

**Latin American Public Opinion Project**

**LAPOP**

The logo for the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) features the acronym 'LAPOP' in large, bold, green capital letters with a black outline. The letter 'O' is uniquely designed, containing a white silhouette map of Latin America, including Mexico, Central America, and South America, set against a yellow background.

**Proyecto de Opinión Pública de América Latina**

# **El Salvador: From War to Peace, A Political Culture in Transition**

by

Mitchell A. Seligson  
Daniel H. Wallace Professor of Political Science  
University of Pittsburgh

and

Ricardo Córdova Macías  
Executive Director  
Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo

Report prepared for USAID/ El Salvador  
May 25, 1995

Mitchell A. Seligson is currently Centennial Professor of Political Science and Fellow of The Center for the Americas, Vanderbilt University. He is Founder and Director of the Latin American Public Opinion Project, LAPOP. Contact: [m.seligson@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:m.seligson@vanderbilt.edu), Department of Political Science Vanderbilt University, Box 1817 Station B, Nashville, TN 37325, voice: (615) 322-6328; fax (615) 343-6003.

## Table of contents:

Chapter 1: Introduction: Methodology and Sample Characteristics .....	1
Chapter 2: The "Culture Shift" Thesis in El Salvador .....	33
Chapter 3: Prospects for Stable Democracy in El Salvador: Political Tolerance and System Support .....	44
Chapter 4: Elections .....	68
Chapter 5: Local Government and Democracy .....	104
Conclusions .....	125
Appendix 1 (questionnaire) and 2 (sample population data), available in the Spanish language edition.	

# Chapter 1

## Introduction:

## Methodology and Sample Characteristics

In 1992 an agreement was reached to end the 12-year long civil war in El Salvador, opening the door to the establishment of a viable democracy in this violence-racked country. It cannot be forgotten that while from the point of view of the United States, the civil war in El Salvador was a low intensity conflict<sup>1</sup> for Salvadorans, it was far more intense than anything experienced by the United States in the twentieth century; the per capita fatality level in El Salvador was six times that suffered by the United States in World War II.<sup>2</sup>

In light of the intensity and breadth of the destruction caused by the civil war, it is nothing short of a wonder that the peace agreements have already achieved so many of their goals: the guerrillas have laid down their arms and the government has reduced the size of its armed forces, demobilizing the most infamous of the military units accused of human rights abuses. Equally if not more important for democratic stability, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) has been legalized as a political party and ran candidates for local and national office in the 1994 elections. Numerous other key reforms have been accomplished or are underway, including the creation of a civilian controlled national police force, the cleansing of the army of notorious human rights violators, the design of a new agrarian code, and the implementation of several land reform measures. Today in El Salvador democratic institutions are flourishing at all levels. At the national level, there is an active and increasingly efficient legislature<sup>3</sup> at the local level municipal governments have

---

<sup>1</sup>See Benjamin C. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*. Sta. Monica: Rand, 1991.

<sup>2</sup>In El Salvador, estimates are that between 75,000 and 80,000 people lost their lives. In the United States, 362,561 members of the armed forces were killed between December, 1941 and the end of the war. See Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History*, New York: Holt, 1989, p. 746.

<sup>3</sup>See "The Legislative Strengthening Project of El Salvador," Report to USAID, El Salvador, December, 1992, Mitchell A. Seligson, Mark B. Rosenberg and Annabelle Conroy; and Mitchell A. Seligson, *La opinión pública salvadoreña frente a la Asamblea Legislativa*. Colección de Documentos, Serie Análisis de la Realidad Nacional, FUNDAUNGO, San Salvador, El Salvador, enero 1995.

become more responsive to citizen demands than ever before in the history of the country,<sup>4</sup> and civil society organizations are blanketing the country.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the advances achieved in the fulfillment of the Peace Accords, it would be misleading to ignore the several difficulties in implementing some of them. Delays and/or the failure to fulfill the accords are most notable in the following areas: a) public security; b) the land transfer program; c) recommendations of the Truth Commission related to the reforms of the judicial system; and d) measures to guarantee the reinsertion of the excombatents. Still being discussed is a rescheduling of the fulfillment of the pending accords.

El Salvador's democratic development in the post civil war period mirrors that of a number of countries around the world that are emerging from a long period of turmoil and authoritarian rule. International agencies, including USAID, have overwhelmingly focused their efforts in the strengthening of key democratic institutions in order to contribute to democratic stability in the Third World. Such efforts have included programs to strengthen legislatures, judiciaries and the electoral system so as to help guarantee majority rule and minority rights, the fundamental factors that make democratic stability possible. Unless such rights are guaranteed, majorities, James Madison argued in the classic work, *The Federalist*, No. 10, will tyrannize over minorities, and political stability will break down. In each country, the immediate goal of the effort has been to make the institutions more efficient and, at the same time, more responsive to the citizenry. In many cases such efforts have achieved notable success; legislatures pass bills more efficiently, courts process cases more quickly and election tribunals run cleaner, more representative elections.

In democracies, efficient, constitutionally legitimate institutions are, however, no guarantee that the wishes of the majority will be respected. Consider the sorry case of child labor legislation in the United States. In 1916, decades after similar

---

<sup>4</sup>For evidence, see Mitchell A. Seligson and Ricardo Córdova Macías, "Considerations for Increasing Participation in Local Democratic Government in El Salvador." Report to USAID, El Salvador, August, 1993. Typescript.

<sup>5</sup>"Civil Society and Democratic Development in El Salvador," co-authored by Harry Blair, John Booth, Ricardo Córdova and Mitchell A. Seligson. Washington, D. C.: USAID, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, Center for Development Information and Evaluation, Program and Operations Division, October, 1994, typescript, 85 pp.

legislation had been passed in Western Europe, the U.S. Congress passed the first child labor legislation in the history of the country by a vote of 337-46 in the House and 52-12 in the Senate. The Supreme Court, however, ruled that legislation unconstitutional by a vote of 8-1. A constitutional amendment was introduced with overwhelming support of Congress and supported by the majority of the state legislatures, but it was not until 1942 that the Supreme Court upheld child labor laws as constitutional. Thus, for decades a quintessential democratic institution, the U.S. Supreme Court, was able not only to thwart the wishes of the overwhelming majority of elected national representatives and the wishes of the majority of elected state legislatures, but by all accounts the overwhelming wishes of the American public.<sup>6</sup>

If democratic institutions offer no guarantee of majority rule, minority rights and ultimately democratic stability, what does? According to Robert Dahl's classic statement, it is the values of citizens that offers this guarantee:

The extent of consensus on democratic norms, social training in the norms, consensus on policy alternatives, and political activity: the extent to which these and other conditions are present determines the viability of democracy itself and provides protections for minorities.<sup>7</sup>

Ample cross-national evidence exists in the academic literature that supports the proposition that belief in the legitimacy of democratic institutions, undergirded by a political culture steeped in democratic values, is a necessary (but obviously not sufficient) condition for democratic stability. On the one hand, it has been demonstrated that almost all Third World countries are regularly confronted by serious challenges to their stability. In recent years, those challenges have increasingly come in the form of economic crises brought on either by flawed macro-economic policies or external challenges. In other cases, domestic insurgency has caused many a regime to totter and in some instances fall. Mexico today faces both such challenges. Yet, not all regimes collapse; the ability of democratic regimes to survive the threat of breakdown has been traced directly to the commitment of citizens and elites to democratic rules of the game. One recent study of the wide scale breakdowns of democracy in Latin America in the sixties and seventies in such countries as Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay shows how beliefs, preferences and actions were

---

<sup>6</sup>The review of child labor legislation is contained in Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. University of Chicago Press, 1956.

<sup>7</sup>Dahl, *op. cit.*, p. 135. In the original quotation, Dahl uses the term he coined, "polyarchy" to refer to democracy. The term "democracy" has been substituted here to avoid confusion with the less-known terminology.

central and far more important than institutions.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, another study has demonstrated that a deep commitment to the political system made it possible for Costa Rica to ride out in the early 1980s its most severe economic crisis of the century with no serious threat to stability.<sup>9</sup> Institutions are, of course, not irrelevant, but by themselves cannot insure democratic stability irrespective of their efficiency.

On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that the success of reforms designed to establish and strengthen democratic institutions can only succeed in an environment in which citizens develop support for those institutions. In Italy, for example, in 1970 new regional governments were created in a major experiment in decentralization. Those regional governments that succeeded are ones in which civic culture values predominated.<sup>10</sup>

In light of this evidence, it is unfortunate that more attention has not been placed in USAID programming on the shaping and measurement of democratic values. The emphasis has been heavily on the institutional side under the misguided assumption that "getting the institutions right" will ensure democratic stability. In fact, unless citizens believe that their courts grant them fair trials and their legislatures pass fair laws, efficient court systems and legislatures will not promote stable democracy. Furthermore, unless citizens are committed to the principles of majority rule and minority rights, unless they are willing to tolerate the rights of those with whom they disagree, democratic stability will be ephemeral. In short, citizen support for key democratic institutions coupled with widespread tolerance of opposition views and other minorities, among both the mass public and key elite groups, are a fundamental requisites for stable democracy.

---

<sup>8</sup>See Youssef Cohen, *Radicals, Reformers and Reactionaries: The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Collapse of Democracy in Latin America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

<sup>9</sup>See "Democratic Stability and Economic Crisis: Costa Rica, 1978-1983," Mitchell A. Seligson and Edward N. Muller, *International Studies Quarterly*, 31(September, 1987), pp. 301-326. Reprinted as, "Estabilidad democrática y crisis económica: Costa Rica, 1978-1983, *Anuario de estudios Centroamericanos*, Vol. 16 (2), 1990 and Vol. 17 (1), 1991, pp. 71-92. Also see, "Ordinary Elections in Extraordinary Times: The Political Economy of Voting in Costa Rica." In John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Elections and Democracy in Central America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989. Reprinted as "Elecciones ordinarias en tiempos extraordinarios: la economía política del voto en Costa Rica," Co-authored with Miguel Gómez Barrantes, *Anuario de estudios centroamericanos*, 13(1), 1987, pp. 5-24.

<sup>10</sup>See Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

In El Salvador the importance of democratic values is especially obvious. The civil war was fought over many issues, but one theme transcends all of the particulars: the need for the creation of "political space" for opposition sentiment. Throughout El Salvador's history, opposition groups have been crushed, the most dramatic example of which occurred in the 1930s during the infamous "matanza" in which as many as 30,000 peasants are said to have been killed by the military.<sup>11</sup> In order for such "space" to be created, it is not only vital that democratic institutions exist, but that there is a widespread commitment to the rights of the opposition.

This study is an effort to probe into the minds of Salvadorans and to help determine the extent to which there are shared values supportive of stable democracy. Although the report will look at a number of values, we will focus on two fundamental values: support for the political system (what we will call system support) and support for democratic values, especially political tolerance. The question we will ask is straightforward: is there evidence of an increase in support for these values since the days of the civil war? If there is, then there is reason for optimism. If there is not, one would not want to bank on the stability of democracy in El Salvador.

In order to measure increases, one must have a baseline of data from which to draw comparisons. We are fortunate that such a baseline exists as part of the University of Pittsburgh Central American Public Opinion Project. That study collected attitudinal survey data on the opinions of over 4,000 Central Americans in the metropolitan areas of each of the six Spanish speaking republics of the region.<sup>12</sup> Identical questions were used in each survey, and sample designs were similar in each case. As a result, comparison among the six countries is greatly facilitated.

Country samples were of area probability design. In each country, the most recent population census data were used. Within each stratum, census maps were

---

<sup>11</sup>Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971.

<sup>12</sup>The funding sources included the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Tinker Foundation, Inc., the Howard Heinz Endowment, the North-South Center, the University of Pittsburgh Central Research Small Grant Fund and the Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos (IDELA). The collaborating institutions in Central America were: Guatemala-- Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES); El Salvador--the Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos (IDELA); Honduras--Centro de Estudio y Promoción del Desarrollo (CEPROD) and the Centro de Documentación de Honduras (CEDOH); Nicaragua--Centro de Estudios Internacionales (CEI), and the Escuela de Sociología, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA); Costa Rica--Universidad de Costa Rica; Panama--Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos "Justo Arosemena" (CELA). Collaborating doctoral students in Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh were Ricardo Córdova (El Salvador), Annabelle Conroy (Honduras), Orlando Pérez (Panama), and Andrew Stein (Nicaragua). Collaborating faculty were John Booth, University of North Texas (Nicaragua and Guatemala), and Jon Hurwitz, University of Pittsburgh (Costa Rica).



used to select, at random, an appropriate number of political subdivisions (e.g., districts) and, within each subdivision, the census maps were used to select an appropriate number of segments from which to draw the interviews. In Central America, census bureaus divide the census maps into small areas designed to be covered by a single censustaker. The maps are sufficiently detailed to show all of the dwelling units. In places like Panama City, where there are a large number of apartment buildings, lists are available that show the number of dwelling units within each building. In the larger buildings, this sometimes results in more than one census segment per building.

Costa Rica was established as the country for the pilot test of the survey items. That sample was gathered in fall 1990. The surveys in the other five countries were then carried out during the summer of 1991 and the winter of 1991-92. The design called for samples in the range of at least 500 to a maximum of 1,000 respondents from each country. The lower boundary of 500 respondents was established so as to provide a sufficient number of cases from each country to allow for reliable statistical analysis at the level of the country.<sup>13</sup> The sample sizes for each country are as follows: Guatemala, N = 904; El Salvador, N = 910; Honduras, N = 566; Nicaragua, N = 704; Costa Rica, N = 597; Panama, N = 500.

### **Sample Design of the 1995 Survey**

The sample designed for this study was a multi-stage stratified, cluster sample of probability design. In total, 1,600 individuals were interviewed distributed among all of El Salvador's 14 departments and 46 out of its 262 municipalities. The sample is the first one constructed in the country over the last decade to be based on current population census data accurate at the level of the municipality, and updated census maps. In that sense, it is superior to all prior survey efforts.

#### Goals of Design

Four goals were established for the sample design for this study. First, the sample would be broadly representative of the entire adult voting age population of

---

<sup>13</sup>By "reliable" what is meant is that the sample had to be large enough so that the confidence intervals were small enough to be able to speak with some precision about the results. A probability sample of 500 produces a sampling error of +/- 4.5% on a 50-50 split at the 95% confidence level. Hence, on a 50-50 binomial split, for Panama, the smallest sample in this study, the true result could be anywhere between 54.5% and 45.5%. Clustering within each sample (required by the area probability design) tends to decrease the accuracy of the sample (because of intra-class correlation), whereas stratification would tend to increase the efficiency.

El Salvador.<sup>14</sup> Such a sample would include all geographic regions of the country, all major urban concentrations, and properly represent the gender division in the country. Second, the portion of the sample representing the greater metropolitan San Salvador area would be drawn from the same sample frame as was the 1991 University of Pittsburgh Central American Public Opinion Project in order to maximize comparability with that baseline study. Third, the sample design to be used in the 1995 study would be easily replicable for follow-up studies that USAID may wish to undertake in future years. Fourth, since political stability is a major concern of this study, the sample would be designed in such a way as to maximize the opportunity to include sufficient numbers of those citizens who have traditionally provided a support base for the FMLN. It was, after all, the FMLN supporters who in the past sought to fundamentally alter the Salvadoran system of government.

These goals were ambitious, especially in light of the fact that no prior studies of public opinion in El Salvador had ever achieved them because of the lack of an adequate sample frame. Fortunately, the availability of such a frame for this study made it possible to achieve each of these goals.

### Background on Prior Sample Designs

In the past, the major difficulty survey researchers have had in El Salvador was to develop an adequate sample frame. Normally, such a task is relatively easy since one begins with the most recent national census, from which one can not only obtain the size of the national population, but its geographic distribution. Further, national censuses are normally conducted on the basis of nation-wide census mapping, and it is those maps that guide the surveyor to the selection of neighborhoods and households to be included in the sample.

In El Salvador, the civil war had two major impacts that greatly affected the sample frames from which survey researchers draw their samples. First, the war prevented carrying out of a population census in 1981, and indeed the census was delayed until 1992. This means that surveyors had to base themselves on the prior census, that of 1971. Surveys conducted in the early 1990s, therefore, were using population census data twenty years out of date. Second, the war caused massive internal and international migration. Some researchers have reported that as many as one million Salvadorans left the country during the war. The internal migration has been equally dramatic. In a study conducted by Seligson, it was found that there was

---

<sup>14</sup>The legal age for voting is 18. We decided to interview all of those between 18 and 65. The decision not to interview those older than 65 was based on the declining probability of finding economically and political active and attentive individuals older than 65.

an extremely rapid process of urbanization between 1971 and 1991. The economically active population in agriculture, for example, declined from nearly half of the population to less than one third in that period.<sup>15</sup> Surveys that use the 1971 census as the base of their sample frames would thus be greatly over representing rural El Salvador.

### The New 1992 Sample Frame: Stratification Criteria

The national population and housing census of El Salvador was finally conducted in October, 1992 by the Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. In February, 1993, preliminary census tabulations were released. This study utilized those tabulations as the basis for drawing the sample. They provide for the first time in decades an accurate assessment of the number and location of the population of El Salvador, an essential requirement for an accurate sample.

The census provides the population of each of El Salvador's 262 municipalities. Daniel Carr Associates had already developed a data base including the population of each of these municipalities. The data base was stratified following the standard classification in wide use in El Salvador: A) cities and towns greater than 80,000 (N=13); B) 40-80,000 (N=15); C) 20,000-39,999 (N=31), and D) fewer than 20,000 inhabitants (N=203).

The large number of municipalities of greatly varying size suggested that the sample be stratified so as to increase its precision. The first stage of stratification was to select the three major metropolitan areas of the country, San Salvador, Santa Ana and San Miguel. These three cities were automatically included in the sample as they comprise 1.7 million of El Salvador's 5 million population, or 33 percent of the national total (details are given in the tables below). These three cities collectively comprise 11 municipalities, 9 in greater metropolitan San Salvador, and one each in Santa Ana and San Miguel. The sample design for the 1991 baseline survey was utilized for this 1995 survey for the San Salvador area. The same municipalities that were included in 1991 were included in 1995.

The stratification of the sample proceeded by considering the remaining 251 municipalities, as stratified by their size as indicated above. Stratum A (minus the municipalities already considered in the three major metropolitan areas) comprised 3.7% of the national population, stratum B comprised 15.7% of the population, stratum C 16.6% and D 31.1%. The sample design was based on "probability

---

<sup>15</sup>Mitchell A. Seligson, "Thirty Years of Transformation in the Agrarian Structure of El Salvador, 1961-1991," forthcoming, 1995, Latin American Research Review.

proportional to size" (PPS) criteria, and therefore the size of each stratum of the sample was designed to match the national population proportions.

It would have been logistically impossible to conduct interviews in each of the 262 municipalities, and based upon prior experience and the human resources available it was decided to select between 40 and 45 municipalities for interviews. In total, we interviewed in 46 municipalities, 43 in the national sample, and 3 additional municipalities in the additional FMLN sample (described below).<sup>16</sup> These 46 municipalities were spread out over all of El Salvador's 14 departments, providing for an unusually comprehensive sample of the country. For the national sample, the division was as follows: Stratum B comprises 15 municipalities containing 15.7% of the national population, and we decided to interview in 7 of those, which were selected using a random start and a systematic selection from the list organized by size. The list for stratum C was organized by size but also divided into two lists, ex-conflictive zones (11) and non-conflictive zones (19). We used a similar systematic selection procedure, and chose 8 municipalities from the list of 31, 3 in the conflictive zones and 5 in the non-conflict zones. Finally, stratum D was organized by geographical groups, Western, Central, Middle-Eastern, and Eastern to provide broad geographical spread. These lists were stratified into conflict and non-conflict areas, with the exception of the Western region, where little conflict went on. We drew 15 municipalities out of these 230, using a systematic selection with a random start that assured that would be dispersed among the regions and within the regions in conflict versus non-conflict zones. This yielded a total of 43 municipalities included in the sample, or 16% of all municipalities. These 16% contained, however, 51% of the nation's population.<sup>17</sup> In short, the geographical dispersion of the sample guaranteed that all zones of the country would be represented, and that an approximately proportional number of interviews would be drawn from the conflictive versus the non-conflictive zones of the country.<sup>18</sup>

In preparation for the 1992 census, nation-wide census maps were prepared. We utilized these maps to draw our sample, and are the first survey organization to be

---

<sup>16</sup>Since one of the FMLN municipalities was also randomly selected for the survey, only 3 FMLN municipalities were added to the sample.

<sup>17</sup>Recall that stratum D contains a large number of municipalities each of which comprises a very small number of people. In contrast, a small number of urban municipalities concentrate a large proportion of the national population. It is for that reason that the proportion of total municipalities included in the sample is far lower than the proportion of the national population that they represent.

<sup>18</sup>The fully stratified listing of municipalities is contained in the report prepared by Daniel Carr & Associates, "Evaluation of the Social Stabilization and Municipal Development Strengthening Project," February, 1994, Appendix A-2.

given access to them.<sup>19</sup> The maps divide the country into its 262 municipalities. For each municipality the maps provide a total count of dwelling units for all urban areas. The definition of urban is far broader than one would normally consider since the objective was not to classify urban versus rural in terms of population size of the area (e.g., towns of 50,000 and larger), but to distinguish between urbanized areas and rural areas. An urbanized area is one in which there is a clear demarcation of streets along which a concentration of houses can be located. Rural areas are those in which scattered houses are found, normally associated with farms. Using this definition, urban areas would include everything from congested city streets in downtown San Salvador, to a cluster of houses located near a church in a rural hamlet. The census maps show each of these urban areas in great detail, designating "census segments" for each of them. In many urban areas there would be multiple census segments, each one normally comprised of from between 30 to as many as 70 dwelling units.

For the purposes of this study, census segments have been designated our primary sampling unit. In total, we conducted interviews in 345 census segments (including the FMLN over sample described below). We consider each of them to be of the same size, even though in practice the size does vary, but over the entire landscape of El Salvador, this variation is not meaningful for sample design purposes. Furthermore, for selection purposes, any segment selected that was found to have fewer than eight dwelling units was dropped for cost effectiveness reasons. We fixed the number of interviews per segment at 5, so as to make cost effective the time it would take to place an interviewer in each of these segments. The size of each "cluster" in the sample was 5. Clustering produces "intra-class correlation," a factor that increases somewhat confidence intervals of the sample. That is because individuals in a cluster have more in common with each other than they would with individuals selected entirely at random from the population. Nonetheless, when clusters are small, as they are in this case, the impact is not great when compared to the cost savings involved. The impact is further reduced by distributing the cases within the clusters. In this sample, within a segment dwelling units were selected using systematic selection of households to spread them out within the cluster. The houses were selected by beginning in the north west corner of the segment and then by walking around the block in a clockwise fashion. Within the household, the "next birthday" system was used, with a quota based on gender.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>We wish to thank Lic. Francisco Alemán R., Director General of the Census Bureau in El Salvador for facilitating these maps to us.

<sup>20</sup>The national distribution is 48% male, 52% female.

Although the new census maps make possible drawing a much better sample than earlier efforts, one weakness of the national census maps provided to us is that they did not cover the remote areas. In order to draw a sample of these areas, we referred to the preliminary census tabulations given to us, which divided each municipal population into the county seat ("cabecera") and rural areas ("resto"). Within each municipality included in the sample, we divided our sample based upon the urban-rural division indicated by the census bureau. We drew the urban sample directly from the census maps, using the census segments discussed above. For the rural areas, we obtained a list of cantones, and treated each canton as a segment with the same population (no population figures were available). We then drew the appropriate number of interviews from randomly selected cantons in each municipality. For each canton selected (treated as a segment) we would draw up to five interviews. For example, if the municipality was 50% urban and 50% rural, we would draw 50% of the sample from those two cantons. Once a canton was selected, the interviewers would locate the village center (usually locating the church, school or general store) and branch out from there in the direction pointed to by the hands of the watch of the interviewer, and then interview in every third house.

### FMLN Over Sample

We decided upon a sample size of 1,400 interviews. This would give us a worst case confidence interval of  $\pm 2.7\%$ .<sup>21</sup> However, for important subgroups of the population, the sample size would be considerably smaller. Since we were especially interested in the views of FMLN supporters, we decided to oversample this group by adding 200 additional interviews in areas likely to have a large number of FMLN supporters. We examined the election returns and selected four municipalities in which the FMLN received strong support: Suchitoto, Cuscatlán (FMLN = 60%), Meanguera, Morazán (FMLN = 61%), San Antonio los Ranchos, Chalatenango (FMLN = 86%), and San José Las Flores, Chalatenango (FMLN = 87%). We conducted 50 interviews in each of these four areas. The overall sample, therefore, consisted of 1,600 interviews, and the final sample weights these interviews so as not to over represent the FMLN in the national picture. The division of the sample in these municipalities followed the same procedure described above except in San Antonio Los Ranchos, a case in which owing to the war, at the time of the census there was no rural population. At the time of the survey, however, the rural area had been

---

<sup>21</sup>The worst case is when the population is divided 50-50 on a given item. Splits that are less than even would provide a smaller confidence interval. For example, in a 70/30 split, the confidence interval would drop to  $\pm 2.4\%$ .

repopulated, but we had no way of knowing the precise numbers, so we merely assumed at 50/50 split.

### **Structure of the Sample**

We have described the sample design in some detail. In the map below we present the results of the design. As can be seen, the sample is very well disbursed throughout El Salvador.

Map 1 about here



We also provide a more detailed breakdown of the sample described above in the tables 1.1 and 1.2 below. Table 1.1 shows the division of the sample for the major metropolitan areas, while table 1.2 contains the sample data for the rest of the country plus a summary of the metropolitan data. In these tables the various strata are shown and the percent of the sample to be drawn from each stratum are given. Furthermore, the actual municipalities from which the interviews are to be drawn are listed.

Table 1.1. Sample Design for Major Metropolitan Areas

Dept.	Municipio	Pop.	% pop.	Sample N	Number of segments
San Salvador	San Salvador	422,570	8.4	118	24
	Mejicanos	145,000	2.9	41	8
	Soyapango	251,811	5.0	70	14
	Ilopango	94,879	1.9	27	5
	Cuscatancingo	55,193	1.1	15	3
	Ciudad Delgado	104,790	2.1	29	6
	San Marcos	54,533	1.1	15	3
La Libertad	Nueva San Salvador	116,575	2.3	32	6
	Antiguo Cuscatlán	29,899	.6	8	2
Total metropolitan S. Sal.		1,275,250	25.4	355	71
Santa Ana	Santa Ana	202,337	4.0	56	11
San Miguel	San Miguel	182,817	3.6	50	10
Total		1,660,404	33.0	461	92
El Salvador		5,047,925	100.0	1,400	280

Table 1.2. Sample Design for Each Stratum

Stratum	No. of Municipios	Population	% pop.	Sample N	Number of segments	No. of muni in sample	Municipios selected	Population	Sam. size/ muni.	No. of segs.
Metro San Salvador, Santa Ana and San Miguel	11	1,660,404	33.0	461	92	11	see table 1.1	1,660,404	461	92
"A" (> 80,000 except metro. San Salvador, Santa Ana and San Miguel = Apopa and Ahuachapan)	2	184,648	3.7	51	10	2	Apopa	100,763	28	6
							Ahuachapan	83,885	23	5
							Total, stratum A	184,648	50	10
"B" (40,000-79,999)	15	794,675	15.7	220	44	7	Sonsonate, Sonsonate	76,200	43	9
							Usulután, Usulután	62,967	35	7
							San Martín, San Salvador	54,125	30	6
							Opico, La Libertad	53,193	30	6
							Ilobasco, Cabañas	51,648	29	6
							Acajutla, Sonsonate	47,409	27	5
							San Vicente, San Vicente	45,824	26	5
							Total, stratum B	391,366	220	44
"C" (20,000-39,999)	31	840,626	16.6	233	47	8	Santiago Nonualco, La Paz	32,338	37	7
							Ciudad Barrios, San Miguel	23,118	26	5
							Aguilares, San Salvador	20,073	23	5
							La Libertad, La Libertad	34,763	40	8
							Atiquizaya, Ahuachapán	28,230	32	6
							Santa Rosa de Lima, La Unión	23,788	27	5
							Tacuba, Ahuachapán	21,359	24	5
							Pasaquina, La Unión	20,116	23	5
							Total, stratum C	203,785	232	46

Stratum	No. of Municipios	Population	% pop.	Sample N	Number of segments	No. of muni in sample	Municipios selected	Population	Sam. size/ muni.	No. of segs.
"D" (< 20,000)	203	1,567,572	31.1	435	87	15	El Porvenir, Santa Ana	5,948	22	4
							Nombre de Jesús, Chalaterango	4,550	17	3
							San Matias, La Libertad	7,550	28	6
							Suchitoto, Cuscatlán	12,776	48	10
							Azacualpa, Chalatenango	1,454	5	1
							San Pedro Nonualco, La Paz	9,923	37	7
							San Sebastian, San Vicente	12,662	47	9
							San Miguel Tepezontes, La Paz	4,386	16	3
							Jucuaran, Usulután	12,750	48	10
							Chapeltique, San Miguel	9,796	37	7
							Delicias de Concepción, Morazán	4,847	18	4
							Nueva Esparta, La Unión	13,639	51	10
							Nueva Guadalupe, San Miguel	6,438	24	5
							San José, La Unión	3,739	14	3
							Jicalapa, La Libertad	5,901	22	4
							Total stratum D	116,359	434	86
Total universe, entire country	262	5,047,925	100.1	1,400	280	43	Total sample, entire country	2,556,562	1,397	278

## Sample Characteristics

In the paragraphs below we describe the basic characteristics of the sample. We begin with a comparison of the sample design and the actual results produced by the sample in terms of the strata. We then move to a description of the demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by the socio-economic characteristics. We conclude this chapter with a profile of the level of attentiveness of the respondents to the mass media and listing of their major preoccupations.

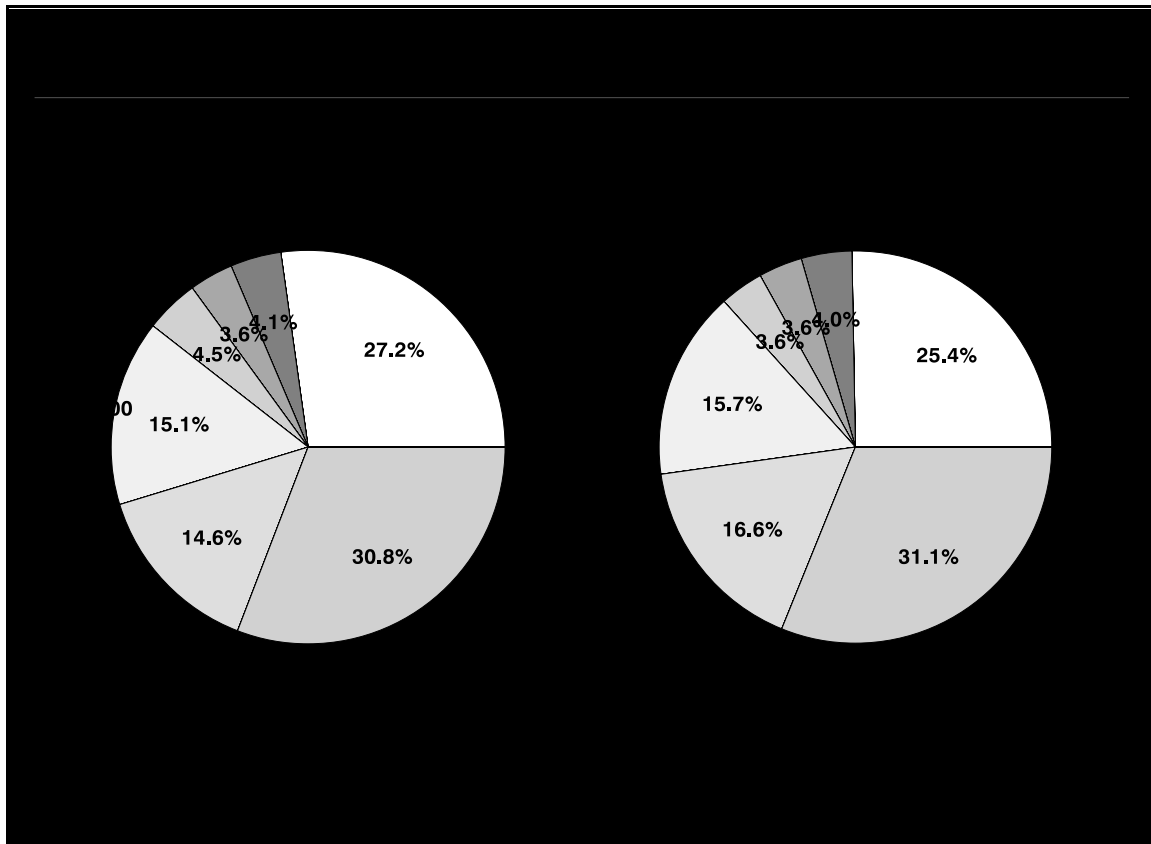
Throughout the remainder of this chapter and in many of the analyses that follow, we will focus on the sample strata as a central independent variable in the analysis. By doing so, we can compare the attitudes and behaviors of Salvadorans in the San Salvador area, the only area covered by the 1991 survey, to the citizens in the other major cities, and in the towns and villages that represent the three remaining strata of the sample. In effect, then, we will be examining these attitudes and behaviors in a sample that ranges from the teaming metropolis of San Salvador down to rural villages with populations of no more than a few hundred citizens. The prior analyses conducted with the University of Pittsburgh Public Opinion Project data base have been unable to make such comparisons because of their limitation to major urban areas of Central America. In the ROCAP-supported study of local government in Central America conducted in 1994 by the University of Pittsburgh, national sample data were collected for each of the six countries and in many cases important differences were found depending upon the population size of the community in which the interview was conducted.<sup>22</sup> Those findings suggest that similar differences might be found in the area of democratic values in El Salvador.

### Sample Design vs. Actual Sample

As noted in the discussion on the sample design, our purpose was to replicate as closely as possible the distribution of the population of the country within our sample. Only in that way can we speak of a truly representative national sample. In the pie charts below (figure 1.1), the sample design is presented along side of the actual sample obtained through the field work. The charts focus exclusively on the primary sample, excluding the additional 200 FMLN-area respondents since the inclusion of those respondents would distort the national results. We only use those 200 when we want to take a close look at the FMLN supporters as a special group of analysis.

---

<sup>22</sup>See Mitchell A. Seligson, "Central Americans View their Local Governments: A Six-Nation Study, 1994." Presented to the Regional Office for Central American Programs (ROCAP), Guatemala, October 5, 1994.



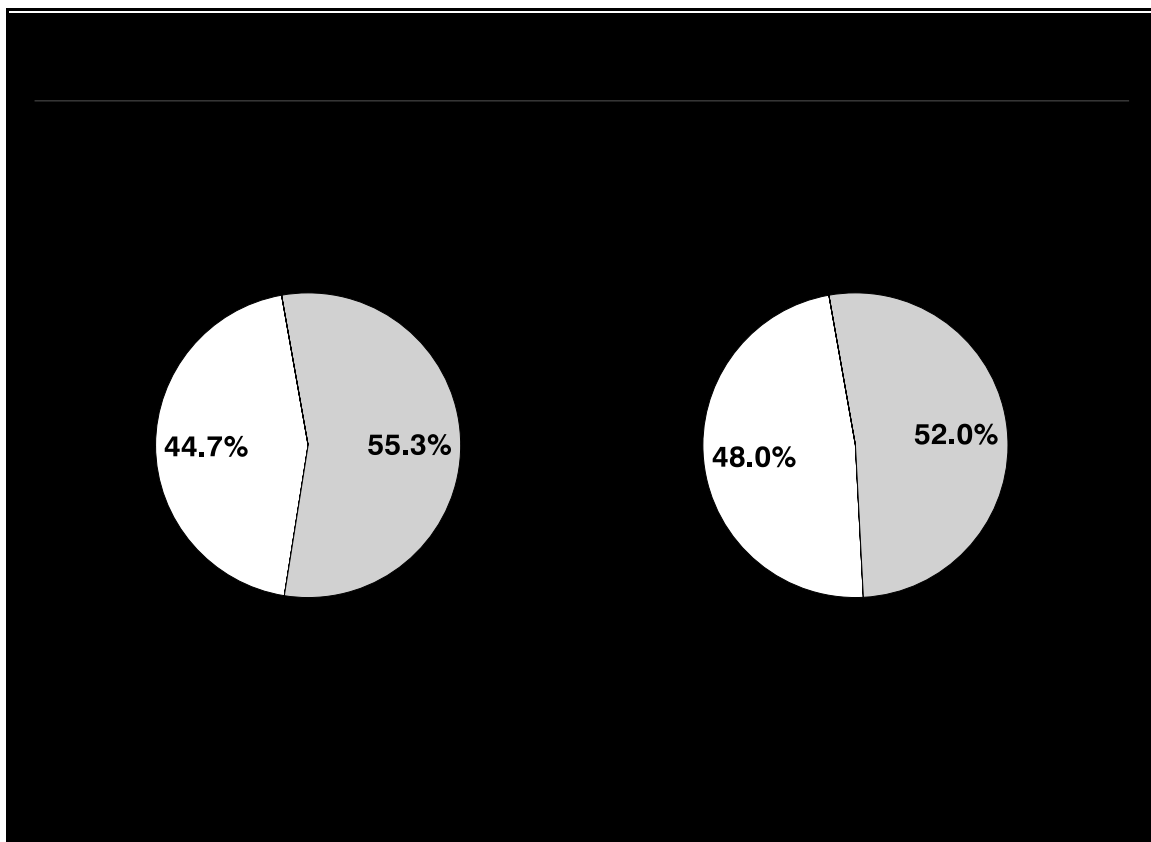
**Figure 1.1**

The comparison of the sample design with the actual sample reveals that we were successful in matching the two. No major variation emerges, and therefore one can conclude that the sample well represents the population of El Salvador as stratified by size of locality of the interview.

### Demographic Profile

El Salvador's population is reported by the Census Bureau to be 48% male and 52% female. This deviation from the expected 50-50 split is partially a result of the lower life expectancy among males in many countries. For example, the World Bank reports that in 1991, the life expectancy among females in lower-middle income countries (of which El Salvador is an example) was 69, whereas for males it was 64.

For El Salvador, the 1991 data were 68 and 63.<sup>23</sup> An additional but perhaps minor factor in El Salvador was the effect of the civil war, which probably killed many more males than females. We designed our sample to represent these gender divisions. As can be seen from figure 1.2, our sample did have more females than males, but at a proportion even higher than in the national population. The confidence interval of the sample was, it will be recalled,  $\pm 2.7$  percent, so the deviation from the expected is within .5% of the confidence interval of the sample design.



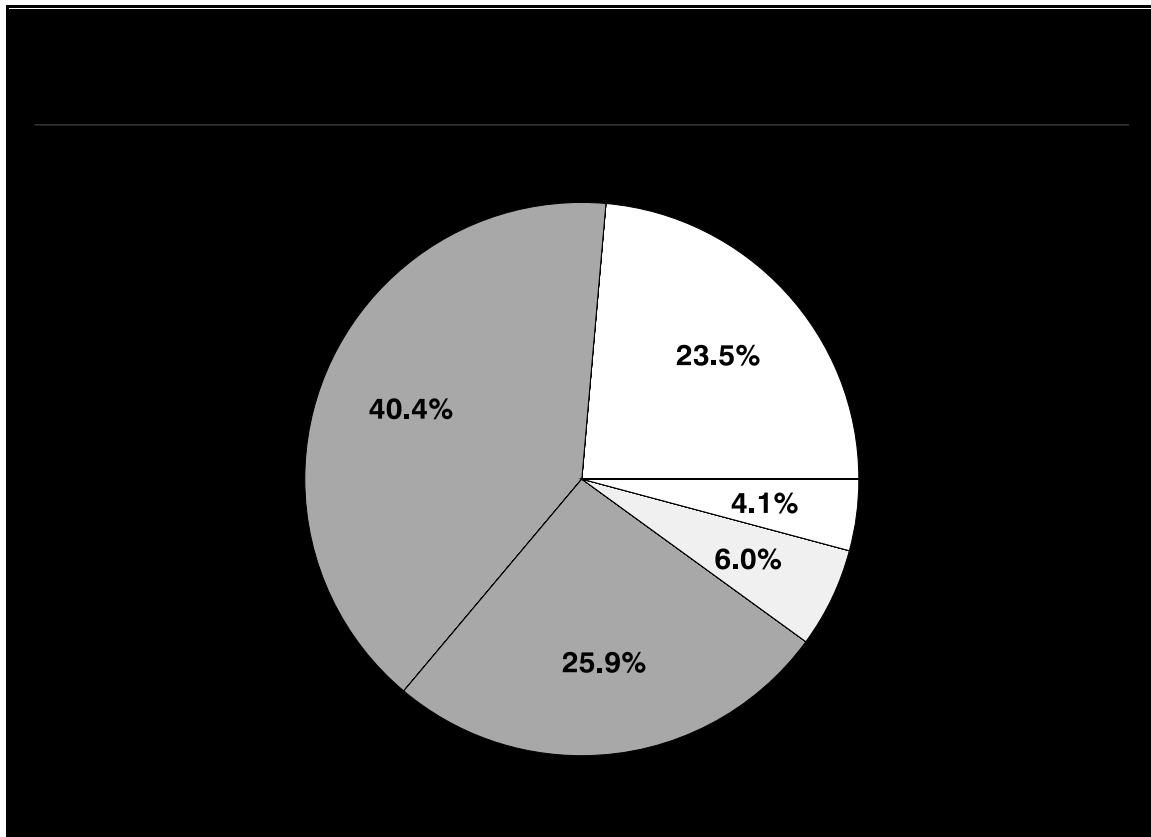
**Figure 1.2**

The average age of the respondents in the survey was 37.4 years. While there is some variation in age among the strata of the sample, it follows no consistent pattern. The mean age in the strata vary from a low of 35 years in San Salvador to a high of 38 years in some of the more rural areas.

---

<sup>23</sup>World Bank, World Development Report, 1993. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 300.

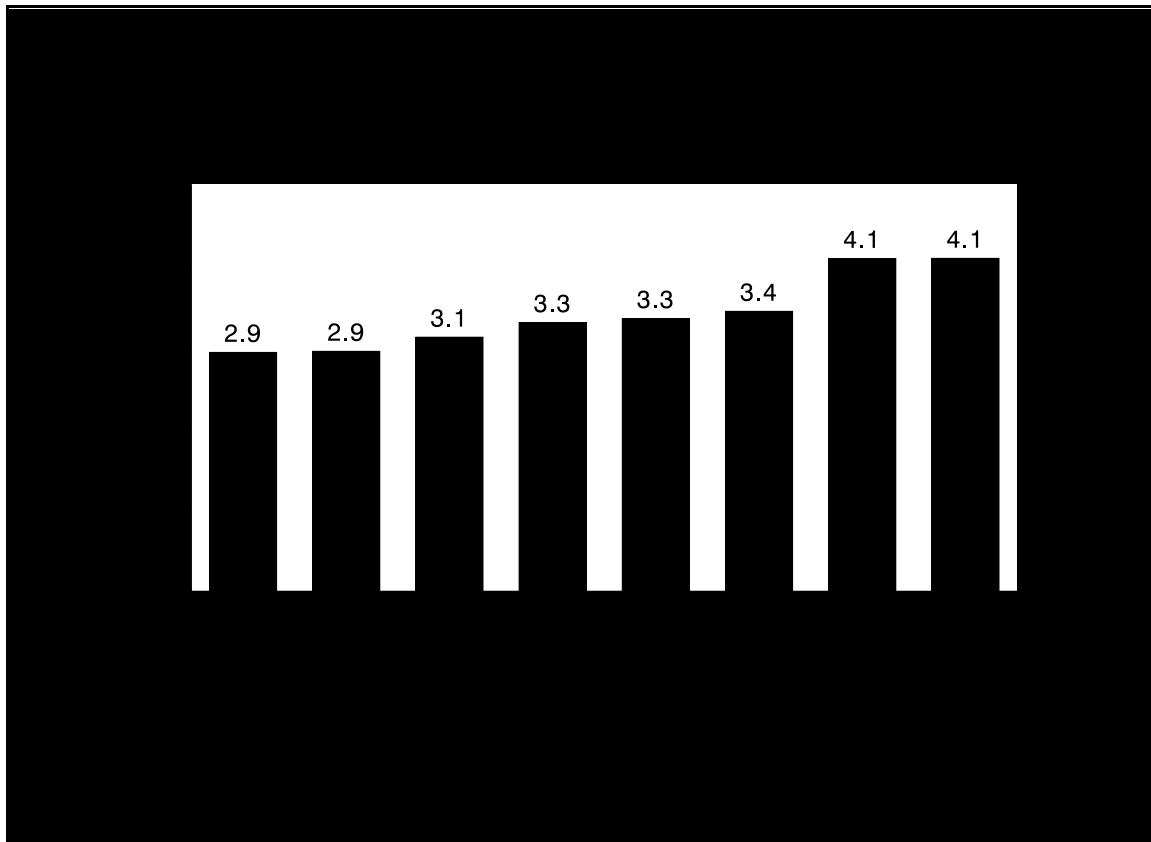
We next turn to marital status. Since the full set of tabulations of the national census are not yet available, we cannot compare our sample results with the national population. In figure 1.3 below, we show the breakdown of the sample by marital status. As can be seen in the chart, two-thirds of the respondents were living in a family unit (married or in common law union).



**Figure 1.3**

The final demographic information to be presented concerns the number of children in the family. We computed averages, excluding from the calculations respondents who indicated that they were not married, widowed, divorced or separated. Figure 1.4 below presents the results. As can clearly be seen, respondents in more rural areas have a higher number of children. Whereas in San Salvador and Santa Ana families have fewer than 3 children, those in the towns and villages smaller than 20,000 average over 4 children.

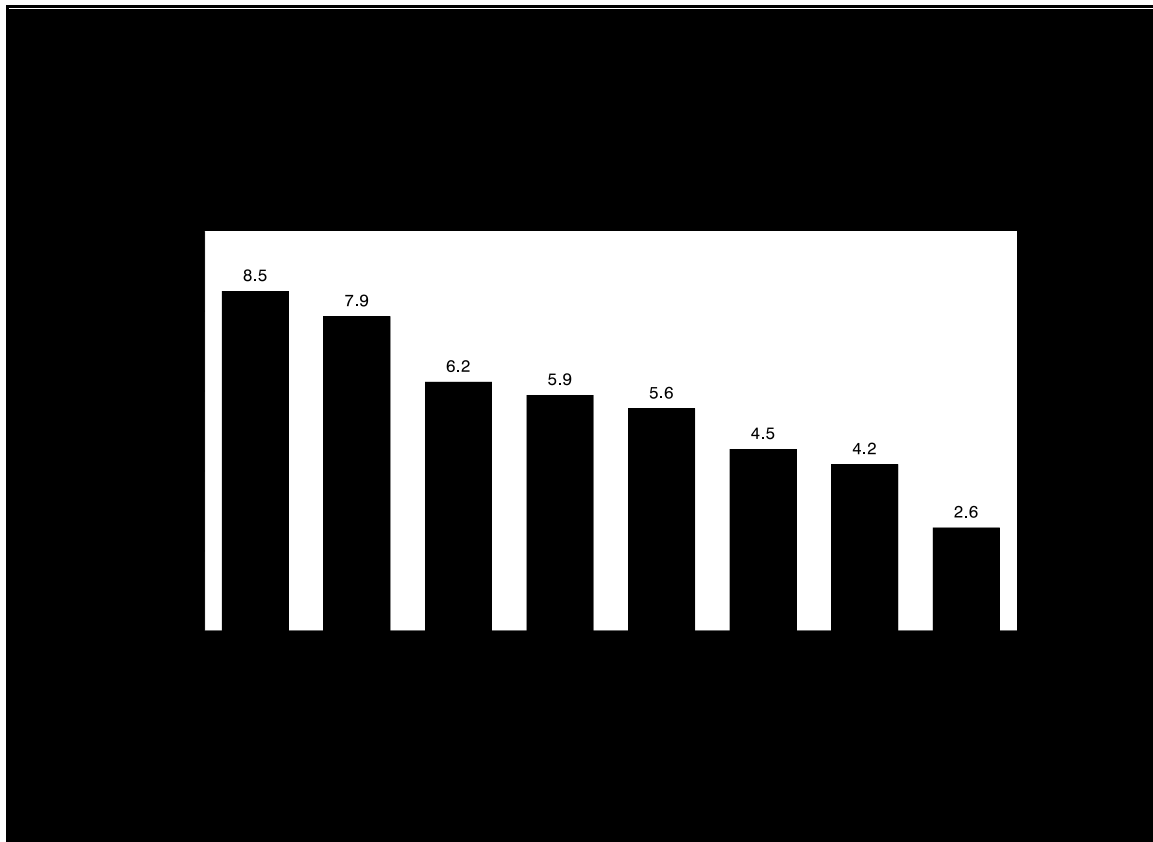




**Figure 1.4**

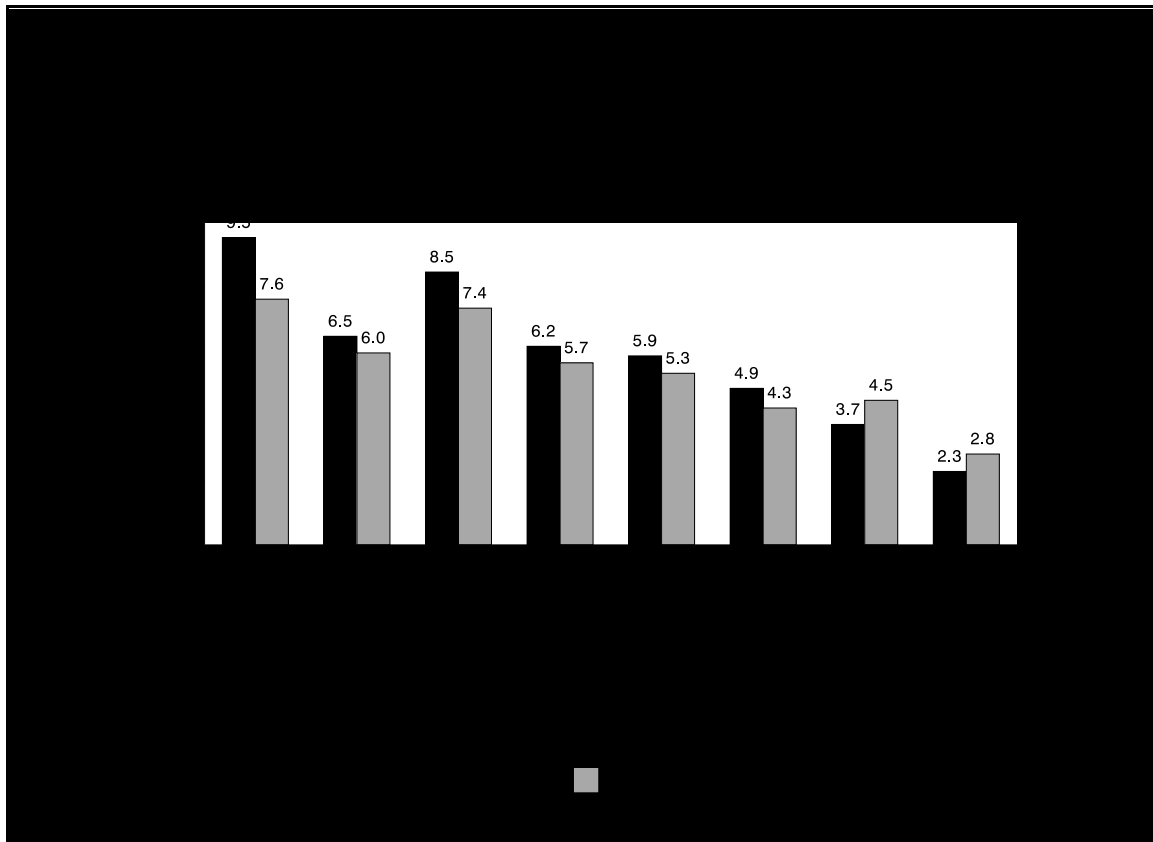
### Socio-economic profile

Education becomes a central variable in the study of democratic values. In many studies, more educated citizens express higher levels of political tolerance. In the sample, the average level of education was 5.9 years, but there was significant variation among the strata of the sample as is shown in figure 1.5 below. As can be seen, rural communities have much lower levels of education than do major metropolitan areas. The extreme is found in the FMLN communities, which were generally very rural, poor areas. It is reasonable to anticipate that democratic values would be lower in these less well educated areas, and our analysis of those values will examine this possibility with some care.



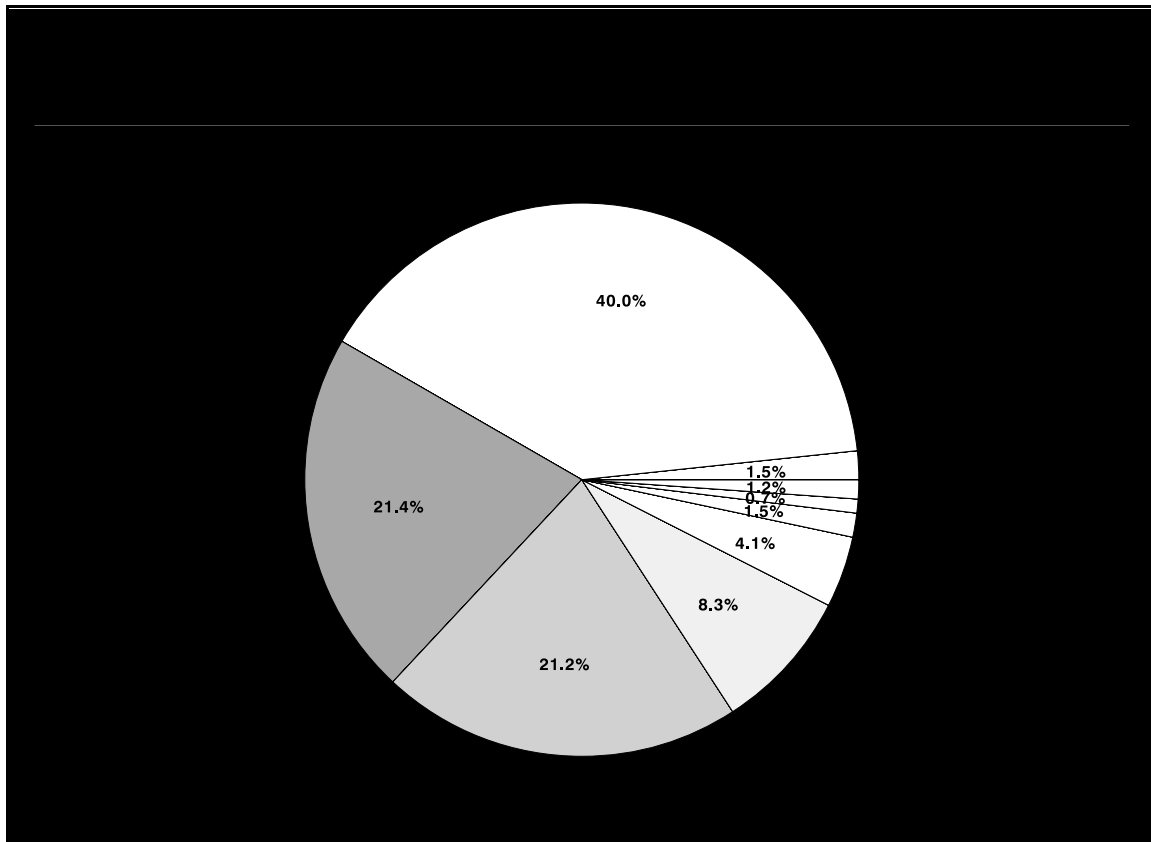
**Figure 1.5**

Education and gender also vary by sample strata. As is shown in figure 1.6 below, for all strata except the most rural, males are more highly educated than females. The higher level of education of males is, no doubt, a reflection of gender bias, in which more of a family's resources are invested in males than females. In rural areas, however, the demand for male farm labor in rural areas takes young boys away from their studies but allows girls to continue to study. As a result, even though females in rural zones still exhibit low levels of education when compared to their urban counterparts, they manage to pull ahead of rural males.



**Figure 1.6**

The incomes of the respondents are summarized in figure 1.7 below. Two-thirds of the respondents have incomes no greater than 1,000 colones per month. Incomes are highest in San Salvador, and lower in the rural areas.



**Figure 1.7**

Occupations of the respondents are summarized in table 1.1 below. Professional and clerical occupations, not surprisingly, are limited to San Salvador, while blue collar factory jobs are found in the major metropolitan areas, but are also found in towns of 40-80,000 population. In contrast, agricultural jobs are mainly found in rural areas.

Table 1.1 Sample Strata

	San Salvador		Santa Ana		San Miguel		> 80,000		40-80,000		20-40,000		<20,000		FMLN zones	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Occupation																
Professional.	6.8%	26	1.7%	1	.0%	0	4.7%	3	3.3%	7	2.9%	6	2.5%	11	2.0%	4
Clerical.....	13.1%	50	1.7%	1	11.8%	6	7.8%	5	4.7%	10	2.9%	6	1.4%	6	.0%	0
Factory labor	26.9%	103	25.9%	15	21.6%	11	7.8%	5	21.1%	45	18.4%	38	9.9%	43	6.0%	12
Rural labor..	1.3%	5	12.1%	7	5.9%	3	15.6%	10	8.9%	19	17.0%	35	12.9%	56	11.0%	22
Farmer.....	.3%	1	.0%	0	2.0%	1	.0%	0	.9%	2	2.9%	6	9.2%	40	7.0%	14
Renter.....	.3%	1	.0%	0	.0%	0	1.6%	1	1.4%	3	3.4%	7	11.1%	48	24.0%	48
Own business.	6.5%	25	13.8%	8	9.8%	5	10.9%	7	9.4%	20	9.2%	19	4.6%	20	2.5%	5
Student.....	10.7%	41	17.2%	10	15.7%	8	6.3%	4	5.2%	11	3.9%	8	3.9%	17	1.0%	2
Homemaker....	29.8%	114	24.1%	14	31.4%	16	39.1%	25	41.8%	89	35.0%	72	41.9%	182	43.0%	86
Other.....	4.4%	17	3.4%	2	2.0%	1	6.3%	4	3.3%	7	4.4%	9	2.5%	11	3.5%	7
TOTAL.....	100.0%	383	100.0%	58	100.0%	51	100.0%	64	100.0%	213	100.0%	206	100.0%	434	100.0%	200

## **Continuities and Changes in El Salvador's Political Process, 1991-1995**

This study compares the attitudes of Salvadorans in 1991, with attitudes in 1995. It is appropriate, therefore, for us to include a brief summary of the changes in political and economic conditions that have occurred since 1991 so that the attitude data can be placed in context.

When we compare the political situation in 1991 and 1995, the first difference we find is that in 1991 there was still a civil war in the country, whereas on January 16, 1995 El Salvador witnessed the third anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords. However, beyond this important issue, in this section we present the main aspects of the continuities and changes in the Salvadoran political process between 1991 and 1995.<sup>24</sup>

### **Continuity**

#### **Economic Model**

The candidate of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), Lic. Alfredo Cristiani, won the presidential elections in 1989. The new administration was committed to a neoliberal economic program and, by 1991, substantial progress in the program of economic adjustment had been achieved. ARENA won again in the 1994 elections, and the new, President Dr. Armando Calderón Sol assured, in general terms, the continuity of the economic program, while having to answer to some changes in both the international arena and the country's socio-economic situation. Nevertheless, we may say that there has been a continuity in the economic model between 1991 and 1995, a model that has shown several positive signs: economic growth and inflation decline, while still coping with a central government and trade deficit. In any case, the Salvadoran economy has entered a new phase of economic growth.

#### **Poverty and Economic Crisis**

During the 1980s, the war had contributed to the deepening of the economic crisis, expressed in negative rates of economic growth. The program of economic reform was

---

<sup>24</sup> See Ricardo Córdova Macías, "El Salvador en transición: el proceso de paz, las elecciones generales de 1994 y los retos de la gobernabilidad democrática," presented at the meeting of the Inter-American Dialogue "Democratic Governance in the Americas", Washington, D.C., September 12-13, 1994. A preliminary version appeared in FUNDAUNGO, Documentos de Trabajo, Serie Análisis de la Realidad Nacional 94-4, San Salvador, July 1994.

implemented in that context, increasing poverty levels and worsening the living standard of the poorest sectors of the population. Even though the government designed policies to focus social spending on those sectors more exposed to the economic crisis, those policies were not successful in alleviating poverty in El Salvador.

The continuity between the Cristiani and Calderón administrations has been characterized by high levels of poverty and deteriorating living conditions for the most vulnerable sectors of the population, as well as by a social policy that has achieved limited results. These are elements that might ultimately destabilize the political process in El Salvador.

### Violence and Crime

Before the Peace Accords, political violence had total preeminence in the debate on violence in the country. After the Peace Accords, and in the context of the new political situation, political violence decreased while crime increased. Nowadays there is a debate between those who argue that crime is a result of the Peace Accords (because they cut down army personnel and dismantled the security forces, without giving the new Civil National Police the resources to cover the entire national territory) and those who assert that there is not a substantial increase in crime but that crime is only more visible because of the conclusion of the civil war. Whatever the correct interpretation, we find a continuity in the fact that the Salvadoran society has been exposed to high levels of political or social violence in the last 15 years.

The problem of crime may have increased recently. According to national surveys, one out of four Salvadorans has been robbed in the last months. Those surveys indicate that the country's major problem is "crime and violence" (28%), followed by unemployment.<sup>25</sup> A study by IUDOP draws the following picture of the situation of perceived insecurity in El Salvador: Seventy percent of the respondents could identify the existence of dangerous places around their homes.<sup>26</sup> In the most recent IUDOP survey, conducted between January 18 and February 5, 1995, crime appears as the principal problem in the country (45,3%), followed by the economic situation (13,8%) and by poverty (11,1%).<sup>27</sup>

## **Change**

---

<sup>25</sup> CID-GALLUP, Public Opinion, El Salvador, No. 20, May 1994.

<sup>26</sup> IUDOP, "La Delincuencia Urbana, Encuesta Exploratoria." San Salvador, February 1993 (mimeo).

<sup>27</sup> IUDOP, Boletín de Prensa 10, No. 2.

The negotiation process and the signing of the Peace Accords contributed to legitimizing democracy and the key players in the peace process. The 1994 elections offered the possibility of consolidating and legitimating a political system opened to all ideological trends.

From 1982 to 1994, there was a movement from "less" to "more" democratic elections. The March/April 1994 elections came closer to meeting the criteria for what analysts consider to be the minimal conditions necessary in order to speak of competitive elections.<sup>28</sup> A democratic election is a contest that satisfies at least the following five conditions: the entire adult population has the right to vote; elections take place regularly; there is no restriction on the formation of parties or the nomination of candidates; campaigns are held with reasonable fairness; votes are cast freely and secretly, they are counted and reported honestly, and the candidates who receive the proportions required by law are installed in office until their terms expire and a new election is held.<sup>29</sup>

As then-President Cristiani said in his Chapultepec speech on January 16, 1992, the most important feature of the peace process is the method chosen to conclude the war, that is, a dialogue in search of political agreements: "It is not only the negotiation's result what is important as a positive product of the common effort, the very method of dialogue is also relevant as the path from rational understanding and search for effective and adequate solutions to the resolution of the most difficult and incisive problems."<sup>30</sup> Even though the peace process was possible because of the strategic military balance between the two contenders--they could not defeat each other--, we should not underrate the political will of the players involved in the peace process. Therefore, the most important lesson of the war is that none of the political forces is capable alone of leading the country, i.e., to rule excluding the other political actors.

The current political process has involved not only an experience of dialogue and search for political agreements during the peace process, but also during the implementation of the Peace Accords. We want to mention three aspects of the political agreements in this crucial phase of the peace process.

#### a) The Negotiation After the Peace Accords

---

<sup>28</sup> Ricardo Córdova Macías and Andrew J. Stein, "National and Local Elections in Salvadoran Politics (1982-1994)," in Henry Dietz y Gil Shidlo, eds., Urban Elections in Democratic Latin America, forthcoming.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, David, et al. "Introduction: Democratic and Nondemocratic Elections," in Democracy at the Polls: A Comparative Study of Competitive National Elections. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1981.

<sup>30</sup> As quoted in "Adios a las armas: Paz para El Salvador," El Día (Mexico), January 17, 1992, p. 6.



Notwithstanding the fact that the Chapultepec Accord establishes that during the cease fire "there will be no substantive negotiations, only those necessary to implement the agreements reached in the negotiation," in practice and from the very beginning there was a permanent negotiation to interpret the meaning of the accords or the ways to implement them. To date, and mediated by ONUSAL, the negotiations on pending agreements have proceed between the FMLN and the government.

b) The Committee for Peace Consolidation (COPAZ)

COPAZ was conceived in the New York Accords "to supervise the implementation of all agreements." Its innovative feature was that the responsibility to supervise the accords was transferred to the representatives of civil society. COPAZ consists of the government, the FMLN, and all the parties represented in the National Assembly. The constitution of COPAZ led to a balance of forces, because the government and its allied parties controlled half of the votes, while the opposition controlled the other half, forcing both factions to reach an agreement.

Without being invested with executive power, COPAZ has been a mechanism of participation and control for the political parties. The balance of COPAZ's work is, in general terms, positive, because it has served as the locus for the country's political consensus. Unfortunately, the agreements reached at COPAZ aiming at achieving consensus, sacrificed in several ways the spirit of supervision of the implementation of the Peace Accords. COPAZ's work may be questioned because of several reasons. First, COPAZ generated a bureaucracy that was mainly ineffective in speeding the implementation of some of the agreements, reproducing the problems by transferring them to committees and subcommittees. Second, in lieu of being an instance for civil society's participation, COPAZ evolved into a mere forum for bargaining among political parties, which reached agreements on the basis of their own interests. Third, there was a dual situation with respect to the National Assembly, because a law needed the consensus of the political parties in COPAZ before it could be passed by the Assembly.

The role of COPAZ was to last for a short period of time, however, the criticisms against it increased rapidly. COPAZ's mandate is about to end, while El Salvador approaches the final phase of the implementation of the Peace Accords. The delays or lack of implementation of the peace agreements can be observed in the following areas: a) public security; b) the program of land reform; c) advice to the Truth Commission with respect to reforms to the judicial system; and d) measures to guarantee the reinsertion of former combatants.

c) The Forum for Economic-Social Accord

The Forum for Economic-Social Accord is an innovative mechanism that emerged out of the Peace Accords for achieving an understanding among the government, business

and labor sectors. It is innovative because it creates the possibility for dialogue and eventual consensus between sectors traditionally isolated from each other. It was not an easy task to have the three sectors at the negotiations table on September 9, 1992.

To date, the only concrete achievement has been the definition of an agenda and a working methodology. On September 18, 1992 the list of topics to be discussed in the Forum was made public. The discussions on the subcommittees--one focused on economic matters; the other on social issues--were aimed at dealing with the most relevant issues for the key actors in the Forum: economic reactivation for the business sector and a labor policy for workers. The agenda reflected a long-term perspective.

On February 17, 1993 the government and the business and labor sectors signed the "Agreement of Principles and Commitments," an important step in the creation of an appropriate setting for discussions in the Forum. However, a series of events (strikes, lay-offs, lack of confirmation of ILO agreements, lack of consensus on the new Labor Code, etc.) and public declarations revealed profound differences between the government/business sector and the labor sector. Presently, the role of the Forum has reached a dead end, because of the polarization and the lack of political will to reach a compromise and to honor previous agreements.

At any rate, we may ask: How will political parties and interest groups reach a consensus in El Salvador? A central political problem for the future governance in El Salvador is the need to keep on working according to the rules that made the consensus possible, those rules that allowed society to reach the peace agreements.<sup>31</sup> The main theme is the relationship between majorities and minorities in the postwar political system: "Consensus is not unanimity, because the search for consensus is a process of political engineering that demands that all participants concur on accepting a certain solution, even though some of them may still disagree with the agreement reached."<sup>32</sup>

### The New Role of Congress

On May 1 the new National Assembly was inaugurated. This Assembly, elected on March 1994, will face three major challenges: a) the need to restructure itself in order to answer to the challenges posed by the country's modernization, b) the recognition that the Legislative Assembly will be the only body for the country's political consensus after the conclusion of ONUSAL's mandate and the exhaustion of COPAZ's role, and c) the responsibility for designating the members of the new Supreme Court of Justice and the

---

<sup>31</sup> Rafael Guido Béjar, "El centro político y la reproducción del consenso," *Tendencias* (San Salvador), No. 23, September 1993, pp. 20-24.

<sup>32</sup> Ricardo Córdova Macías, "Acerca del papel de la oposición en un sistema democrático," *La Prensa Gráfica* (San Salvador), November 29, 1994.

Supreme Electoral Court. These are important appointments because they select the personnel who will advance the new political-judicial order in agreement with the peace accords.

In recent months, the election of judges for the Supreme Court of Justice has received major attention in El Salvador. Congress was divided into two blocs: the right-wing parties (ARENA and PCN) and the unified opposition (PDC-FMLN-MU-CD). Given the fact that 2/3 of the votes were needed to appoint the judges, there was an impasse for almost a month until the two blocs reached an agreement on the principal source of disagreement: the appointment of the Court's president. This first experience has shown the complexity of the parliamentary game and the process of coalition-building, and the difficulty of reaching a compromise on such relevant issues between the different legislative factions. However, the positive side for El Salvador's political history is that this is the first time that the Supreme Court is designated not by the executive branch, but as a result of a debate in the Legislature and with the inclusion of proposals from civil society (both the lawyers' association and the Consejo Nacional de la Judicatura played an important role in this process). The specific constitution of the Court is also a positive sign, because it is truly balanced with significant possibilities for an independent role. This means a rejection of both the tradition of continuity and the politicization of the nominations.

In the new political scenario, each institution faces the challenge to have an efficient role in order to process the demands and needs of the population. The role of the institutions becomes a critical factor for the legitimacy of the political system. In addition, it would be important that each state branch fulfills its role and to achieve an efficient balance of powers. The Legislative Assembly faces an important challenge in light of the end of ONUSAL's mandate in the near future, because it remains as the only body that can articulate the consensus required by the democratic transition. The Supreme Court of Justice has the responsibility of promoting a deep reform of the judicial system to overcome the serious problems that prevent the full establishment of the rule of law in El Salvador.

### Political Parties

One of the central challenges for the refinement of a basic consensus in El Salvador and for the future governance in the country is the need to redefine the relationship between political parties and civil society. The current debate is centered on the appropriate role of political parties in El Salvador. Political parties face at least three challenges. First, the challenge of reform, i.e., changes concerning organization, channels for participation, and election of leaders and candidates. Second, the challenge to place candidates before civil society in order to offer transparent information about the characteristics of the particular candidate and his or her platform, something not available for civil society at the time, when constituents vote for parties without knowing the specific

candidates or their programs. Third, it is necessary to recognize that the crisis affecting political parties has affected also their capacity to voice people's demands, which shows the need to find a new style to articulate party politics with the interests of civil society. To a certain degree, one might see as legitimate the reaction of civil society against the monopoly of representation by political parties.

This discussion has been centered on three categories of analysis: representation, legitimacy, and governance. We want to add another one: participation. It is not only necessary to redefine the relationship between political parties and civil society in terms of practices in which political institutions become more responsible and efficient, but it is also critical to increase participation in national and local government, and at civil society's different levels of organization.

### Civil-Military Relations

The Peace Accords have redefined civil-military relations in El Salvador. Given the fact that it was impossible to terminate the armed forces or to combine both armies, three types of measures were advanced in order to face the problem of military reform: reduction, restructuring, and depuration. These measures were aimed at achieving the preeminence of civil society over military power and the implementation of the rule of law in El Salvador.

## Chapter 2

### The "Culture Shift" Thesis in El Salvador

In this chapter we present the first of two distinct approaches to the study of the relationship of attitudes to democracy. In this chapter, we present what we call the "culture shift" thesis. In chapter 3 we present a thesis based upon political tolerance and system support. As we shall see, although the theories themselves are not fully compatible, both lead to similar conclusions regarding the prospects for stable democracy in El Salvador.

#### The Culture Shift Thesis

One of the most significant theses on the subject of democratization to have emerged in recent years is that proposed by Ronald Inglehart at the University of Michigan. Inglehart has proposed in a landmark article and important book, that democratic systems emerge from an historical process of "culture shift."<sup>1</sup> The logic of the argument is depicted in figure 2.1 below.

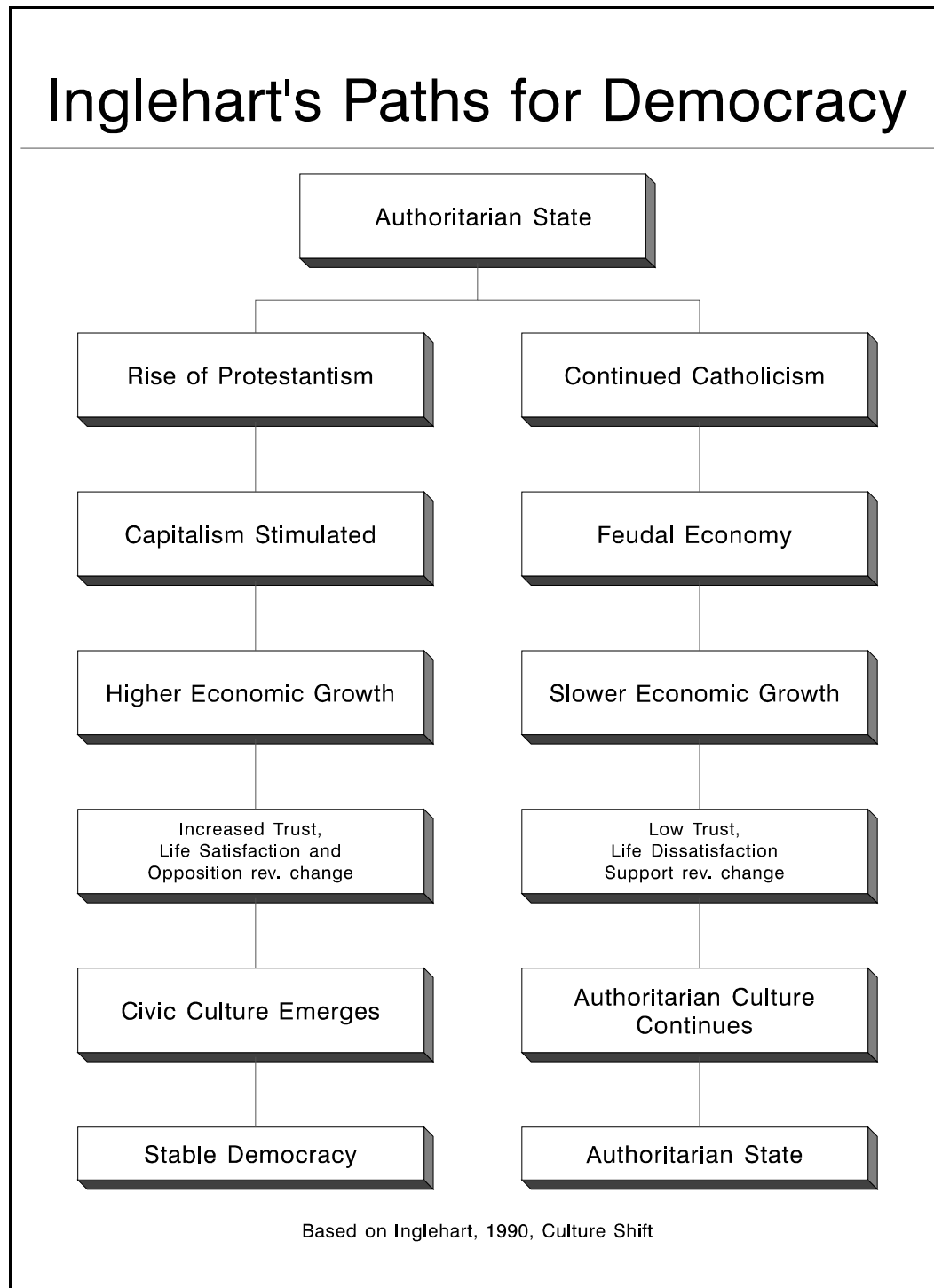
Inglehart argues that historically, most political systems began as authoritarian regimes. Feudal systems are good illustrations of this type of regime. But then the Protestant reformation made it possible for capitalism to emerge, which in turn stimulated economic growth. Growth, in turn, led to a fundamental reorientation in the attitudes of individuals living in such systems, especially in three key areas: life satisfaction, inter-personal trust and opposition to revolutionary change. According to Inglehart, economic growth and its material rewards led to this increase in life satisfaction, which in turn enabled individuals to trust each other more. As a result of greater life satisfaction and inter-personal trust, individuals became more satisfied with their governments and were less likely to support revolutionary change but instead preferred gradual reform. Out of this constellation of attitudes emerged a "civic culture," one supportive of democratic norms, eventually giving birth to stable democracy.

Inglehart also notes that there is more than one path to stable democracy. He examines other world areas and other religions and notes how they, too, might eventually turn to democracy. But in each of these world areas, irrespective of the long-term historical factors related to religion, ideology and economic growth, the pivotal change is in the

---

<sup>1</sup>See Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4, December, 1988, pp. 1203-1230; Inglehart, *Culture Shift*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

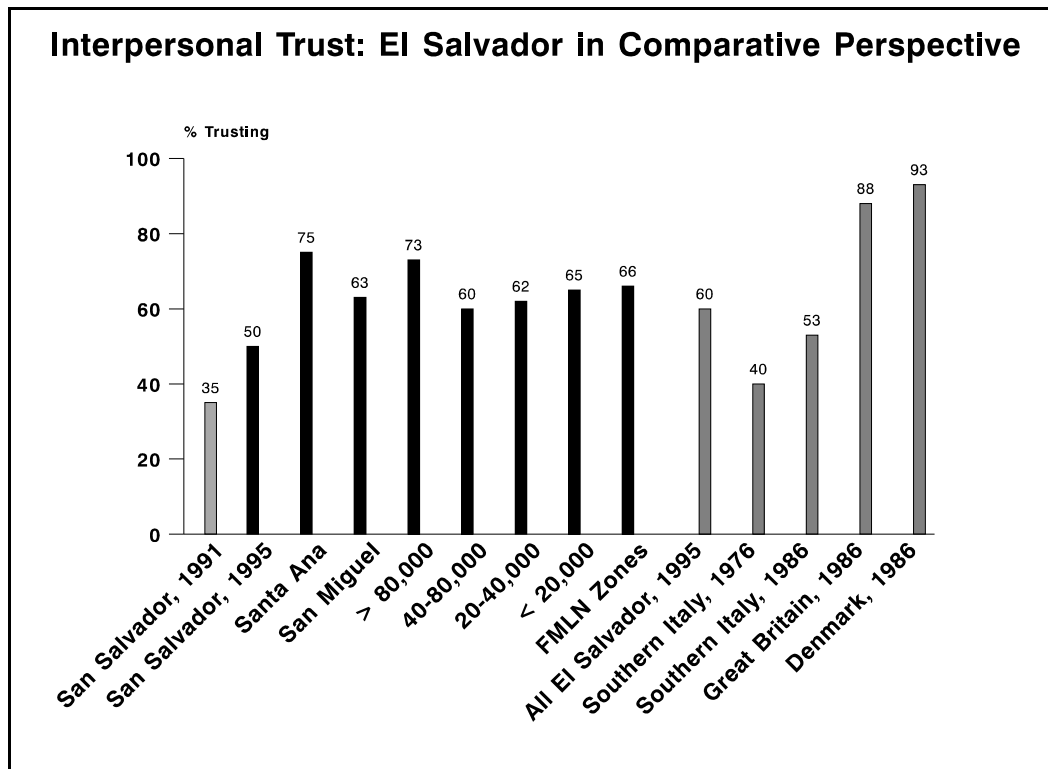
attitudes of the individuals comprising the system, particularly in terms of life satisfaction, inter-personal trust and opposition to revolutionary change. If this thesis applies to El Salvador, one would expect to find shifts in these key attitudes since the civil war concluded in 1992. Did El Salvador experience a "culture shift" as a result of the ending of the war and its transition to democratic rule?

**Figure 2. 1**

### Interpersonal Trust

We first examine interpersonal trust. This is the value that is required if individuals are to trust their neighbors as well as those in public office and the larger society as a whole. Without it, according to a number of scholars, it is impossible to establish effective community associations. In Banfield's classic study of Southern Italy, he found that villagers were characterized by an attitude of "amoral familism" in which each family looked out only for itself and assumed that all others would do likewise.<sup>2</sup> In villages characterized by such attitudes, there were very few effective community organizations and as a result, these villages proved largely incapable of extracting resources from the central government that would help improve their economy. In figure 2.2 below, we see the results of the 1991 survey compared to the 1995 survey. The question asks: Talking generally about the people around here, would you say that in general they are very trustworthy, fairly trustworthy, little trustworthy or not at all trustworthy? The Spanish language version of the item is IT1 in the questionnaire (see appendix). For simplicity of presentation, we have dich

otomized the responses into trusting and not trusting.



**Figure 2. 2**

<sup>2</sup>Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York: Free Press, 1958.



There are a number of important conclusions to be drawn from this figure. First, a direct comparison of the 1991 sample (shown as a grey bar on the left side of figure 2.2) with the 1995 sample (black bars) reveals a substantial increase in trust, from 35% of the residents of San Salvador to 50%, a difference that is statistically significant (sig. <.001).<sup>3</sup> We consider these findings very important, as inter-personal trust is presumed to be a fundamental building block of civic life. Although we cannot be certain of the explanation of this increase in trust, we suspect that once the civil war came to a conclusion, it became easier for Salvadorans to begin to trust each other because of the diminution of physical threats made to the population from both sides. During the war, citizens often did not know if their neighbors were FMLN supporters, and therefore might target them in an urban offensive, or if their neighbors were instead informing on them to the police.

---

<sup>3</sup>In this comparison, and all others where we compare the 1991 and 1995 samples, we are confining the comparison to the identically defined metropolitan area of San Salvador. Since, however, the 1991 sample was confined to those with at least a third grade education, we limit the 1995 results to the same subset of the population. For the other bars in the charts, however, we include the full sample, including all education levels. Education, however, has no significant influence on inter-personal trust in these samples, so the exclusion from the San Salvador sample does not have a material influence on these results.

A second finding that emerges from figure 2.2 is that during the war, interpersonal trust was very low in comparative perspective. Although we do not have data from other regions of the country for 1991, San Salvador as a city had lower trust levels than did Southern Italy in 1976, before the economic boom, which, according to Inglehart, served to increase trust levels.

Third, by 1995, Salvadorans as a group exhibited higher interpersonal trust than did Southern Italy even after it experienced much of its economic boom.

Fourth, compared to highly stable democracies like Great Britain and Denmark, interpersonal trust in El Salvador is still relatively low.

Fifth, there is no overall pattern relating trust to sample stratum other than to note that it is lowest in San Salvador. In contrast, residents of Santa Ana exhibit extremely high levels of inter-personal trust.

Our study included two other measures of interpersonal trust (IT2 and IT3), each of which attempts to get at the same underlying dimension. Both show statistically significant (sig. < .01) differences between 1991 and 1995 in the same direction as show in figure 2.2 above. These items therefore confirm the findings that inter-personal trust has increased in El Salvador since the war ended.

### Opposition to Revolutionary Change

\_\_\_\_\_A second key attitude in the culture shift model is support/opposition to revolutionary change. In a country like El Salvador, in which the opposition for much of the civil war advocated an extreme shift in the political and economic system, it is very important to know the extent to which citizens are committed to such a change, and if there have been changes since the war ended.

Important findings emerged from an examination of the results as presented in figure 2.3 below. First, only a tiny minority of Salvadorans support radical change in their country. For the country as a whole, only 3.8% sympathized with such change. Second, although there was an increase in support for radical change in 1995 in San Salvador (from 3.3% to 5.3%), the increase was not statistically significant. This increase therefore has no substantive significance. Third, even in 1991, when El Salvador was undergoing a civil war, support for radical change was no higher than it was for Japan, one of our most stable democracies, and slightly lower than it was in the U.S. and Britain. In contrast, El Salvador, both during and after the civil war, clearly distinguished itself from Mexico and South Africa (in the early 1980s) where substantial minorities supported radical change. Contrasts with Nicaragua and Guatemala are also especially relevant. In Nicaragua, an urban 1991 sample, similar to the 1991 El Salvador sample, showed that there was more than three

times as much support for radical change there than there was in El Salvador. A national sample conducted in Guatemala in 1993 showed that there was over three times the support there than there was for the 1995 El Salvador national sample.

It is unfortunate that we do not have data on support for radical change in the period during which the civil war was initiated. One might suppose that such support was higher in those days, but we do not know. What we do know is that after 12 years of war, very few Salvadorans are seeking radical change. Indeed, given the comparative data from Japan, U.S.A., etc., it seems unlikely that the small percent who support radical change would be diminished any further in years to come. This may be a variable that has reached its lower limits for the population as a whole and should not be expected to drop further.

Our explanation for the low levels of support for revolutionary change is that the war resolved not by military means but via negotiation in which the demands sought by both parties were incorporated into the peace treaties. For this reason, a far broader range of the political spectrum was able to "buy into" the settlement and reject radical solutions.<sup>4</sup> It is also the case that these results are influenced by the ending of the Cold War and the diminution in the importance of revolutionary solutions to political problems.

We hasten to add that even though for the country as a whole very few Salvadorans are seeking radical change, there remains a hard core of support for such change among FMLN supporters. Nearly one-quarter of residents living in zones highly favoring the FMLN, support radical change. Indeed, among FMLN voters in these zones, nearly one-third of the respondents support radical change.<sup>5</sup> This finding is not surprising, given the political complexion of the FMLN, and indeed it helps to validate the survey results, since one would expect higher support for radical change among FMLN supporters. Our results tell us that those who live in FMLN areas are six times more likely to support radical change than those who live in the rest of El Salvador, and among FMLN voters in those zones are eight times more likely to support radical change.

---

<sup>4</sup>For details on the peace process, see Ricardo Córdova Macías, El Salvador en transición: el proceso de paz, las elecciones generales de 1994 y los retos de la gobernabilidad democrática. San Salvador: FundaUngo, Documento de Trabajo, Serie Análisis de la Realidad Nacional 94-4, Julio, 1994.

<sup>5</sup>As will be noted in the discussion on the voting data, a large proportion of voters did not indicate to the interview the party for which they cast their vote, stating that their vote was secret. It may well be that many of those voters were FMLN supporters but we do not know so cannot assume their voting preference. We exclude those voters from the data presented in this paragraph.

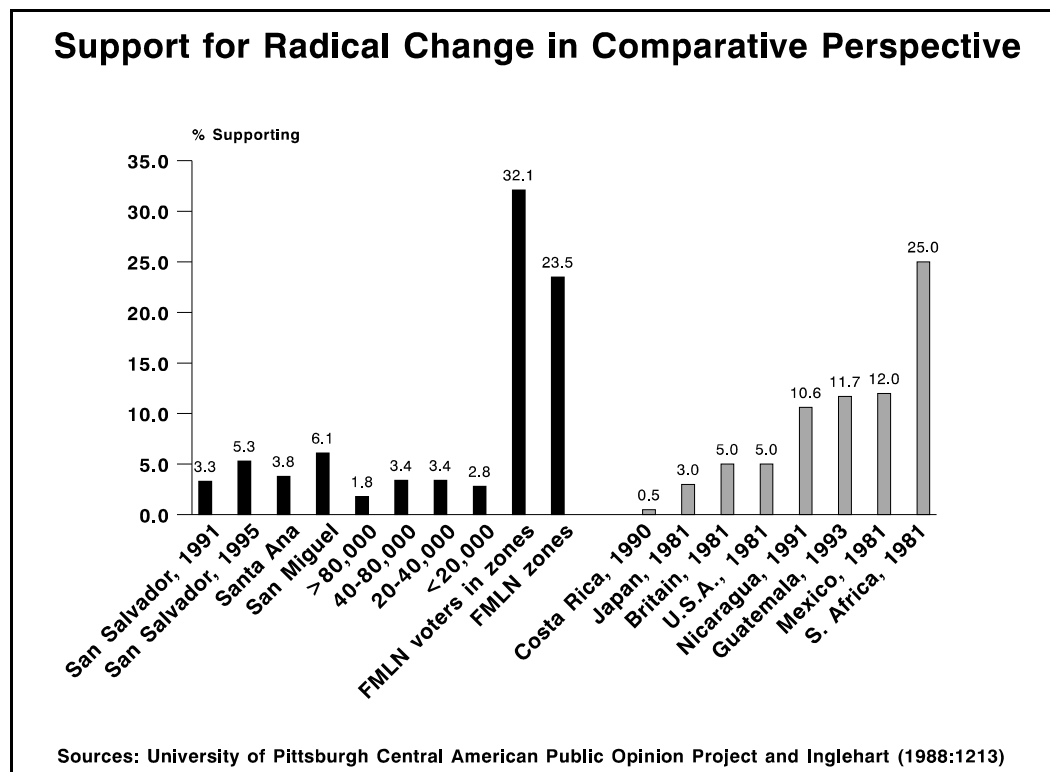


Figure 2. 3

### Life Satisfaction

We have seen that there has been a significant increase in inter-personal trust coupled with stable and low support for revolutionary change, both strong indicators, from the point of view of the culture shift thesis, of the development of a political culture supportive of stable democracy. We now turn to the final element in the equation, life satisfaction, where we find a different picture.

Life satisfaction is thought to relate, over time, to support for the political system of a country. System support is believed to emerge over the long haul as citizens find that their governments are effective and fair. When governments consistently "deliver the goods," in terms of jobs, improved infrastructure, health care, etc., life satisfaction tends to increase and brings with it support for the system of government that is believed to make such achievements possible. Sharp downturns in an economy can cause momentary dips in performance, but if the crisis is dealt with fairly, neither life satisfaction nor system

support should be affected. Of course, if such downturns become a permanent condition, both values should erode.<sup>6</sup>

In El Salvador we measured life satisfaction with the item, "In general, how satisfied are you with your life? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied" The original item can be found in the appendix (LS3). We show the results in figure 2.4 below. First of all, we note that overall life satisfaction is highest in San Salvador, with over half the population indicating that they are very satisfied with life in general. Second, we note that life satisfaction is far lower in the FMLN zones. Third, in comparative perspective, life satisfaction is higher than it is in Nicaragua, but substantially lower than it is in Costa Rica. Fourth, and perhaps most important, we found that between 1991 and 1995, in San Salvador, life satisfaction declined, and the decline was statistically significant ( $<.001$ ).<sup>7</sup> Fifth, although we do not show the results here, our survey did include two additional questions on life satisfaction, one related to housing and the other related to income, and in both cases there was also a statistically significant decline. This decline in life satisfaction might well be an expression of disaffection with the economy. After all, between 1980 and 1991, the economy declined by an average of 0.3% per year.<sup>8</sup> Yet, beginning in 1990, the economy did recover, growing at 3.4% in 1990, 3.5% in 1991, 5.3% in 1992, 5.1% in 1993 and 6% in 1994.<sup>9</sup> While we cannot be certain of the origins in the decline in life satisfaction, we do expect that it will have its impact on system support, a topic to be taken up in the next chapter of this report.

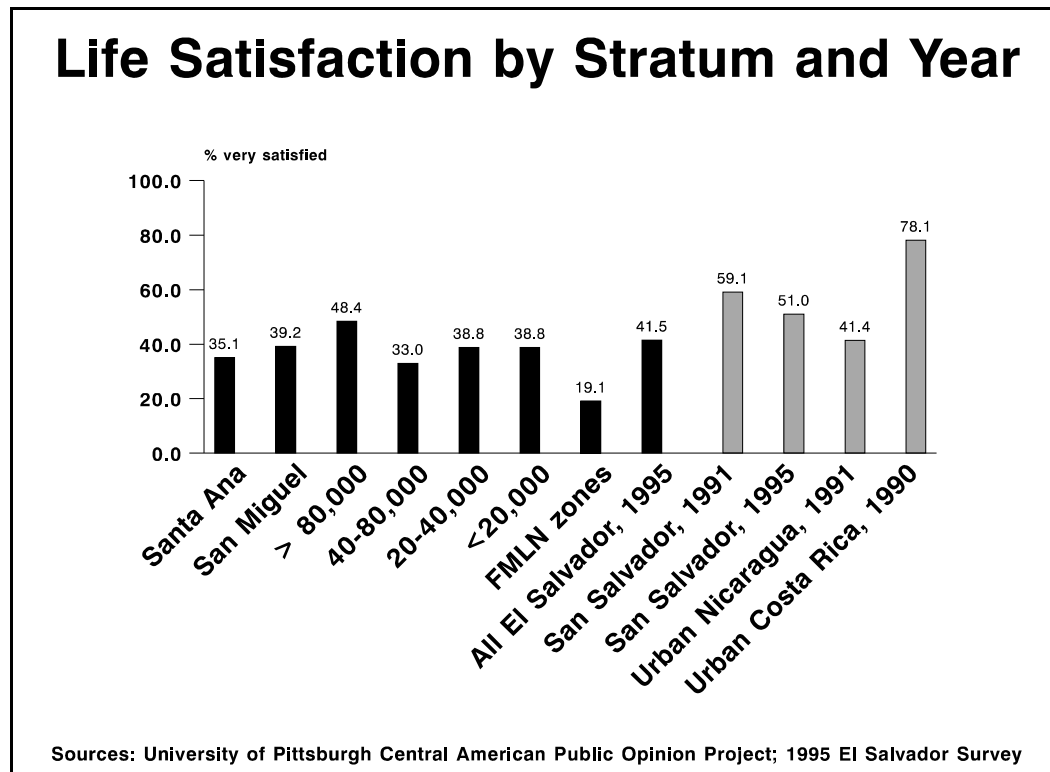
---

<sup>6</sup>For an empirical analysis of the impact of economic crisis on system support in Costa Rica see, "Democratic Stability and Economic Crisis: Costa Rica, 1978-1983," co-authored with Edward N. Muller, *International Studies Quarterly*, 31(September, 1987), pp. 301-326. Reprinted as, "Estabilidad democrática y crisis económica: Costa Rica, 1978-1983, *Anuario de estudios Centroamericanos*, Vol. 16 (2), 1990 and Vol. 17 (1), 1991, pp. 71-92.

<sup>7</sup>This finding also applies to the results when the original four-choice response format is utilized. In that case, chi-square significance is .04.

<sup>8</sup>See World Bank, *World Development Report*, 1993, p. 238.

<sup>9</sup>Juan A. B. Belt, "El Salvador: Economic Policy Making and the Transition from War to Peace." Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Miami, Florida, August 11, 1994.



**Figure 2. 4**

## Summary

We have found clear evidence in this chapter that values are not static. Indeed, there may well be a culture shift underway in El Salvador. A statistically significant increase in interpersonal trust was found when we compared the 1991 and 1995 San Salvador samples. Further, we found that support for revolutionary change was very low, except for supporters of the FMLN. Finally, while trust is on the increase, satisfaction with life seems to be declining. Therefore, there are elements of the underlying values on which stable democracy can be built that are moving in opposite directions. These findings suggest that while trust might lead to greater support for democracy, dissatisfaction with life might undermine system support and prevent the emergence of stability. In the next chapter we will examine the variables that bear directly on the question of democratic stability.

## Chapter 3

# Prospects for Stable Democracy in El Salvador: Political Tolerance and System Support<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 2 of this study we examined three attitudes that have been central to much theorizing about democracy: life satisfaction, interpersonal trust and opposition to revolutionary change. Those attitudes might well prove to be important over the long run, and yet, they do not provide any direct evidence of the extent to which individuals are committed to stable democracy.

Consider each of the variables discussed in chapter 2. Interpersonal trust is said to be crucial for the establishment of participatory institutions. Perhaps so, but such institutions are not necessarily found only in democratic societies. Neither Nicaragua under the Sandinistas nor Cuba under Castro are illustrations of democratic societies, yet both are cases of extremely high citizen participation at local, regional, and national levels. Hence, it is easy to envision societies with high levels of trust and high levels of citizen participation that are nonetheless authoritarian.

Life satisfaction is also problematical. As Inglehart (1988:1205) argues, life satisfaction, "...may contribute to the evolution of broadly favorable orientations toward the institutions under which one lives." While that seems like a reasonable argument that may be supported empirically, there is nothing about life satisfaction that would imply a positive orientation toward democratic institutions. No doubt many Spaniards under Franco or Chileans under Pinochet manifested high levels of satisfaction with life and may have directly attributed that satisfaction to the institutions under which they lived. But those were profoundly anti-democratic institutions.

Finally, it may also be true that those with low levels of interpersonal trust and life satisfaction would reject the existing political system and support revolutionary change. But it is easy to see that these are precisely the attitudes that would help overturn an authoritarian system. If an authoritarian system were populated entirely with those who opposed revolutionary change, then the system presumably would survive indefinitely.

---

<sup>1</sup>Some of the background discussion in this chapter in which the theoretical and measurement material is drawn, in part, from Mitchell A. Seligson, "Democracy in Central America: Deepening, Eroding or Stagnating?" In Kurt von Mettenheim and James M. Malloy, eds., *Deepening Democracy and Representation in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, forthcoming.

Hence, strong support for revolutionary change in authoritarian systems is precisely what would be needed to bring about democratization.

In short, the logic of the argument depends heavily upon the context in which the attitudes occur. The syndrome of attitudes that Inglehart links to democratic stability or the lack of it could just as easily be linked to authoritarian stability or instability.

The central limitation of the argument developed by Inglehart, and the data we presented in chapter 2, is that they do not include attitudes that are more proximately and unambiguously related to a particular form of political system, namely democracy. In this chapter, we turn to those attitudes. Specifically, we examine one set of attitudes that relates directly to the maintenance of a political system that is democratic, namely political tolerance, and a second set of attitudes related to the stability of that democracy, namely system support. We will argue that in order for stable democracy to emerge in El Salvador, it will be necessary to have a large proportion of its citizens who are both politically tolerant and who support the basic institutions of their system.

The plan of this chapter is to first discuss each of the two clusters of variables. That will be followed by an examination of the interrelationship of the two. We will present the data from the 1991 and 1995 surveys to examine changes, if any, in these attitudes and their interrelationship. Finally, we examine in closer detail the 1995 survey to take advantage of its national scope.

## Political Tolerance

El Salvador does not have a good record in tolerating political dissent. Many observers point to the infamous 1932 massacre ("La Matanza") as a clear signal that the ruling authorities would exact extreme penalties on those who sought to challenge their rule. The repression continued throughout the twentieth century, but reached new levels in the 1970s. At that time opposition groups, including labor movements, peasant movements and church-based organizations, were all attacked and suppressed by the authorities.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the civil war's most distressing characteristic was the emergence of powerful and effective death squads, which exacted brutal retribution against all who were seen as enemies of the ruling order. Although the death squads were accused of having official support within the regime, for the purposes of this study, it is not important if these

---

<sup>2</sup>See Comisión de la Verdad, "De la locura a la esperanza: la guerra de doce años en El Salvador. Informe de la comisión. *Estudios Centroamericanos* 158 (March, 1994); Harry Blair, John Booth, Ricardo Córdova and Mitchell Seligson, *Civil Society and Democratic Development in El Salvador: A CDIE Assessment*. Washington, D. C., USAID, February 6, 1995; James Dunkerly, *The Long War*. London: Junction Books, 1982; Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1982; Lisa North, *Bitter Grounds: Roots of Revolt in El Salvador*. 2nd ed., Wstport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill.



accusations were true, but only that there was the widespread impression that they were acting as civilian "guardians of the faith," and thus became an anthropomorphic representation of political culture. If the death squads did indeed represent the manner in which Salvadorans believed that dissidents should be treated, the capacity of the political culture to sustain democracy would have been very limited indeed.

It is our task in this chapter to explore the nature of political tolerance in El Salvador. We base our study on prior empirical work conducted by political scientists. The quantitative study of political tolerance has its roots in research by Stouffer and McClosky of U.S. respondents' willingness to extend civil rights to proponents of unpopular causes.<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, Pierson and Marcus argue that tolerance is a critical element in democratic political culture because intolerant attitudes eventually can produce intolerant behavior that may victimize the targets of intolerance. They have extended the research beyond the U.S. to several other countries.<sup>4</sup> Work in Israel and Costa Rica has been conducted by Seligson and Caspi.<sup>5</sup>

Political tolerance has been measured in many studies by determining how willing individuals may be to extend civil liberties to specific groups. In some cases, such as the Stouffer studies, the groups are chosen by the investigator. In others, lists of groups are presented, and the respondent selects his/her "least liked group."<sup>6</sup> It now appears, however, that both methods produce highly similar results.<sup>7</sup> In El Salvador, we measured tolerance by focusing on four of the most basic civil liberties: the right to vote, demonstrate, run for office and the right of free speech. We utilized a 10-point response format, that

---

<sup>3</sup>Samuel A. Stouffer. Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties. New York: Doubleday, 1955; Herbert McClosky "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics." American Political Science Review, 1964, 58:361-382; Herbert McClosky and Alida Brill Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>John L. Sullivan, James Pierson and George E. Marcus, Political Tolerance and American Democracy. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982; John L. Sullivan, Michal Shamir, Patrick Walsh, and Nigel S. Roberts Political Tolerance in Context: Support for Unpopular Minorities in Israel, New Zealand, and the United States. Boulder: Westview Press, 1985.

<sup>5</sup>Mitchell A. Seligson and Dan Caspi "Arabs in Israel: Political Tolerance and Ethnic Conflict." The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 19 (February, 1983):55-66.

<sup>6</sup>John L. Sullivan, James E. Pierson, and George E. Marcus, "An Alternative Conceptualization of Political Tolerance: Illusory Increases, 1950s-1970s," American Political Science Review 73 (September 1979):781-794.

<sup>7</sup>James L. Gibson, "Alternative Measures of Political Tolerance: Must Tolerance Be 'Least-Liked?'" American Journal of Political Science, May, 1992, vol 36, pp. 560-577.

ranged from strongly approve to strongly disapprove, and asked the following questions (question numbers refer to the questionnaire items as presented in the appendix of this report):

There are people who only say bad things about the Salvadoran form of government. How strongly (on a 1-10 scale) would you approve or disapprove of the right of those people to:

D1. Vote?

D2. Hold a peaceful demonstration to express their point of view?

D3. Run for office?

D4. Make a speech on T. V.?

The results are contained in figure 3.1 below. For three of the four variables that comprise the tolerance scale, between 1991 and 1995 statistically significant ( $<.05$  or less) increases in tolerance were detected. Only on the "run for office" item was there a reversal of the trend, and the difference in that case was not statistically significant. The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that political tolerance has increased in El Salvador since the civil war came to a conclusion. Even so, there remains a reluctance to grant those rights to those who wish to run for office.

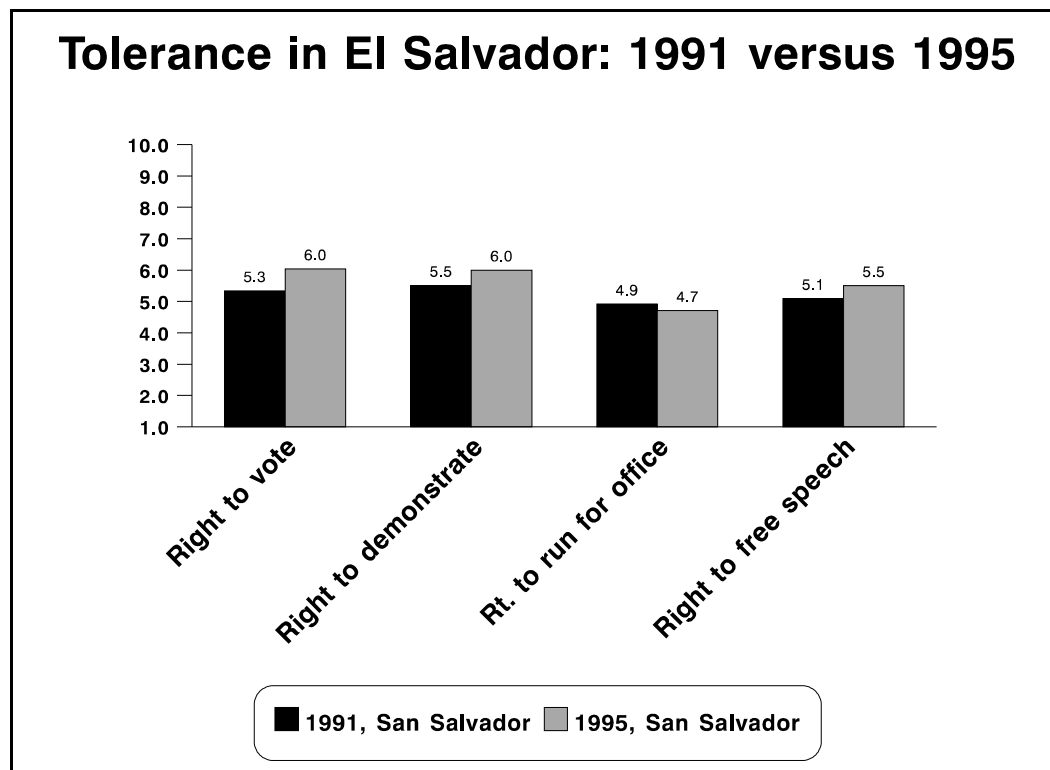


Figure 3. 1

## System Support

System stability has long been thought to be directly linked to popular perceptions of the legitimacy of the system. Illegitimate systems, ones that do not have the support of the populace, can only endure over the long haul through the use of repression. When repression no longer can be used effectively, or if opposition elements are willing to risk even extremely grave sanctions, illegitimate regimes will eventually fall. Hence, the failure of the Tienanmen Square protestors to bring about changes in the Chinese system can be attributed to either of two causes: (1) the level of coercion that the state was willing to apply exceeded the willingness of the protestors and their supporters to bear it; or (2) system legitimacy was greater among the mass public than it appeared from observing the protestors alone. In contrast, the rapid demise of the communist governments of Eastern Europe suggests rather strongly that once repressive forces are weakened (in this case by the removal of the threat of Soviet intervention on behalf of those governments), illegitimate regimes quickly crumble.

But what of democratic systems? Since almost all of Latin America today is democratic (in structure at least), we want to know what forces have, in the past, been responsible for their downfall? In most cases, military coups have been the main actors responsible. Certainly this has been the case in the vast majority of democratic breakdowns in Latin America. Democratic systems, in contrast, provide a wide variety of mechanisms for the popular expression of discontent and obstacles to the widespread use of official repression. In democracies, therefore, when citizens are discontented with government performance they tend to wait until the next election to seek a change in incumbents. There are, however, some instances in which popular sentiment seems to have been at least partly responsible for democratic breakdowns. The best known case is the demise of the Weimar Republic, where the voters made their choice. In Latin America, the Fujimori "auto-golpe," which extinguished democratic rule in Peru in 1992, emerged out of a popular revulsion over the inability of the extant democratic system to deal effectively with Sendero Luminoso terrorism. According to several reports, despite the use of undemocratic means, President Alberto K. Fujimori was among the most popular heads of state in all of Latin America.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the repeated attempts to overthrow the elected government of Venezuela have been supported, according to the polls, by many of its citizens. In the main, however, while authoritarian regimes survive

---

<sup>8</sup>James Brooke, "Fujimori Sees a Peaceful, and a Prosperous, Peru," *New York Times*, April 6, 1993, A3. According to the article, Fujimori's approval ratings are between 62 and 67 percent.

based on some combination of legitimacy and repression, democracies tend to rely primarily on legitimacy alone.<sup>9</sup>

According to Lipset's classical work, systems that are legitimate survive even in the face of difficult times. In Central America, by the mid 1980s all six countries were regularly holding free and fair elections.<sup>10</sup> The survival of these democracies, each of which are facing very difficult economic times, depends upon continued popular support. One need only think of the ballot box ouster in 1990 of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, to see how critical such support can be. In that case, the inability of the system to cope effectively with the severe economic crises and the protracted Contra war, caused voters to turn against the system.<sup>11</sup>

Until recently, efforts to measure legitimacy have been hampered by reliance on the Trust in Government scale devised by the University of Michigan.<sup>12</sup> That scale, it has turned out, relied too heavily on a measurement of dissatisfaction with the performance of incumbents rather than of generalized dissatisfaction with the system of government. The development of the Political-Support Alienation Scale, now tested in studies of Germany, Israel, the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru and elsewhere, has provided a much more powerful analytical tool for measuring legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> The scale has been shown to be reliable and valid. It is based upon a distinction made by Easton, relying upon Parsons, of

---

<sup>9</sup>This is not to say that democracies do not use coercion, but that its use is limited.

<sup>10</sup>Participation by leftist parties was highly restricted in El Salvador up until the peace accords implemented in 1992-93. In Guatemala such participation still remains restricted.

<sup>11</sup>See Vanessa Castro and Gary Prevost, The 1990 Elections in Nicaragua and their Aftermath. Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992. Since the ouster of the Sandinistas involved a dramatic shift in the entire system of government, from socialist to capitalist, from Soviet/Cuban alignment to realignment with the U.S., it is appropriate to think of this election as having changed the system rather than merely the personnel of government.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur H. Miller, "Political Issues and Trust in Government," *American Political Science Review* 68 (September 1974):951-972

<sup>13</sup>For a review of this evidence see Mitchell A. Seligson, "On the Measurement of Diffuse Support: Some Evidence from Mexico," *Social Indicators Research* 12 (January 1983):1-24, and Edward N. Muller, Thomas O. Jukam and Mitchell A. Seligson "Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior: A Comparative Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (May 1982): 240-264. The present discussion draws on that evidence.

defining legitimacy in terms of system support (i.e., diffuse support) vs. specific support (i.e., support for incumbents)<sup>14</sup>.

Five items were included in the original scale utilized in Central America. For the El Salvador study, we expanded the scale to include a range of additional items. Each item utilized a seven-point response format, ranging from "not at all" to "a great deal." The questions were as follows (with the item numbers referring to the questionnaire, found in the appendix of this report):

- B1. To what degree do you believe that the courts in El Salvador guarantee a fair trial?
- B2. To what degree do you have respect for the political institutions of El Salvador?
- B3. To what degree do you think that the basic rights of citizens are well protected by the Salvadoran political system?
- B4. To what degree do you feel proud to live under the political system of El Salvador?
- B6. To what degree do you feel that one ought to support the political system of El Salvador?
- B11. To what degree do you have trust in the Supreme Electoral Tribunal?
- B12. To what degree do you have trust in the Armed Forces?
- B13. To what degree do you have trust in the Legislative Assembly?
- B14. To what degree do you have trust in the incumbent government<sup>15</sup>?

In figure 3.2 below we present the results of the comparison of the 1991 sample with the 1995 sample. As can be seen, very little change has occurred. Indeed, there is no statistically significant difference on seven out of the nine items. A positive increase was noted for the courts, basic rights, and support, while declines were detected for institutions, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the Armed Forces, the Legislature and the incumbent government. Only on the last two items, the legislature and the incumbent government, were the declines statistically significant. The conclusion to be drawn is that system support did not change from the levels of 1991.

---

<sup>14</sup>David Easton, "A Re-assessment of the Concept of Political Support," *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (October 1975):435-457; Talcott Parsons, "Some Highlights of the General Theory of Action," in Roland A. Young, ed. *Approaches to the Study of Politics*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1958).

<sup>15</sup>Note that in Spanish, the term "el gobierno" does not translate into "government" in English, since the meaning in Spanish relates directly to the incumbent regime rather than to the institutions of state.

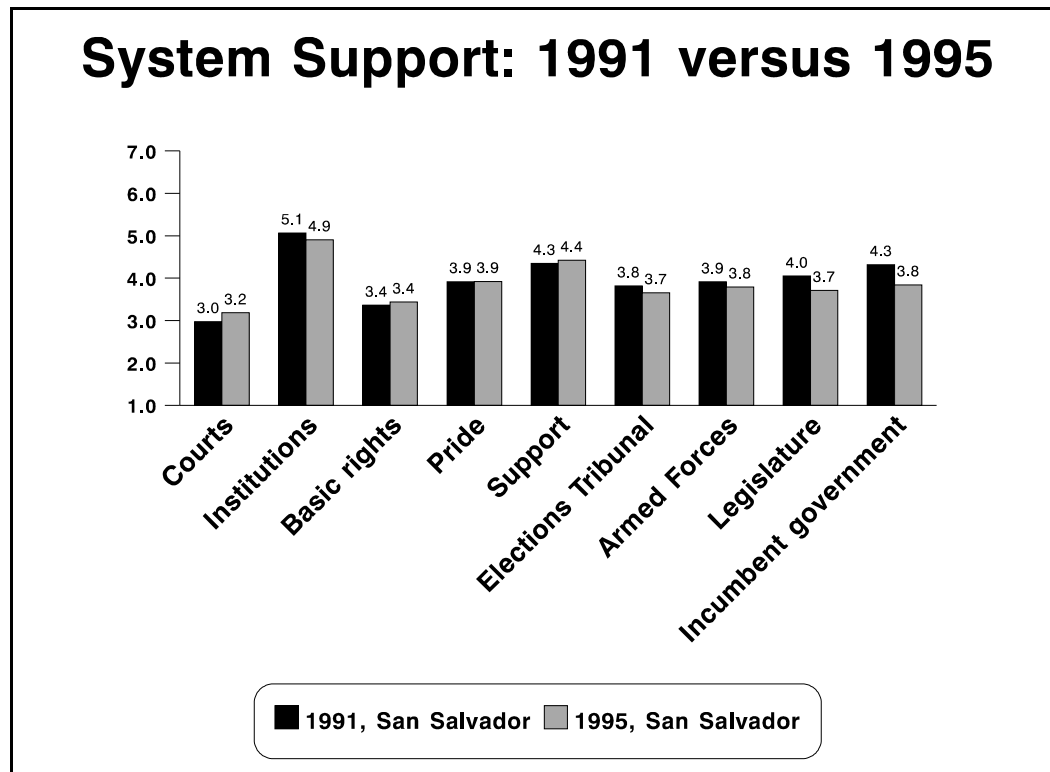


Figure 3. 2

### Theoretical Interrelationship of System Support and Tolerance

How do system support and tolerance relate, and what impact is there on democratic stability of the different combinations of these two variables?<sup>16</sup> Reducing complexity to the simple, dichotomous case, support can be either high or low, and likewise tolerance can be either high or low. The following chart represents, for this dichotomous situation, all of the theoretically possible combinations of system support and tolerance.

<sup>16</sup>This framework was first presented in Mitchell A. Seligson and Ricardo Córdova Macías, *Perspectivas para una democracia estable en El Salvador* (San Salvador: IDELA, 1993).

Table 3.1  
Theoretical Relationship Between  
Tolerance and System Support  
in Institutionally Democratic Polities

System support	Tolerance	
	High	Low
	High	Low
High	Stable Democracy	Authoritarianism
Low	Unstable Democracy	Democratic Breakdown

Let us review each cell, one-by-one. Systems that are populated by individuals who have high system support and high political tolerance are those we would predict would be most stable. This prediction is based on the simple logic that high support is needed in non-coercive environments for the system to be stable, and tolerance is needed for the system to remain democratic. Systems with this combination of attitudes are likely to experience deepening of democracy and might eventually end up as one of Dahl's polyarchies.<sup>17</sup>

When system support remains high, but tolerance is low, then the system should remain stable (because of the high support), but democratic rule ultimately might be placed in jeopardy. Such systems would tend to move toward authoritarian (oligarchical) rule in which democratic rights would be restricted.

Low support is the situation characterized by the lower two cells in the chart, and should be directly linked to unstable situations. Instability, however, does not necessarily translate into the ultimate reduction of civil liberties, since the instability could serve to force the system to deepen its democracy, especially when the values tend toward political tolerance. One could easily interpret the instability associated with the Martin Luther King years in the United States as ones that led directly to the deepening of democracy in that country. Hence, in the situation of low support and high tolerance, it is difficult to predict

---

<sup>17</sup>Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

if the instability will result in greater democratization or a protracted period of instability characterized perhaps by considerable violence. On the other hand, in situations of low support and low tolerance, democratic breakdown seems to be the obvious eventual outcome. Presumably, over time, the system that would replace it would be autocratic.

It is important to keep in mind two caveats that apply to this scheme. First, note that the relationships discussed here only apply to systems that are already institutionally democratic. That is, they are systems in which competitive, regular elections are held and widespread participation is allowed. These same attitudes in authoritarian systems would have entirely different implications. For example, low system support and high tolerance might produce the breakdown of an authoritarian regime and its replacement by a democracy. Second, the assumption being made is that over the long run, attitudes of the mass public make a difference in regime type. Attitudes and system type may remain incongruent for many years. Indeed, as Seligson and Booth have shown for the case of Nicaragua, that is what may well have occurred. But the Nicaraguan case we studied was one in which the extant system was authoritarian (i.e., Somoza's Nicaragua) and repression had long been used to maintain an authoritarian regime, perhaps in spite of the tolerant attitudes of the citizens.<sup>18</sup>

#### Empirical Relationship Between Tolerance and System Support in El Salvador

It is now time to put together the two variables that have been the focus of our discussion by examining the joint distribution of the two variables. To do this, both variables are dichotomized into "high" and "low." To do this we first created an index of tolerance, by summing up the scores each respondent gave for each of the four tolerance items. Since each item ranged from 1 to 10, the total scale ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 40. With a range of 36 points, there is no exact division at the midpoint of this scale, so we arbitrarily decided to break it as follows: 4-21 = low, 22-40 = high. This split slightly favored high tolerance over low, since the low range included only 17 points and the high range 18. As a practical matter, this made no difference in our evaluation since we are interested in the change from 1991 to 1995, and so long as the scale metric remains the same for both years, differences, if any, will clearly emerge. Political trust is scaled in a similar way, but each item ranged from 1 to 7, providing a total range of the

---

<sup>18</sup>Mitchell A. Seligson and John A. Booth, "Political Culture and Regime Type: Evidence from Nicaragua and Costa Rica," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 3, August, 1993, pp. 777-792. A different version appears as "Cultura política y democratización: vías alternas en Nicaragua y Costa Rica." In Carlos Barba Solano, José Luis Barros Horcasitas y Javier Hurtado, *Transiciones a la democracia en Europa y América Latina*. México: FLACSO y Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991, pp. 628-681. Also appears as "Paths to Democracy and the Political Culture of Costa Rica, Mexico and Nicaragua," Larry Diamond, ed., *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*. Boulder: Lynne Reimer Publishers, 1994, pp. 99-130.



nine items of a low of 9 and a high of 63. This allowed for a break point of 9-35 for the low range and 36-63 for the high range. Here again, the split is not exactly even, giving 26 points for the low range and 27 for the high, but again, the difference is not important when we compare one sample to the other.

The results of this analysis appear in table 3.2, where it is shown that there was considerable shifting of the population among the four cells. Much of this shift can be directly attributed to the significant increases ( $< .001$ ) in tolerance between 1991 and 1995. Perhaps the most important change was in the increase in the stable democracy cell, moving from slightly more than one-fifth of the population to nearly one-third of the population. There was a corresponding decline in the authoritarianism cell, down from 32% to 17%. The remaining cells experienced little change, with small increases in both unstable democracy and democratic breakdown as a result of the small decline in system support. That difference, however, was not statistically significant and therefore produced no significant shift in the overall results. Furthermore, if we deleted from our 9-item system support scale, the item measuring support for the incumbent government, system support would have declined less. We did not do this, however, in order to make these results compatible with our previous publications on the subject.

Table 3.2.  
Empirical Relationship Between  
Tolerance and System Support  
in San Salvador, 1991-1995

System support	Tolerance			
	High		Low	
	Stable Democracy		Authoritarianism	
High	1991: 22%	1995: 32%	1991: 32%	1995: 17%
Low	Unstable Democracy		Democratic Breakdown	
	1991: 23%	1995: 26%	1991: 23%	1995: 25%

We have found a statistically significant increase in the proportion of the residents of San Salvador who are in the stable democracy cell and a corresponding decline in the percentage in the authoritarianism cell. In order to translate these statistically significant findings into ones that suggest substantive significance, it is helpful to put El Salvador into its regional context. Table 3.3 shows how El Salvador's shift from 1991 to 1995 changes its position among the Central American countries. In 1991, El Salvador had a distribution of its respondents that was very similar to that found in Guatemala, placing El Salvador in the penultimate position in terms of the proportion of its citizens in the stable democracy cell. By 1995, however, El Salvador has surpassed Honduras and moved up to fourth position in the region. In order to make this comparison, we are assuming, of course, that the values in the other countries have remained the same. We do not know, however, if change has also occurred in those countries.

Table 3.3. Joint Distribution of System Support and Tolerance in Central America (Capital Cities)				
Country	Stable Democracy	Authoritarianis m	Unstable Democracy	Democratic Breakdown
Costa Rica	52%	41%	3%	4%
Panama	37%	16%	36%	12%
Nicaragua	37%	33%	18%	12%
El Salvador, 1995	32%	17%	26%	25%
Honduras	30%	5%	42%	22%
El Salvador, 1991	22%	32%	23%	23%
Guatemala	18%	39%	15%	29%

Percents do not always total 100 owing to rounding.

Source: University of Pittsburgh Central America Public Opinion Project

While these findings are very encouraging, it is important not to neglect the democratic breakdown cell. One-quarter of the residents of Metropolitan San Salvador neither support their system nor support key democratic liberties. When compared to Costa Rica, in which only 4% of the sample has that combination of attitudes, it is clear that El Salvador has a long way to go until it can enjoy the stable democracy that Costa Rica has experienced.

## **Tolerance and System Support: Subsector Comparisons, 1995**

Thus far in this chapter our attention has been focused on comparing the 1991 sample with that of 1995. Those comparisons, however, are limited by the fact that in 1991 we were only able to obtain data on San Salvador. With a national sample, we can examine various subsectors of the population with the 1995 data to see what patterns emerge. In doing so, we will make use of the indexes developed above of political tolerance and system support. Now, however, rather than dichotomizing the results into low and high, we will use the full range of the two scales, calibrating them on a 0-100 basis to make their interpretation more intuitive.<sup>19</sup>

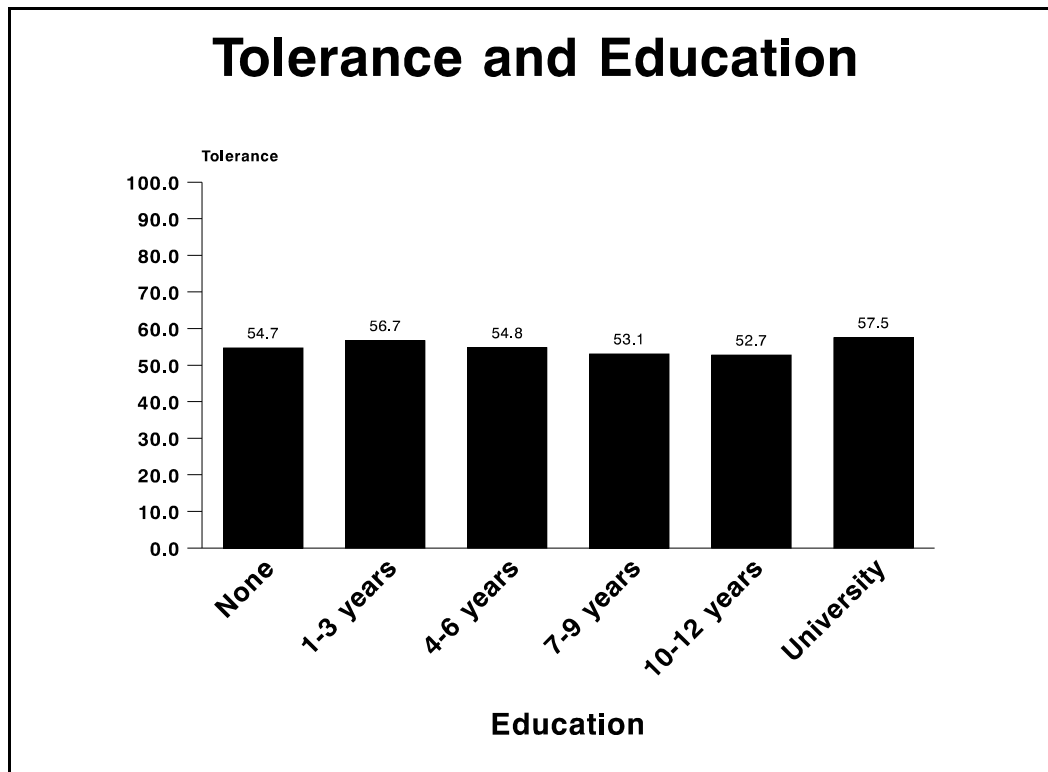
### Political Tolerance

One of the most common findings in research on political tolerance is that it is closely correlated with education; the higher the education, the greater the tolerance. We found that pattern in other Central American counties.<sup>20</sup> It came as a considerable surprise to find that El Salvador deviated from this world-wide pattern, as it is shown in figure 3.3 below. As can be seen, there is almost no difference between the most poorly educated and the most well educated respondents in the sample, and the differences are not statistically significant.

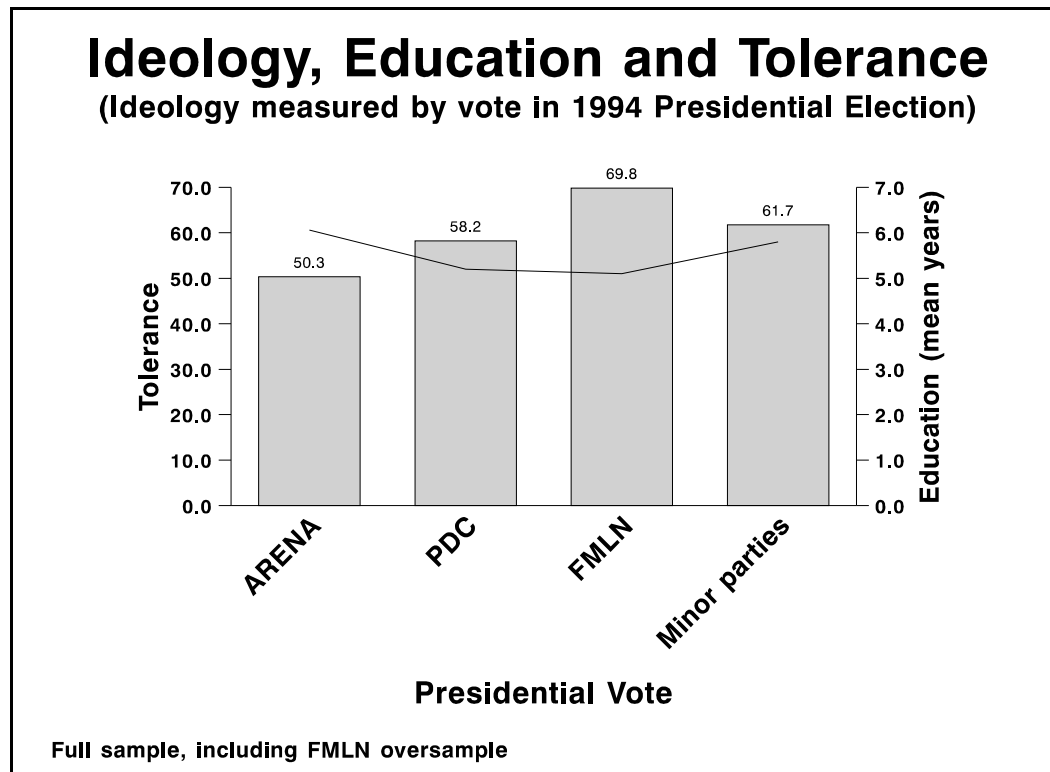
---

<sup>19</sup>To create these scales, the variables comprising them were first summed. In the case of the tolerance scale, in which each item was scored 1-10, this provided a range of 4-40 for the four items. We subtracted 4 from this total to provide a zero range, and then multiplied by 2.78 to provide a maximum range of 100 (rounded). For the system support scale, which contained 9 items, each of which ranged from 1 to 7, we summed the 9 variables, subtracted 9 points, and multiplied by 1.852 (and rounded the result).

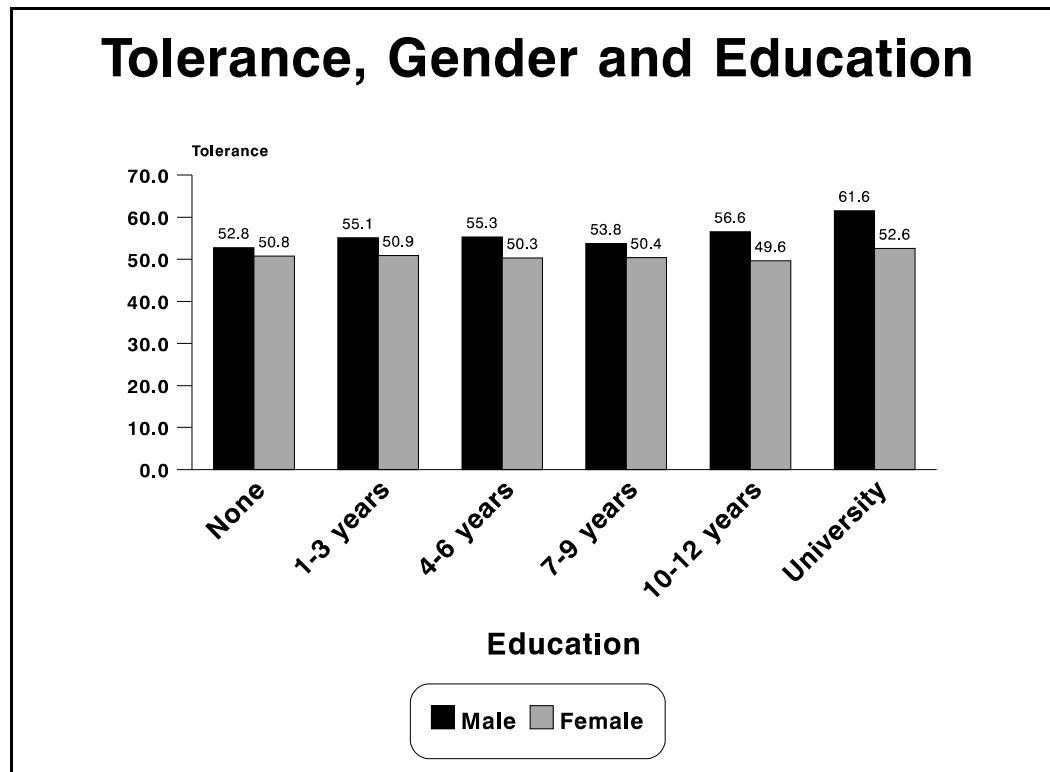
<sup>20</sup>Mitchell A. Seligson and Joel Jutkowitz, *La Cultura Democrática de los Guatemaltecos: Resumen*. Co-authored with Dinorah Azpuru de Cuestas and Max Eudardo Lucas P. Guatemala: ASIES, 1995, pp. 77. See also, "Guatemalan Values and the Prospects for Democratic Development." Co-authored with Joel M. Jutkowitz. Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales, Guatemala (ASIES) and Development Associates, Inc., Rosslyn, VA., March, 1994.

**Figure 3. 3**

In attempting to account for this finding, we turned our attention to ideology to look for an "interaction effect" between ideology and education. El Salvador is a country riven by ideological splits. We assume that those on the left would be more politically tolerant of the rights of the opposition than the right. Empirically, this would translate into higher tolerance scores for FMLN supporters than for ARENA supporters. We also suspect that the average education for FMLN supporters is lower than for ARENA supporters. Figure 3.4 shows the results of the analysis. The analysis clearly shows two things. First, tolerance is far higher among those who support the FMLN than it is among those who support ARENA. Second, education is far higher among ARENA supporters than FMLN supporters. What we have, then, is two variables having opposite impacts on tolerance (i.e., an interaction effect). Leftist ideology moves Salvadorans to higher levels of tolerance, but those same individuals, on average, have lower levels of education than do those who support ARENA, the party on the right, thereby reducing their tolerance.

**Figure 3. 4**

Gender also plays a role in tolerance. But we must be careful to consider the finding reported in Chapter 1 regarding the lower level of education among females in El Salvador. Figure 3.5 shows that even when controlled for education, females are less tolerant than males. For every level of education, males are more tolerant than females. Surprisingly, the differences are greatest among those with university education.



**Figure 3. 5**

Location also has some very important impact on tolerance. Recall that the comparisons between 1991 and 1995 were based on San Salvador data. As can be seen in figure 3.6 below, we would be incorrect to assume that all of El Salvador is similar to the capital city. Two important conclusions emerge from this figure. First, tolerance in San Salvador is lower than in all other regions of the country, even though education levels, as we have shown in chapter 1, are far higher. Second, and less unexpected, tolerance in FMLN zones is far higher than in other regions of the country. It is not clear why tolerance should be lower in San Salvador, and further exploration of this anomaly needs to be undertaken.

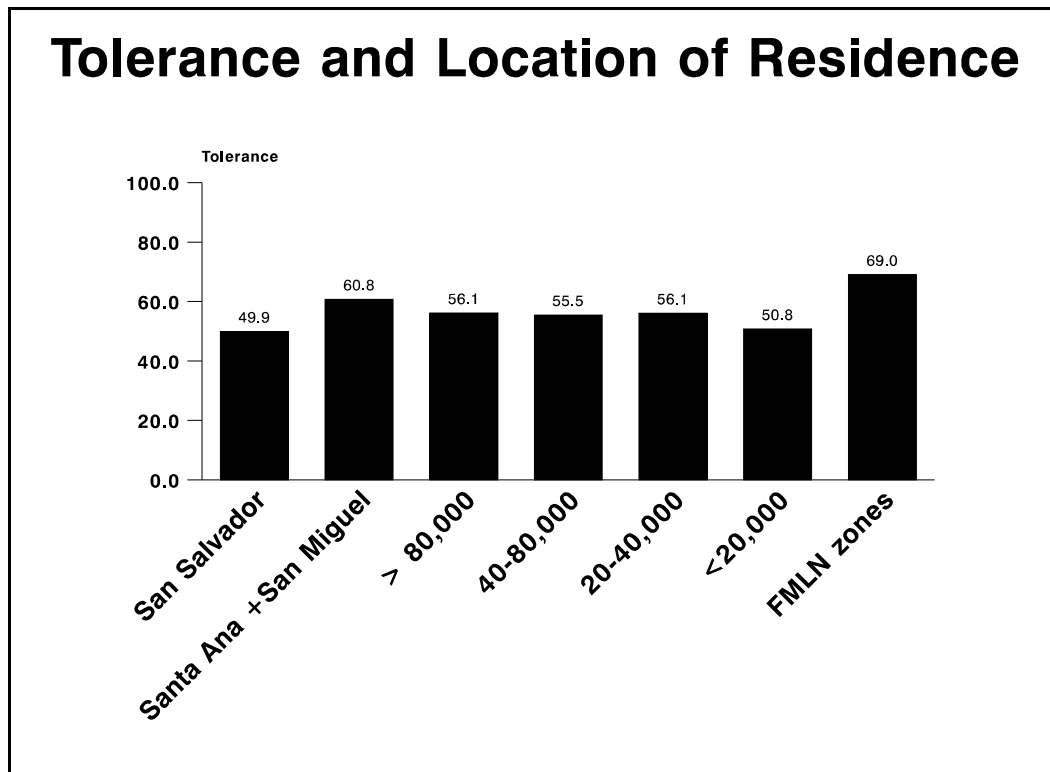
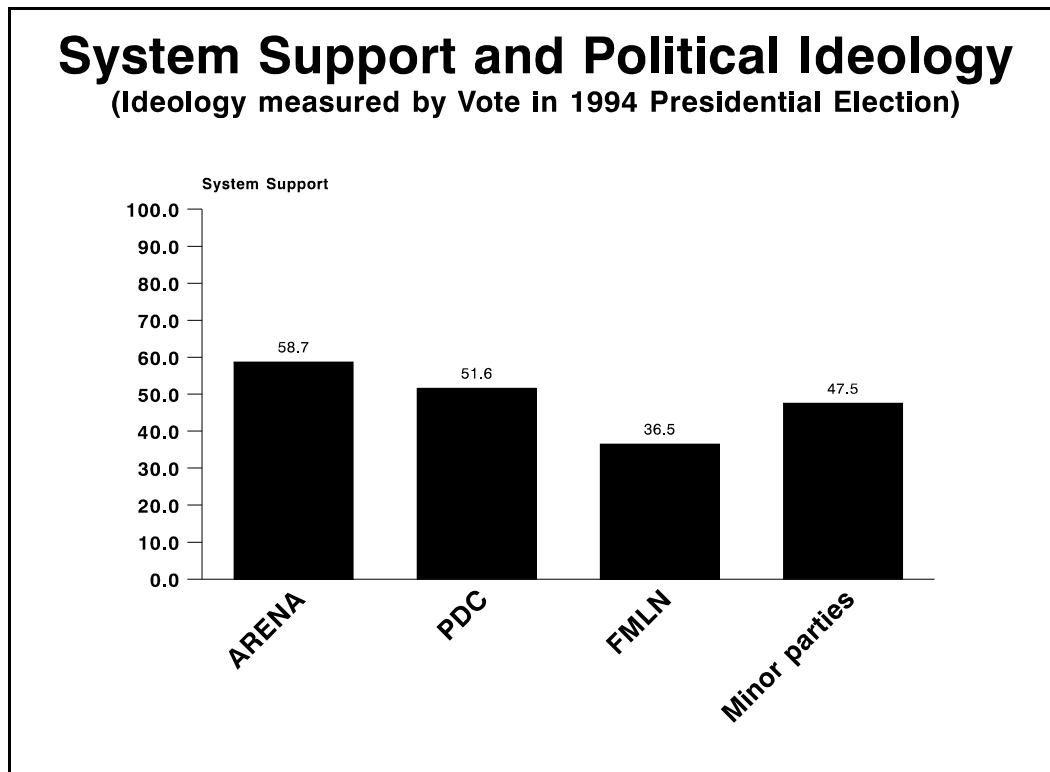


Figure 3. 6

### System Support

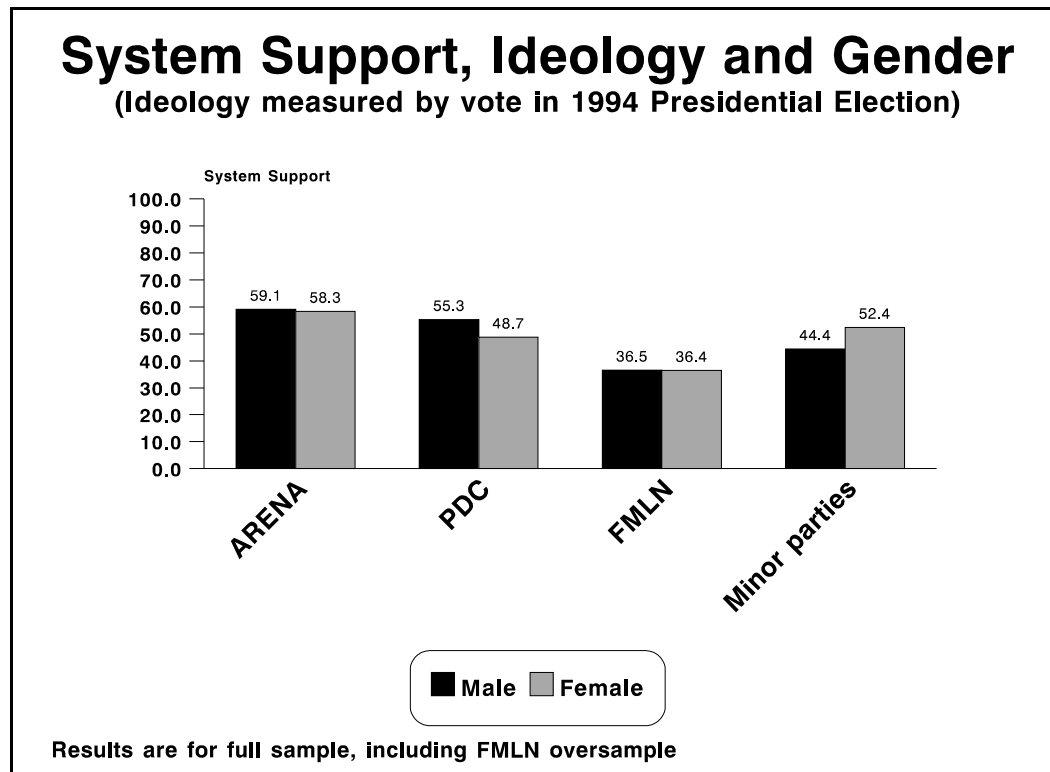
The ideologically charged atmosphere in El Salvador suggests to us the hypothesis that system support is directly linked to ideology. Our hypothesis is that low system support is found among FMLN supporters while high support is found among ARENA supporters. Figure 3.7 shows that this is indeed the case. The differences are statistically significant ( $< .001$ ).



**Figure 3. 7**

In contrast to the ideological impact on system support, there is no connection to common demographic variables, namely gender and age. The differences among system support are not related to age, nor are they related to gender (no figure shown). Furthermore, as can be seen in figure 3.8 below, there are virtually no gender-based differences in the degree of system support for ARENA and FMLN supporters. Female supporters of the PDC, however, are likely to exhibit somewhat lower levels of system support.





**Figure 3. 8**

Searching further for differences in system support beyond the ideological factor, we find some indication that there is a link with socio-economic status, but the link is complex. Normally, one would anticipate that higher socio-economic status translates into higher system support. As we showed in chapter 2, Inglehart's thesis was that economic development translated into higher life satisfaction, which in turn translated into stable democracy. We would expect, therefore, that those individuals within a given country who have risen economically would be the ones most likely to express higher levels of system support.

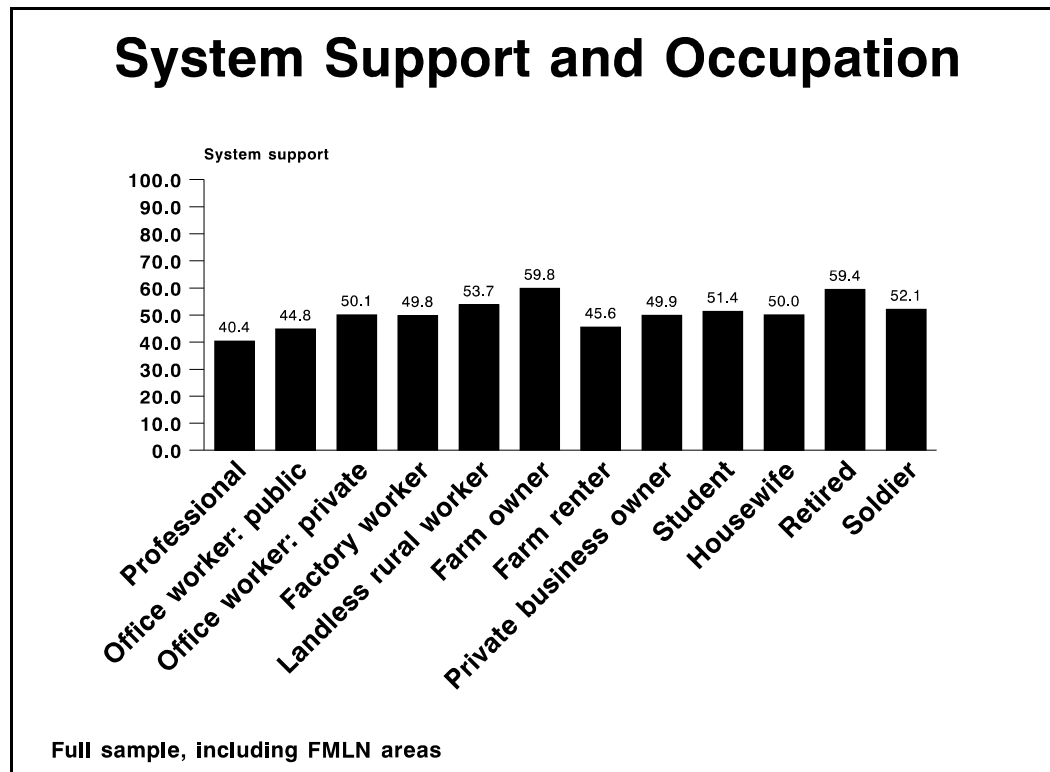
The survey results in El Salvador do not fully support the Inglehart expectation, and indeed in many ways contradict it. We found, for example, that in some cases occupation is indeed important, but in complex ways. As is shown in figure 3.9 below, two occupations at opposite ends of the socio-economic ladder, stand out as having comparatively low levels of system support: professionals and renters/sharecroppers. The low support expressed by farm renters/sharecroppers is easily understood and conforms to the Inglehart thesis. As has been shown by Seligson in his recent study of land tenure in El Salvador, renters and sharecroppers are among the most disadvantaged groups in El

Salvador.<sup>21</sup> Although many Salvadoran farmers benefited from the land reform programs of the 1980s, and some are benefiting from the peace accords land reform provisions, as many as 200,000 farm families have received support from neither program. As a result, the most widely utilized form of land tenure in El Salvador is renting and sharecropping, a very insecure form of land tenure that only rarely provides a decent level of income for the farmer.

Far more difficult to explain is the low level of support among professionals, individuals, almost all of whom have comparatively high levels of income. An examination of the frequency distribution for each of the variables that comprise the support scale, it was found that the opinions of the professional group are very much divided, with some expressing very high support and others very low support. Yet, although the standard deviation of the professional group is somewhat higher than other occupations, it is not as high as other occupations and therefore the low level of support expressed by this group is not entirely a function of widely differing opinions. One must conclude that among professionals in El Salvador there are serious doubts about the legitimacy of the political system. Since these individuals are often opinion leaders, it is a troubling result and one whose causes and implications need to be thought through.

---

<sup>21</sup>Mitchell A. Seligson, "Thirty Years of Transformation in the Agrarian Structure of El Salvador, 1961-1991" *Latin American Research Review*, forthcoming.



**Figure 3. 9**

We have found that low support is found among the highest and lowest occupations in El Salvador. How is support linked to income? Based on the Inglehart thesis, one might suppose that system support is a function of income, with richer Salvadorans providing higher levels of support. In fact, a correlation of monthly household income (variable q10, see appendix) and system support is not statistically significant. We distrust this result because income data on survey questionnaires is notoriously unreliable. A more effective method of tapping income in surveys is to measure possession of household appliances and conveniences. The results are presented in figure 3.10 below. As can be seen, there is a systematic pattern by which Salvadorans who are richer (as measured by their material possessions) express lower system support. This finding is consistent with the prior finding that professionals exhibited lower system support than other groups, but is inconsistent with the finding that renters and sharecroppers express lower support. One must conclude that system support has no direct link to socio-economic status since there appears to be a complex interaction between occupation and income that requires further study.

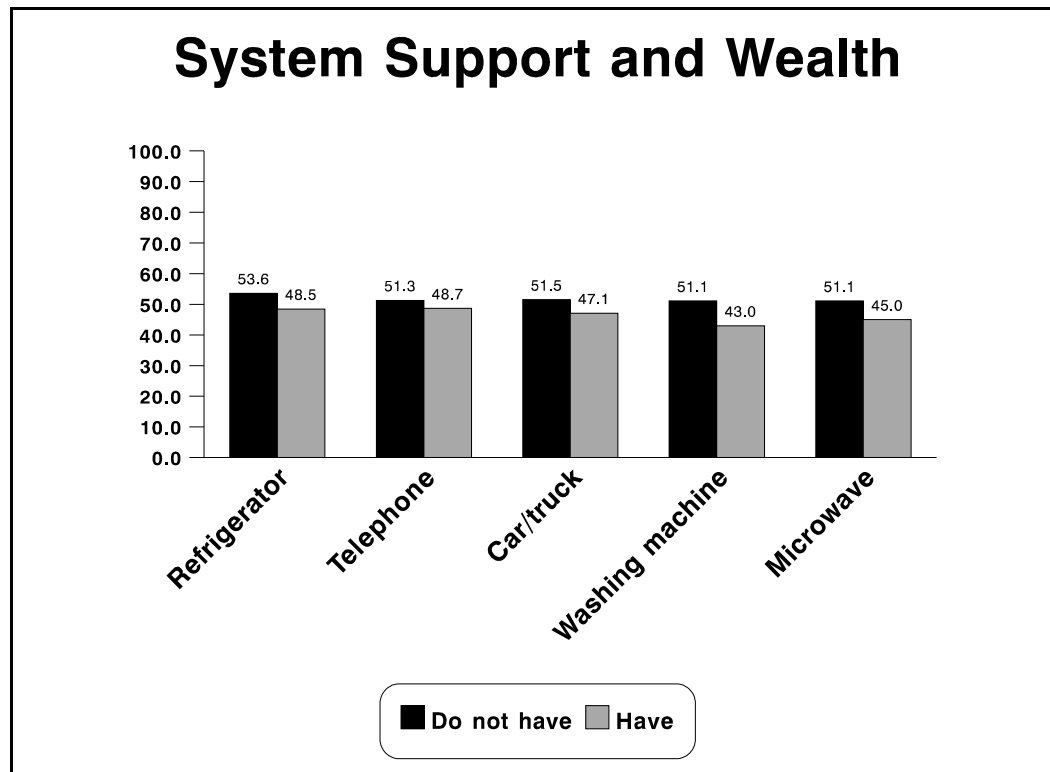


Figure 3. 10

## Conclusions

In this chapter we have found that a significant shift in the direction of stable democracy has taken place since the days of the civil war. Between 1991 and 1995 many more of the residents of El Salvador express politically tolerant attitudes, which, when combined with their levels of system support, suggest that they support stable democracy. When coupled with the findings from chapter 2, which showed increases in interpersonal trust, there is much reason to be encouraged about changes in the direction of political attitudes in El Salvador.

Further exploration of tolerance and system support led to the conclusion that both are directly linked to political ideology, far more so than socio-economic and demographic variables. Indeed, as we found was the case with the education variable, education and ideology seem to be working at cross purposes. We also found that gender plays a role in tolerance, with females being less tolerant than males, even when education is held constant.

These findings suggest that we should take a closer look at ideology in El Salvador. We do so in the next chapter, examining electoral behavior in terms of support for the spectrum of parties, along with the question of political participation in the form of voting versus abstention.

## Chapter 4 Elections

On March 20, 1994 four simultaneous elections took place in El Salvador: a presidential election, congressional elections (by proportional representation) for the 84-seat Legislative Assembly, municipalelections in all 262 municipalities (by majority vote, i.e., the party that obtained more votes received all seats in the municipal council), and elections for the Central American Congress, for which 20 representatives were elected (by proportional representation in a single national district).<sup>1</sup>

Nine parties competed in these elections. On the right side of the ideological spectrum were the following parties: the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA), currently in power, the Movimiento Auténtico Cristiano (MAC), and the Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PCN). On the center-right we find the following: the Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC), the Movimiento de Solidaridad Nacional (MSN), and the Movimiento de Unidad (MU). And, finally, on the left are the following parties: the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), the Convergencia Democrática (CD), and for the first time, the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). Six parties and a coalition (the left built the coalition "MNR-CD-FMLN") participated in the presidential elections. Each of the nine parties presented its own list of candidates for the legislative elections, and the leftist parties, in some cases, built coalitions for the municipal elections.

The so-called "elections of the century" took place in a context of technical irregularities that limited popular participation. The impact of such problems on voting turnout has not been measured, but there has been some dissatisfaction with the organization of the March 1994 elections. We do not question the legitimacy of the electoral results--yet it is clear that there were irregularities--, so we agree with the judgement of the U.N. General Secretary about the acceptable conditions of freedom, competition and security in which the elections took place, i.e., that in spite of the

---

<sup>1</sup> On the 1994 elections, see Ricardo Córdova Macías, "El Salvador en transición: el proceso de paz, las elecciones generales de 1994 y los retos de la gobernabilidad democrática," San Salvador, FUNDAUNGO, *Documentos de Trabajo*, July 1994. For a general perspective on the distinction between national and local elections, see Ricardo Córdova Macías and Andrew J. Stein, "National and Local Elections in Salvadoran Politics (1982-1994)", in Henry Dietz y Gil Shidlo (eds.), *Urban Elections in Democratic Latin America*, forthcoming.

problems, the "electoral results can be considered acceptable."<sup>2</sup> Based on the problems of the March 20 elections and the recommendations made by the political parties and ONUSAL, the second presidential round--that took place on April 24--was better organized.

We find it remarkable to find such low turnout in the "elections of the century." There were 1,307,657 valid votes in the presidential election, which represented 48% of a voting-age population of 2.7 million; or 56% of the 2.35 million of registered voters. According to our survey (see Figure 4. 1), voting turnout was over-reported (by 9.6%), a result also found in similar studies conducted by the University of Michigan and by different organizations in Central America.<sup>3</sup> Turnout in El Salvador was low by Central American standards, as is shown by comparing the results of the 1994 Salvadoran election with other recent elections in Central America (see Table 4.1). Indeed, turnout was lower than each of the other countries except for the most recent elections in Guatemala.

---

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, March 31, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> See Mitchell A. Seligson, *et al.*, "Who Votes in Central America? A Comparative Analysis", in Mitchell A. Seligson and John Booth (eds.), *Elections and Democracy in Central America, Revisited*, University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming 1995.

### Vote in 1994 Elections According to 1995 Survey

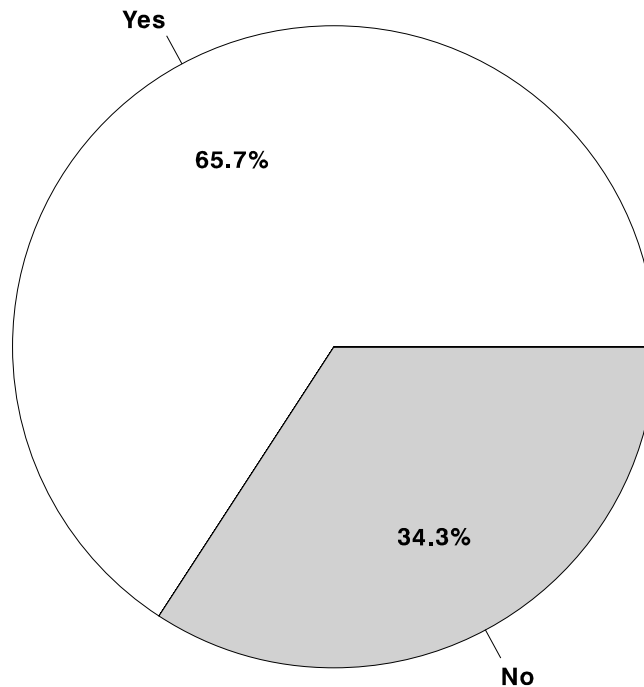


Figure 4.1

It might be argued, simplistically, that such a low turnout was a function of the technical problems of the election day. However, the problem is more complicated. A partial explanation would be that low turnout was also a sign of the crisis of representation of political parties--including the left-- and of the limited mobilization impact of electoral campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In the final round of the presidential run-off 1,197,244 valid votes were cast.



Table 4.1. Voting for Recent Elections and Population Data for Central America

Country	Election date/ survey date	Total population (millions) for election year <sup>a</sup>	Voting age population (millions)	Number of votes (millions)	Voting of voting- age population	Number of registered voters (mil- lions)	Percent turnout of registered voters	Survey results	Voting compulsory/ not compulsory
<u>Costa Rica:</u> Entire country	1990/ 1990	3.01	1.75	1.38	79%	1.69	82%	--	compulsory
Urban "meseta central"	"	.94	.55	.49	89%	.60	82%	84%	
<u>El Salvador:</u> Entire country	1991/ 1991	5.38	2.62	1.15	44%	2.1	52%	--	compulsory
Greater San Salvador	"	1.42	.68	.33	49%	.45	73%	63%	
<u>Guatemala:</u> Entire country	1990(1st round)/ 1992	9.20	4.43	1.81	41%	3.20	57%	--	compulsory (ex- cept illiterates, invalids and 70+ years)
Department of Guatemala	"	1.96 (1990)	.98	.39	40%	.62	63%	70%	"
<u>Honduras:</u> Entire country	1989/ 1991	4.98	2.28	1.80	79%	2.37	76%	--	compulsory
Tegucigalpa	"	.69	.30	.27	87%	.35	75%	83%	"
San Pedro Sula	"	.48	.15	.13	86%	.19	69%	93%	"
<u>Nicaragua:</u> Entire country	1990/ 1991	3.87	2.01	1.51	75%	1.75	86%	--	not compulsory
Managua	"	1.07	.56	.39	71%	.46	85%	79%	"
<u>Panama:</u> Entire country	1989/ 1991	2.37	1.37	.75	55%	1.19	63%	--	not compulsory
Panama City	"	.41	.28	.19	64%	.28	69%	78%	"

a Population data are taken from CELADE (1991). Voting age is 18 for all countries in Central America except Nicaragua, where it is 16. The population projections from CELADE group all those from 15-19 years of age into a single cohort. Interpolation was used to estimate the population of 18 and older (16 and older in Nicaragua). Although different population figures can be obtained from other sources, it was determined that the use of a single, highly respected source for all six countries would help standardize the errors across all of the cases. As better data become available, the estimates made by CELADE will change. For example, a May, 1992 estimate of the 1991 population of El Salvador

shows 5.28 million inhabitants, compared to the 5.38 million reported in the 1991 publication (which was based on 1986 estimates) shown in the above table. See MIPLAN (1992). The preliminary estimates of the 1992 population census show 5.047 million.

Sources for voting data:

Costa Rica: Data are from the district totals as reported by the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones, *Cómputo de votos y declaratorias de elección, 1990*. San José: TSE. A total of 38 districts were included in the sample. Note that the voting districts in some cases cover rural as well as urban areas, whereas the sample is completely urban. As a result, a precise match between the sample and the voting data is not possible. Population estimates for sampled areas come from, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, *Costa Rica: Cálculo de población (por provincia, cantón y distrito) al 1° de enero de 1990*. San José, 1991.

El Salvador: Population estimates for greater San Salvador are from 1992 CELADE estimates for the election year of 1991. See Ministerio de Planificación y Coordinación del Desarrollo Económico y Social, Dirección General de Población y Desarrollo Territorial, Dirección de Población, *Estimación de la población de El Salvador por departamento y municipio (cifras preliminares)*, San Salvador, May 1992, mimeo. Estimates for the country as a whole are from the 1991 CELADE publication (using 1986 estimates) in order to maintain the continuity of the series for all six countries. However, the preliminary population figures from the 1992 population census of El Salvador shows 5.05 million persons compared to the 5.38 million estimated by CELADE. But the preliminary figures for greater San Salvador for the 1992 census are 1.52 million vs. 1.42 for the CELADE estimates. See "Ministerio de Economía, La Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, "Resultados Preliminares del V Censo de Población y IV de Vivienda 1992," *Prensa Gráfica* January 19, 1993, p. 34. Voting data from Ricardo Córdova Macías, "Procesos electorales y sistema de partidos en El Salvador (1982-1989)," *Documentos de Trabajo*, Series Análisis de la Realidad Nacional 92-1, FUNDAUNGO, San Salvador, December 1992.

Guatemala: Tribunal Supremo Electoral, *Memoria de la Elecciones 1990/1991*. Guatemala, n.d.; and Tribunal Supremo Electoral, Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral del Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (CAPEL-IIDH), *Informe Final del Programa de Capacitación electoral 1990*, TSE-CAPEL, Guatemala, Marzo, 1991. Guatemala City population estimates from "Estimaciones de población urbana y rural por Departamento y Municipio: 1990-1995," Guatemala: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas.

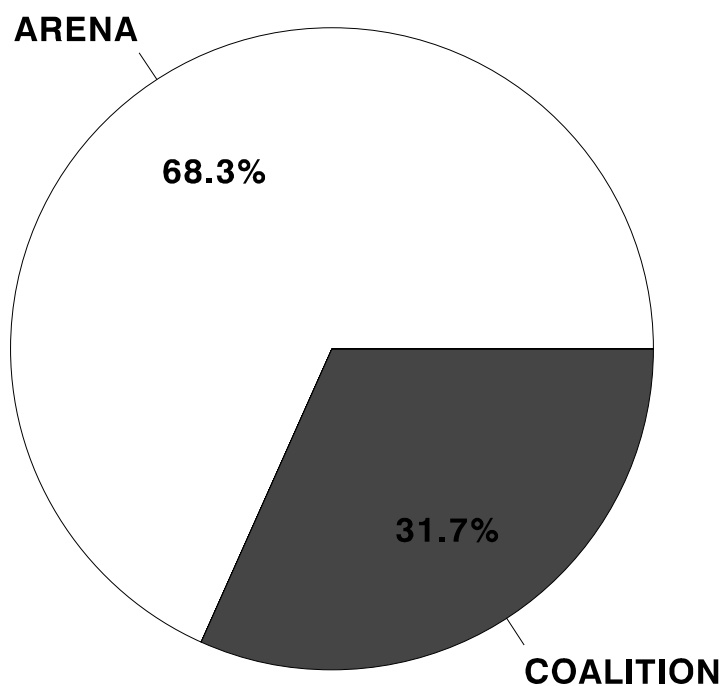
Honduras: Censo nacional de población y vivienda, 1988: Características generales de la población y de las viviendas por barrios y colonias, San Pedro Sula y Tegucigalpa (Tegucigalpa, December 1990); unpublished data, Tribunal Nacional de Elecciones. Note that the number of registered voters in Tegucigalpa is given as larger than the voting-age population. This may be a result of the underestimation of the voting-age population, estimates made from the CELADE population estimates or from differences in the way the area included in the population census for Tegucigalpa vs. the voting districts included as part of the city.

Nicaragua: Data for Managua are for the "Region III", which includes Managua and the surrounding areas. No voting data are available for the city itself, but the population of the city of Managua was 903,620, whereas the Region III had a population of 1,067,881. Hence, the city was 84.6 percent of the region. Latin American Studies Association, Commission to Observe the 1990 Nicaraguan Election, "Electoral Democracy Under International Pressure," March 15, 1990, mimeo; "Cómo votó Nicaragua: los resultados electorales, *Envío* (Managua-UCA) April 1990, pp. 1-24. Abstention rates of registered voters taken from Castro and Prevost (1992:223); Vanessa Castro and Gary Prevost, *The 1990 Elections in Nicaragua and their Aftermath*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992.

Panama: OEA (1992:40). Results based on recount. Estimates of turnout vary from 54% to 75%. Our calculations based on data from the Electoral Tribunal and reported by the Comité de Apoyo a los Observadores Internacionales, *Testimonio de un Proceso Electoral* (1990) show 76% turnout rate of registered population in the areas in which we surveyed. It is important to note that the 1989 election was aborted before the full count of the votes was completed, hence the true vote totals are not known. The best estimates are that approximately one-fifth of the votes were not counted.

In the first round of the presidential elections, ARENA obtained 49.03% of the vote, the Coalition (FMLN-MNR-CD) 24.90%, and the PDC 16.36%. In general terms, these results coincided with the predictions of the public opinion surveys. We have to underscore three issues: the high percentage of the vote obtained by ARENA, which received almost 50%; the left established as the second political force; and the PDC moved to the third place, but with a significant amount of votes. In the final round of the presidential run-off--which took place on April 24-- ARENA obtained a sound triumph with 68.35% of the vote, while the FMLN-MNR-CD received 31.65% of the vote.

### **Vote for President (1994) According to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal**



**Figure 4.2**

Our survey (see Figure 4. 3) did not differentiate the presidential vote in the first

round from the run-off, since in our study we were interested in support for all of the parties that competed in the elections, not merely the two who entered the final round of the presidential run-off. Nonetheless, our results showed voting turnout similar to the electoral results. While ARENA obtained 68.35% of the vote, in our survey it emerged with 63.2%, and in the case of the FMLN-MNR-CD coalition, which obtained 31.65% of the vote, our survey reported 22.6%. Part of the difference between the actual vote and the survey can be explained by the confidence interval of the sample, which would narrow somewhat the difference. The remaining part of the difference is a direct result of the inclusion of the PDC vote in our totals, when that party was eliminated for the final round. See Figure 4.3 for details.

### Vote for President (1994) According to Survey of 1995

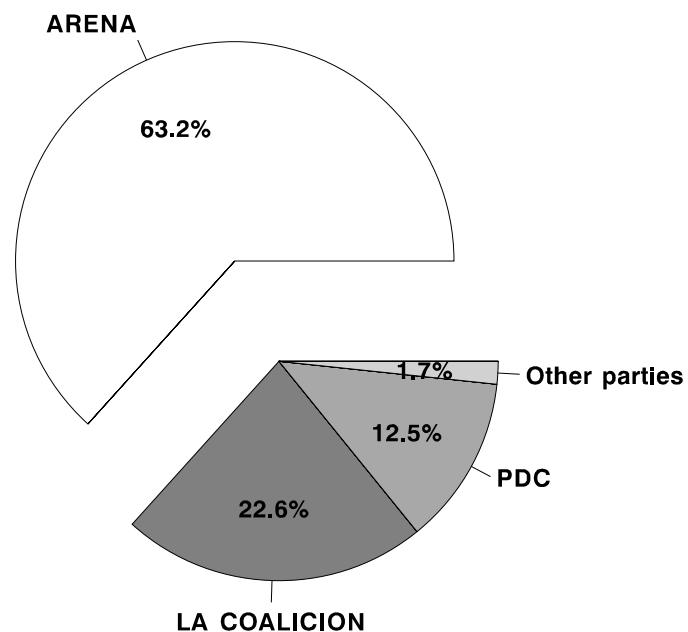


Figure 4.3

Even though the elections showed a high degree of polarization between ARENA and the FMLN, it was in the legislative elections where that polarization could be seen more clearly (see Table 4. 2). While ARENA kept its 39 representatives, the rest of the political parties decreased their representation, and the FMLN appeared for the first time with 21 representatives.

Table 4. 2  
Distribution of the Number of "Diputados" by Political Party  
in the Legislatures Elected in 1991 and 1994

Political Party	Number of Diputados 1991	Number of Diputados 1994
ARENA	39	39
PCN	9	4
PDC	26	18
CD	9	1
FMLN	np <sup>5</sup>	21
UNIDAD	np	1
MAC	1	0
Total	84	84

Source: Ricardo Córdova Macías, "El Salvador en transición: el proceso de paz, las elecciones generales de 1994 y los retos de la gobernabilidad democrática," San Salvador, FUNDAUNGO, Documentos de Trabajo, July 1994.

The distribution of votes showed how small parties or parties in the center of the ideological spectrum were the ones that suffered the consequences of polarization. The electoral results showed a high polarization and reasserted the two main political forces (ARENA and the FMLN) as the two poles at the ends of the political spectrum; however, it is still too early to draw conclusions about the future of the political center. These elections took place under conditions of significant polarization related to the main actors and issues of the civil war.

Our survey showed an over-representation of voting turnout for ARENA's "diputados." Figure 4. 4 shows the distribution of votes according to the survey and the data from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

---

<sup>5</sup> The FMLN did not participate.

## Vote for Diputado (1994)

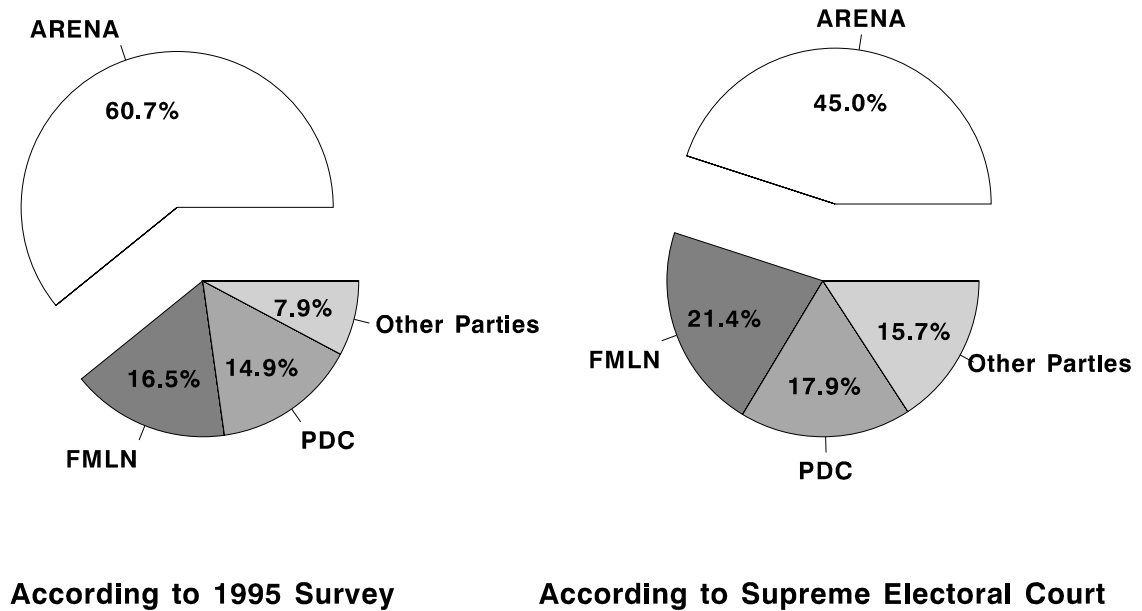


Figure 4.4

### Who Votes in El Salvador?

In this section we analyze socio-demographic, socio-economic, geographic, and socio-political variables in relation to participation in elections in El Salvador. Then we focus on different hypothesis that attempt to explain the reasons for abstention in El Salvador.

#### Socio-Demographic Variables

According to several studies of voting behavior in the United States, education, gender and age are the most important individual characteristics that help predict

voter turnout. In the case of education, we observed the following trend: those with no education or low levels of education had approximately the same lower level of voting turnout, but turnout increases with higher education (Figure 4. 5).

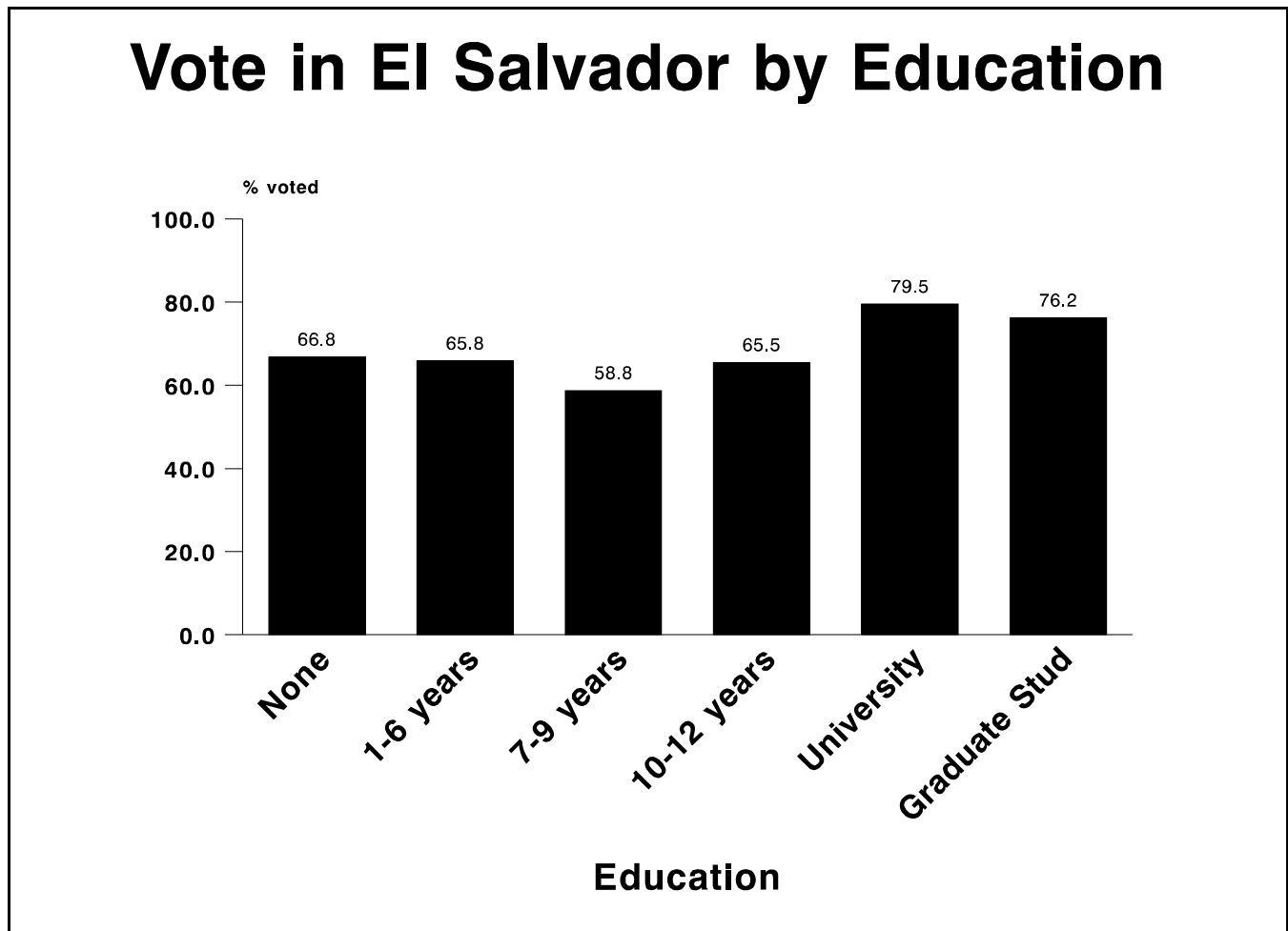


Figure 4.5

With reference to age, there is a curvilinear pattern in Central America, i.e., younger and older citizens voted less than those who were in their middle age. The case of El Salvador follows this pattern, as can be observed in Figure 4. 6: young people who recently gained the right to vote were those who voted the less. Subsequently there was a significant increase, a tendency to stabilize in the middle years, and finally a small decrease for the older stratum.



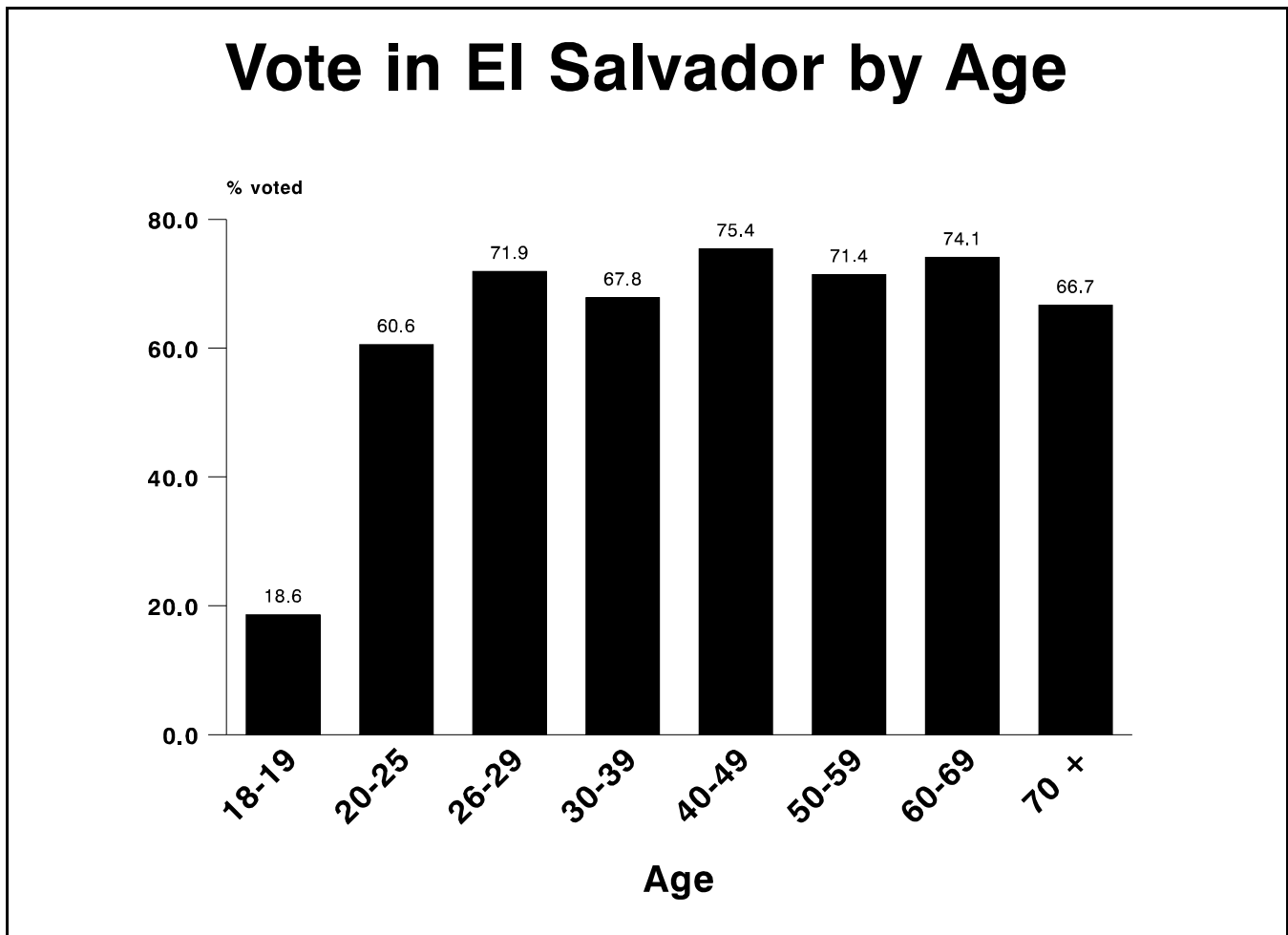


Figure 4.6

With reference to gender, males tended to vote more than females (see Figure 4. 7). The difference is statistically significant.

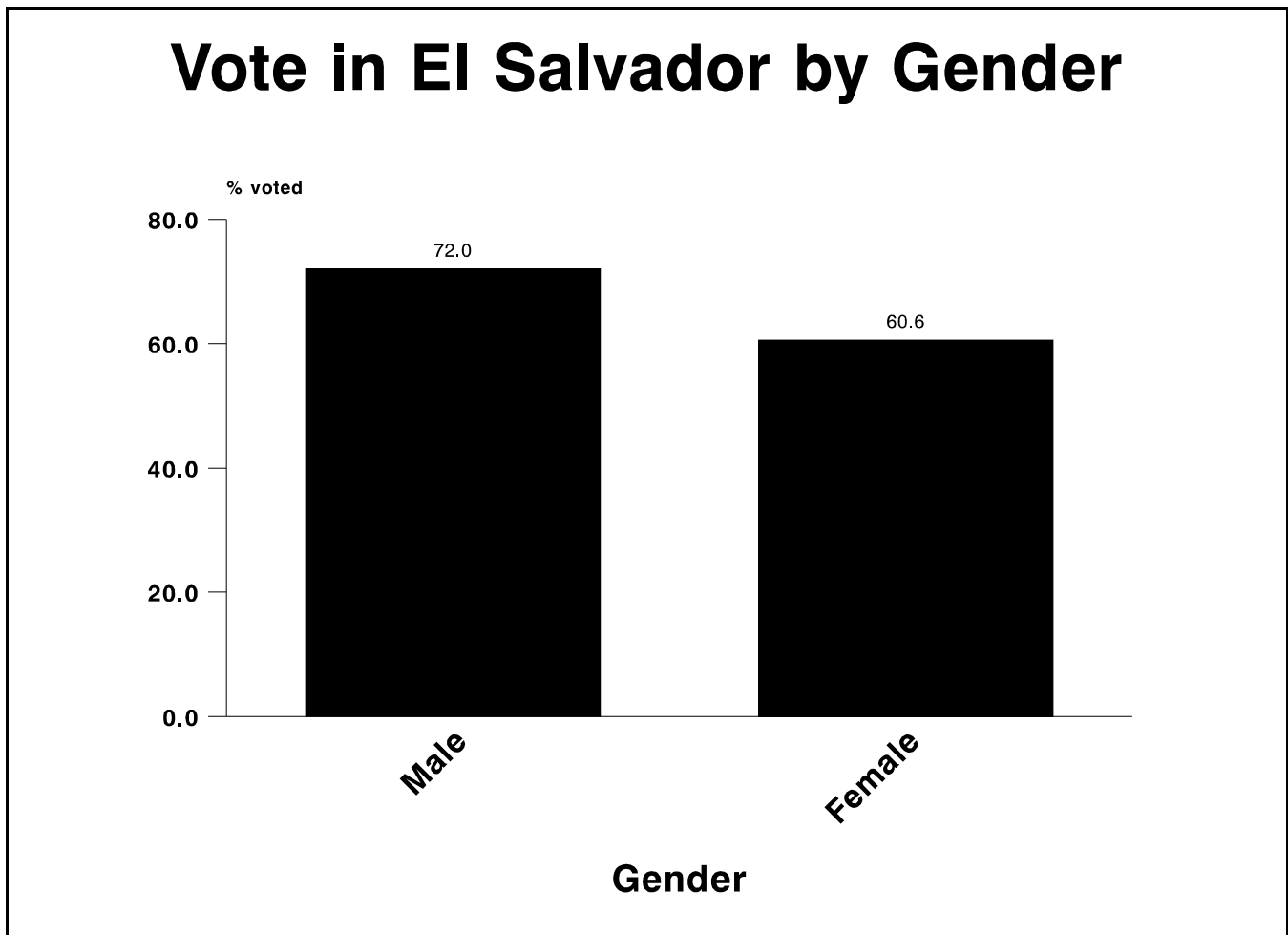


Figure 4.7

### Socio-Economic Variables

Income is important in explaining voting turnout. In the survey, the respondent was asked: "In which of the following levels do you place your monthly household income?" and he/she was handed a card with the following levels: 1. Less than 720 colones; 2. Between 721 - 1,000 colones; 3. 1,001 - 2,000 colones; 4. 2,001 - 3,000 colones; 5. 3,001 - 4,000 colones; 6. 4,001 - 5,000 colones; 7. 5,001 - 6,000 colones; and 8. More than 6,001 colones. Figure 4. 8 shows a clear pattern: there was a correspondence between higher income levels and higher voting turnout.

## Vote in El Salvador by Income

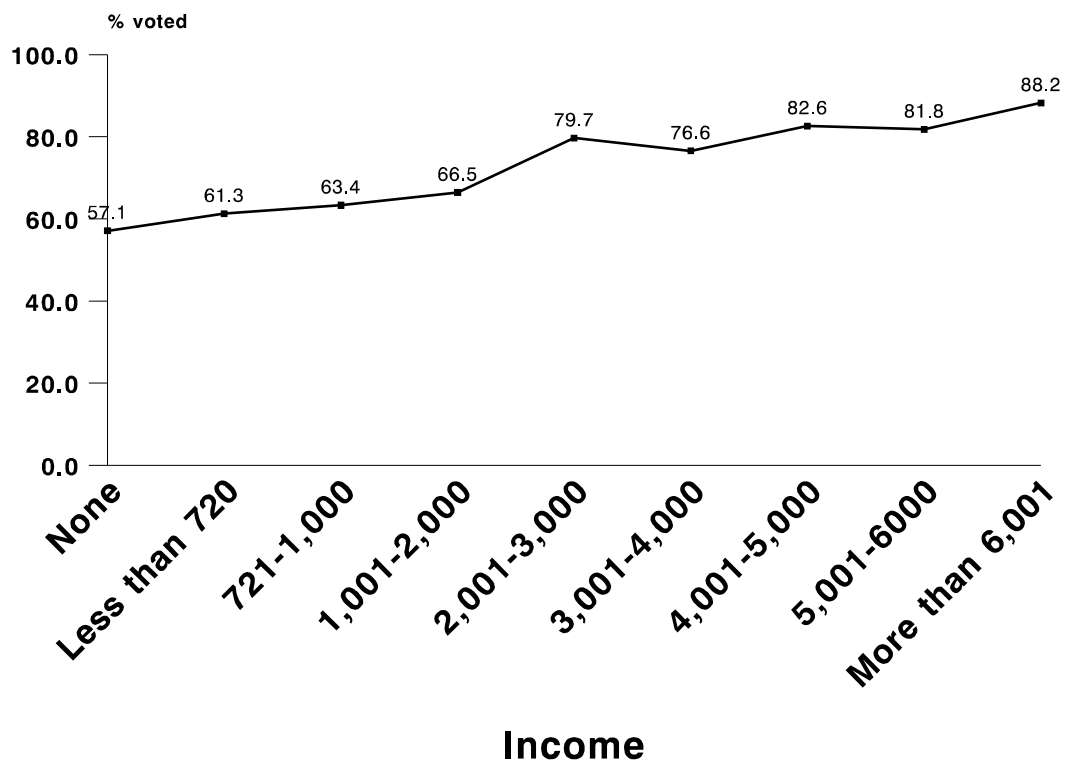


Figure 4.8

In terms of occupation, voting turnout showed a great variability, as can be seen in Figure 4. 9. Retired individuals, professionals, and office workers in the public sector were at the higher end of voting turnout, while soldiers, housewives, and students were at the lower end.

## Vote in El Salvador by Occupation

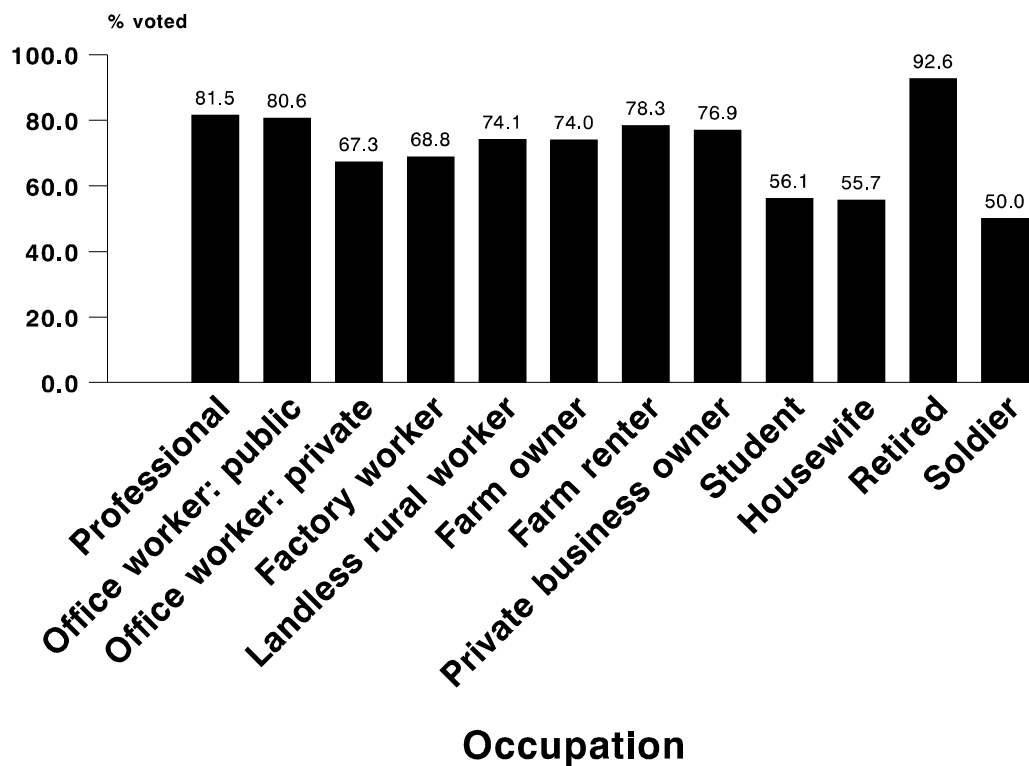


Figure 4.9

### Geographic Variables

There was almost no correlation between the location of residence and voting. Only Santa Ana residents showed a higher voting turnout, while San Miguel residents showed less than average voting turnout (see Figure 4. 10).

## Vote in El Salvador by Location of Residence

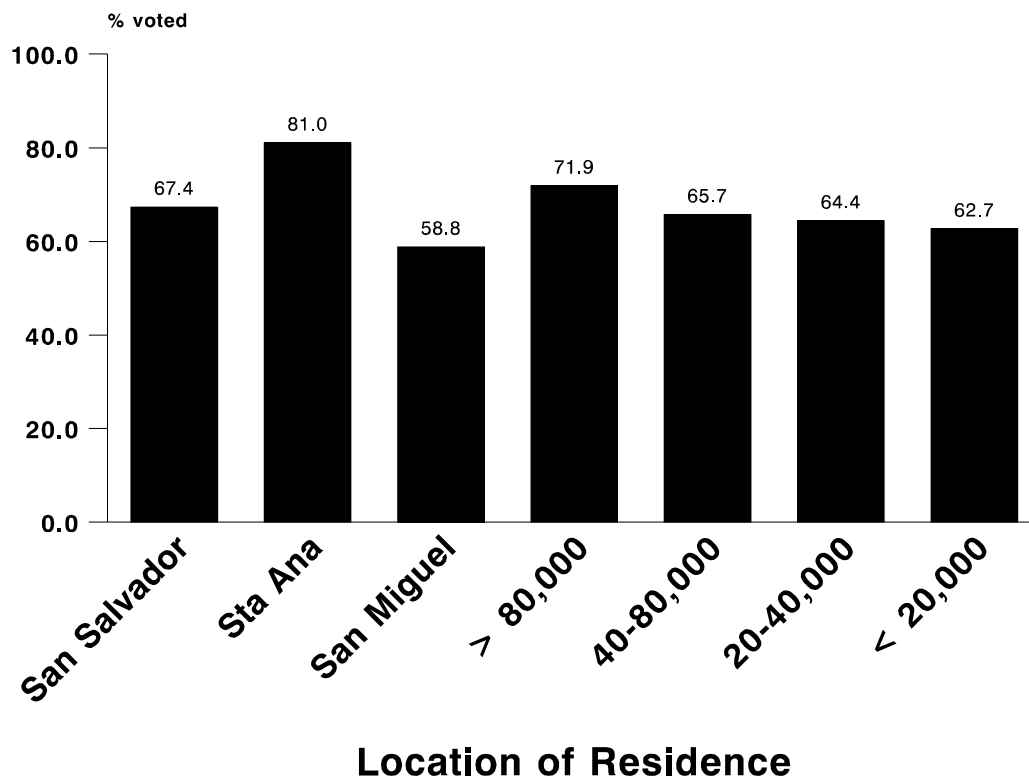


Figure 4.10

### Socio-Political Variables

Contrary to what we expected, ideology did not have a direct relationship with voting turnout. We observed a great variability in participation in elections, irrespective of political preference. When using the left-right scale, we did not find a clear tendency in participation, i.e., ideology was not a good predictor of voting turnout (see Figure 4. 11).

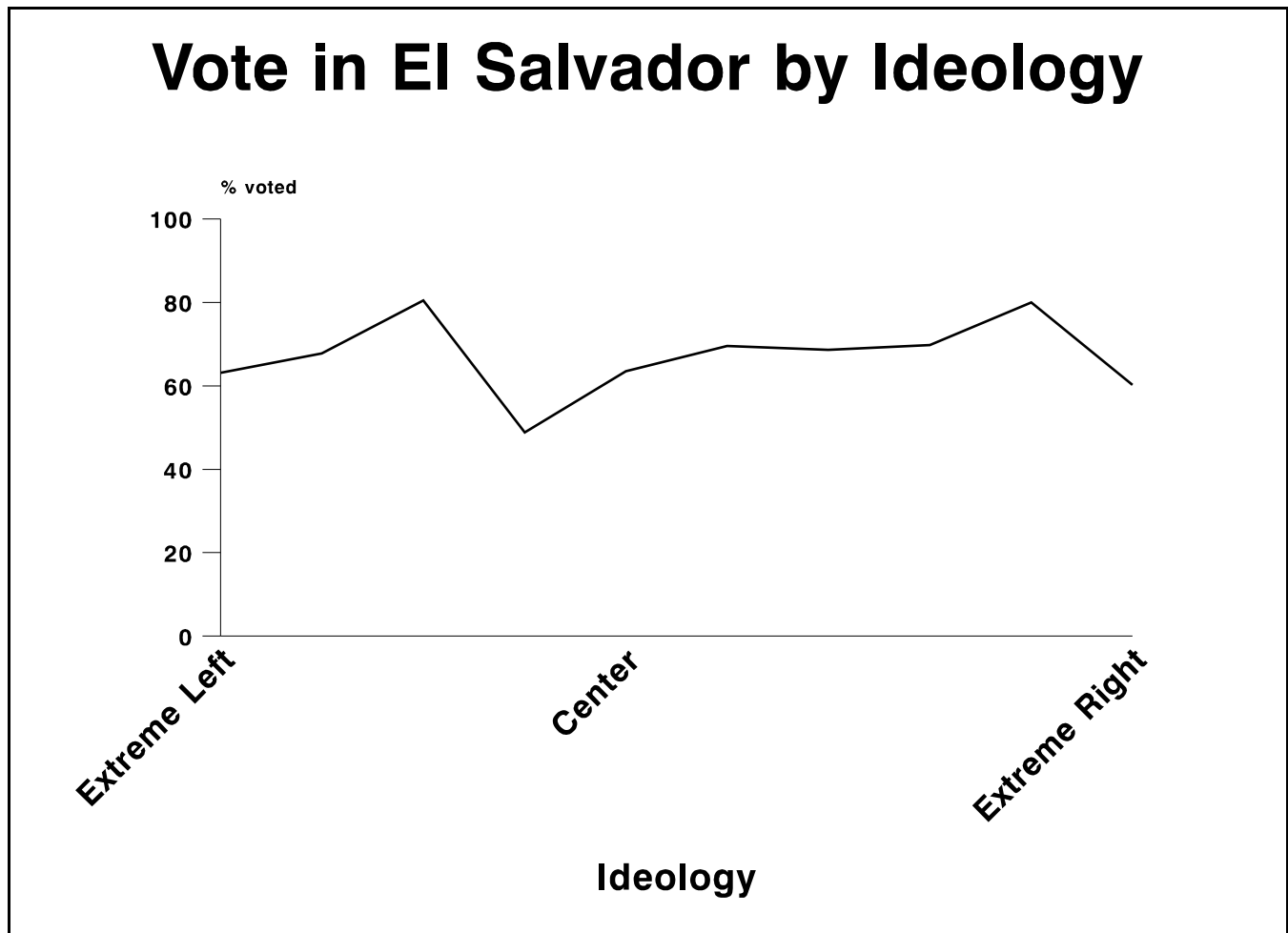


Figure 4.11

The variable that best explained voting behavior was level of information. Figure 4. 12 clearly shows how higher levels of information were correlated with higher levels of voting turnout.

## Vote in El Salvador by Level of Information

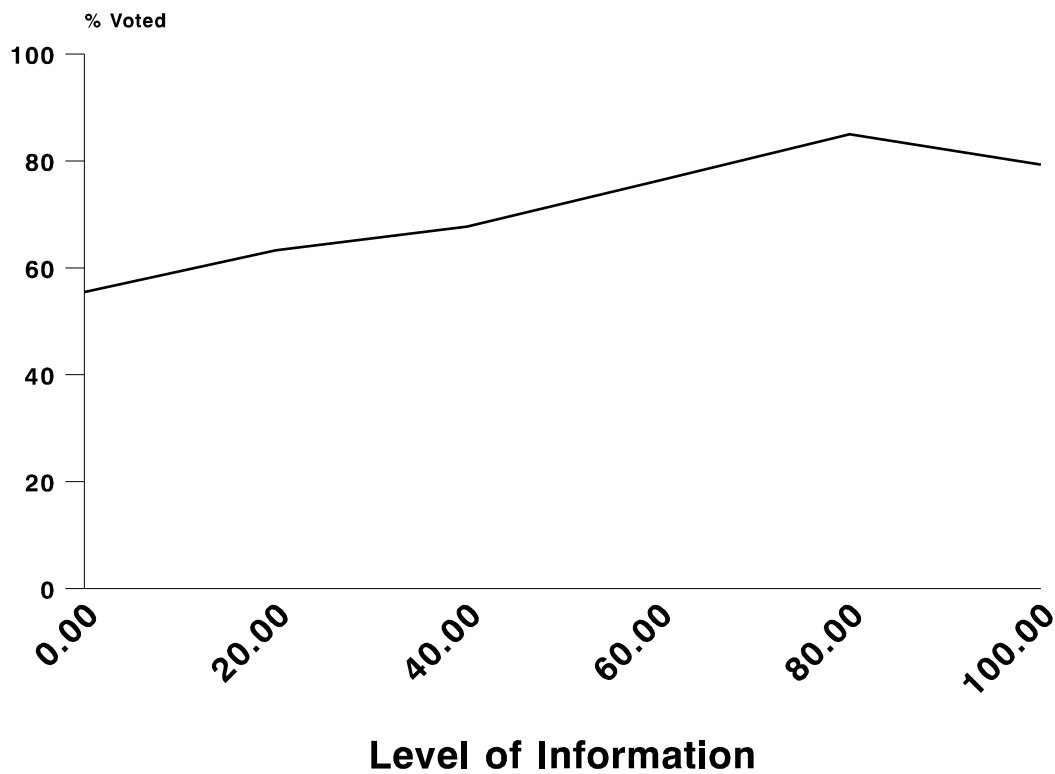


Figure 4.12

Religion was another interesting variable. Catholics tended to vote more than Protestants, and the latter tended to vote more than atheists (see Figure 4. 13).

## Vote in El Salvador by Religion

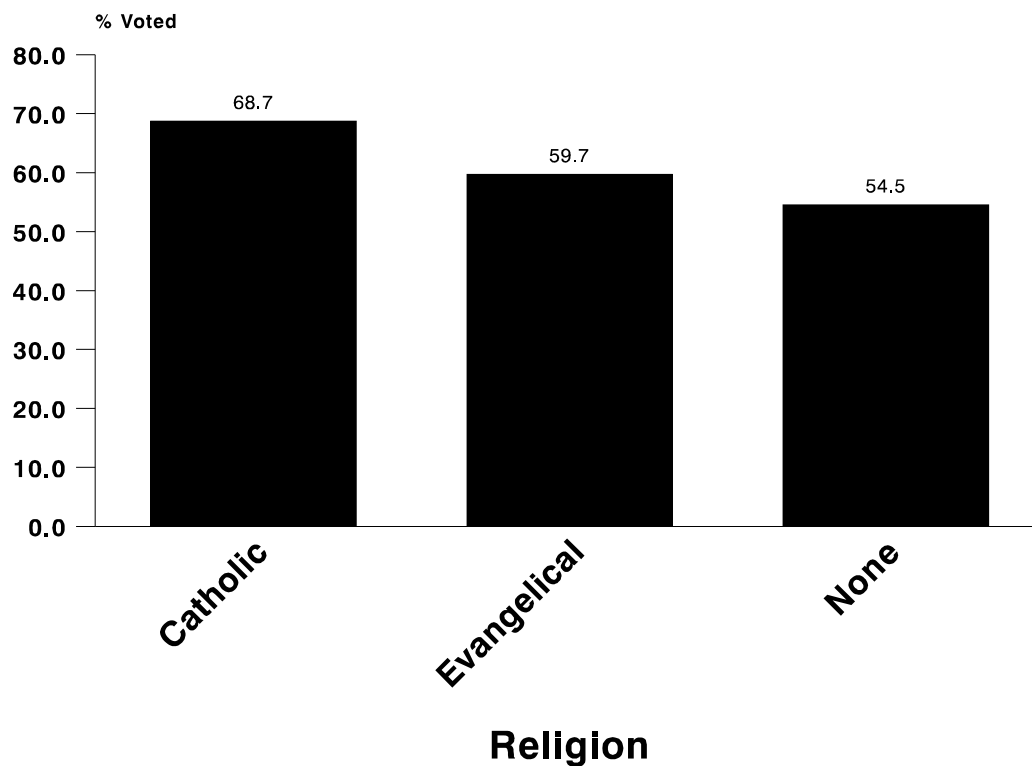


Figure 4.13

### Reasons for not-voting

When we analyzed the reasons for not-voting, we found a critical difference between the reasons the respondent gave for himself/herself and the reasons he/she gave for "others" who did not vote. According to the 1995 survey, personal reasons were basically problems of registration (40.1%), sickness (22.7%), and mistrust (13.7%). The reasons for others tended to be more political: mistrust (39.3%), registration problems (33%), and violence (9%). We interpret this to mean that political reasons such as mistrust and violence were stronger for others, while registration and sickness were the principal motives for respondents. These results were linked to the political context, in which respondents felt some danger or insecurity, even in 1995, to express their true reasons for abstention. For 1995, the



fact that registration problems appeared for both the respondent and "others" showed that it was in fact a key problem in the elections of March 1994 (see Figure 4. 14).

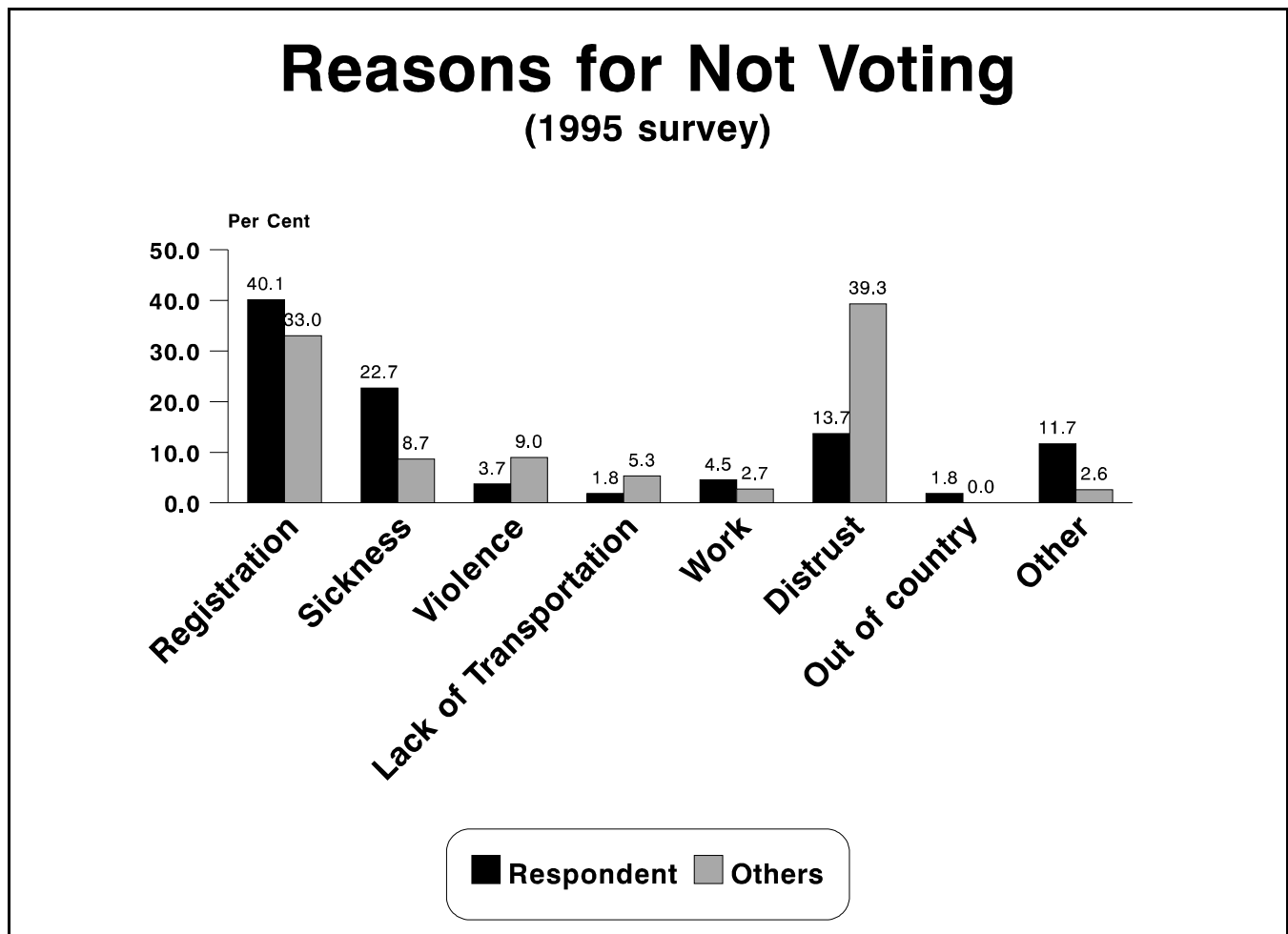


Figure 4.14

It is important to compare the reasons for not-voting mentioned in the 1995 survey with those mentioned in the 1991 survey. Figure 4. 15 shows the results for the 1991 survey. We found the same trend for 1991, yet somewhat more accentuated. Political reasons were given for "others": mistrust (60.3%), violence (17.2%), and registration in the third place (16.5%). For the respondent, the reasons were: registration (50.1%), mistrust (18.3%), and sickness (11.7%).

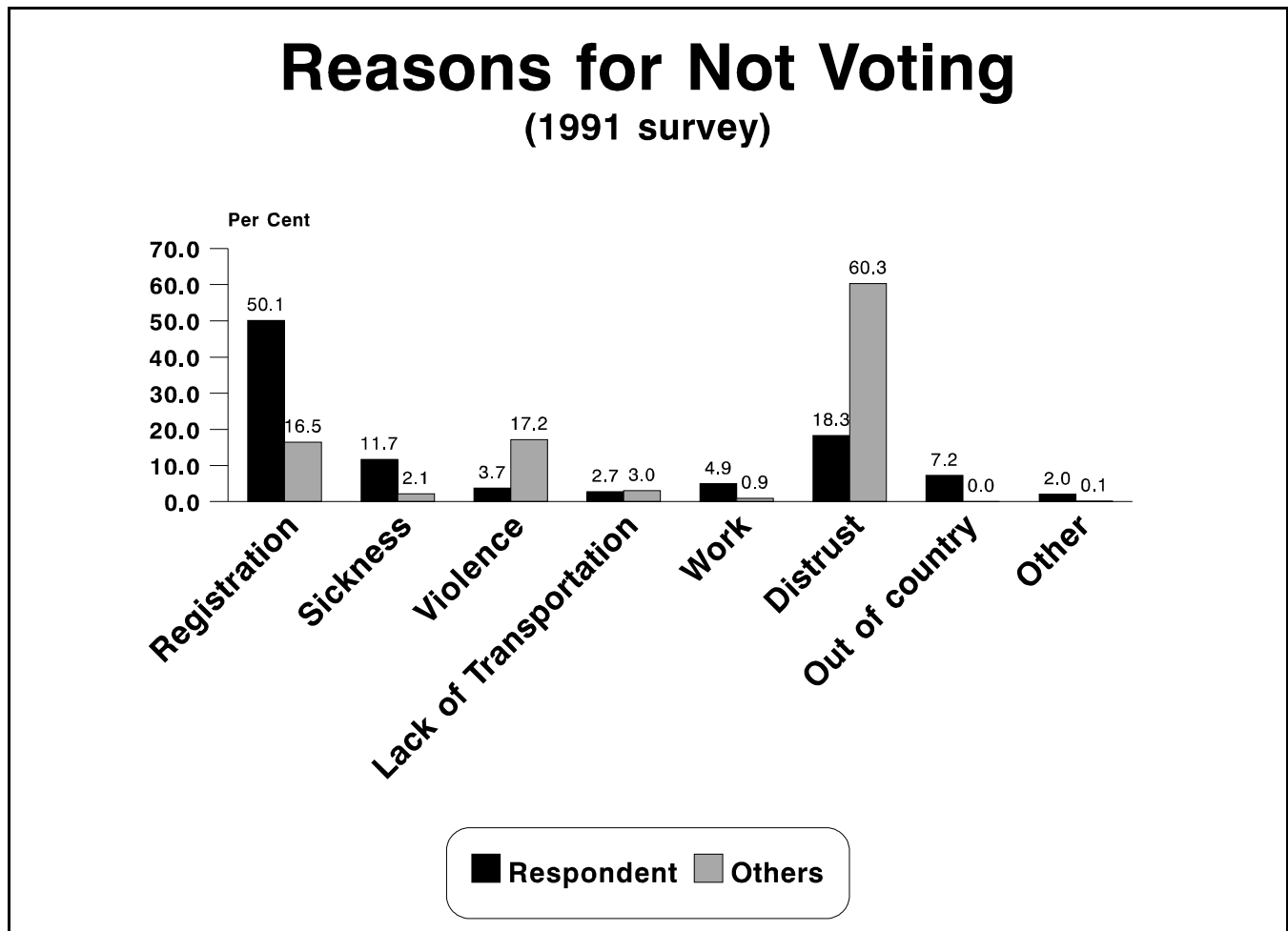


Figure 4.15

### Municipal Elections

When we analyzed the results of the March 1994 elections, we found something surprising: the poor results obtained by the FMLN at the municipal level, including many of the municipalities controlled by the FMLN during the civil war. Out of 262 municipalities, ARENA won 207, the PDC 29, the FMLN 15, the PCN 10, and the MAC 1.

We posit two hypotheses to explain those results. First, the lack of experience of the guerrillas in electoral participation and, particularly, their lack of vision regarding the need to add to their rolls local leaders with less direct links to their party structures but with the capacity to attract more votes.

The second hypothesis refers to the way in which the electoral system of simple majority is structured, generating a discrepancy between votes and the distribution of municipal councils. In practice, the party or coalition winning the plurality wins all the seats.

We would now like to refer to the distribution of council seats among the different political parties.

Table 4.3  
Distribution of Votes and Municipal Councils by party, 1994

Party	1994 Elections	
	Municipal Councils	Percentage of Votes
ARENA	207	44.48%
MAC	1	0.74%
PCN	10	7.96%
PDC	29	19.41%
CD/FMLN <sup>6</sup>	15	24.48%
TOTAL	262	-----

As we pointed out previously, the disparity between votes and municipal councils was clear in the 1994 elections, considering that ARENA, with 44.48% of the vote, obtained 79.01% of the municipal councils; while the leftist coalition, with 24.48% of the vote, obtained only 5.73% of the municipal councils. The PDC, with 19.41% of the vote, won 11.06% of local governments. The most interesting case was that of the MAC, which with only 0.74% of the vote, obtained one municipal council.

The main political problem entailed by this electoral system at the level of local government is that those parties that were defeated, though by as few as 100 votes, remain totally excluded from local government for three years. Another important

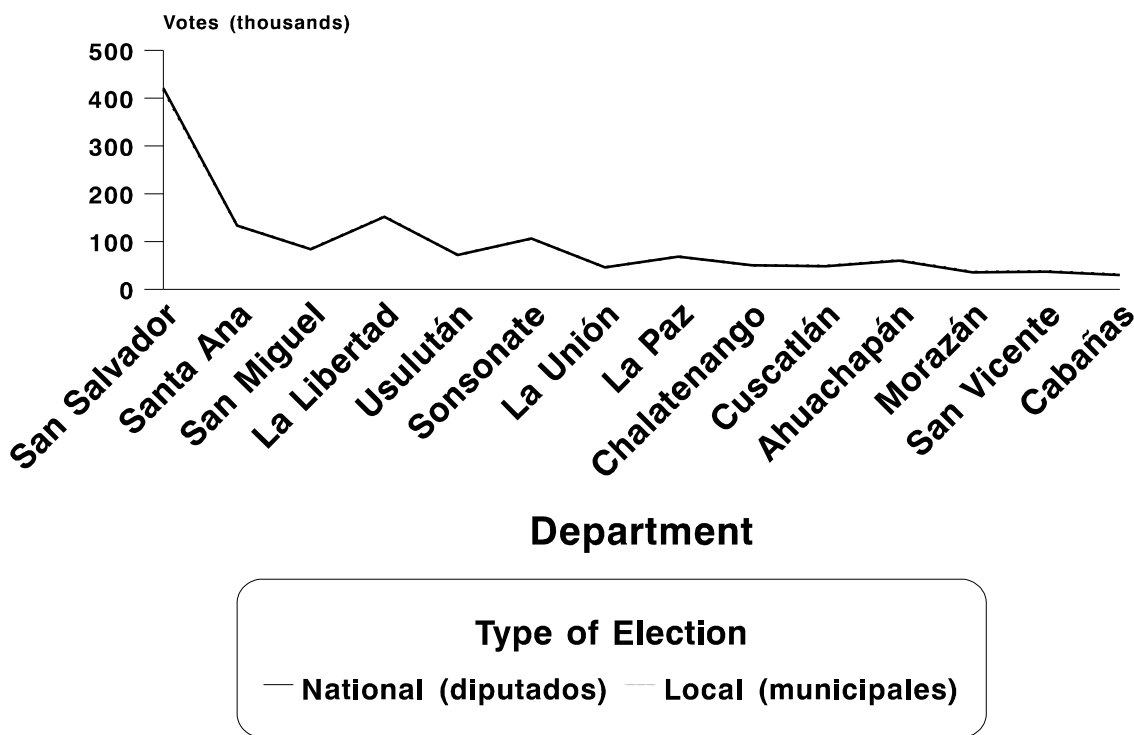
---

<sup>6</sup> In the 1994 elections, the left could not reproduce the alliance at the presidential level for the local elections. Therefore different coalitions were formed at the local level: FMLN-MNR-CD, FMLN-CD, FMLN-MNR and CD-MNR, and also each party ran alone for the majority of the municipalities. The results were the following: the FMLN won only in 13 municipalities and in 2 in alliance with the CD. In order to simplify the table, we added all the votes received by the three parties on the left at the municipal level and also added the "alcaldías" they won alone or in alliance with other parties.

question is to determine whether the dynamics of voting in local elections differs from voting in national elections. Even though we have analyzed this problem in another study,<sup>7</sup> we would like to reiterate a main findings in this area. There is almost a perfect overlap between the quantity of valid votes for legislators and municipal councils, as can be seen for all departments in the 1994 elections (Figure 4. 16).

This means that, whether in local or national elections, the quantity of votes cast in each department was the same. We show now the distribution of the vote in national and local elections for the three main parties.

## El Salvador: Electoral Results Comparison in National and Local Elections, 1994



Source: Ricardo Córdova and Andrew Stein

Figure 4.16

<sup>7</sup> See Ricardo Córdova Macías and Andrew J. Stein, "National and Local Elections in Salvadoran Politics (1982-1994)," in Henry Dietz and Gil Shidlo (eds.), *Urban Elections in Democratic Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, forthcoming.



Table 4.4

Percentage of the Vote in Local and National Elections for the Three Main Parties, 1994

Department	ARENA Local	ARENA National	ARENA Difference	PDC Local	PDC National	PDC Difference	FMLN Local	FMLN National	FMLN Difference
San Salvador	43.73	44.80	-1.07	13.15	11.37	1.78	27.81	29.49	-1.68
Santa Ana	44.10	43.92	0.18	22.08	20.98	1.1	20.80	21.46	-0.66
San Miguel	43.63	44.63	-1.0	25.34	23.57	1.77	14.54	15.04	-0.5
La Libertad	48.01	47.87	0.14	17.39	15.61	1.78	20.64	21.93	-1.29
Usulután	43.45	44.09	-0.64	23.04	21.13	1.91	15.16	15.94	-0.78
Sonsonate	42.78	43.10	-0.32	23.30	23.45	-0.15	15.66	16.71	-1.05
La Unión	45.05	45.57	-0.52	32.57	30.09	2.48	5.95	6.83	-0.88
La Paz	44.53	46.59	-2.06	21.58	20.34	1.24	15.03	15.96	-0.93
Chalatenango	44.75	45.05	-0.3	24.09	22.23	1.86	20.00	18.89	-1.11
Cuscatlán	51.93	52.36	-0.43	14.60	12.44	2.16	16.87	18.31	-1.44
Ahuachapán	40.88	41.06	-0.18	25.06	24.01	1.05	15.75	15.95	-0.20
Morazán	39.12	39.49	-0.37	23.66	23.49	0.17	16.41	15.83	0.58
San Vicente	42.29	43.23	-0.94	25.83	22.52	3.31	21.06	22.69	-1.63
Cabañas	49.92	49.56	0.36	16.26	15.73	0.53	12.54	12.12	0.42
Total	44.48	45.03	-0.55	19.41	17.87	1.54	20.33	21.39	-1.06

On the basis of Table 4.4, we would like to comment on three aspects. In the case of ARENA, in three of the departments local elections yielded more votes than did national elections; the opposite occurred in 11 of the departments. The most significant decreases took place in San Vicente (-0.94), San Salvador (-1.07), and La Paz (-2.06).

On average, nationally ARENA lost -0.55% votes in local elections, which means that there was no significant variation in the quantity of votes obtained by ARENA in function of the type of election. Irrespective of the type of election, ARENA obtained roughly the same share of the vote: 44.48% locally and 45.03% nationally.

In the case of the PDC, in all departments (except for one, Sonsonate) local elections brought more votes than did national elections, which is reflected in the fact that on average, local elections yielded 1.54% more votes. Irrespective of the type of election, the PDC obtained roughly the same share of the vote: 19.41% locally and 17.87% nationally.

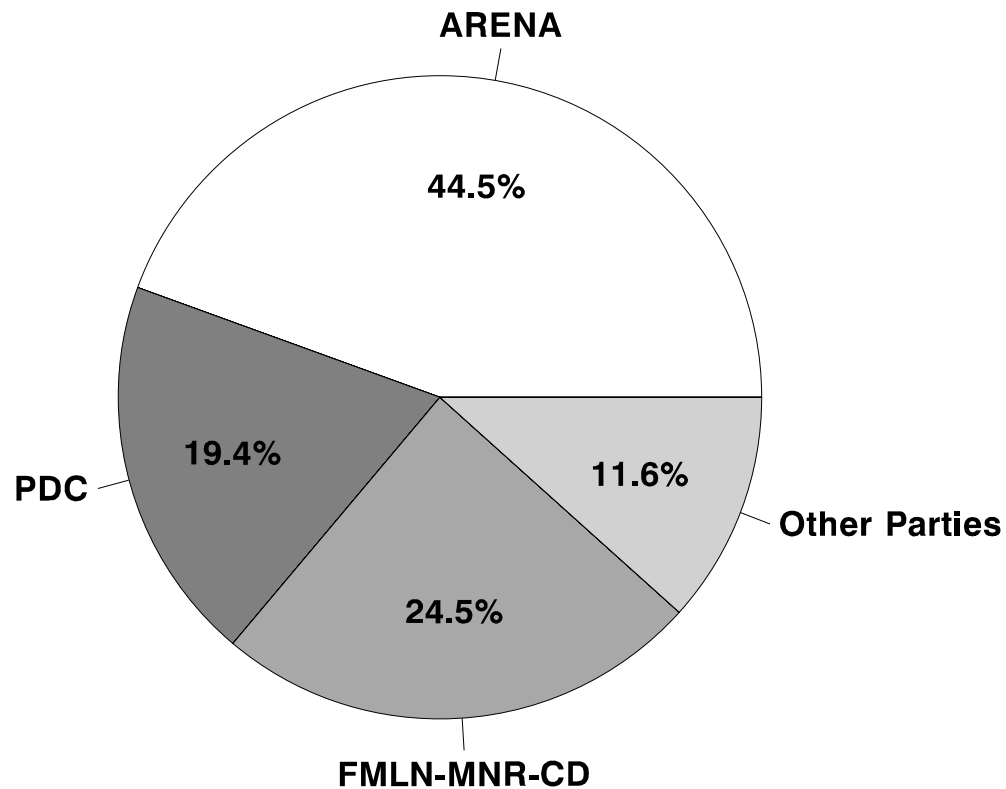
In its most recent electoral participation, the FMLN obtained in almost all departments more votes in the legislative elections than in local elections, with the exception of Morazán and Cabañas. Irrespective of the type of election, the FMLN obtained roughly the same share of the vote: 20.33% locally and 21.39% nationally.

### Differences in Voting Behavior

In the previous section we compared the votes in the national and local elections. In this section we will show our findings when comparing voting behavior in national and local elections in the 1995 national survey. Figure 4. 17 shows the results of the March 1994 elections at the municipal level.



## Municipal Elections Results, 1994

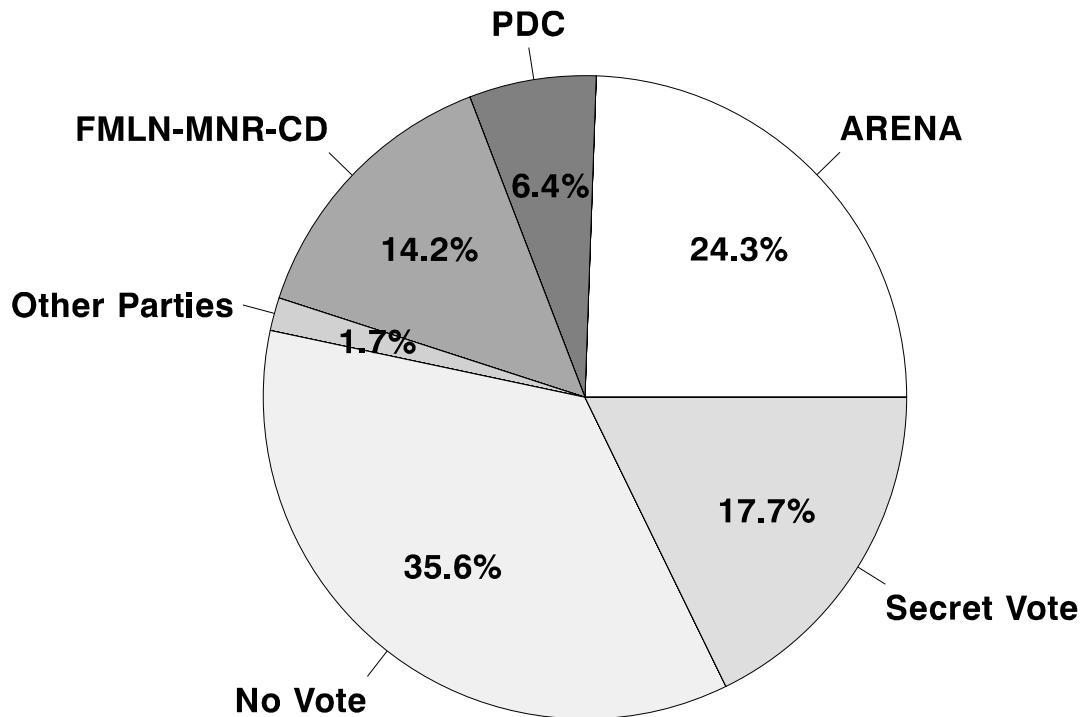


Source: Supreme Electoral Court

Figure 4.17

The survey data allows us to compare not only the attitudes of those who voted for a given party, but also of those individuals who did not vote and those who said that the vote was secret. We clustered the parties into four groups: ARENA, PDC, FMLN-MNR-CD and other (minor) parties. Figure 4. 18 shows the distribution of the vote in these groups.

## Voting Behavior: Municipal Elections, 1994



Source: 1995 Survey

Figure 4.18

When we compared the results for the different variables at the national and local levels, we found the same results. Therefore we will only report the voting results at the local level.

In order to study the relationship between voting behavior and system support, we created a seven-point scale, consisting of six variables: support for the courts (B1), political institutions (B2), Supreme Electoral Tribunal (B11), political system (B6), that the basic rights of citizens are well protected by the Salvadoran political system (B3), and degree to which the respondent feels proud to live under the political system of El Salvador (B4). Figure 4. 19 shows that those who voted for the leftist coalition exhibited lower levels of system support, while those who voted for ARENA showed the highest levels of support. Those who voted for the PDC, minor parties, did not

vote, or (refused to reveal their vote) showed similar levels of system support.

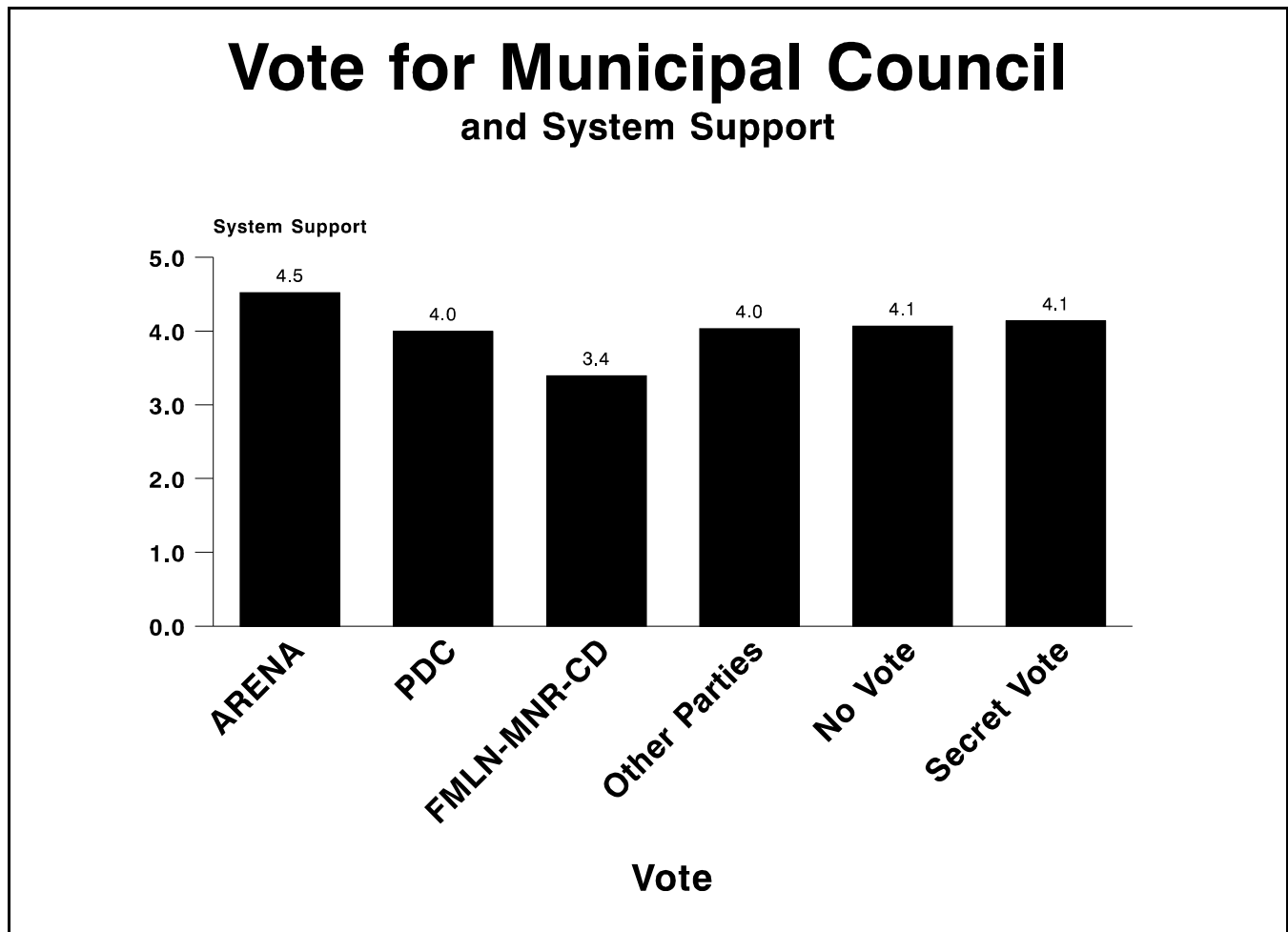


Figure 4.19

In order to study the relationship between voting behavior and political tolerance, we created a ten-point scale, consisting of four variables: the approval or disapproval of the right of the people who only say bad things about the Salvadoran form of government to: vote (D1), hold a peaceful demonstration to express their point of view (D2), run for office (D3), and make a speech on T. V. (D4). As Figure 4.20 shows, those who voted for the FMLN-MNR-CD were more tolerant, followed by those who voted for the PDC and minor parties, and, finally, those who voted for ARENA, did not vote, or considered the vote secret showed the lowest levels of tolerance.

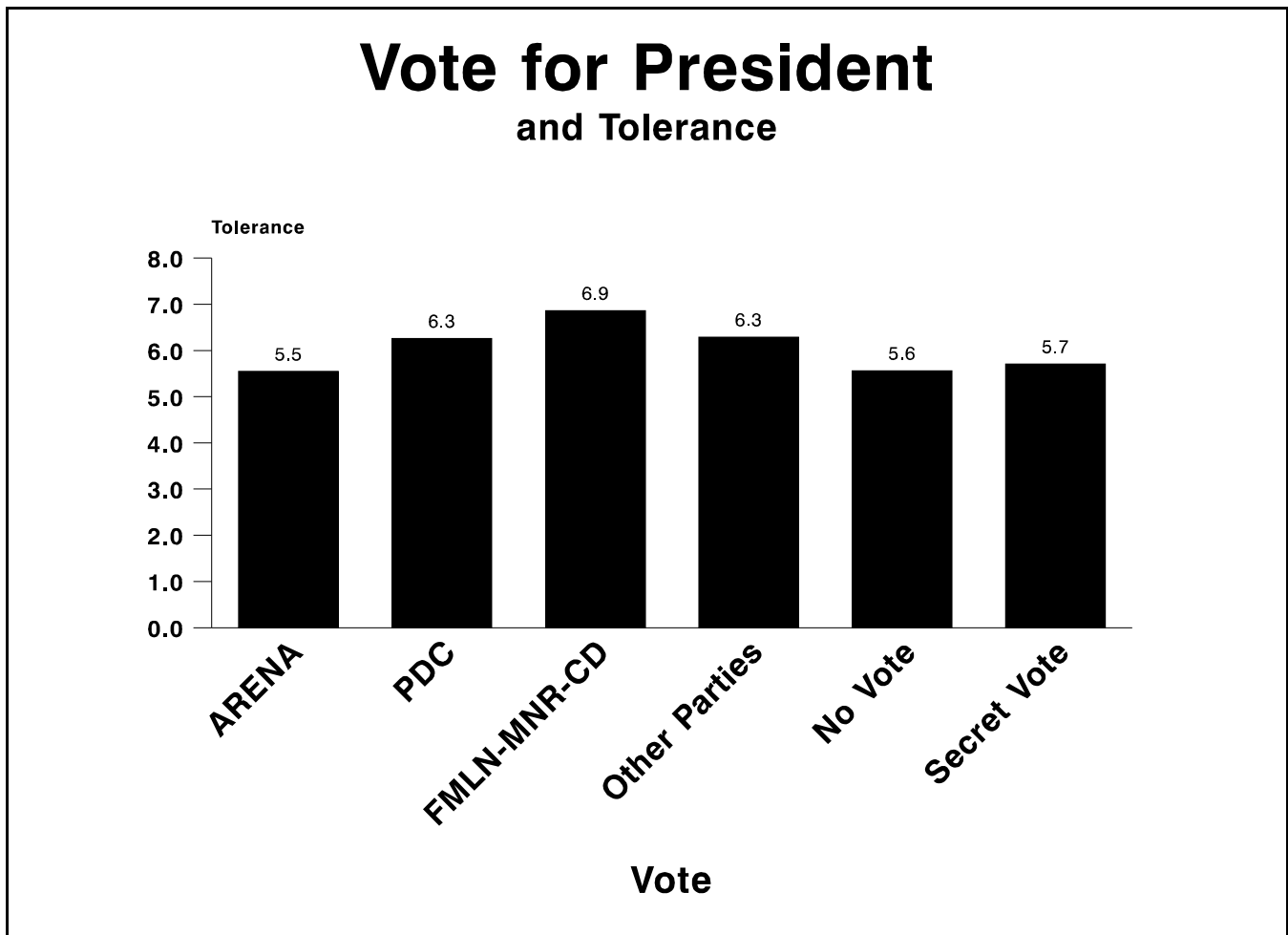


Figure 4.20

As we have seen in the last two figures, there is some correlation between voting behavior and some political attitudes. This is even clearer in the evaluation of President Calderón's job. The question says: Talking in general terms about the incumbent government, would you say that the job being done by President Calderón Sol is: very good, good, fair, poor, or very poor? The scale goes from 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor). Figure 4. 21 shows how those who voted for the leftist coalition were the ones who gave Calderón a lower evaluation, followed by those who voted for the PDC, did not vote and considered voting secret, while the highest evaluation was given by those who voted for ARENA and minor parties.

## Evaluation of President and Vote for Municipal Council

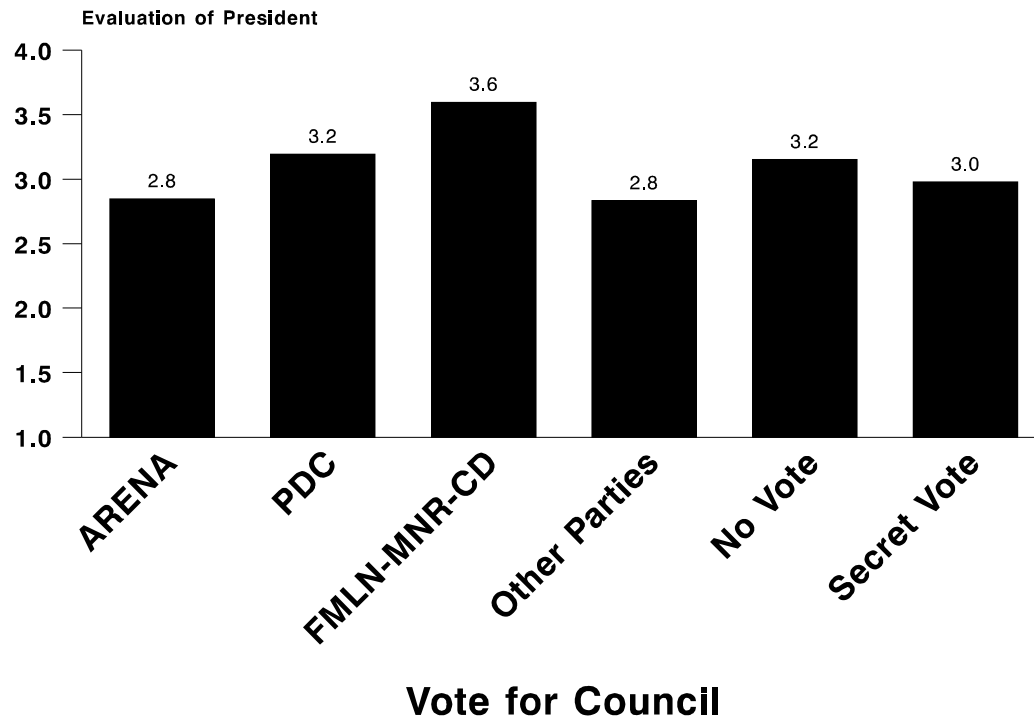


Figure 4.21

Those differences in political attitudes had some degree of correspondence with the political process experienced by El Salvador in recent years. Therefore, we explored the relationship between voting behavior and the impact of the civil war on the people. We operationalized this last variable in this way: if the individual, because of the war: had lost any relative (WC1), if any relative was forced to hide or to abandon his/her home (WC2), and if any relative was forced into exile (WC3). We created an index, using the three variables, with a maximum of 3 and a minimum of 0. As Figure 4.22 shows, the supporters of the FMLN-MNR-CD coalition were the most affected by the war, followed by the supporters of the PDC. Those who voted for ARENA, minor parties, and did not vote were in third place, and, finally, those who said that the vote was secret were the less affected by the civil war.

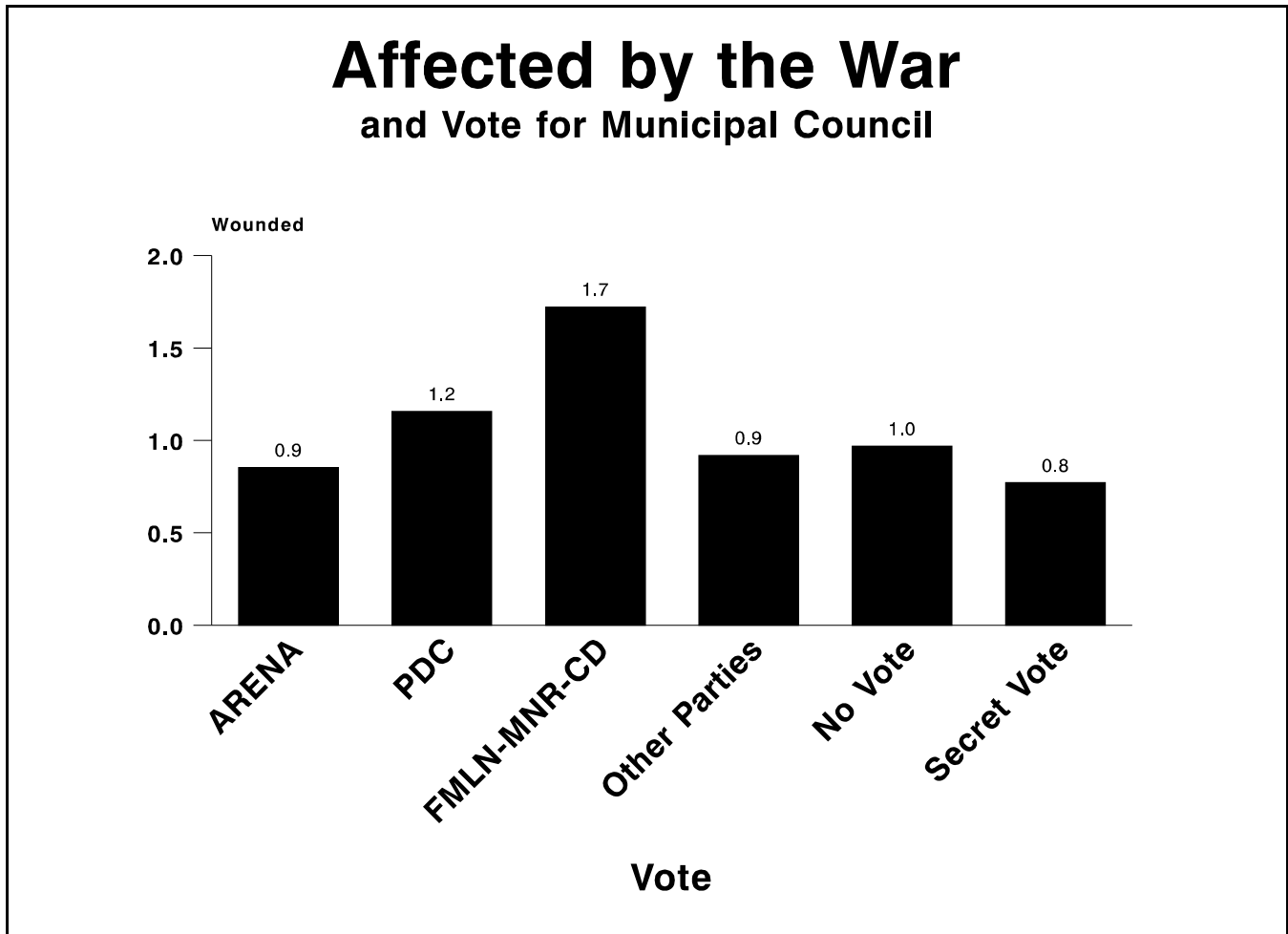


Figure 4.22

When we compared the level of education, the level of information, and the income for the different groups, we found that in the groups with higher levels of education, information and income, there was clear tendency to vote for the leftist coalition. See Figures 4. 23, 4. 24, and 4. 25.

## Level of Information and Vote for Municipal Council

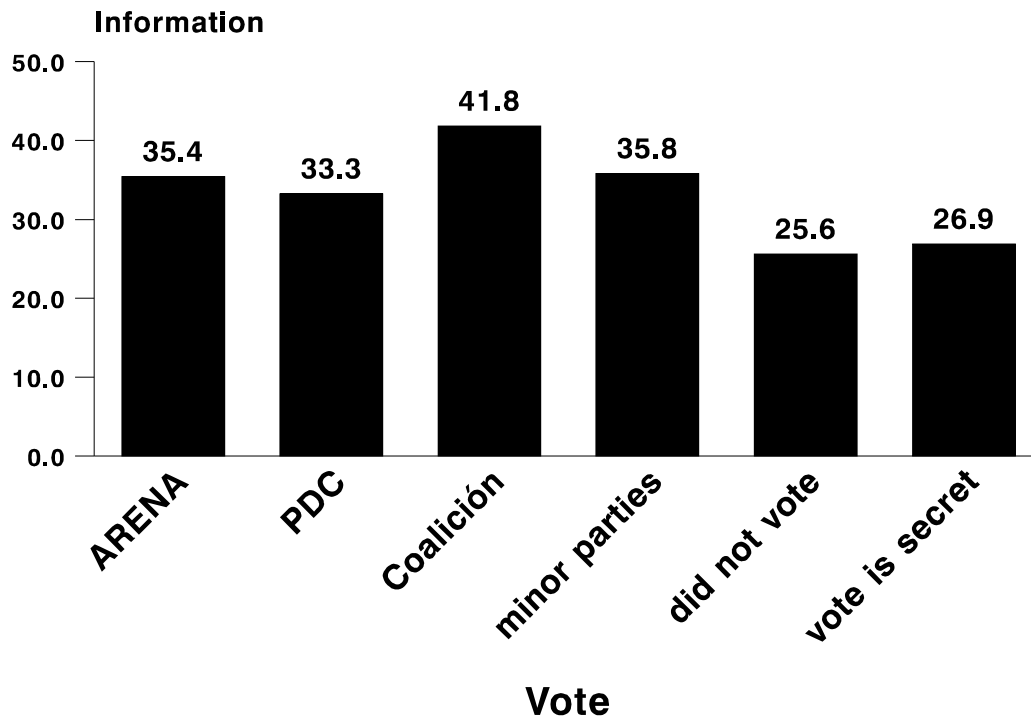


Figure 4.23

## Years of Education and Vote for Municipal Council

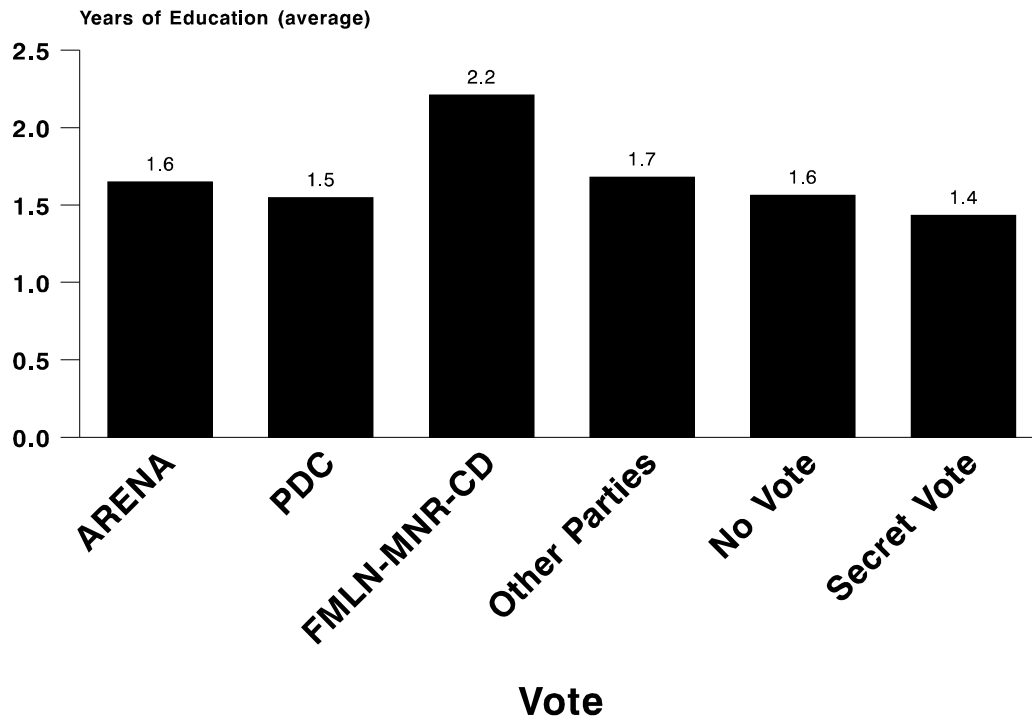


Figure 4.24



## Household Income Level and Vote for Municipal Council

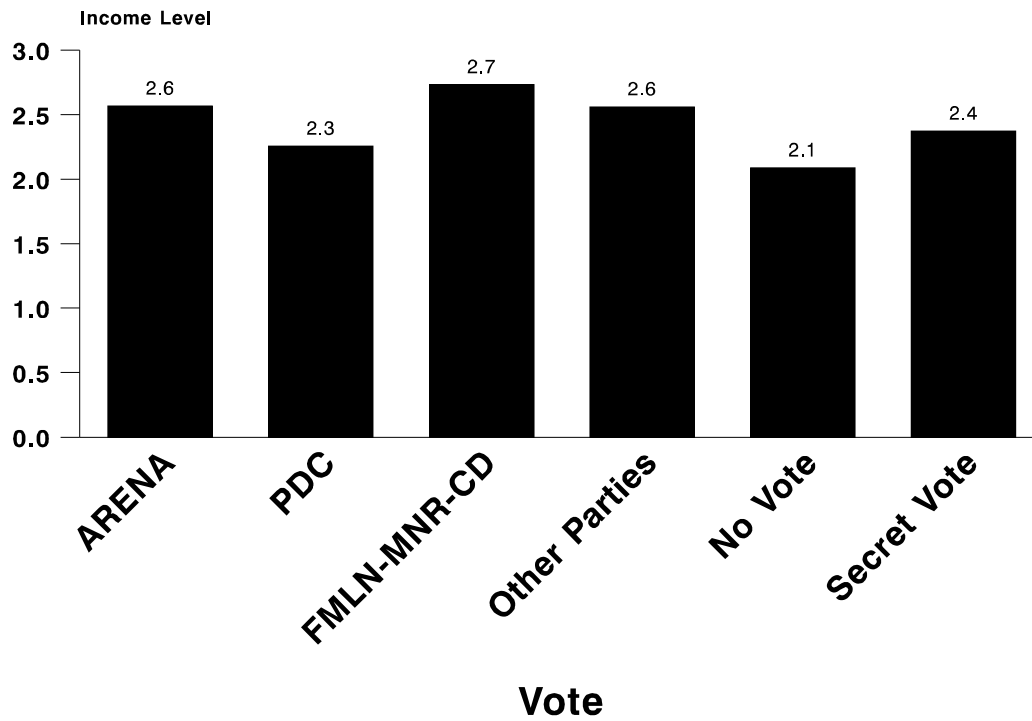


Figure 4.25

## Chapter 5

### Local Government and Democracy

Local governments have been operating in Central America since the colonial period and are institutions that are well known and widely accepted, if often criticized for their incompetence and lack of resources. Local governments are stable organizations that are likely to remain as a basic building block of government for decades if not centuries to come. Their role in promoting democracy has recently become the center of attention throughout Latin America, as decentralization plans focus more attention on previously ignored local governments. The link to democracy is clear, if not yet empirically tested: Municipal government officials regularly stand for elections in front of a constituency that has the ability to evaluate their performance at first hand. Municipal officials are now, in the days of competitive party politics in Central America, regularly thrown out of office for not performing their jobs well enough. In short, local governments are a vitally important component of democratic governance in Central America, and strengthening them implies strengthening democratic process in the region.

Unfortunately, local governments have been little studied in Central America, and elsewhere for that matter. They are not "sexy," in that they normally only involve themselves in the most pedestrian of matters, such as paving streets and collecting trash. They are devoid of armies, air forces and ambassadors, and for that reason might seem to the outside observer to be very boring subjects of study. In fact, however, world-wide citizens have more contact with their local governments than they do with their national governments. As we already noted, Putnam's major study of democracy in Italy has demonstrated the centrality of local governments.<sup>1</sup> In Central America, where most citizens in rural areas do not pay income tax, in many cases their only contact with national government is with local government.

Far less clear is the empirical relationship between local government and democratization. To our knowledge, there is not a single study on the hypothesized relationship for the Central American countries, and we are not aware of any for South America either. What we have, instead, is speculation.

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert D. Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

We propose two hypotheses. The first is the one that is often articulated in development projects as a justification for expanding the capacity and authority of local government. This hypothesis suggests that if local government gain in capacity and authority, citizens will participate more in them, and as a result, citizens will make their governments more responsive and, ultimately, become more supportive of democracy. Our second hypothesis is a variant on the first, and focuses less on the quantity of participation than on the quality. We suggest that unless citizens are satisfied with their local governments, they will not become more supportive of democracy. Furthermore, increased participation by itself may be an indication of greater satisfaction or greater dissatisfaction. All depends upon the responsiveness of local government to citizen demands. Indeed, if participation does not lead to satisfaction of demands, we would suspect that over time participation will decline and support for democracy will decline with it. In this chapter we test that speculation with our 1995 survey data. We find much support for the second hypothesis.

### Background to the Questions

This chapter relies upon a set of ten questions that were developed in 1994 for USAID's Regional Housing and Urban Development Office (RHUDO) as part of a Central America wide effort to measure local participation in and attitudes toward local government.<sup>2</sup> It was decided to use nine of those ten items in the El Salvador democratic values survey of 1995, dropping one item that did not seem to add much new information to the series. One of the remaining nine items, the one on voting for local government officials, was included in the section of the questionnaire that dealt with voting in congressional and presidential elections. In 1994, the series of questions was administered as part of a C.I.D. Gallup series of surveys as summarized on the following table:

---

<sup>2</sup>The senior author of this report was contracted by RHUDO, via its cooperative agreement with ICMA (International City/County Management Association) of Washington, D. C.), to undertake a study of the opinions of Central Americans toward their local governments. In consultation with the RHUDO staff in Guatemala, a series of ten questionnaire items was drafted and the content agreed upon. A series of pre-tests of the items was conducted in each of the Central American countries. The pre-tests consisted of administration of the questions to respondents in both urban and rural areas. The pre-tests were conducted by experts in each country: Guatemala, Lic. Jorge Castillo Velarde of ASIES; El Salvador, Ricardo Córdova, Executive Director of FundaUngo; Honduras, Rafael Díaz Donaire of World Neighbors; Nicaragua, Andrew Stien, Ph.D. candidate, University of Pittsburgh and Visiting Professor, National University of Nicaragua; Costa Rica, Lic. Miguel Gómez B., Professor of the University of Costa Rica, and Panama, Orlando Pérez, Ph.D. candidate, University of Pittsburgh and Research Associate of CELA (Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos "Justo Arosemena"). Although the items are identical in content for each country, minor differences in questionnaire wording were necessitated to best reflect the terminology used in each of the six countries of the region. The final versions are included in the appendix of this study.

Table 5.1. 1994 Survey and Sample Characteristics

Country	Date	Sample size
Guatemala	June, 1994	1,212
El Salvador	May, 1994	1,212
Honduras	June, 1994	1,220
Nicaragua	April, 1994	1,202
Costa Rica	April, 1994	1,204
Panama	March, 1994	1,218
Total		7,268

In total, 7,268 Central Americans were interviewed for this study. In each country, the samples are national probability in design, with the respondents from the primary sampling unit being selected based upon the "last birthday system"<sup>3</sup> plus a quota system (age and sex). The samples for each country were weighted based on population size, and the final weighted combined sample produced a file of 7,254 cases. It is that combined file that is referenced in this report. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face with trained interviewers of Gallup except in Costa Rica, where 500 interviews were conducted over the telephone. The ubiquitous availability of telephones in Costa Rica made the use of phone interviews possible. The remaining interviews were directed to those without phones. Interviewers were individuals with high school education or greater. Approximately one-quarter of all of the interviews were revalidated by telephone or personal follow up by field supervisors. In each country the survey focused on the voting age population, generally those 18 years of age and older.

## The Questions Asked on Local Government

### Participation

In democratic politics, citizens can chose to involve themselves with local government in three basic ways. First, they can attend meetings of the local government. Second, they can petition local government for assistance. Finally, they

---

<sup>3</sup>The interviewer determines the dates of the birthdays of all household members and interviews the member whose birthday is closest to the date of the interview.

can vote in local elections. The survey included questions on each of these three forms of participation.

Attendance at local government was measured by the following question:

**Have you had the opportunity to attend a session or meeting convened by the municipality during the last 12 months?**

The question varied somewhat depending upon the country. For example, in Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, municipalities may hold open town meetings, called *cabildos abiertos*, in addition to regular municipal meetings. In other countries, regular and extraordinary meetings of municipal government are regularly held. There is also variation in terms of the openness of municipal government to citizen participation. For example, in El Salvador meetings have traditionally been closed to the public, but beginning in 1986 when the *cabildo abierto* was introduced as part of the new municipal code, this alternative mechanism for citizen participation was introduced.<sup>4</sup>

Attendance at a meeting does not necessarily mean that the individual is an active participant in that meeting. Citizens may go to such meetings merely to attend a community social event, or out of curiosity. In many other cases, community delegations attend the meetings to show solidarity with their community leader. All that can be known from this item is that the individual attended one or more meetings during the course of the year. Interpretation of the quality of participation is left to other questions in the study.

It is important to note that the one-year time frame for meeting attendance was selected so as to enable comparisons of participation levels from one year to the next. If the question had included a longer time frame, then a study done in the following year would not pick up variation (up or down) in recent local government participation. It is important to note, however, that individuals have difficulty recalling with precision their behavior of several months before. Therefore, the one-year time frame should be taken as a general guideline for participation.

The second question in the participation series gets more directly at the question of active involvement. The question reads:

**Have you asked for help or presented a petition to some office, employee, or municipal official of the municipality during the last 12 months?**

---

<sup>4</sup>The "consulta popular" was also introduced. This is a form of local plebiscite, but one that has not been utilized with any frequency.

Here again, there is variation in the wording of this item across the six nations. In some countries the local officials are called "*municipes*," while in others they are called "*consejales*." The questionnaire used the terminology appropriate for each country.

Petitions and requests for help can be of two types: personal or communal. An individual can request that the municipality provide a building permit or a birth certificate. This would be an example of a personal request. On the other hand, there can be requests that a school room be constructed or a road be paved. This would be an illustration of a communal request. The current survey does not distinguish between these two types of activities, and it would be important to do so in future studies if more funding can be made available for a more extensive series of questions.

Voting, finally, is the quintessential form of participation in a democracy. In Central America, until the early 1980s, most elections (when they occurred) were manipulated and participation was limited. Only in Costa Rica is there a long history of free and fair elections. With the establishment of democratic procedures in each of the Central American countries in the 1980s, elections have become regular events, and most observers have found them to be free and fair. In this study the focus is on local elections. Election procedures vary throughout the region, but all allow for voters to cast a ballot for local officials. The question read as follows:

**Did you vote in the last elections for municipal candidates?**

It is reasonable to anticipate variation in this item depending upon the date of the last election. Elections that occurred right before the survey was administered are more likely to recall casting their vote than those who voted several years before. People tend to forget about events that are far more momentous than voting, so one cannot expect great accuracy for recall beyond six months to a year.

Satisfaction

Participation in local government may bring rewards, it may bring frustration, or a combination of the two. Much depends upon the capacity and responsiveness of local government. In the series on participation, all that could be determined was the level of activity. With this series of items, one can measure the respondents' evaluation of municipal government.

The first item in this series is the most general:

**Would you say that the services that the municipality is giving to the people are excellent, good, average, poor or very bad?**

This is the first item in the ten-item set of questions that uses a five-point scale response format. The purpose of using such a scale is to go beyond a simple, "yes-no" dichotomy, and thus to allow for intensity of approval/disapproval. Researchers have found that five points are about ideal for capturing variation in public opinion; fewer points throw away real differences of opinion, whereas more points add little discriminating power to the measure.

The second item directly concerns the respondents' evaluation of the manner in which the municipality treats its clients. The item reads as follows:

**How do you think that you or your neighbors have been treated when they have gone to the municipality to take care of some business? Did they treat you very well, well, average, badly or very badly?**

In this item the focus is on the evaluation of routine matters that citizens need to carry out at their local governments. In many countries these matters include obtaining identity cards, paying for services such as trash collection, and obtaining birth and death certificates. The range of actions varies from country to country.

### Legitimacy

A fundamental building block for democratic theory is that in order for there to be political stability, citizens must believe in the legitimacy of their governments. This is the belief that the political system, even when it makes decisions disliked by its citizens, has the basic right to be making those decisions and will be supported.

The concept of legitimacy has typically been utilized to study government at the national level. In Central America, where municipal government has almost always been overshadowed by far more powerful central governments, it is important to know if citizens perceive a legitimate role for their local governments. It would not be surprising to find that some Central Americans find local government superfluous. On the other hand, irresponsible and/or repressive central governments may be so disliked that some Central Americans would prefer to increase local government power and authority at the expense of central government. This series of four items was designed to measure these sentiments.

The first item directly compares local and national government:

**In your opinion, who has responded better to help resolve the problems of this community? Would it be the central government, the national legislators or the municipality?**

The motivation for providing three options, including national legislators (*diputados*), is that pre-tests of the item demonstrated that some citizens made a clear distinction between their central government and their national legislators. When the item is analyzed to explore the central/local distinction, however, central government and legislators are combined into a single option. For the remainder of the analysis, however, the three separate responses are retained. The response format also allowed for the options "neither" and "all are equal." These responses emerged in pre-testing and for the purpose of establishing dimensionality ( see below) are collapsed into the non-local response.

The next item in the legitimacy series attempts to measure the extent to which citizens would rather see a stronger local government or would instead prefer a stronger central government. The item reads:

**In your opinion, should local government be given more responsibility and more funding, or should we let the central government assume more responsibilities and municipal services?**

The response format allowed for two additional replies, neither of which was read to the respondent: "don't change anything," and "more to the municipality if it gives better service."

It is one thing to demand a better local government and it is quite another to be willing to pay for it. In the following item, the respondents were, in effect, being asked to "put their money where their mouth is." They were asked:

**Would you be willing to pay more taxes to the municipality to enable it to provide better service or do you think that it is not worth it to pay more?**

The final item in this series attempts to provide an overall evaluation of the legitimacy of municipal government. The focus is on the responsiveness of local government to popular demands. The item reads as follows:

**Do you think that the municipal officers and the mayor of this municipality are responsive to what the people want almost always, the majority of the time, once in a while, almost never or never?**



Once again the five-item response category is employed in this item in order to finely grade the sentiments of those interviewed.

## Participation in Local Government

### Attendance at Meetings

The most basic information we have comes from the first item, one that measures attendance at the meetings of the municipality. In the 1994 Central America survey, 11.3 per cent of those interviewed had attended a municipal meeting during the 12 months prior to the survey. In that survey, El Salvador stood out as having significantly more attendance than any other country in the region. We attributed that difference to the successful *cabildo abierto* pro-

gram and the stimulation of the funds available via the Municipalities in Action program (MEA).<sup>5</sup> In figure 5.1, we present the results of a direct comparison of the 1994 and the 1995 surveys. It should be noted that even though the two surveys used different sample frames and were conducted by different survey organizations, the results of the two surveys are nearly identical, well within the confidence interval (i.e., margin of error) of the surveys. Both surveys show the same thing: El Salvador stands out as having exceptionally high participation in local government. The small difference between the 1994 Gallup survey and the 1995 University of Pittsburgh survey should not be considered to have substantive importance.

Now that we have confidence in the reliability of the data we have on municipal meeting attendance, it is illuminating to examine differences in participation within the 1995 sample. Our first look is at differences among the sample strata. As is shown

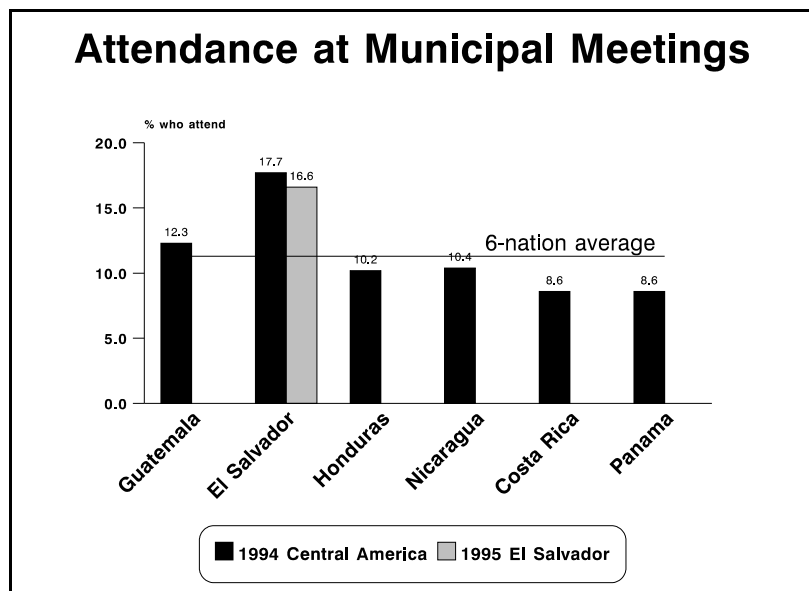
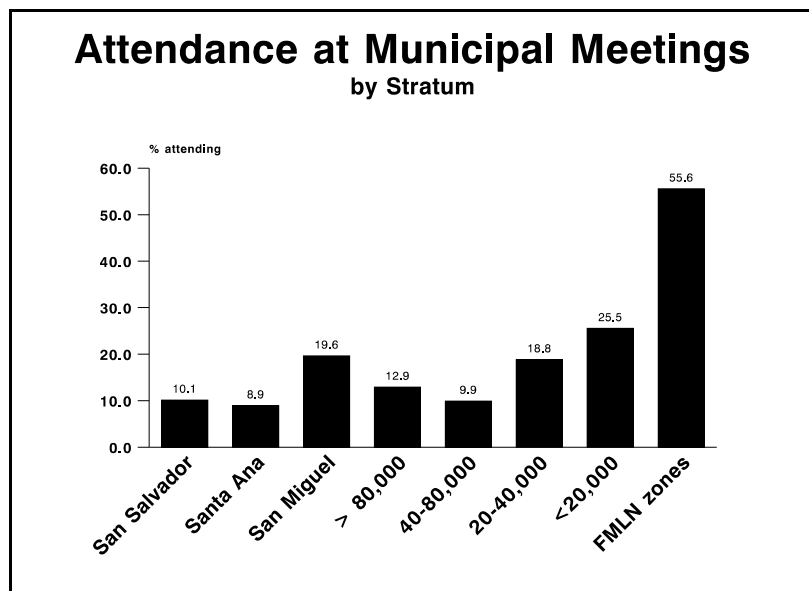


Figure 5.1

<sup>5</sup>For details see Seligson, 1994 and Blair *et al.*, 1995.

in figure 5.2, the differences are dramatic. San Salvador, Santa Ana, and cities in the 40,000 population size and larger have levels of participation far lower than the national average with the exception of San Miguel, which exceeds that average. Throughout Central America we found that participation in municipal meetings was far lower in urban areas than in rural, and this is a pattern we also uncover in this data set.

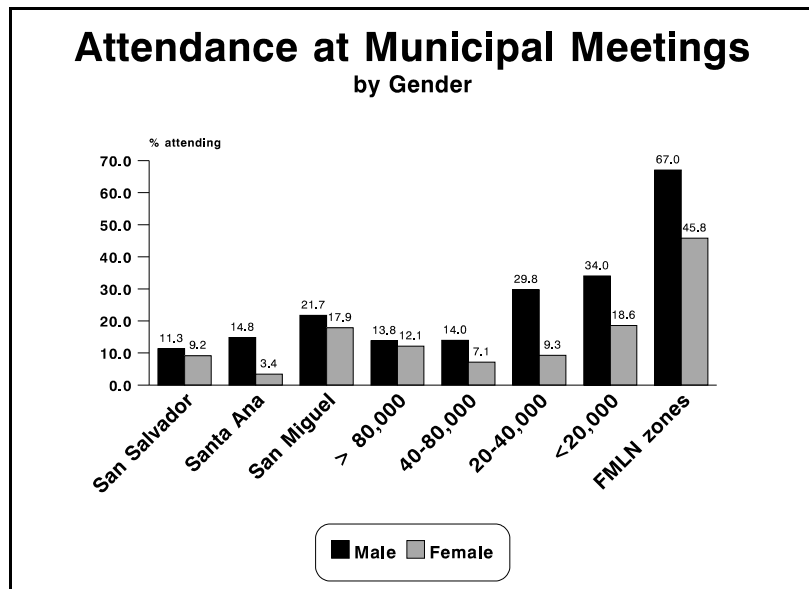


**Figure 5.2**

The higher participation in San Miguel compared to its "sister" city, Santa Ana is very likely related to the much higher level of conflict during the civil war, which in turn meant that MEA funds were available for the San Miguel region for reconstruction. The availability of those funds, we believe, is a heady stimulant to participation. Participation in municipal meetings is far higher in the towns and villages where the population is smaller than 40,000 people, and rises again in those areas with the smallest population size (less than 20,000). But what is most dramatic is the enormously high level of participation within the FMLN zones. Over half of all adults in these zones attended a municipal meeting within the 12 months prior to the survey (February 1994-February, 1995). It is rare in comparative studies of participation to find activism approach this level.

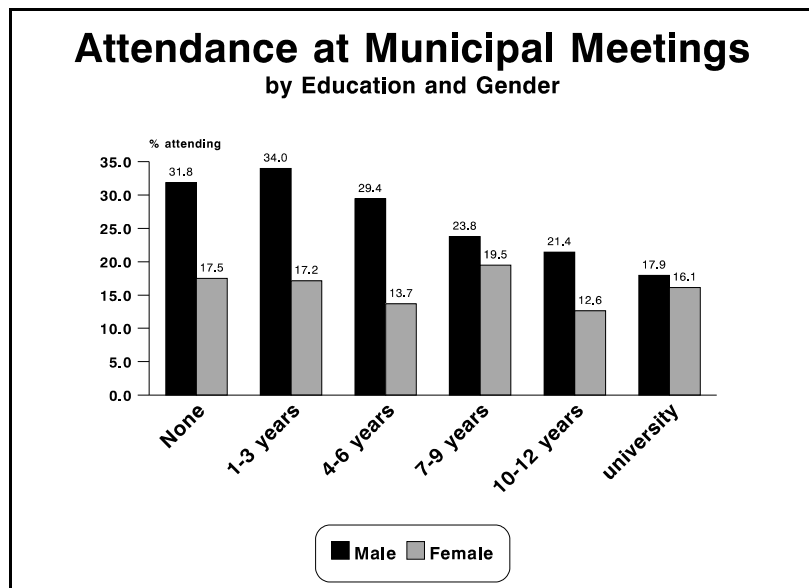
We next want to examine municipal participation for gender differences since we have already found gender to play a role in the previous analyses. Those are displayed in figure 5.3. The differences are dramatic, with male attendance exceeding that of female in every region of the country. In Santa Ana only 3 percent of females have participated in a municipal meeting, compared with 45 percent of those in FMLN zones. Within the FMLN zones over two-thirds

of the men have attended a municipal meeting in the 12 months prior to the survey.



**Figure 5.3**

Education has been found, world-wide, to stimulate political participation of citizens. In El Salvador, as we see in figure 5.4, the pattern appears to be quite the reverse; the lower the education, the more active the citizen. Figure 5.4 would lead one to believe that education "causes" lower participation in El Salvador. In fact, since we already know from chapter 1 that education is lower in the more rural areas, and we know from the results presented in this chapter that partici-



**Figure 5.4**

pation is higher in rural areas, we have reason to believe that once we control for the rural/urban differences, the inverse correlation between education and participation will disappear. In fact, that is what happens. Once we control for the sample strata,

education no longer has any significant relationship to participation. An examination of a stratum-by-stratum set of charts in which region is controlled, we find that, generally speaking more highly educated Salvadorans tend to participate more actively in municipal government, but the relationship is not uniform. For example, in some areas, while high school educated Salvadorans participate more, the university-educated participate less. We also note in figure 5.4 the stark differences in gender-based participation, as we found in figure 5.3 above, but the gap shrinks rapidly among the most highly educated Salvadorans.

#### Attendance at Municipal Meetings and Democratic Norms

While the finding of high political participation in El Salvador at the local level is encouraging, we do not find any significant association between such participation and tolerance or system support. This is certainly disappointing, since we would have hoped that increased local government participation would lead to or be responsible for greater system support and tolerance. Also, we do not find significant correlations between municipal participation and the key Inglehart variables. Yet, as we will show below, there is a direct connection between attitudes toward local government and system support, but the relationship is not with participation but with satisfaction with their performance.

Further exploration of subsets of the data revealed an interesting finding. In the special FMLN area subsample, greater municipal participation was significantly correlated with political tolerance. In a multiple regression analysis, in which the four tolerance variables are combined into a single index, the multiple  $r = .40$ , significant at  $<.001$  with education controlled (education does not, however, have a significant relationship to municipal participation). This finding suggests that within the FMLN zones, where, as we have already shown in chapter 3, tolerance is higher than for the nation as a whole, those individuals who participate more in municipal meetings are more tolerant than those who do not. Once again, we do not know cause and effect; it could be that those who are more tolerant to begin with participate more. It may well be that within the FMLN zones there arose a clear division between activists for the "cause" and those who were not. Once the war came to a conclusion, activists remained highly participant, and these are the individuals with more tolerant views.

Another explanation is that tolerance is a function of participation in this particular case. Those who participate may become more tolerant because they understand that tolerance contributes to the very possibility of participation. Indeed, FMLN partisans may know, as a result of their personal experience, what implications intolerance had in El Salvador and thus what consequences the lack of tolerance may have in the current democratization process. This analysis is supported by the finding

that there is a strong correlation between demand-making and tolerance within the FMLN areas.

### Requests for Assistance from Local Government

Attending a municipal meeting is not the same as demand making. The latter is the more active form of political participation. As can be seen in figure 5.5, the 1994 Gallup survey and the 1995 University of Pittsburgh survey uncovered virtually identical results from the two national samples. Once again, such consistency gives one confidence in the reliability of the survey. Substantively, however, we see that the high level of municipal participation found in El Salvador does not translate into a high level of demand making. El Salvador's level is the second lowest in Central America, higher only than Nicaragua, and far lower than Costa Rica, the region's leader.

In figure 5.6 we present data on demand making of local government, broken down by stratum and gender. There are a number of findings here. First, for the most part, men are more

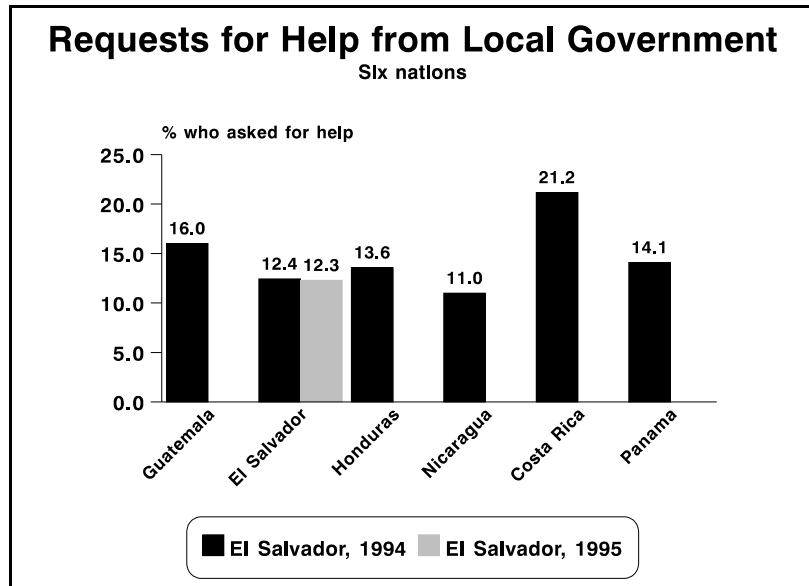


Figure 5.5

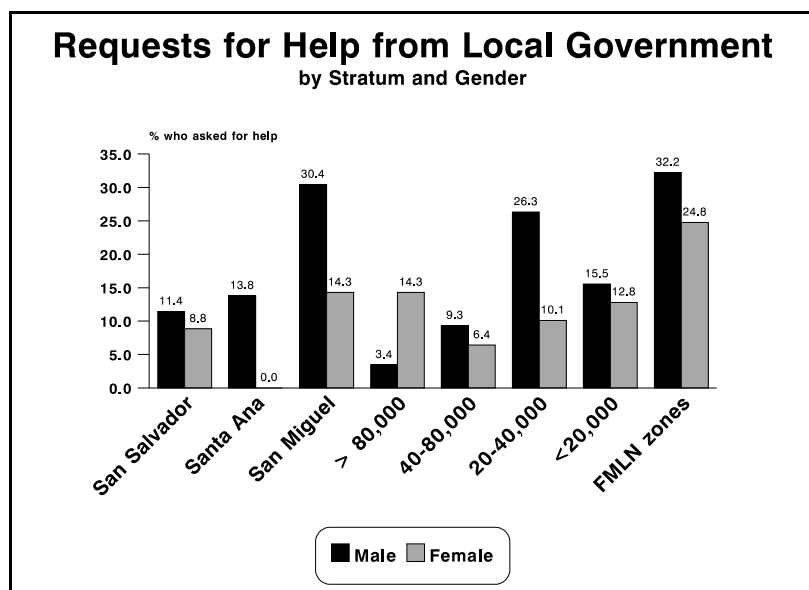


Figure 5.6

likely to make demands than women. The only place that this pattern is broken is in the towns larger than 80,000 (excluding San Salvador, Santa Ana and San Miguel). In those towns, women are very active in making demands. Second, demand making in San Salvador, Santa Ana and the towns of 40,000-80,000 is relatively low. Third, the highest demand making is found in San Miguel, the towns in the 20,000-40,000 range and in the FMLN zones. Among males in the FMLN zones, nearly one-third have made a request for help from their local government.

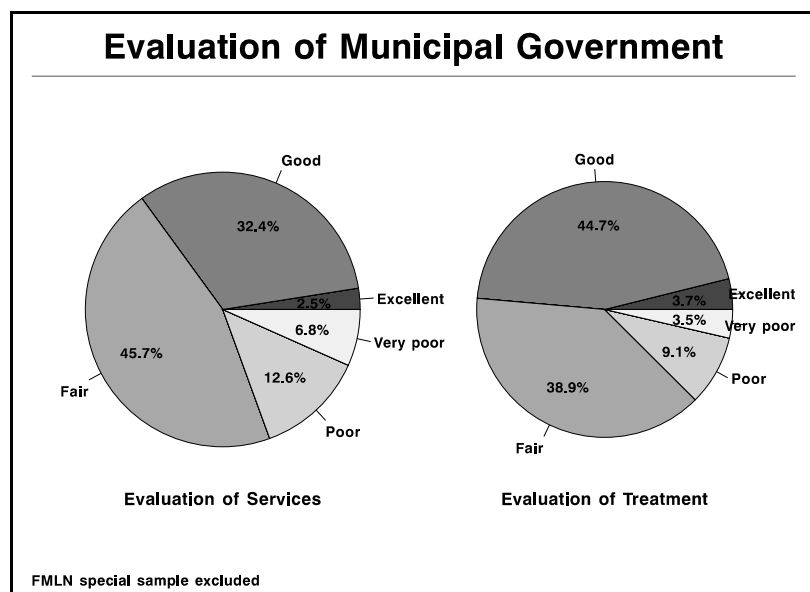
In terms of other correlates of local demand-making, it was found that education plays no role. Further, once again it was found that tolerance and system support were not related to local demand-making for the country as a whole. We did uncover one minor significant association between demand making and one of the Inglehart items measuring life satisfaction (LS2,  $r = -.07$ , sig = .05), indicating that those with lower life satisfaction are likely to be making more demands. This makes sense in some ways, since those who have needs are more likely to make demands. But, it does not conform to the Inglehart thesis that those who are satisfied are likely to be more democratic. Tolerance, however, was strongly correlated with local demand-making ( $r = .31$ , sig. < .001) within the FMLN areas. We see, therefore, that both local government participation and demand-making are more common among those who live in solidly FMLN zones.

### Voting in Local Elections

In chapter 4 we examined voting in some detail. We do not repeat that material here.

### **Satisfaction with Local Government**

Participation in local government does not necessarily lead to satisfaction with it. How satisfied are Salvadorans with their local governments? The basic information is contained in figure 5.7. Less than half of the sample (excluding the



**Figure 5.7**

FMLN oversample) found municipal government services and treatment to be either "excellent" or "good." It is notable, however, that a larger proportion expressed a positive evaluation of the treatment they received from municipal officials than they did of the services they received.

These figures need to be placed in context. In figure 5.8, we display the results from the 1994 national municipal study conducted in Central America. As we see, in terms of satisfaction with services, El Salvador is at the top, and in terms of satisfaction with treatment, it is second, right behind Honduras.

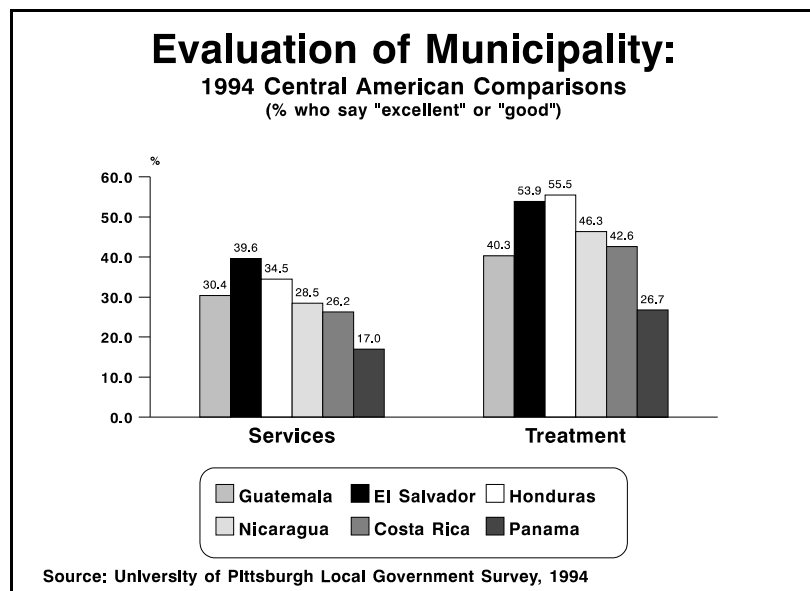


Figure 5.8

Internal comparisons within El Salvador are also revealing (see figure 5.9). Satisfaction with municipal services and treatment varies within the eight strata of the sample, with the most negative evaluations emerging in San Salvador and the most positive in the rural areas. FMLN areas are especially positive in their evaluations of municipal services, a reflection, perhaps of their loyalty to the FMLN governments in

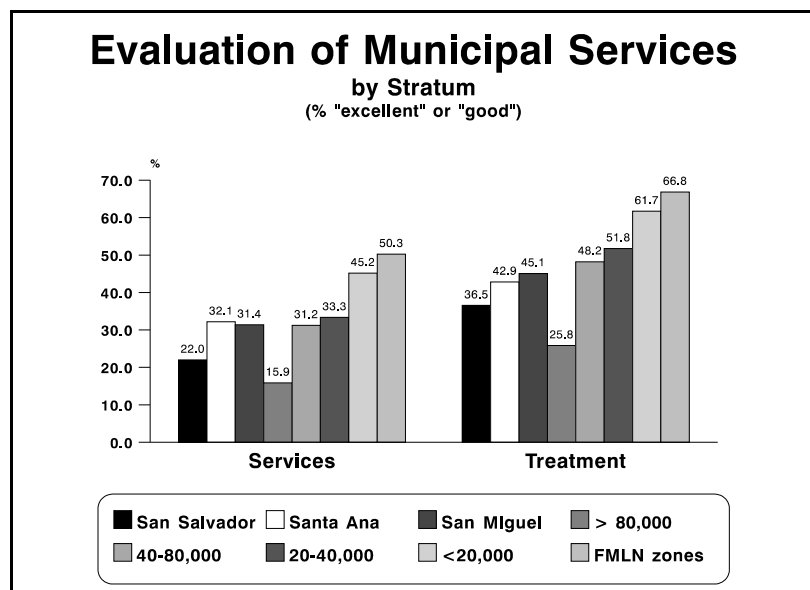


Figure 5.9



charge. Also, people in FMLN areas show high levels of satisfaction with municipal services because they themselves played a significant role in making those services possible through high levels of participation. It is reasonable to suppose that people tend to be more satisfied with what they have built through their own efforts. In addition, in these poor areas, some level of responsiveness from local governments does make a difference in people's evaluations of municipal services. One deviation from the patterns is in towns greater than 80,000, where satisfaction is quite low.

### Evaluation of Municipalities and Democratic Norms

Much of USAID's efforts in municipal development programs in El Salvador have been focused on increasing citizen participation. In this study we have carefully examined such participation, both within El Salvador and in comparative perspective. Yet, it should be obvious that citizens can take different lessons from their participatory experiences. Some may attend a *cabildo abierto* and be very content with the outcome and as a result develop a commitment to this crucial institution of local democracy. Others, however, may be frustrated or even angered by the experience. We need to know more than the level of citizen participation in local government; we need to know the degree of satisfaction with local government. Furthermore, we need to know if that satisfaction is linked to system support at the national level. Using our data set we can answer that question.

We first sought to find the linkages between participation and positive evaluation. Participation in local government meetings has no statistically significant link to evaluation of services, and only a very weak ( $r = .08$ ,  $\text{sig.} = .05$ ) link to evaluation of treatment by municipal officials. We further found no significant correlation at all between making demands on the municipality and satisfaction with services or treatment. These findings suggest quite clearly that our suspicion that participation per se might not be linked to greater support for the national system of government (i.e., system support). In fact, we found no significant correlation whatsoever between participation in local government and system support.

In contrast, we found clear evidence that evaluation of local government was linked to system support at the national level. In particular, positive evaluations of municipal services and perception of treatment by local government are directly linked to higher system support, as is shown in figure 5.10. These two variables are correlated at  $r = .24$  and  $.30$  ( $\text{sig} < .001$ ), indicating a moderately strong association. This is an important finding since it is a clear sign that those individuals who feel that

they are better treated by their local governments as well as those who have a positive evaluation of local government services are stronger supporters of the Salvadoran system of government. We have, therefore, a link between local level government and national government in the minds of Salvadorans.

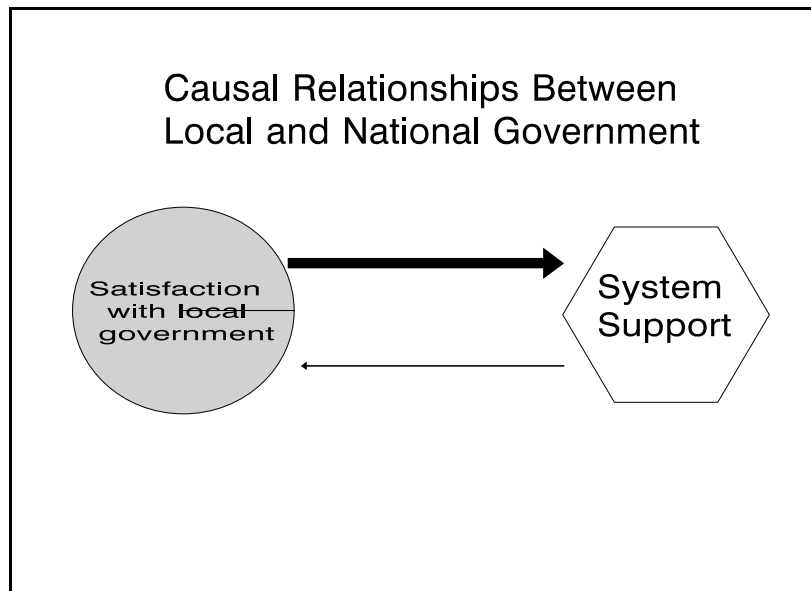
Since it is local government with which citizens have far more contact than national government, it may be safe to assume that it is favorable evaluations at the local level that are driving system support at the national level, although we cannot be certain. However, in order to verify this empirically, we are faced with a complex methodological problem. Recall that we are dealing with cross-sectional data, i.e., a "snapshot" of public opinion. In order to establish causality, it is normally necessary to have a panel design, in which we interview the same individuals over a period of time and see how their attitudes change. It is possible, however, even when limited to cross-sectional data to make reasonably firm assertions about the direction of causality using a technique called "two-state least squares regression."<sup>6</sup> We applied that technique to the data, focusing on two variables: our scale of system support and satisfaction with municipal government (SGL1).

In order to be able to determine the direction of causality, it is necessary to locate what are known as "instrumental variables," ones that are correlated with system support, but not with satisfaction with local government, and other variables that are correlated with satisfaction with local government but not with system support. We found that ideology and evaluation of the incumbent administration (L1 and M1) were associated with system support, but not with satisfaction with local government. On the other hand, we found that education, wealth, attention to news in the mass media (TV and newspapers) were all associated with satisfaction with local government but not with system support.

---

<sup>6</sup>I would like to thank Professor Steve Finkel of the University of Virginia for his advice on this section.

We employed these "instrumental" variables in an analysis to determine the direction of causality. Our findings are, as we suspected, that satisfaction with local government leads to increased system support, as is shown schematically in figure 5.10. Furthermore, we find that there is a "reciprocal" relationship in operation, such that increased system support tends to feed back into increased satisfaction with local government.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 5.10**

We also find a direct, statistically significant link between each of our measures of inter-personal trust and satisfaction with local government (correlates range from .08 to .18, most significant at  $< .001$ ). We find that the higher the level of interpersonal trust, the higher the level of satisfaction with local government. We conclude, therefore, that both theories of democracy developed in chapters 2 and 3 of this study help predict satisfaction with local government. That is to say, those who are more satisfied with local government are both more trusting of others and more supportive of their national government.

These results show quite clearly, therefore, that it was not participation by itself that was key to increased system support, but satisfaction with local government. The lesson is clear: local governments must "deliver" and satisfy their constituents if they expect to be supported.

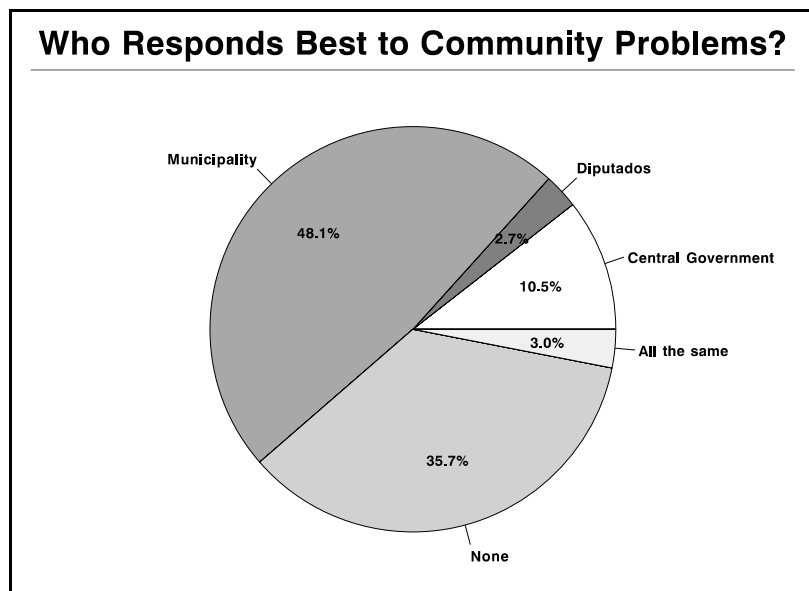
---

<sup>7</sup>We should stress that only through a panel design can we be completely confident that this causal analysis accurately describes the observed correlations.

## Legitimacy of Local Government versus National Government

### Which Government Responds Better?

Nearly a majority of Salvadorans believe that their municipalities respond better to community problems than does the national government. The results are shown in figure 5.11. It is surprising to the outsider, however, to find the very small proportion of Salvadorans who believe that their elected national officials, the diputados, respond well to local problems. Yet, it must be recalled that El Salvador does not have single member district representation, so the diputados do not really represent their local constituencies. As a result, citizens are quite correct in thinking that they must solve their problems either through their local government or through the state apparatus. It should also be noted that there is no significant association between system support or tolerance and the proportion of Salvadorans who believe that their municipalities are the most able to solve local problems.



**Figure 5.11**

### Support for Strengthening Local Government

We also asked the respondents if they felt that local government should be given more responsibility and more income or should the central government take over more municipal services. As can be seen in figure 5.12, a majority prefer an increase in municipal strength, but a significant minority would prefer more central government responsibility over local matters. This minority is not defined by party identification, nor by gender. We do find, however, that less well educated citizens tend to prefer local government over national. The most striking trend, however, is that within FMLN areas support for local government is far higher than it is for national government.

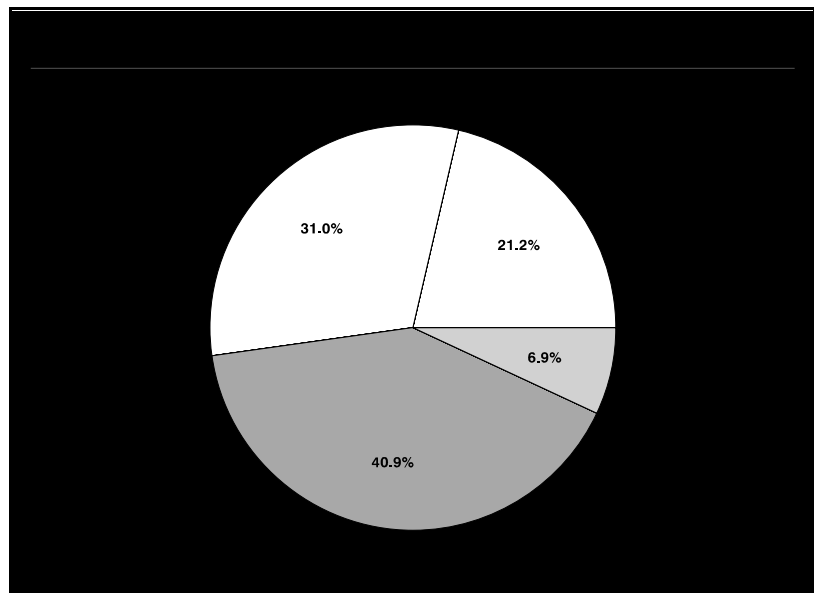


Figure 5.12

The pattern of support for increased strength of local government is clearly related to the strata of the sample, as is shown in figure 5.13. More rural areas are more likely to prefer a strengthened municipal government, but only in the FMLN areas does support reach two-thirds of the sample.

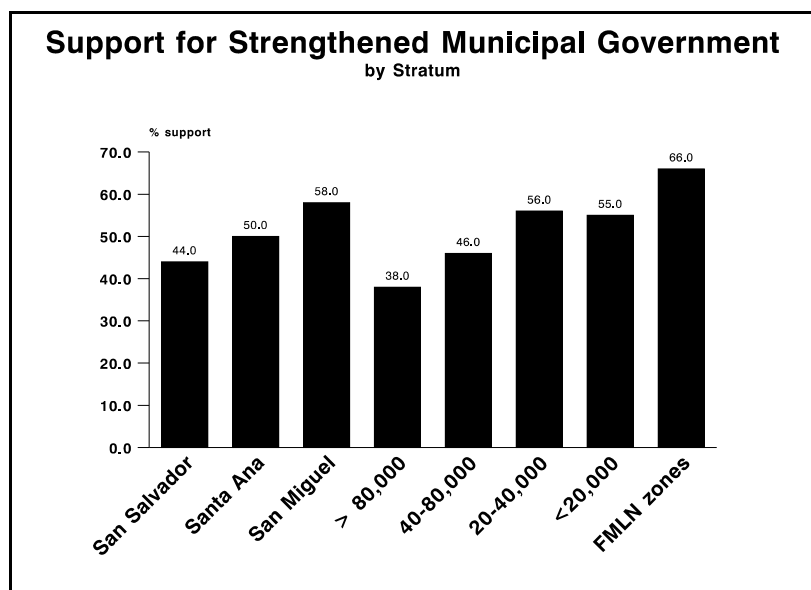
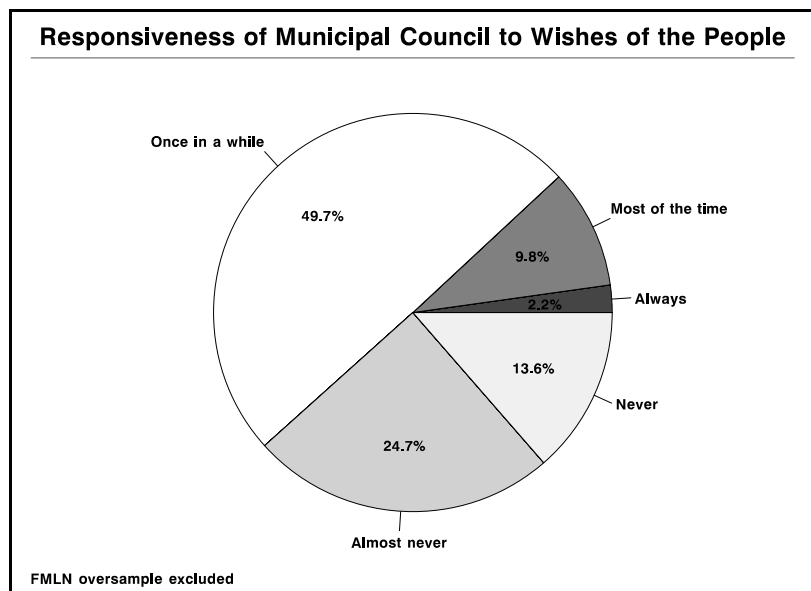


Figure 5.13

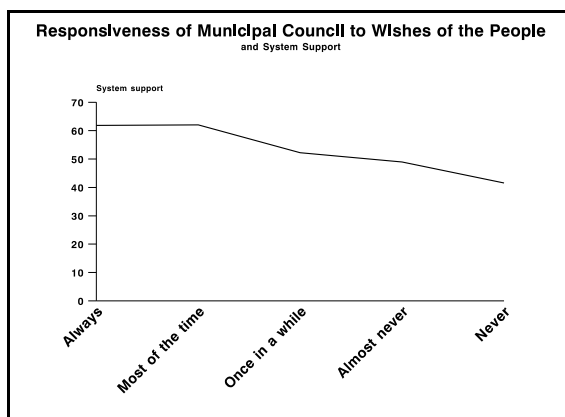
We then wanted to see if Salvadorans were willing to pay more for better local services. An overwhelming 79.1 per cent would not. Support for more taxes was low in all strata of the sample.

### Perceived Responsiveness of Municipal Government

Finally, we wanted to determine how responsive citizens felt their local government was to them. The results are shown in figure 5.14. As we can see, a majority reacted positively to their municipality. We did find a clear relationship between perception of responsiveness and both system support and tolerance.



**Figure 5.14**



**Figure 5.15**

We found that there is a significant correlation ( $r = .23$ ,  $\text{sig} < .001$ ) between system support and perceived responsiveness of local officials (see figure 5.15). This is identical to the pattern we uncovered in our exploration of satisfaction with local

government and shows a clear pattern of a relationship between satisfaction and system support. In contrast, we found a weaker, yet still significant negative correlation ( $r = .13$ ,  $\text{sig.} < .05$ ) between tolerance and perceived responsiveness. This means that the more tolerant an individual is, the less likely he/she is to feel that their local government is responsive. Finally, we found that individuals with higher interpersonal trust were more likely to believe that their local governments were responsive to them ( $r = .16$  for IT1,  $\text{sig} < .001$ ).

## Conclusions

The results of this empirical exploration of local government in El Salvador provides strong confirmation of our second hypothesis. We do not find that attendance at meetings or even demand-making is related to our democratic norms indicators. In contrast, evaluation of municipal government services and evaluation of treatment of citizens by local officials are directly linked to system support and interpersonal trust. In addition, we find that perceived responsiveness of local government is linked to those same democratic values. Hence, both theories of democratization presented in this paper are supported by these results. It is not the quantity of participation that matters, even though many foreign assistance projects measure their success by counting levels of participation, but it is the quality of that participation that is central. Unless citizens feel that they are well treated by their local governments, no amount of participation will increase their system support. We also found little relationship of any of the variables to tolerance, indicating that while satisfying local participation may build national system support, vital for political stability, we cannot expect local government to make citizens more tolerant.

These correlations help us focus more clearly on the meaning of the comparative results we presented in this chapter. We have shown that Salvadorans participate in local governments at far higher levels than do other Central Americans. We also found important differences by national region and gender. Education, however, is not related to levels of participation. We also found that over a third of Salvadorans provide positive evaluations of the services provided by their local government, a level that is higher than any other country in the region. Since such evaluations we now know are linked to system support, we would suspect that El Salvador may experience increased system support over time as the impact of local government satisfaction spills over into other areas. We also note that FMLN zones and rural areas express the highest level of satisfaction with municipal government, also a positive sign given that so much of the insurgency of the past decade took place in those very areas.