

February 9, 2007

## Central Americans Frustrated With Job Creation Efforts

### Opinions on the effect of DR-CAFTA mixed throughout region

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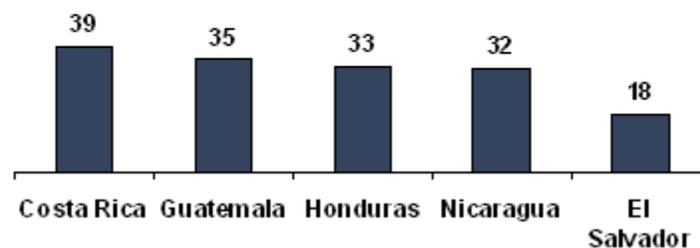
#### GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

Princeton, NJ -- The anti-U.S. sentiment purportedly sweeping through Latin America actually applies so far only to a number of South American countries. In fact, Central America is currently the most *pro*-U.S. region in the western hemisphere. Several factors help explain this fact, including geographic proximity and the fact that remittances from large contingencies of migrant workers living in the United States are a primary source of income for most of the region's economies.

To some extent, Central America represents a "laboratory" for gauging the effectiveness and viability of "new age" free-market economics and trade integration initiatives proposed by U.S. leaders and local elites, in contrast with the leftist ideology currently being advanced in some South American countries, such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. For the most part, Central America has embraced such market approaches as development models.

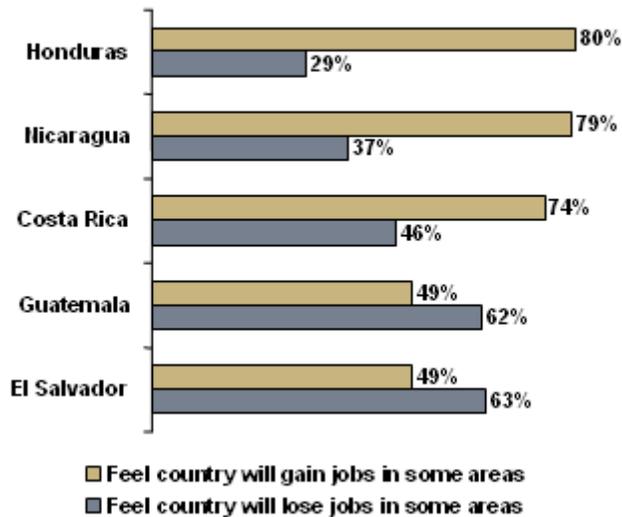
However, that may not last. Central Americans are not satisfied with efforts to create quality jobs in their countries. In none of the five countries surveyed -- Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador -- does the percentage satisfied with job creation efforts reach 40%. In El Salvador, just 18% say they are satisfied.

*Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with efforts to increase the number and quality of jobs in your country?  
(numbers shown in percentages)*



What's more, not all Central American populations are optimistic that the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), which aims to create a free trade zone encompassing the United States and most of Central America, will help with job creation. In fact, in two of the five countries surveyed -- El Salvador and Guatemala -- those who say they are familiar with DR-CAFTA are more likely to say that the creation of DR-CAFTA will result in job losses for their country than they are to say it will result in the creation of more jobs.

### Opinion of the effect of DR-CAFTA



Free trade agreements between Latin America and the United States have been at the core of U.S. foreign policy toward the region since 1994. They have met strong opposition from leftist movements in Latin America, which argue that the economic asymmetries that exist between the United States and smaller, poorer countries would lead inevitably to job losses and increased poverty among the latter.

Free trade supporters in Latin America, on the other hand, contend countries like those in Central America that are constrained by small internal markets would have to become more competitive in order to trade their goods and services in larger economies, thus creating more jobs and turning the forces of globalization in their favor. This logic may, in fact, be inspiring the positive views of DR-CAFTA that Hondurans, Nicaraguans, and Costa Ricans share. Unlike their Guatemalan and Salvadorian neighbors, residents of these countries who are familiar with the trade pact are more likely to say DR-CAFTA will help create jobs than to say it will result in job losses.

Given the failure of the "neo-liberal" model in Latin America during the 1990s, DR-CAFTA may well be the last chance of free-market economics to prove its effectiveness for containing poverty and reducing inequality, as impoverished Central Americans are growing increasingly disenchanted with their current leaders.

#### Survey Methods

Results are based on face-to-face interviews conducted in 2006 with randomly selected national samples of approximately 1,000 adults, aged 15 and older who live permanently in the five Central American countries polled. For results based on these samples, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of error attributable to sampling and other random effects is  $\pm 3$  percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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