

Democracy Audit, Nicaragua, 1999

Technical Information

Country	Year	Sample Size	Weighted/Unweighted
Nicaragua	1999	2,500 public + 124 judiciary	Weighted

This survey was carried out in 1999 as part of the LAPOP series of surveys. The fieldwork was carried out by Borge and Associates under the supervision of Prof. Orlando Pérez from Central Michigan University.

National Survey:

The national survey was a national probability design, with a total N of 2,500. The sample was drawn from every Nicaraguan department except Río San Juan, which was excluded because of its remoteness and low population density. The sample represents 98.3% of the population. The sample is divided in two stratas: general population and a special sub-sample of the judicial sector.

The complete sample of 2,500 respondents was gathered by selecting JVRs (Juntas Receptoras del Voto) in every department and conducting 150 interviews in each one. In the case of Managua, 300 interviews were conducted in 12 JVRs because of its demographic and political importance. It has an estimated margin of error at $\pm 2\%$ (at the 95% level). The sample needs to be weighted in order to represent the national distribution of the population. The full version of the report as well as the complete questionnaire can be found on the LAPOP website, in English and Spanish, as “Democracy Audit, Nicaragua, 1999,” written by Mitchell Seligson and published by the University of Pittsburgh and The Nicaraguan Development Center with the support of USAID.

Containing data gathered in 1999, this national survey report analyzes the attitudes of Nicaragua’s citizens towards crime, justice administration, local government, system support, civil participation, tolerance, and democracy.

Special Sample of the Judicial Sector:

The judiciary sample contains an additional 124 participants, drawn from four groups:

- Magistrados de Apelaciones. These are the appeals courts for cases ruled on by the court of first instance (Juez de Primera Instancia).
- Jueces de Distrito. These are the district judges, who rule on serious civil or criminal cases in which the penalties exceed three years in prison. These judges are located in county seats and have the capacity to revoke decisions taken by the “Juzgados Locales” (see below).
- Jueces Locales. These are the courts of first instance for cases in which the penalties are less than three years imprisonment. Each municipality of the country has one of these judges.
- Procuradores. These are the state prosecutors, sometimes called “fiscales.”

USAID requested a survey of 100 respondents comprised of the above four categories. The University of Pittsburgh believed, however, that a larger sample of 200 (50 in each category) would allow for a more precise comparison, not only with the national sample of the population, but among the four categories listed above. Every effort was made to achieve this higher goal, but, alas, this was not to be, as only 124 individuals from the judicial sample were interviewed. The reasons for this result are explained below.

The lists given to the University of Pittsburgh of the four categories of respondents in the judicial sector contained a total of 360 names. These lists were provided to the interview teams that were dispersed throughout the country, and each team was given five days to make appointments with those individuals who fell into their geographic sector.

For the judiciary, the timing of the survey was not ideal. Considerable tension existed because of serious conflicts between the executive and the Comptroller of the country. This conflict eventually rose to the level that the Comptroller was arrested and jailed. Of 360 names on the list, 140 refused to answer because they believed that it would be imprudent for them to do so in light of their judicial position. An additional 55 potential respondents, all prosecutors, refused to answer because they stated that they had been explicitly instructed not to do so by their superiors. An additional 54 respondents began to reply, but found the questions too sensitive and suspended the interview in mid-stream. The remainder of the missing cases were a product of the inability of the interviewers to locate the respondents during the five-day period allotted for doing so. In 1997 it was easier to interview judges because the interviewers were allowed to include “jueces suplentes” in their sample, but those names were not on the lists provided by USAID this year. In the end, 124 interviews were carried out, including 35 appellate judges, 29 district judges, 32 local judges and 28 prosecutors.