

Public acceptance of environmental restrictions

Hugo Barber¹ & Pablo Ospina²

¹ Datanálisis

² Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar

This article is based on a survey carried out in March 2008 (Table 1) and the results of meetings of four focus groups¹ that were held on the three most populated islands of Galapagos. It evaluates the level to which Galapagos residents are willing to accept a number of limitations to their lifestyle, their patterns of consumption, and their material aspirations, based on environmental considerations. We analyze their attitudes towards immigration, resource use, and the special legislation for the province.

Table 1. Technical data on the surveys.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2006	2008
Month of survey	July	October	September	January	November 2000	June	March
Sample total	377	427	582	553	573	442	487
Isabela	102	109	160	150	151	102	104
San Cristóbal	147	158	209	203	213	147	185
Santa Cruz	128	160	213	200	209	193	198
Standard error	±5.2	±4.8	±4.1	±4.3	±4.2	±4.7	±4.5

Sources: Fundación Natura/Fondo Mundial para la Naturaleza (2002: 53); Barber and Ospina (2006), and Opinion Survey of March 2008.

Immigration

Survey results from 2008 confirm the same trend since the initiation of these surveys in 1997 (Fundación Natura/Fondo Mundial para la Naturaleza 2002): there is a significant resistance to immigration. The growing number of new and recent immigrants has not caused any significant variation in the perception that immigration increases crime, unemployment, and environmental damage. However, as in previous years, there is a lower acceptance of immigration restrictions when it involves members of one's own family. Half of the people that agree that immigration increases crime, unemployment, and environmental degradation, do not believe that these impacts are sufficient cause to justify immigration restrictions for their relatives (Figure 1).

¹ A focus group is a type of collective interview, generally with a group of people with relatively homogeneous characteristics. The four focus groups used in this study had a range of five to nine people; interviews lasted for two to three hours.

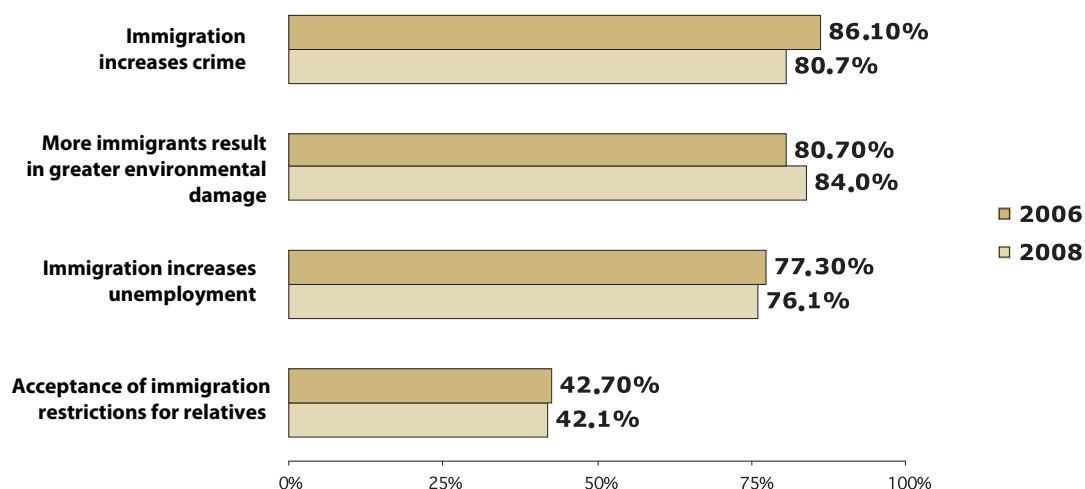


Figure 1. Attitudes toward immigration in 2006 and 2008.

Responses in Santa Cruz, the most populated island in Galapagos, are the most notable. While there is greater concern on this island regarding immigration, there is also greater resistance to immigration restrictions for relatives. The relationships among other variables are more predictable: the older the person and the greater portion of their life lived in

Galapagos, the greater their tendency to oppose immigration and to accept immigration restrictions for their own family. Contrary to what one might expect, Galapagos natives are not the most opposed to new immigration. It appears that age is a stronger determining factor than place of birth in this regard.

Table 2. Attitudes regarding immigration by island and age (%).

Phrase	Total	Island			Age			
		Isabela	San Cristóbal	Santa Cruz	18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50 and older
Immigration increases crime	80.7	76.0	74.0	84.8	82.2	80.6	79.4	81.8
More immigrants result in greater environmental damage	84.0	76.0	77.9	88.4	84.9	83.3	84.7	82.4
Immigration increases unemployment	76.1	72.2	75.2	77.3	72.5	72.3	78.6	82.3
Acceptance of immigration restrictions for relatives	42.1	61.6	53.6	33.3	37.3	41.7	40.3	53.6
AVERAGE	70.7	71.5	70.2	70.9	69.2	69.5	70.8	75.0

Table 2. Continuation.

Phrase	Gender		Time in Galapagos*		
	Male	Female	Less	More	Born in Galapagos
Immigration increases crime	77.0	83.6	76.5	82.5	80.6
More immigrants result in greater environmental damage	84.0	84.0	78.6	85.4	86.1
Immigration increases unemployment	72.7	78.8	73.7	79.3	71.0
Acceptance of immigration restrictions for relatives	40.1	43.6	49.1	40.0	40.2
AVERAGE	68.5	72.5	69.5	71.8	69.5

Note: Data weighted by population size on each island

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

Exploitation of resources

With respect to use of natural resources, there is a general acceptance (eight of every ten people surveyed) of the prohibition of shark fishing and of harvesting native timber (Figure 2). The six percent

reduction in the acceptance of closed fishing seasons between 2006 and 2008 (a time at which fishing closures were being debated) is not statistically significant. However, the slight increase in support for the idea of limiting the number of tourists is statistically significant (Figure 2).

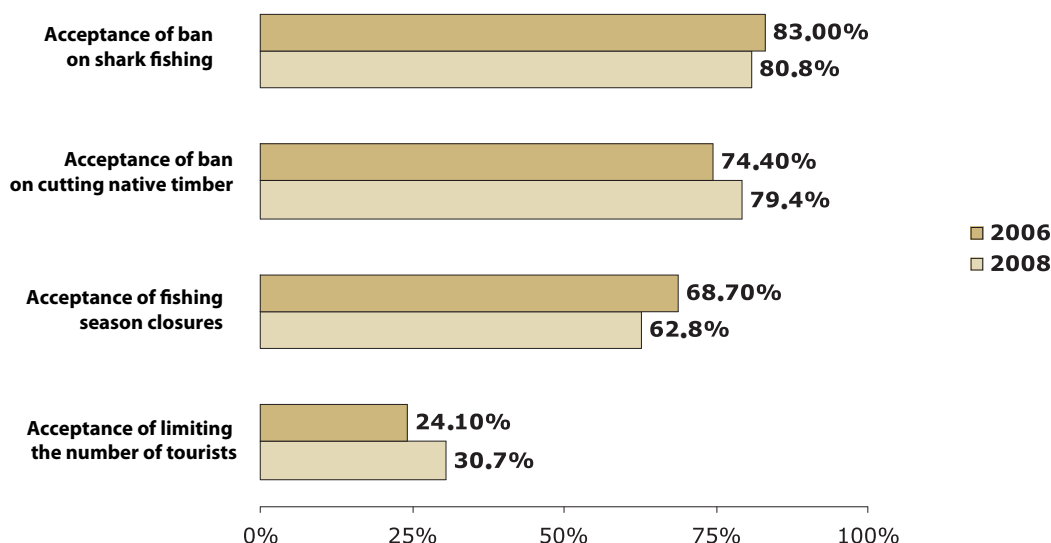


Figure 2. Attitudes regarding exploitation of resources in 2006 and 2008.

The analysis of opinions on the ban on shark fishing and on limiting the number of tourists demonstrates the contrast between the economic bases of the two islands. While the ban on shark fishing is greatly accepted on Santa Cruz (a tourism port), acceptance is much weaker on Isabela, where fishing plays a much greater role in the local economy (Table 3). On the other hand, although the support is generally less for the establishment

of limits to the number of tourists (important social expectations exist for a greater economic benefit from tourism), there is greater acceptance of the idea on Isabela and San Cristóbal than on Santa Cruz (Table 3). Another element that arises from this analysis is that the older residents and natives of Galapagos are those who most favor a restriction on the number of tourists (Table 3).

Table 3. Attitudes regarding restrictions on exploitation of natural resources (%).

Phrase	Total	Island			Age			
		Isabela	San Cristóbal	Santa Cruz	18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50 and older
Acceptance of ban on shark fishing	80.8	52.0	71.3	89.9	87.5	85.2	75.5	75.9
Acceptance of ban on cutting native timber	79.4	62.5	75.7	83.8	85.9	75.6	77.5	80.8
Acceptance of fishing season closures	62.8	78.9	64.4	59.6	52.7	67.2	57.1	83.0
Acceptance of limiting the number of tourists	30.7	36.5	36.7	26.7	33.1	28.9	26.0	41.1
AVERAGE	63.4	57.4	62.0	65.0	64.8	64.2	59.0	70.2

Table 3. Continuation

Phrase	Gender		Time in Galapagos*		
	Male	Female	Less	More	Born in Galapagos
Acceptance of ban on shark fishing	74.5	85.7	87.3	82.0	71.3
Acceptance of ban on cutting native timber	78.4	80.2	78.0	81.3	76.1
Acceptance of fishing season closures	67.6	59.0	52.9	61.9	74.6
Acceptance of limiting the number of tourists	33.0	28.9	22.6	29.7	41.4
AVERAGE	63.4	63.4	60.2	63.7	65.8

Note: Data weighted by population size on each island
 * "Less" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos for less than one third of their current age; "More" indicates someone who has lived in Galapagos for more than one third of their current age.

Environmental legislation

Acceptance of the Special Law for Galapagos increased from 2006 to 2008, with more people viewing it as good both for conservation and for Galapagos residents. However, the opinion that it imposes

unnecessary environmental restrictions has also increased. For example, the majority of residents believe that the protected areas are too large and that environmental protection is merely a pretext for imposing restriction on island residents (Figure 3).

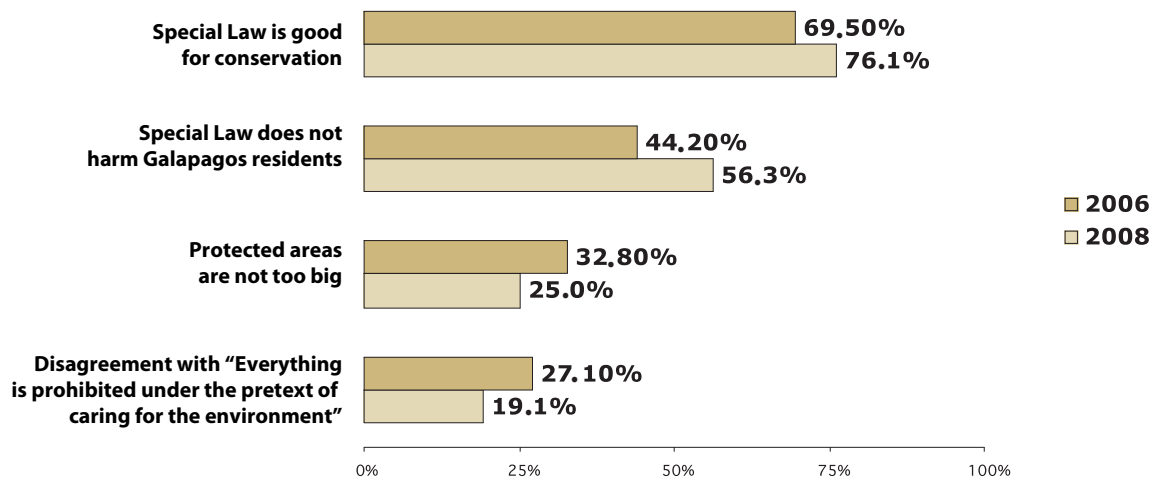


Figure3. Attitude regarding environmental legislation in 2006 and 2008.

Residents in San Cristóbal show the least acceptance of environmental legislation. Fewer people believe that the Special Law for Galapagos is good for conservation and that it does not harm residents (Table 4), while more people believe that protection of the environment is just a pretext for restrictions. Only with regard to the size of protected areas do the residents of Isabela demonstrate a more unfavorable opinion

than those in San Cristóbal (Table 4). Residents of Isabela strongly believe that the size of protected areas is too large. A large majority of residents of the three islands (an average of 75%) hold the view that protection of the environment is used as a pretext for imposing restrictions.



Photograph Cristina López

Table 4. Opinions regarding environmental legislation (%).

Phrase	Total	Island			Age			
		Isabela	San Cristóbal	Santa Cruz	18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 49 years	50 and older
Special Law is good for conservation	76.1	81.7	67.6	79.8	78.6	78.4	71.7	79.2
Special Law does not harm Galapagos residents	56.3	53.8	42.7	63.6	58.0	54.6	57.4	54.3
Protected areas are not too big	25.0	13.5	28.6	24.7	31.6	25.3	20.6	24.3
Disagree with "Everything is prohibited under the pretext of protecting the environment"	19.1	20.2	14.6	21.2	16.7	17.6	16.7	30.4
AVERAGE	44.1	42.3	38.4	47.3	46.2	44.0	41.6	47.1

Table 4. Continuation.

Phrase	Gender		Time in Galapagos*		
	Male	Female	Less	More	Born in Galapagos
Special Law is good for conservation	77.2	75.3	68.6	78.9	77.1
Special Law does not harm Galapagos residents	60.7	52.8	51.9	58.3	55.8
Protected areas are not too big	23.6	25.9	22.7	25.2	26.5
Disagree with "Everything is prohibited under the pretext of protecting the environment"	21.8	17.0	15.6	20.3	19.6
AVERAGE	45.8	42.7	39.7	45.7	44.8

Note: Data weighted by population size on each island

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

Trends

Over the last decade, the average acceptance of environmental restrictions has not varied significantly when only the five questions used in all years are considered. Most people continue to accept the ban on shark fishing and on cutting native timber (Table 5). The lowest levels of acceptance are for quarantine restrictions and limits on the number of tourists. The fishing season

closures received the lowest acceptance of all throughout the decade. This is probably due to the fact that fishermen have lived through a period of prolonged closures, the continuation of which was under discussion when the survey was completed. Finally, the acceptance of migratory restrictions for relatives continues to be low, especially when compared to the social concerns regarding immigration, but is higher than previous years.

Table 5. Acceptance of environmental restrictions from 1997-2008.

Phrase	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2006	2008
Accept ban on shark fishing	70.6	77.6	70.5	74.0	69.1	83.0	80.8
Accept quarantine measures*	69.9	77.3	74.2	73.7	74.3	42.0	30.7
Accept ban on removing sand from beaches	79.1	90.4	90.4	85.5	77.3	ND	ND
Accept fishing season closures	70.1	76.7	79.6	79.9	74.9	69.0	62.8
Accept ban on cutting native timber	64.9	77.6	78.5	77.8	57.9	74.4	79.4
Accept ban on sea cucumber fishing	60.4	62.8	37.3	31.5	24.9	ND	ND
Accept immigration restrictions for relatives	27.4	32.7	37.5	36.4	32.3	42.7	42.1
Accept limiting the number of tourists	48.9	42.4	32.6	36.5	42.3	24.0	30.7
Average acceptance of environmental restrictions						55.8	54.4

Note: Data weighted by population size on each island

* Data are not comparable because the question differed in 2006 and 2008 from previous years. In previous Galapagos Reports survey participants were asked if they were in agreement or disagreement with the phrase: "I would allow them to review my luggage for quarantine." Later the phrase was: "They should allow us to bring all types of fruits and vegetables to Galapagos because they are cheaper."

Sources: Data from 1997 to 2001 in Fundación Natura/Fondo Mundial para la Naturaleza (2002:54); data from 2006 and 2008, Opinion Survey, June 2006 and March 2008

Conclusions

What is most evident in the evaluation of the 2006 and 2008 surveys, and in the comparison with trends over the past decade, is the consistency of opinion of Galapagos residents with respect to acceptance of environmental restrictions. In general, acceptance of restrictions related to extractive activities is much greater than acceptance of those related to day to day life in Galapagos. In fact, there is a lower acceptance of restrictions related to three major areas of human activity that have serious impacts on the health and vitality of Galapagos ecosystems: immigration, tourism, and quarantine controls. This occurs because the restrictions in these three areas require greater and more profound changes in behavior than do those associated with the extraction of resources.