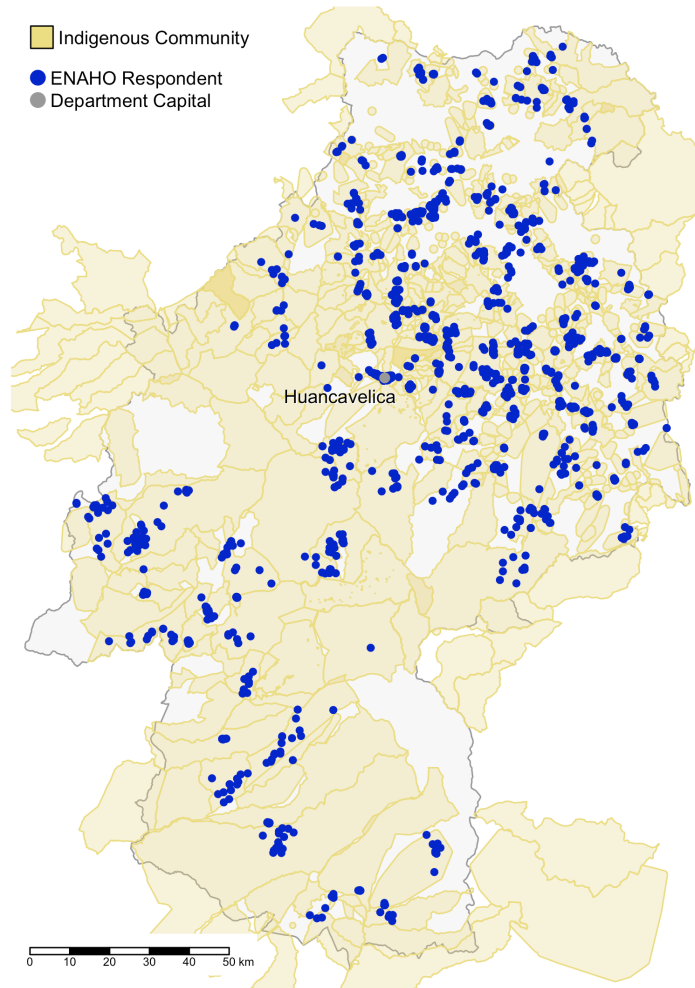


Legend — All Communities — ENAHO Sampled Communities

Community Polygons by Data Source

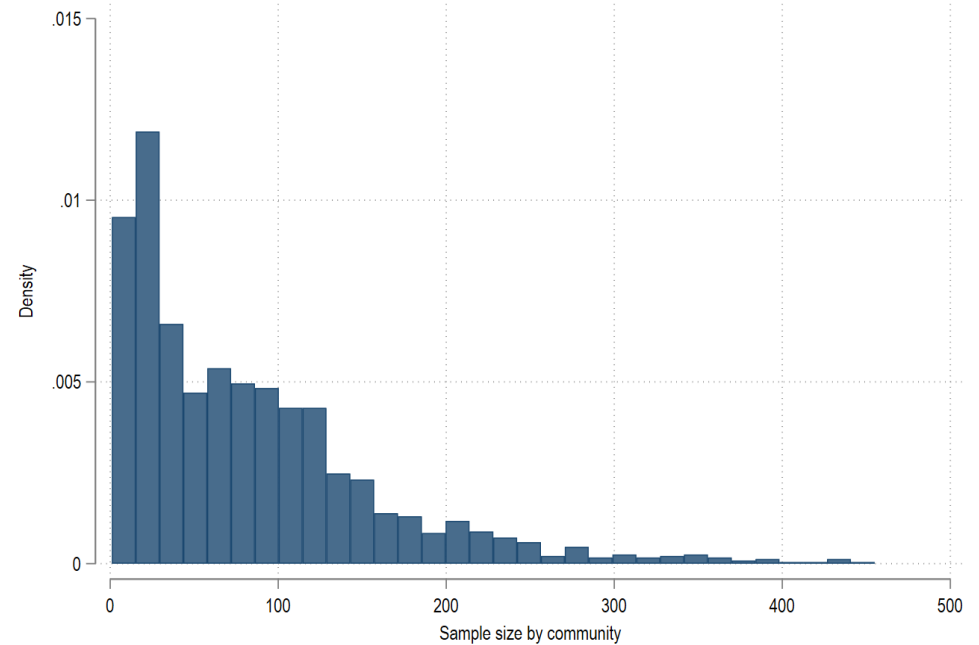


Maps of Sampled Communities in Selected Departments



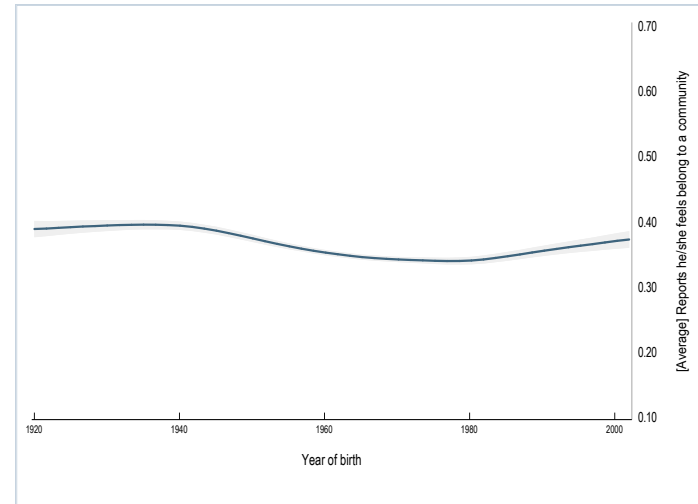
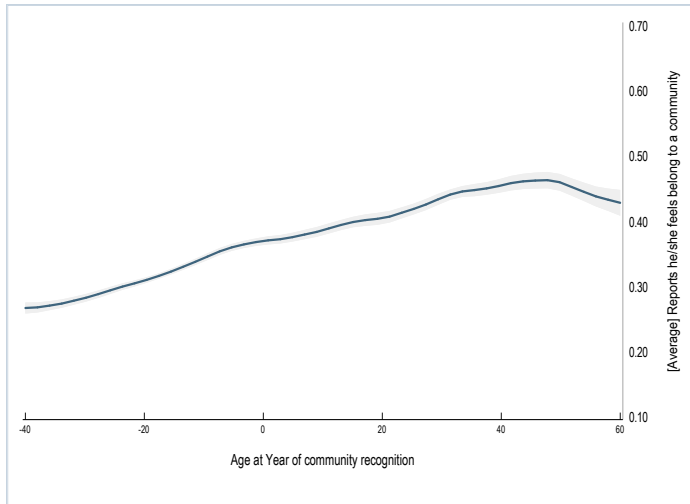
Distribution of Sampled Individuals by Community

Sample size of individuals by community	Number of communities
Less than 25	457
25 to 50	255
51 to 100	419
101 to 150	296
151 to 200	111
201 to 500	131
More than 500	43

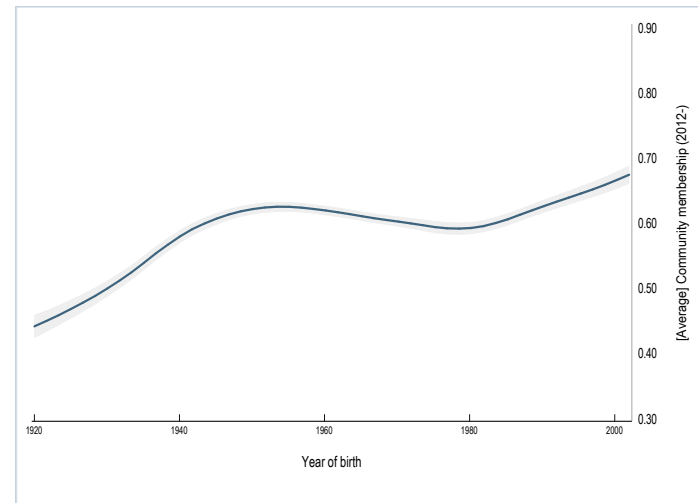
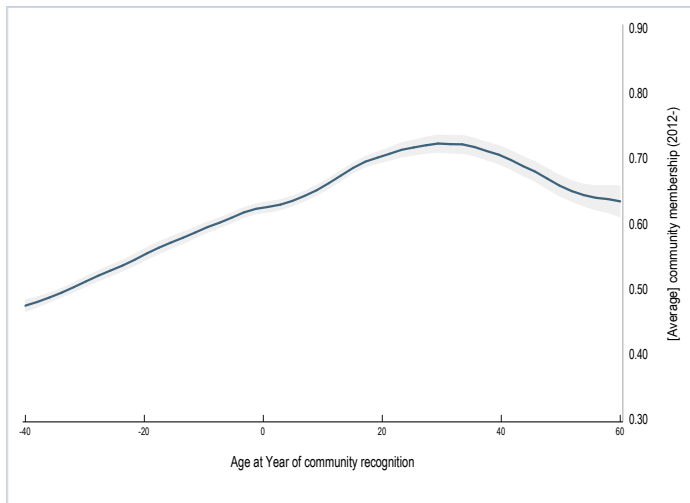


Outcomes by Age at Recognition vs. Year of Birth

Self-Identify as Member of Indigenous Community

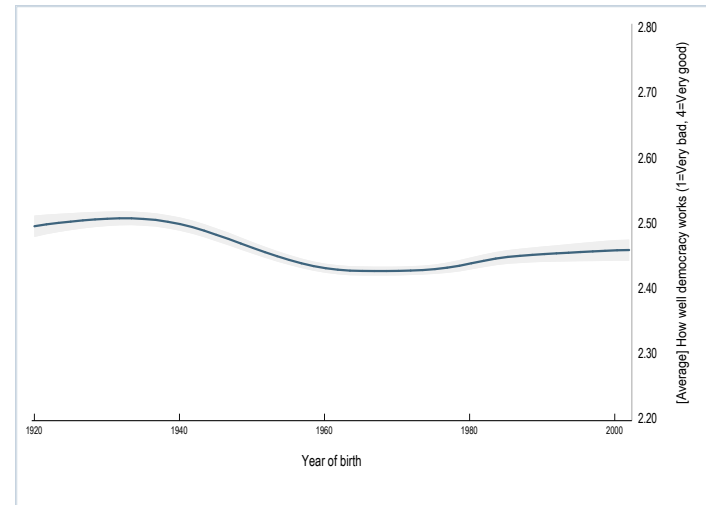
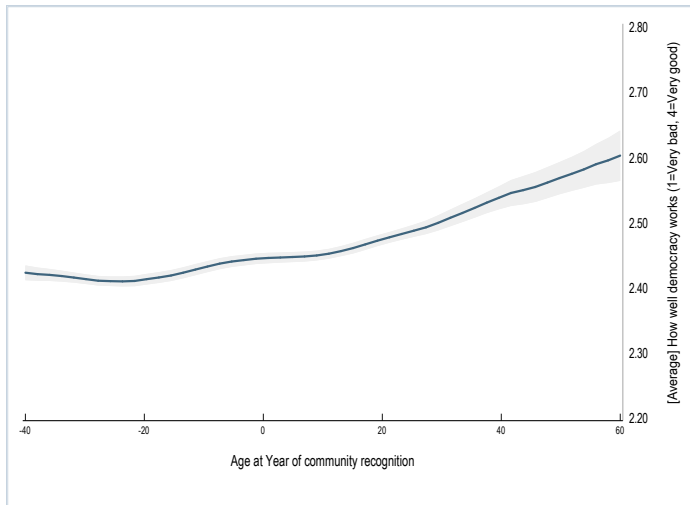


Community Member



Outcomes by Age at Recognition vs. Year of Birth

Feels Democracy Works Well



Trust in Regional Government

