



PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Agency for International Development

Strategic Development Office (503) 2501-3471

U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (503) 2501-2471

Email: kazucena@usaid.gov

<http://www.usaid.gov/sv>

<http://elsalvador.usembassy.gov/>

“THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN EL SALVADOR 2008: THE IMPACT OF GOVERNANCE”

SAN SALVADOR- Most Salvadorans prefer democracy over any other kind of government, as it has been revealed in the last “The Political Culture of Democracy in El Salvador 2008: the Impact of Governance” study, prepared by the Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo Foundation (FUNDAUNGO) and the “Jose Simeon Canas” Central American University Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP).

The study has been coordinated by the Vanderbilt University, through its Latin American Public Opinion Project, AmericasBarometer initiative, and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).

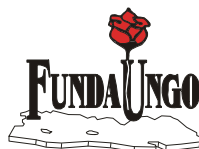
The study is based on a national public opinion survey carried out on February 2008, with a sample of 1,549 Salvadoran adults, a 95% confidence level, and sampling error of +/- 2.4%.

Among the study results, it is noteworthy that Salvadorans continue to consistently support the idea of a democratic government: 78.4% prefers democracy as a form of government, whereas only 9.7% prefer an authoritarian regime, and 12% say there is no difference between democratic and authoritarian governments. 84% prefers electoral democracy as opposed 15.5% that would support a strong unelected leader.

On the other hand, the data shows that a 42.8% are satisfied with democracy, while 57.2% are not satisfied with this political regime. A comparison with 2004 data shows that the democracy functioning dissatisfaction levels have risen.

When comparing the citizens' trust in the various political institutions on 2004, 2006 and 2008, a generalized drop in the level of trust is noted.

Almost two thirds (61.2%) of the surveyed citizens think that the main problems in the country are economic, and one third (34.2%) mentioned insecurity.





Pag 2

The political culture of democracy in el salvador 2008: the impact of governance

There is an increased perception of insecurity: 41.5% of Salvadorans express that they feel unsafe because of crime. Nevertheless, there might have been a reduction in the perception of insecurity in comparison with 2006.

The study results show that 19% of Salvadorans were direct victims of crime during the year leading up to the survey.

The majority of people (72.8%) continue not reporting violence incidents, mainly because they think that it will make no difference or because it might lead to retribution by criminals. According with the report: "This returns to the trust that Salvadorans have in their institutions. This trust is seriously affected by violence and insecurity, creating a vicious circle that only increases the gap between citizens and institutions".

The report considers that crime and insecurity problems contribute to erode the trust that Salvadorans have in their institutions, the legitimacy of the political system, and the evaluation of the democratic system's performance.

43.9% of the respondents consider that corruption is very widespread among public officers. The results show that around 14.8% of people have been victims of corruption in the past year.

The report says that: "People who have been victims of corruption tend to trust less in Fundamental political institutions and tend to be more distrustful with respect to their own Neighbors and fellow citizens as well".

In general, the respondents show higher levels of trust in municipal governments, although it has decreased in comparison with 2004. The study identified a close connection between the citizenry and local government, in terms of having solicited help or cooperation from local officials to resolve problems.

Low levels of citizen trust in political parties persist, which have diminished in comparison with 2004. Also, the level of trust in elections has dropped.

The study "The Political Culture of Democracy in El Salvador 2008: the Impact of Governance" was presented this afternoon by its authors: Dr. Ricardo Cordova FUNDAUNGO Executive Director, and Jose Miguel Cruz, IUDOP and Vanderbilt University researcher. Also, the presentation was presided over by Jeanette Aguilar, IUDOP Director, and Larry Brady, USAID/EI Salvador Mission Director.

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