

Public acceptance of environmental restrictions¹

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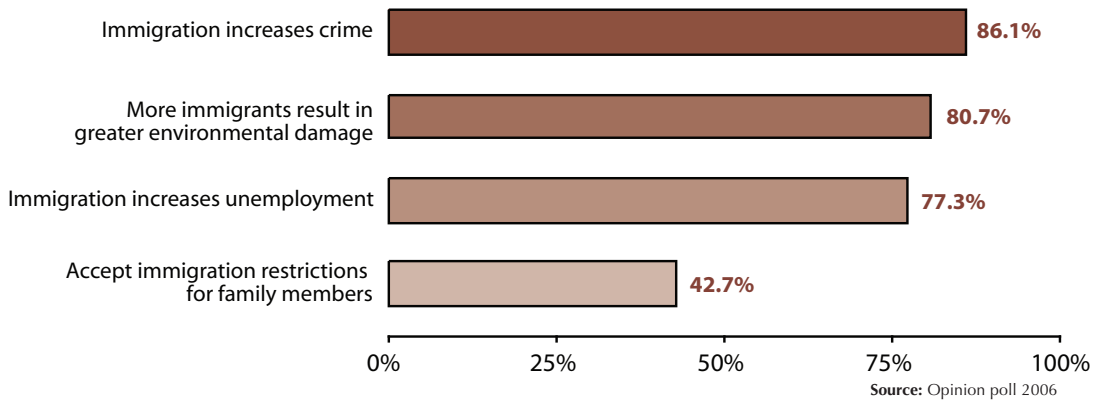
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To what point are Galapagos residents willing to accept certain restrictions to preserve the natural environment of the islands? This article analyzes public attitudes toward human migration, resource utilization, and special legislation for the province based on the results of an Opinion Poll conducted in June 2006 on Isabela, San Cristóbal, and Santa Cruz islands.

Immigration

There is significant resistance to immigration, with a widespread view that newcomers increase crime and unemployment, as well as damage the environment (Fig. 1). However, when immigration restrictions personally affect family members, the level of acceptance declines.

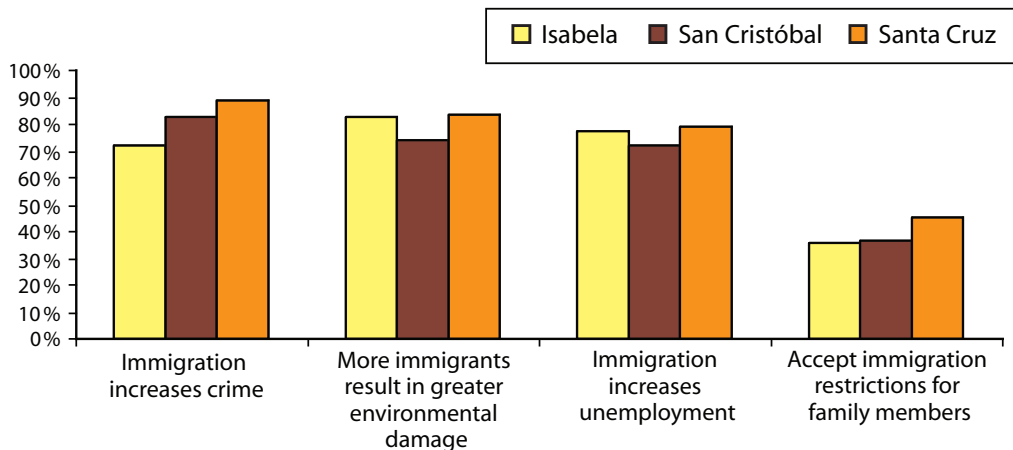
Figure 1. Attitudes toward immigration



The greatest level of concern about immigration is among residents of Santa Cruz Island. Residents on Isabela indicate that immigration affects the environment and increases unemployment, whereas on San Cristóbal the main concern focuses on an increase in crime resulting from immigration (Fig. 2).

Although Galapagos residents acknowledge that immigration results in environmental damage, their acceptance of immigration restrictions affecting their own family members is not very high.

Figure 2. Attitudes toward immigration by island



Concern about immigration is higher among women, residents who are native or have lived in Galapagos

longer, and those who have studied outside Galapagos or visited other islands (Tables 1-a and 1-b).

Table 1-a. Attitudes toward immigration by gender, time in Galapagos, and age group.

	Gender		Time in Galapagos			Age			
	Male	Female	Less*	More*	Born in Gal.	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-49 years	50 and older
Immigration increases crime	83.9 %	87.9 %	81.3 %	87.1 %	89.8 %	86.6 %	84.4 %	87.8 %	86.6 %
More immigrants result in greater environmental damage	74.8 %	85.8 %	74.8 %	83.7 %	82.1 %	82.1 %	79.0 %	81.2 %	82.7 %
Immigration increases unemployment	76.2 %	78.3 %	77.7 %	79.7 %	73.3 %	72.4 %	75.2 %	79.0 %	84.5 %
Accept immigration restrictions for family members	43.1 %	42.4 %	35.5 %	47.0 %	44.6 %	44.8 %	37.2 %	47.3 %	45.2 %
AVERAGE	69.5%	73.6%	67.3%	74.4%	72.5%	71.5 %	69.0 %	73.8%	74.8%

Source: Opinion poll 2006

Notes

* "Less" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos less than one third of their current age; "More" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos more than one third of their current age.

Table 1-b. Attitudes toward immigration by education and visits to other islands.

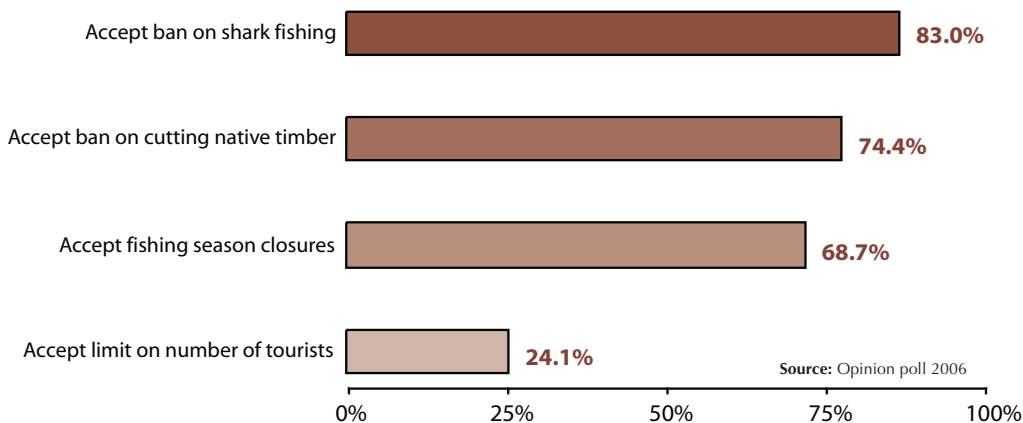
	Education		Visited other islands	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Immigration increases crime	87.0%	84.1%	89.7%	83.1%
More immigrants result in greater environmental damage	80.5%	80.4%	81.4%	79.7%
Immigration increases unemployment	83.4%	68.3%	79.2%	75.3%
Accept immigration restrictions for family members	48.4%	34.7%	44.5%	40.1%
AVERAGE	74.8%	66.9%	73.7%	69.6%

Source: Opinion poll 2006

Resource utilization

Regarding use of natural resources, residents of all three islands strongly agree with the ban on shark fishing (Fig. 3). Agreement is also significant, although to a lesser degree, with the ban on cutting native timber in the islands, and fishing season closures in general. However, the idea of restricting the number of tourists has much lower acceptance.

Figure 3. Attitudes toward resource utilization

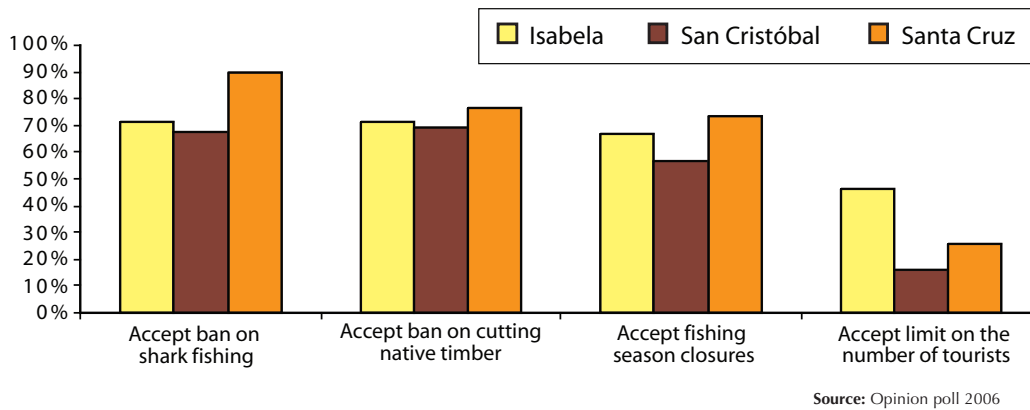


Source: Opinion poll 2006

Limits on resource utilization have a greater acceptance in Santa Cruz, except for limits on tourism, possibly because tourism contributes so significantly to that island's economy. The same hypothesis would tend to

explain the greater acceptance for limits on tourism in Isabela, since a decrease in tourism would not seriously affect its economy. The population of San Cristóbal is the least likely to accept these types of restrictions (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Attitudes toward resource utilization by island



Agreement with limits on resource extraction is highest among young adults, those who have studied outside Galapagos, and those who have visited other islands (Tables 2-a and 2-b).

Santa Cruz has the highest acceptance levels for environmental restrictions except when limiting the number of tourists.

Table 2-a. Attitudes toward resource utilization by gender, time in Galapagos, and age group.

	Gender		Time in Galapagos			Age			
	Male	Female	Less*	More*	Born in Gal.	18 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 49 years	50 and older
Accept ban on shark fishing	78.8%	86.5%	80.3%	85.8%	80.8%	89.0%	82.7%	80.7%	79.3%
Accept ban on cutting native timber	76.5%	72.8%	71.6%	76.7%	74.5%	78.5%	73.7%	72.8%	75.8%
Accept fishing season closures	70.9%	66.7%	67.1%	70.4%	68.8%	70.6%	64.9%	68.6%	72.0%
Accept limit on the number of tourists	28.6%	20.2%	22.6%	20.0%	31.8%	32.8%	23.5%	21.3%	20.2%
AVERAGE	63.7%	61.6%	60.4%	63.2%	64.0%	67.7%	61.2%	60.9%	61.9%

Source: Opinion poll 2006

Notes

* "Less" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos less than one third of their current age;
 * "More" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos more than one third of their current age.

Table 2-b Attitudes toward resource utilization by education and visits to other islands.

	Education		Visited other island	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Accept ban on shark fishing	86.4%	78.3%	89.0%	77.6%
Accept ban on cutting native timber	77.1%	69.7%	76.2%	72.9%
Accept fishing season closures	72.5%	63.2%	76.7%	61.3%
Accept limit on the number of tourists	27.3%	19.8%	30.2%	18.9%
AVERAGE	65.8%	57.8%	68.0%	57.7%

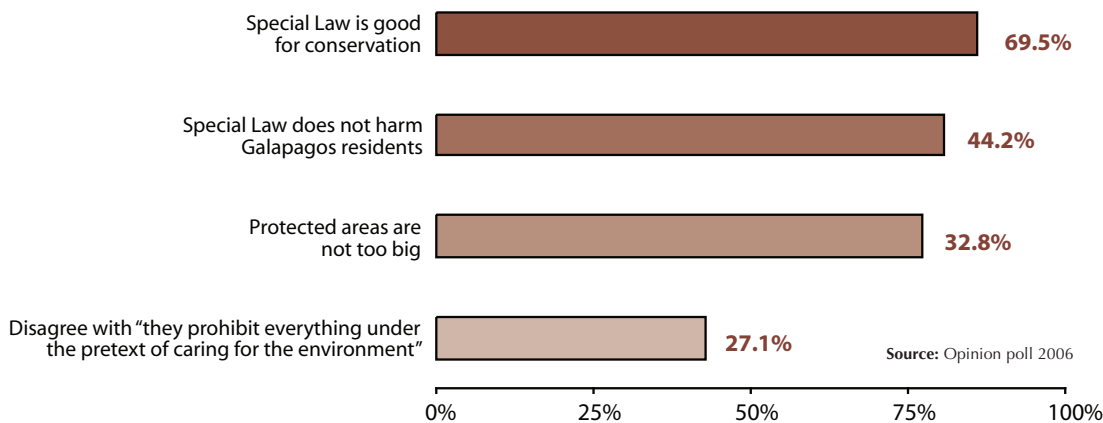
Source: Opinion poll 2006

Restrictive legislation

The Special Law for Galapagos is only somewhat accepted: 70% of those polled believe that this law is good for conservation and 44% do not believe that it harms the resident population (Fig. 5). Another example of the low acceptance of these norms is that the

majority of those polled believe that the protected areas are too big and agree that, in Galapagos, “everything is forbidden under the pretext of caring for the environment”.

Figure 5. Attitudes toward restrictive legislation



In Santa Cruz there is greater willingness to accept the Special Law for Galapagos and, to a lesser degree, the size of the protected areas (Fig. 6). There was also greater disagreement with the opinion that “everything is forbidden under the pretext of caring for the environment,”

although in general, this phrase was widely accepted on all three islands. Restrictive legislation received greater approval among younger residents and those who have visited other islands (Tables 3-a and 3-b).

Figure 6. Attitudes toward restrictive legislation by island

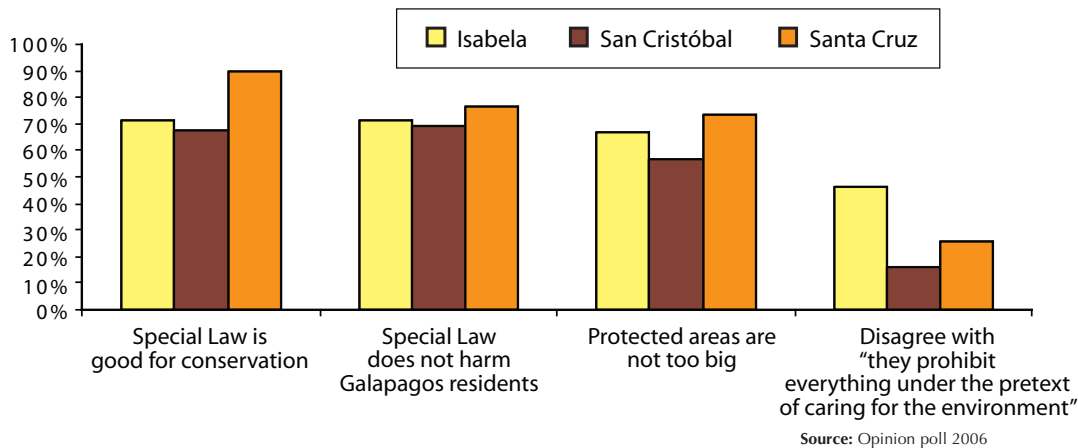


Table 3-a. Attitudes toward restrictive legislation by gender, time in Galapagos, and age group.

	Gender		Time in Galapagos			Age			
	Male	Female	Less	More	Born in Gal.	18 - 24 years	25 - 34 years	35 - 49 years	50 and older
The Special Law is good for conservation	64.9%	73.5%	75.2%	69.3%	66.0%	79.3%	74.4%	61.7%	61.3%
The Special Law does not harm native or resident population	47.1%	41.7%	43.7%	41.3%	50.8%	44.8%	45.6%	46.8%	38.1%
Protected areas are not too big	34.5%	31.3%	37.1%	27.9%	35.8%	38.9%	31.9%	33.7%	26.1%
Disagree with "they prohibit everything under the pretext of caring for the environment"	28.9%	25.6%	28.2%	23.4%	31.4%	34.1%	23.8%	26.8%	25.6%
AVERAGE	43.9%	43.1%	46.0%	40.5%	46.0%	49.3%	43.9%	42.3%	37.8%

Notes

Source: Opinion poll 2006

* "Less" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos less than one third of their current age;
 * "More" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos more than one third of their current age.

Table 3-b. Attitudes toward restrictive legislation by education and visits to other islands.

	Education		Visited other islands	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
The Special Law is good for conservation	71.5%	65.8%	75.7%	65.2%
The Special Law does not harm native or resident population	45.7%	40.4%	54.4%	34.4%
Protected areas are not too big	34.7%	29.3%	36.6%	28.0%
Disagree with "they prohibit everything under the pretext of caring for the environment"	24.7%	29.4%	31.1%	23.3%
AVERAGE	44.2%	41.2%	49.5%	37.7%

Source: Opinion poll 2006

Trends

Public acceptance of environmental restrictions have fluctuated between 1997 and 2006. Acceptance of the ban on shark fishing is high. In 2000 it dropped, but the acceptance level began to rise again in 2001, reaching its highest level in 2006 (83%). In general, the highest levels of acceptance during the period involve bans on removing sand from beaches and fishing season closures. However, this acceptance shows a declining trend over the years, with the most recent poll (2006) showing the lowest acceptance rates for fishing season closures (Table 4 and Fig. 7).

There is also low acceptance of immigration restrictions for family members and limits on the number of tourists, although the former shows a rising trend, whereas acceptance of limits on the number of tourists is falling (Fig. 7).

The trend seen in the average acceptance percentages seems to indicate that increases or decreases in public acceptance of environmental restrictions is more related

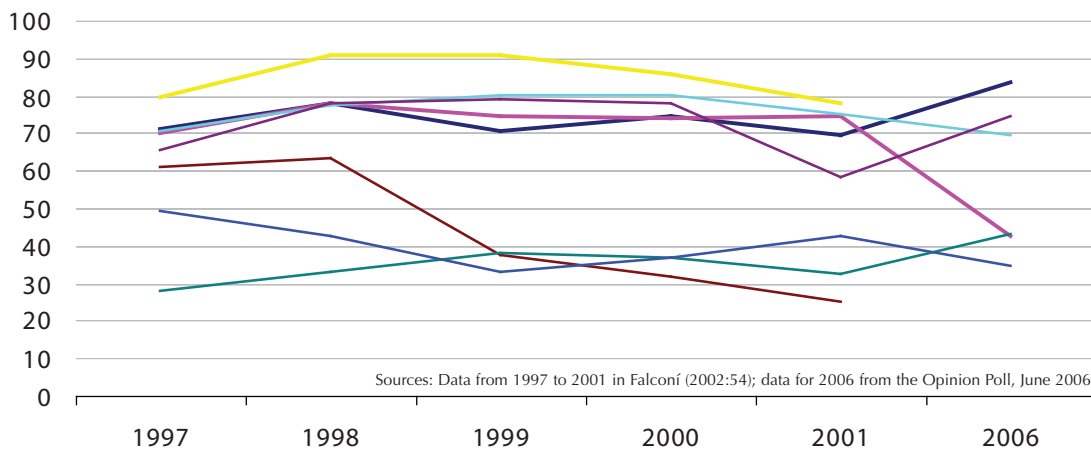
to the specific situation affecting each variable than it is to changes in public attitudes or a general commitment by the resident population to the environment (Table 4).

There is high acceptance of the ban on shark fishing and, to a lesser degree, fishing season closures in general. However, the idea of restricting the number of tourists has much lower acceptance levels.

Table 4. Acceptance of environmental restrictions, 1997-2006 (% of respondents).

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2006
Accept ban on shark fishing	70.6	77.6	70.5	74.0	69.1	83.0
Accept quarantine measures	69.9	77.3	74.2	73.7	74.3	42.0
Accept ban on removing sand from beaches	79.1	90.4	90.4	85.5	77.3	Nd
Accept fishing season closures	70.1	76.7	79.6	79.9	74.9	69.0
Accept ban on cutting native timber	64.9	77.6	78.5	77.8	57.9	74.4
Accept ban on sea cucumber fishing	60.4	62.8	37.3	31.5	24.9	Nd
Accept immigration restrictions for family members	27.4	32.7	37.5	36.4	32.3	42.7
Accept limits on the number of tourists	48.9	42.4	32.6	36.5	42.3	24.0

Figure 7. Acceptance of environmental restrictions (1997-2006)



Sources: Data from 1997 to 2001 in Falconí (2002:54); data for 2006 from the Opinion Poll, June 2006.

Note:

Data weighted according to each island's population.
 Quarantine data are not comparable because the question was changed in 2006. Previous *Galapagos Reports* asked whether the respondent agreed or not with the phrase: "I would let them search my luggage for quarantine", whereas in 2006 the phrase was: "They should let them bring all kinds of fruits and vegetables to the islands because they are cheaper."