

Insights Series #143

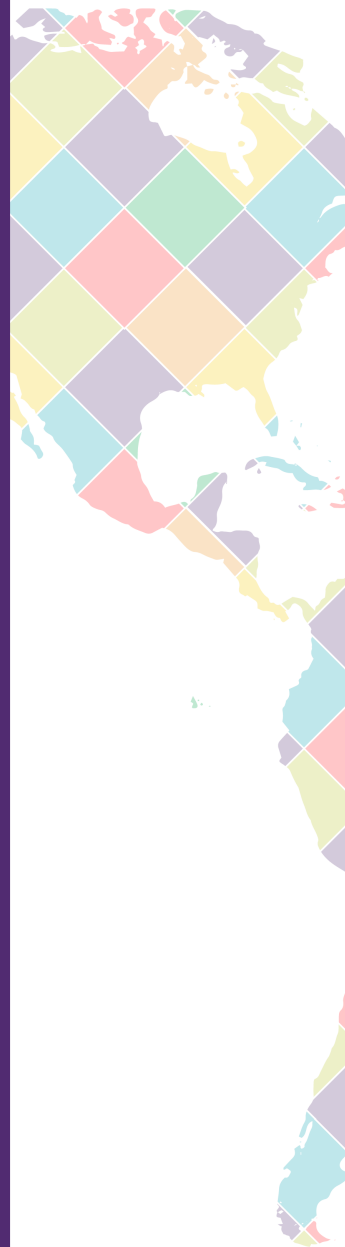
The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: 1973-2005

Mitchell A. Seligson
Vanderbilt University

June 17, 2020

Summary:

- LAPOP announces the release of a special archive of surveys.
- The archive covers surveys from 17 countries, conducted between 1975 and 2005.
- The archive includes the Seligson-Gómez data bank of surveys on the political culture of democracy in Costa Rica.
- Datasets from the archive can be found at:
<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/Seligson-Archive.php>



It is a sad irony that LAPOP is disseminating news of a treasure trove of 82 surveys so close in time to when the scholar who provided the intellectual framework for the cross-national empirical study of political culture in the first place, Professor Sidney Verba, has passed away.¹ Verba, along with his co-author Gabriel Almond clearly demonstrated, with their ground-breaking book, *The Civic Culture*,² that individual, group and national differences in political cultures could be systematically measured with surveys in cross-national research. Literally thousands of students and professors followed their path in the half-century that has followed the publication of that book. I was one of them, one of the early ones, focused on the Latin American region, planning my first survey, a decade after the publication of *The Civic Culture*. Eighty-two surveys later, the effort is still going strong, continuing now as the AmericasBarometer series (2004-present day); this archive leaves off where that project begins.

There have been countless comments on and critiques of *The Civic Culture*,³ many of them anachronistic, accusing its authors of failing to utilize methodologies that were in fact not widely in use until years after their research had been completed. Only a decade or more later did the first (main-frame based) modern computing hardware and software become widely available to the social science community. I recall well Sid Verba leaning over from his seat and whispering to me, at a conference celebration in 1989 in Mexico City of the 50th anniversary of the publication of his book,⁴ that hardly a month passed without him receiving an email from a graduate student who had (re-)discovered a minor computational error in the book. Verba told me then that he would readily admit being guilty as charged, patiently explaining to the young critic the computational limitations he and Almond faced in the early 1960s, when their computational “hardware” consisted only of a counter-sorter (a massive, heavy, unreliable and infernally noisy mechanical device, unknown to students today), while students of today take as a given that they can run massive calculations at the blink of an eye on svelte, powerful yet silent laptops, loaded with sophisticated statistical routines.

While I adopted the method introduced by Almond and Verba, my perspective on political culture differed from theirs. Whereas they tried to

show that only Anglo-Saxon countries, represented by Britain and the U.S. in their five-country sample, had developed a political culture that could sustain and nurture democratic government, I often found Latin American political cultures equally pro-democratic. Maybe my perspective was influenced by two years of living in Costa Rica as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, but as I got to know other countries and nationalities in the region, my perspective did not change; Anglo-Saxon countries had no monopoly on democratic political culture, even if, back then, some of these other places were governed by dictatorships.

As I expanded the reach of the surveys over the years to a wider and wider circle, eventually incorporating every independent mainland country in the region,⁵ and then many countries in the Caribbean, including over 30 countries covered by the LAPOP AmericasBarometer series initiated in 2004, it became clear that Costa Ricans were not alone in expressing pro-democracy sentiment. I found that many Latin Americans were not anti-democratic, just as the expansion of the AmericasBarometer into the U.S. and Canada found that not all people in those countries were pro-democratic.

To allow other researchers to draw their own conclusions (no doubt, some differing from the conclusions I have come to, and published over the years), based on the original raw data itself, I am very grateful to LAPOP for making all of the data available, world-wide, with the release of the “Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive.”

I am also grateful to the following Vanderbilt graduate students who labored long and hard to clean the data, some of which date back over fifty years, reviewing the questionnaires, and cleaning up discrepancies with the datasets, and preparing the technical reports: Kaitlen Cassell, Facundo Salles Kobilanski, and Bryce Williams-Tuggle. Thanks to LAPOP staffer Dr. Carole Wilson for transforming all the datasets from their original SPSS format into Stata format, and to LAPOP staffer Rubí Arana for archiving the datasets and making them available for online downloads in either SPSS or Stata format.

Why the Archive is Especially Useful for Comparative Analysis

The Seligson Archive offers researchers data based on a consistent definition of how to measure democratic political culture, and sample designs drawn from a consistent set of principles. Those two features are generally lacking in many other archived data from surveys conducted in Latin America. As a result, using many others it is unclear if temporal or national variation in responses are caused by variation in political culture or merely an artifact of these methodological variations.

Comparative survey research has become commonplace and important archives of older datasets have, fortunately, become available. Three limitations confront users of those archives. First, the questionnaire items are often focused exclusively on issues of the moment, or only local concern, rather than broader questions of democratic norms and behaviors. Second, when such broader questions do appear, they are rarely repeated across time and space. Finally, sample designs vary sharply, and often deviate from best practices.

In contrast, most (but not all; see exceptions in the list below) of the surveys in the Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive were driven by a uniform theoretical focus, namely by the one provided by Robert Dahl in his classic book, *Polyarchy*,⁶ in which the essence of a democratic belief system involves support for an extensive and inclusive set of political liberties, in the context of a belief in the legitimacy (in terms of “diffuse support”) of the political system as defined by David Easton.⁷

The sample designs, likewise, almost⁸ always followed the principles laid down by my sample design class teacher at the University of Michigan, Leslie Kish, in his classic book, *Survey Sampling*.⁹ These principles rested on the notion of drawing a stratified and clustered area probability sample, using population census data to calculate the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) distribution of the sample, accompanied by census maps to locate sample segments within selected Primary Sampling Units

(PSUs). However, I often found that when working with local counterparts, having them adhere to those principles was a serious challenge. I met resistance from what I learned was (and remains) a common and widespread practice in much of Latin America of drawing samples based not on stratification and area probability criteria, but instead on loosely defined social class, classifying neighborhoods by class (often defined by letters A, B, C, D). Of course, stratifying on class assumed that it was possible to know *a priori* the class breakdown of the country, so that appropriate numbers of interviews could be assigned to each one. It also assumed class homogeneity within each neighborhood, something actually *less* common in Latin America than the U.S., because zoning restrictions, used so commonly in the U.S. as a mechanism to impose *de facto* racial residential and school segregation, came relatively late to much of Latin America.¹⁰ Only in recent years, because of a growing fear of crime, do we see the widespread emergence of gated communities, within which class is likely to be fairly uniform.

The Seligson-Gómez Data Bank of Surveys on the Political Culture of Democracy in Costa Rica

Potential users of this archive will note that the longest and most extensive list of surveys were carried out in Costa Rica. Costa Rica is the country outside the U.S. that I know best. I lived there off and on for over five years, including two years as a volunteer in the U.S. Peace Corps. Yet, those factors do not explain why there is such an abundance of Costa Rica surveys. That can be attributed to my now-deceased colleague, Lic. Miguel Gómez B. Miguel, who is widely considered the founder of survey research in Costa Rica. As a young man of humble origins, but enormous intellectual potential, he received a scholarship to the University of Michigan where he studied sampling under Leslie Kish and received an M.A. degree. He then returned to Costa Rica where he joined the School of Statistics at the University of Costa Rica, and, for many years, taught the sample design course until his retirement.

I met Miguel in 1976 when I was in Costa Rica attempting to carry out a survey to assess the effect of land reform on human fertility, a project funded by a grant from a joint program of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Kish had recommended that I see Miguel to find out if he could recommend experienced interviewers. Miguel at that time headed up a survey unit within Costa Rica's Office of the Presidency, regularly conducting surveys on policy issues of the day. We struck up a friendship that lasted over the decades until his death on the very day in May, 2011, I was returning to Costa Rica to visit him as he was recovering from a long illness. In those years, each time I would return to Costa Rica, Miguel generously, without compensation, assisted me in my latest survey efforts. All of the sample designs and much of the questionnaire format came from Miguel and our long workdays together. The Costa Rican collection bears his imprint and is as much a result of his efforts as it is mine. Miguel was the most selfless colleague I ever had. He is sorely missed.

A Note of Variable Naming Conventions Use in This Archive

When I began developing the questionnaires, SPSS limited variable names to 8 characters, the first having to be a letter. All letters had to be uppercase. As a result, most surveys at the time, including the early ones in this archive have variables named as "VAR001, VAR002, VAR003", etc. The limitation of this system became obvious as the number of surveys grew. The names had no meaning, requiring analysts to work with codebook in hand. Further, there was no comparability across surveys, so what that meant was VAR010 in one survey could have the same properties as VAR20 in another, further complicating analysis. When I started working with Miguel, he proposed a better system, based on modules, such that there was module A and module B, which became variable names A1, A2, A3, etc., and B1, B2, etc. The "icebreaker" question, "What's the most important problem around here?" thus became then (and forever more),

“A4”, and the system support series, became (and has remained) “B1, B2, B3”, etc. Later, when computer analysis packages became more flexible, we started using descriptive Spanish language words to define variables, such as “IDIOMAQ” to define the language of the questionnaire and SOCT1 to indicate the first item of the “sociotropic” series of items. We have left untouched these original names in the databases so that they correspond to their original questionnaires.

The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: List of Datasets by Country and Year

The archive consists of 82 surveys, spread among 64 country-years. In the tables below, I list the country and year of each dataset along with a basic description of each one. Users need to consult the Technical Reports of each dataset for further detail. The datasets, questionnaires, and Technical Reports can be found at: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/Seligson-Archive.php>.

Table 1: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Albania

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Albania	1	2004-05	Corruption	Mass Public (2004): 1,198
	2	2004-05	Corruption	Mass Public (2005): 1,200
	3	2004-05	Corruption	Public Officials: 577
	4	2004-05	Corruption	Judges: 155

Description: Four samples: Mass public (2 years), public officials, and judges.

**Table 2: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Bolivia 1998**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Bolivia	5	1998	Democratic Values and Behaviors	National: 2,977
	6	1998	Democratic Values and Behaviors	Municipal: 499

Description: Two samples, national and oversample in six municipalities with USAID with Democracy, Development and Citizen Participation (DDPC) programs.

**Table 3: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Bolivia 1999-2000**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Bolivia	7	1999	Democratic Values and Behaviors	DDPC: 895
	8	2000	Democratic Values and Behaviors	National: 3,006
	9	2000	Democratic Values and Behaviors	DDPC: 900

Description: DDPC (see 1998) oversample in 9 municipalities in both Survey 7 and Survey 9.

**Table 4: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Bolivia 2001-2005**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Bolivia	10	2001	Political Culture	Military and Police: 276
	11	2002	Political Culture	National: 3,016
	12	2003	Special Questionnaire Including Political Culture Items	Judges: 459
	13	2003	Special Questionnaire Including Political Culture Items	Legislators: 142
	14	2003	Special Questionnaire Including Political Culture Items	Prosecutors: 96
	15	2004-05	Two samples, national and members of the media	National: 3,070 Media: 856
	16	2005	Alternative Crop Survey	National: 3,022 Alternative Development: 600 Expulsion Zones: 159 Cities: 1,567

**Table 5: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Central America**

Region	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Central America	17	1999	Regional Study of Political Culture and Decentralization	Guatemala: 1,197
Central America	18	1999	Regional Study of Political Culture and Decentralization	El Salvador: 1,450
Central America	19	1999	Regional Study of Political Culture and Decentralization	Nicaragua: 1,248
Central America	20	1999	Regional Study of Political Culture and Decentralization	Costa Rica: 1,428

Description: The surveys above did not use the Seligson sample design.

**Table 6: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Colombia**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Colombia	21	2001	Transparency Study, Phone Survey in Four Cities	2,388

**Table 7: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Costa Rica 1973-1978**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Costa Rica	22	1973	Land Tenure and Agricultural Production; Civil Society	Male Farmers and Agricultural Laborers: 531
	23	1976	Farmers in Different Types of Land Reform Settlements	Land Reform: 753
	24	1978	Politics and Political Culture	National: 1,707

Description: The sample for Survey 22 was comprised entirely of male farmers and agricultural laborers. Survey 22 included many questions on land tenure and agricultural production; civil society. Survey 23 is on farmers in different types of land reform settlements, the other (Survey 24) is a national survey of politics and political culture.

**Table 8: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Costa Rica 1978-1985**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Costa Rica	25	1978	Political Culture Survey	201
	26	1980	Political Culture Survey	280
	27	1983	Political Culture Survey	501
	28	1985	Political Culture Survey	506

Description: All samples from Surveys 25-28 were from the Central Valley of Costa Rica.

**Table 9: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive:
Costa Rica 1987-2002**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Costa Rica	29	1987	Political Culture Survey	Mass: 927
	30	1987	Political Culture Survey	Political Elite: 219
	31	1990	Political Culture Survey	597
	32	1995	Political Culture Survey	505
	33	1999	Political Culture Survey	National: 1,428
	34	2002	Political Culture Survey	National: 1,016

Description: The samples from Surveys 31 and 32 were taken from the Central Valley of Costa Rica.

**Table 10: The Seligson Political Culture Survey
Archive: Dominican Republic 1994-2001**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Dominican Republic	35	1994	Political Culture Survey	2,425
	36	1997	Political Culture Survey	2,577
	37	2001	Political Culture Survey	3,091

Description: Surveys 35-37 had national samples, but did not have a Seligson sample or questionnaire design. Survey 37 did have some Seligson items included.

Table 11: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Ecuador 1986-2004

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Ecuador	38	1986	Sample of Coffee Co-op Members	1,002
	39	2001	Political Culture Survey	National: 2,923
	40	2001	Political Culture Survey	Northern Border: 1,950 Southern Border: 47
	41	2002	Political Culture Survey	4,500
	42	2004	Political Culture Survey	Municipal Oversample: 4,500

Description: Survey 40 has an over-sample of northern and southern border municipalities. Survey 41 has a sample from 15 municipalities. Survey 42 has oversamples in selected municipalities.

**Table 12: The Seligson Political Culture Survey
Archive: El Salvador 1989-1999**

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
El Salvador	43	1989	Impact of Remittances on Small Businesses	211 Stores
	44	1991	Political Culture Survey	Metropolitan Areas: 910
	45	1991	Political Culture Survey	Elites: 63
	46	1991	Political Culture Survey	Omnibus Study: 1,240
	47	1993	Land Tenure Survey	1,161
	48	1995	Political Culture Survey	1,600
	49	1999	Political Culture Survey	National plus Oversample: 2,914
	50	1999	Political Culture Survey	Decentralization: 1,450

Description: Survey 44 has a sample drawn from greater metropolitan San Salvador. Survey 47 has a sample of land tenure types. Survey 48 has national sample of 1,400 plus 200 in high FMLN areas. Surveys 49 and 50 have a national sample plus an over-sample in metropolitan San Salvador, and additional interviews in USAID-focused areas, plus a decentralization study.

Table 13: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Guatemala 1992-2001

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Guatemala	51	1992	Political Culture Survey, National	904
	52	1993	Political Culture Survey, National	1,197 + 200 indigenous respondents
	53	1995	Political Culture Survey, National	1,198 + 200 indigenous respondents
	54	1997	Political Culture Survey, National	1,200 + 200 indigenous respondents
	55	1998	Political Culture Survey, National	1,400
	56	1999	Political Culture Survey, National	1,200
	57	2001	Political Culture Survey, National	1,670

Table 14: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Honduras 1983-2001

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Honduras	58	1983	Land Tenure Study	767
	59	1985	Land Tenure Study	767
	60	1989	Land Tenure Study	429 minus attrition
	61	1991	Political Culture Study	National: 566
	62	1991	Political Culture Study	Elite: 18
	63	2001	Corruption and Political Culture	3,000

Description: The samples for Surveys 58-60 were drawn from farmers in selected departments. The samples from Surveys 61 and 62 were drawn from Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula along with an elite sample. Survey 63 has a national sample with a natural experiment because of Hurricane Mitch.

Table 15: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Israel, Madagascar, and Mexico

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Israel	64	1979	Political Culture, Focus on Tolerance	490
Madagascar	65	2005	Corruption Surveys	National: 3,300 Public Sector: 900
Mexico	66	1978	Political Culture, Migration, Work Conditions in <i>maquiladoras</i> in northern Mexico	839
	67	1979	Political Culture	430

Description: Survey 64 has a national sample, but does not cover the West Bank and Gaza. Survey 67 has a sample drawn from residents of the city of Guadalajara.

Table 16: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Nicaragua 1989-1999

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Nicaragua	68	1989	Political Culture	1,150
	69	1991	Political Culture	704
			Managua, León, Masaya, and Granada	
	70	1995	Political Culture, National	1,200
	71	1996	Corruption, Political Culture, National	2,400
	72	1997	Political Culture	National: 2,500 Special Groups: 1,100
	73	1998	Corruption, Political Culture, National	2,400
	74	1999	Political Culture Survey	National: 2,500 Judiciary: 124

Description: Survey 68 has a sample from four major cities; not Seligson sample design. The special group for Survey 72 includes police, military, teachers, and NGO members. Survey 73 is a follow-up to Survey 72. Survey 74 has a special sample of the elite judiciary.

Table 17: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Panama

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Panama	75	1991	Political Culture Survey	Panama City: 500
	76	1991	Political Culture Survey	Elite: 29

Table 18: The Seligson Political Culture Survey Archive: Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela

Country	Count of Surveys	Year	Focus of Survey	Sample Size
Paraguay	77	1996	Political Culture Survey, National	1,450
	78	1998	Political Culture Survey, National	1,450
Peru	79	1996	Political Culture Survey, National	1,508
	80	1997	Political Culture Survey, National	1,533
	81	1998	Political Culture Survey, National	1,784
Venezuela	82	1995	Political Culture Survey, Caracas and Maracaibo	897

Notes

1. See <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/13/obituaries/sidney-verba-dead.html>.
2. Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy*

- in *Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
3. An interested reader can get a feel for the fundamental critiques in Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba, eds. *The Civic Culture Revisited*. Boston Little Brown, 1980.
 4. Julia I. Flores Dávila, ed., *A 50 años de la cultura cívica: pensamientos y reflexiones en honor al profesor Sidney Verba*. Mexico: UNAM, 2011.
 5. French Guyana, an overseas department of France, and thus not an independent country, has not (yet) been included.
 6. Dahl, Robert A. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971.
 7. Easton, David. "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support." *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (October 1975): 435-57. The initial attempt to form a scale was carried out by Edward N. Muller, "The Representation of Citizens by Political Authorities: Consequences for Regime Support." *American Journal of Political Science* 64 (1970b): 1149-66. For an extensive treatment of this topic using the AmericasBarometer see Booth, John A., and Mitchell A. Seligson. *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Democracy and Political Support in Eight Nations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
 8. See the tables below and the Technical Reports, which note deviations from these principles, when they occurred.
 9. Kish, Leslie. *Survey Sampling*. Originally published 1965 ed. New York: J. Wiley, 1995.
 10. The previously dominant approach was confused further by fuzzy and non-uniform definitions of class.



Mitchell A. Seligson (mitchell.a.seligson@vanderbilt.edu) is LAPOP's Founder and Senior Advisor. He is emeritus Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University.

This report was edited by Dr. Elizabeth J. Zechmeister and Rubí Arana. This report was translated by Dr. Juan Camilo Plata, Dr. J. Daniel Montalvo, and Rubí Arana. Formatting, production, copy editing, graphics, and report distribution were handled by Rubí Arana, Maita Schade, and Laura Sellers. Our data and reports are available for free download on the project website. Please follow us on Twitter or Facebook to stay in touch.

As a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative, LAPOP is committed to routine disclosure of our data collection and reporting processes. More information about the AmericasBarometer sample designs can be found at vanderbilt.edu/lapop/core-surveys.

The contents of this *Insights* report are the sole responsibility of its author and LAPOP and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other supporting organization. LAPOP's AmericasBarometer surveys are supported predominantly by USAID and Vanderbilt University. The 2016/17 round also had support from the IADB, the UNDP, the Open Society Foundations, and academic partners and researchers across the Americas.

vanderbilt.edu/lapop
@lapop_barometro
@LatinAmericanPublicOpinionProject
lapop@vanderbilt.edu
+1-615-322-4033



230 Appleton Place, PMB 505, Suite 304, Nashville, TN 37203, USA