

Introduction

The following is a preliminary report of the results of the observation of the presidential elections held on March 15. The observation was conducted by the University Institute of Public Opinion (*Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública, IUDOP*) of the Central American University "José Simeón Cañas" (UCA), with the technical assistance of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). This process of domestic nonpartisan observation was initially employed in the legislative and municipal elections of January 18, in which close to 2,000 observers participated.

For election day, March 15, we planned to deploy 2,500 observers in a similar number of voting stations (*Juntas Receptoras de Votos, JRV*) nationwide. The observation was based on NDI's quick count methodology, which consists of direct observation of a random, and therefore representative, sample of the nationwide distribution of voting stations. This

methodology has permitted a systematic evaluation of the quality of the electoral process as well as estimates of the results of the tallying of valid votes for the presidential election at the national level.

This election observation effort constitutes the broadest such initiative conducted in the country, which was possible thanks to the support provided by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE*), which accredited the network of observers for both election dates.

The national network of volunteers is formed by students from UCA and universities outside the capital, as well as other citizens, who were selected in accordance with an established profile and later trained in the contents of the electoral code and procedural aspects of observation work. A processing center customized for the reception of information to be transmitted on election day was installed, where close to 200 people operated, serving as a logistical tool that facilitated the work of our observers nationwide.

Satisfied at having offered a contribution to increased transparency in this historic election process, IUDOP at UCA thanks the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Diakonia of Sweden for their generous support for this project; NDI and its team of international consultants for their support; the network of election observers, departmental and municipal coordinators and citizen data receivers for their dedication and civic commitment; the staff of various units of the Central American University for their support in promoting this initiative; the TSE for its help and accessibility in backing the efforts at domestic observation; the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (*Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, PDDH*), for the support it offered; and international donors and international observation missions, for their important contribution to the promotion of electoral transparency in El Salvador.

University Institute of Public Opinion.

Methodological specifications

We selected a random sample of voting stations nationwide to faithfully reflect their distribution previously conducted by the TSE for the presidential elections of March 15, 2009. A random sample of voting stations guarantees the representativeness of the sample at the national level. Randomly selecting sample points (voting stations) results in a distribution which is proportional to the number of polls in all regions of the country.

In this way, and with the objectives of reducing sample error and having a greater presence in voting stations nationwide, as in the elections for deputies and mayors in January of this year, we selected a sample of 2,500 voting stations nationwide, permitting us to make inferences with a margin of error of +/- 0.99 percent with a 95 percent confidence level.

Table 1 shows the actual distribution of voting stations nationwide along with the sample distribution of 2,500 voting stations as designed by IUDOP.

Tabla 1
Distribución oficial de JRVs, y muestra nacional seleccionada, para elecciones presidenciales del 15 de marzo

Departamento	Distribución oficial de JRVs		Muestra nacional (n=2,500)	
Ahuachapán	487	5.11%	128	5.12%
Santa Ana	879	9.22%	230	9.20%
Sonsonate	689	7.23%	181	7.24%
Chalatenango	328	3.44%	86	3.44%
La Libertad	1,045	10.96%	274	10.96%
San Salvador	2,750	28.84%	721	28.84%
La Paz	467	4.90%	122	4.88%
Cuscatlán	374	3.92%	98	3.92%
San Vicente	256	2.69%	67	2.68%
Cabañas	246	2.58%	65	2.60%
San Miguel	743	7.79%	195	7.80%
Usulután	549	5.76%	144	5.76%
La Unión	430	4.51%	113	4.52%
Morazán	291	3.05%	76	3.04%
Total nacional	9,534	100.00%	2,500	100.00%
Res. extranjero	10	0.10%	10	100.00%

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de datos del Tribunal Supremo Electoral (2009) y Proyecto Observación Electoral 2009 (IUDOP, 2009).

The number of voting stations in the sample (i.e., the number of voting stations we expected to observe in each department) corresponds identically to the actual distribution of voting stations nationwide, as determined by the TSE.

The national sample was, at the same time, stratified into four levels: the first was the San Salvador Metropolitan Area (SSMA), including all of the municipalities of the department of San Salvador as well as the departmental capital of La Libertad (Santa Tecla) and Antiguo Cuscatlán (a municipality in the department of La Libertad characterized by a high level of urbanization). A second category consisted of the capitals of the remaining 12 departments (i.e. “urban areas outside the capital,” as opposed to the San Salvador urban area). The third category consisted of the remainder of the municipalities outside the San Salvador metropolitan area, characterized for their more rural composition. Finally, the fourth group was composed of the voting stations in the voting center (*centro de votación*) intended for voters who received their identity document (*Documento Único de Identificación*, DUI) outside the country. This separation of a fourth category responds to the fact that, while the voting center in question was geographically located in the municipality of San Salvador (category 1), the novelty of the initiative and the characteristics of the relevant population led us not to conduct a sample of these voting stations, but rather a census, observing all 10 stations dedicated for this purpose.

As a result, 31.9 percent of the national sample consisted of the municipalities in the SSMA; 18.5 percent of the departmental capitals; and the remaining 49.6 percent by municipalities with more rural characteristics, denoted generally as “rural” (Table 2).

Tabla 2. Universo y muestra de JRV's y votantes, según estratos

ESTRATOS	Juntas receptoras de votos			
	Universo		Muestra (n=2,500)	
1: AMSS	3,042	31.9%	798	31.9%
2: URBANO	1,764	18.5%	463	18.5%
3: RURAL	4,728	49.6%	1239	49.6%
TOTAL	9,534	100.0%	2500	100.0%
4: Depto 15	10	100.0%	10	100.0%

IUDOP's network of observers was deployed throughout election day in the various voting stations defined as part of the sample. As a result, we have specific information of the various sequential processes of the election:

- 1) *Information reported in the morning:* on the process of the installation of voting stations and the start of voting;
- 2) *Information reported in the afternoon and evening:* on developments in voting, the closure of voting stations and the tabulation process.

In this sense, the task of the observers was to transmit the final information to IUDOP's center of operations as each indicated process was completed.

While the great majority of the network of observer transmitted the required information to the center of operations at the correct time, there was a small percentage in each department of the country that did not successfully report information, due to various reasons and limiting factors. Some of these limiting

factors were related to difficulties faced by observers in staying at the designated voting station and with the withdrawal of some observers in the days prior to the election for personal reasons or due to fears of what could occur during the election.

As a result of this, both in the case of the morning information (*installation of voting stations and start of voting*) as well as the afternoon/evening information (*course of voting, closure of voting stations and tabulation process*), we were not able to recover data from all of the originally selected national sample (2,500 voting stations), though we did recover a large majority.

Table 3 displays, by department, the distribution of the original sample and the distribution for the samples recovered in the morning and evening, as well as the number of voting stations that could not be monitored. However, the sample points that did transmit data permitted estimates of the voting behavior of those in the capital, within a margin of error of less than 1.5 percent.

Tabla 3

Distribución de la muestra nacional original (n=2, 500), de la muestra recuperada durante la observación de la mañana y de la tarde/noche, y número de JRVs no observadas en cada uno de los momentos de observación, según departamento del país

Departamento	Muestra original (n=2,500)		Muestra recuperada en la mañana		JRVs no observadas (am)*	Muestra recuperada en la noche		JRVs no observadas (pm)*
Ahuachapán	128	5.1%	118	5.3%	10	108	5.1%	20
Santa Ana	230	9.2%	213	9.6%	17	206	9.7%	24
Sonsonate	181	7.2%	159	7.2%	22	157	7.4%	24
Chalatenango	86	3.4%	83	3.8%	3	83	3.9%	3
La Libertad	274	10.9%	230	10.4%	44	225	10.5%	49
San Salvador	721	28.7%	642	29.0%	79	628	29.4%	93
La Paz	122	4.9%	104	4.7%	18	100	4.7%	22
Cuscatlán	98	3.9%	67	3.0%	31	63	3.0%	35
San Vicente	67	2.7%	64	2.9%	3	60	2.8%	7
Cabañas	65	2.6%	59	2.7%	6	59	2.8%	6
San Miguel	195	7.8%	183	8.3%	12	175	8.2%	20
Usulután	144	5.7%	117	5.3%	27	112	5.3%	32
La Unión	113	4.5%	99	4.5%	14	89	4.2%	24
Morazán	76	3.0%	65	2.9%	11	58	2.7%	18
Res. extranjero	10	0.4%	10	100.0%	0	10	100.0%	0
Total	2,500	100.0%	2213	88.2%	297 (11.8% de muestra original)	2133	85.0%	377 (15% de muestra original)

*Respecto a la cuota muestral calculada por departamento

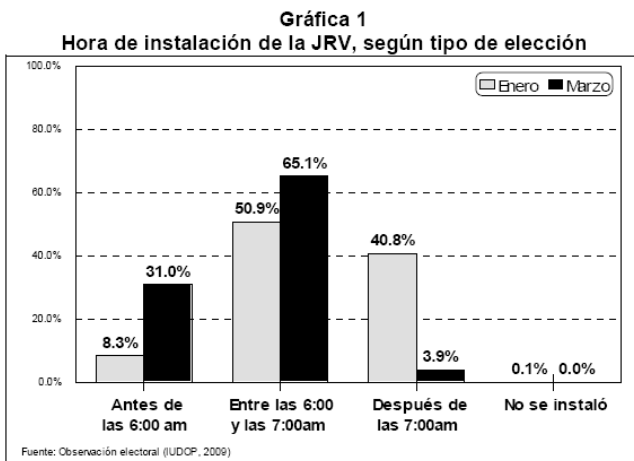
Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de datos del Proyecto Observación Electoral 2009 (IUDOP, 2009).

Morning observation

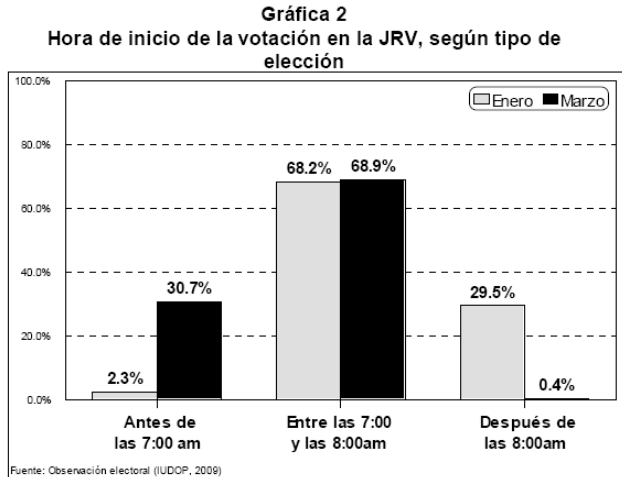
Of the more than 2,200 observers who were able to transmit information, 96.1 percent were present during the installation of the voting station corresponding to them. The remaining 3.9 percent arrived at their voting center after the installation of the voting station. Therefore, the following information about the indicators for the processes of *Voting station installment* and *Start of voting* is based on the large majority of observers that were present at that time.

Installation of voting stations and start of voting

In these presidential elections, our results indicate that at least three out of every 10 voting stations nationwide was installed before 6:00 a.m.; 65.1 percent were installed between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.; and only 3.9 percent were installed after 7:00. A comparison with the data obtained for the same indicator in the election for deputies and mayors this past January indicates a substantial improvement in moving up the installation of the voting stations (see Graph 1).

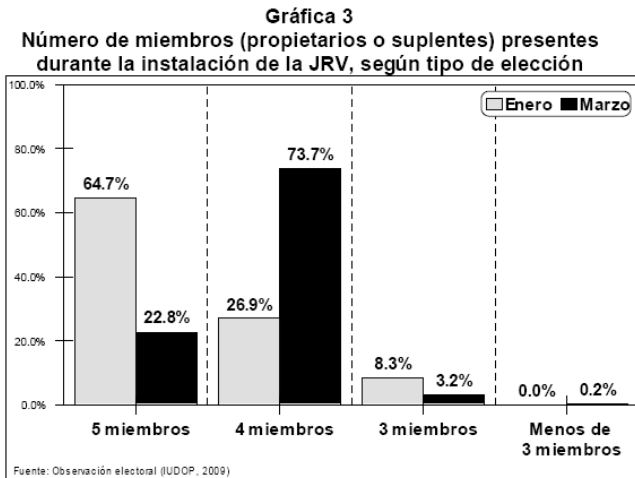


Without a doubt, this had an effect on the improvement of the time of the start of voting. As shown by Graph 2, at least three of every ten voting stations again began voting before 7:00 a.m.; 68.9 percent did so between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m., and only 0.4 percent nationwide began the voting process after 8:00 a.m. This improvement is clear and contrasts with the results obtained in the observation by IUDOP's network of observers in the January elections.

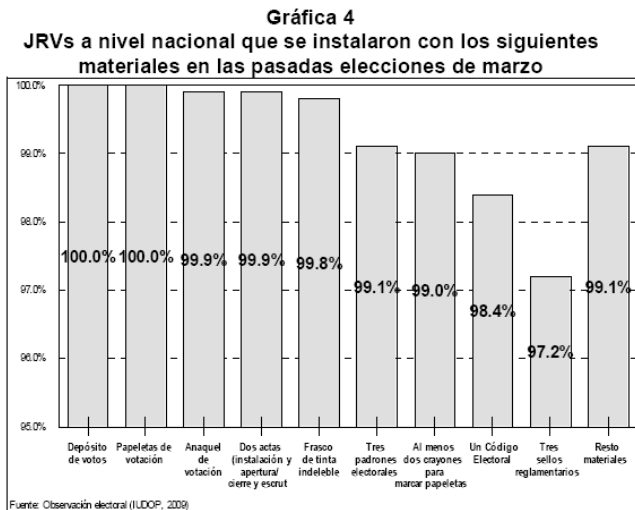


Composition of the elections boards

While in the January elections, elections boards were installed with the number of members required to open in the majority of cases, in these elections we registered an irregularity: 0.2 percent installed with fewer than three members; 3.2 percent did so with three members; and 73.7 percent did so with the four members stipulated by the TSE. However, despite the fact that the official composition of the elections boards was changed to four members for these elections, 22.8 percent of observers recorded boards that installed with five members. On being asked about this fact, the observers declared that, due to the proximity of the political party pollwatchers (*vigilantes*) to the elections board areas, and the active role played by the pollwatchers in the administration of the electoral process at the voting station, the observers at times confused the pollwatchers with the elections board members. However, in other cases, pollwatchers actively assumed the roles of members of the elections boards, for which reason they were counted as such.

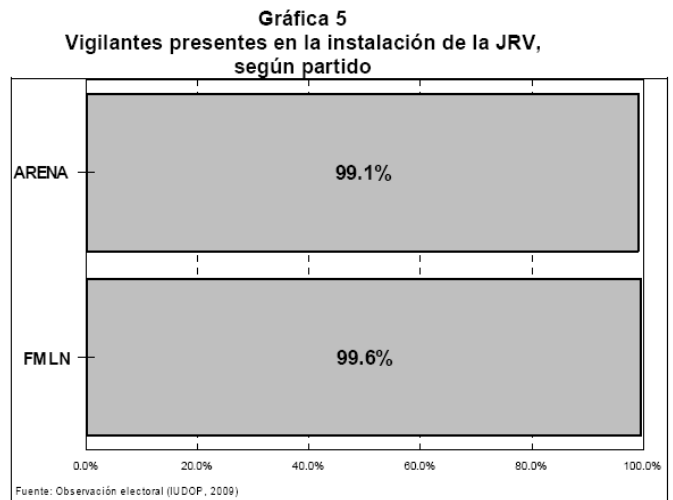


Continuing on the topic of installation, more than 97 percent of elections boards nationwide installed the voting station with the necessary materials to begin the voting process. IUDOP’s network of observers sought to identify the presence of at least nine items indispensable for the installation of the voting station, such as the three copies of the voter registry, the ballot box, the voting shield, the ballot papers, the bottle of indelible ink, the required seals, official reporting documentation (*actas*), as well as the other materials (see Graph 4). Each of those materials was available to the members of the elections boards at the time of installation in practically all cases.



Later calculations with the data showed that 90.2 percent of elections boards nationwide had all nine materials for which we checked; 5.2 percent had at least eight of the nine essential materials; and 4.6 percent had seven or fewer materials out of those included on the checklist.

Additionally, the presence of pollwatchers from the two competing political parties, the Nationalist Republican Alliance (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*, ARENA) and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*, FMLN), during the installation was observed in practically all cases (99 percent; see Graph 5).

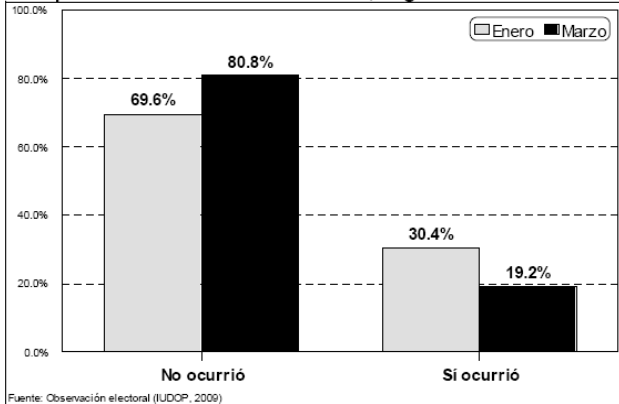


Taking all of the voting stations observed as a whole, at the time of installation, 98.8 percent of voting stations had pollwatchers from both political parties, while only 1.2 percent nationwide had a pollwatcher from only one party.

Anomalies and difficulties during the installation of the voting stations and the start of voting

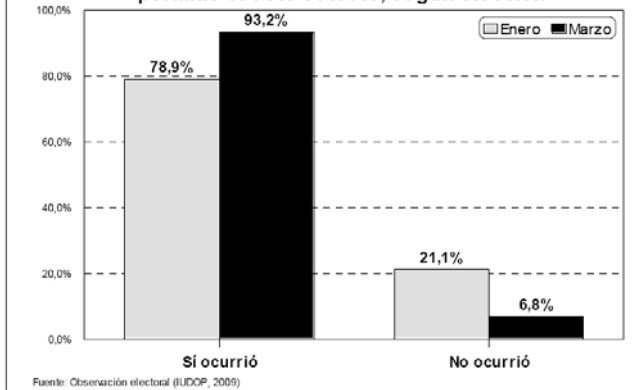
Despite the fact that the process of installation and opening was generally conducted in accordance with the processes and guidelines established in the Electoral Code, we continued to identify the problem of the unfamiliarity of elections board members with the voting station installation procedures. Graph 6 shows that, while the percentage of observers that reported this situation declined in comparison to the January election, this situation still occurred at 19.2 percent of elections boards nationwide.

Gráfica 6
“Los miembros de la JRV desconocían el procedimiento de la instalación”, según elección



During the start of voting, observers identified that the placement of the voting shield did not permit a secret vote in 6.8 percent of cases. Again, while this contrasts with the high rate at which this occurred in January (more than one in every five voting stations nationwide), this difficulty persisted.

Gráfica 7
Ubicación del anaquel de votación permitió el voto secreto, según elección

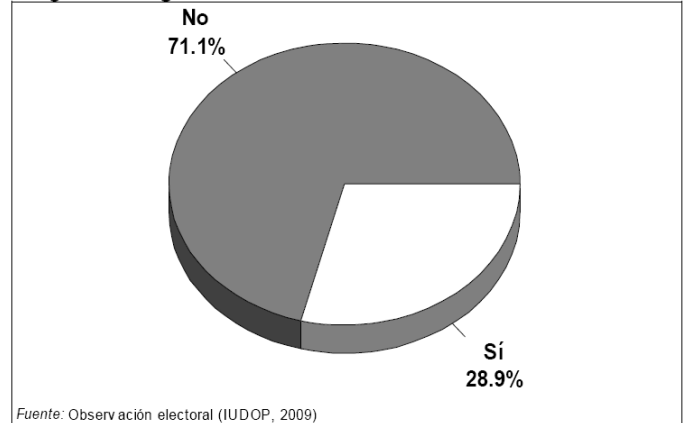


Afternoon and evening observation

Voting process

Out of the observers in IUDOP’s network that reported information in the afternoon, 71.1 percent did not indicate irregularities in the voting process.

Gráfica 8
¿Hubo irregularidades en el desarrollo de la votación?



However, at 28.9 percent of voting stations various types of irregularities were recorded, which are displayed in Table 4.

Tabla 4
Problemas e irregularidades en el desarrollo de la votación (en %)

Problemas	Muestra nacional (n=612)
Electores que votaron siendo observados por mala ubicación de anaquel	44.9%
Electores que votaron sin entintarse el dedo	22.2%
Vigilantes de partidos políticos diciendo a votantes por quién votar	20.4%
Personas que votaron con DUI falsificado	12.3% (1 persona=60.3%; 2 personas=16.4%; 3 personas o más=23.3%)
Electores que quisieron votar y ya alguien lo había hecho en su lugar	10.3% (1 persona=78.7%; 2 personas=13.1%; 3 personas o más=8.2%)
Personas que votaron con alguna mancha visible de tinta en alguno de sus dedos	9.2%
Electores armados en el centro de votación, a quienes se les permitió votar	4.1%
Otras irregularidades	27.3%

An important situation, observed at 13 percent of voting stations, was the possibility that voters could be observed by third parties when casting their votes due to the poor placement of the voting shield. This situation merits mention because it occurred despite the measures taken by the TSE to guarantee greater secrecy, which points to problems in the local administration of the voting stations by the members of the elections boards.

A second irregularity occurred at the 6.4 percent of voting stations where observers from IUDOP's observation network could observe voters who did not ink their fingers after casting their ballots. This evidences negligence on the part of the elections board members in conducting their work.

At six out of 100 voting stations (5.9 percent), party pollwatchers would tell voters who to vote for, violating provisions of the Electoral Code. In this respect, there is a need for greater regulation of the role of party pollwatchers, as they frequently attempt to influence voters and, as seen above, even assume activities and responsibilities that are competences exclusive to members of the elections boards.

A serious anomaly relates to persons voting with falsified identity documents (*Documento Único de Identidad, DUI*), which were photocopied, with the photo pasted on or scanned. This situation was reported by 3.6 percent of observers. While this is low in numerical terms, it is high in consideration of the gravity of the situation. We requested that observers reporting this situation indicate the number of persons they had observed committing this infraction, with the aim of quantifying the magnitude of this irregularity: 60.3 percent indicated that they had seen one person attempting this at the voting station they were observing; 16.4 percent observed two people; 12.3 percent observed three people; and 11 percent observed four or more.

Meanwhile, at three of every 100 voting stations (3.0 percent), cases were observed of voters wishing to vote being told that someone had already voted in their place. Again, given the gravity of this situation, we asked about the number of persons in this situation, finding that: 78.7 percent of observers reporting this anomaly said that there had been only one case at the voting station they had observed. Another 13.1 percent

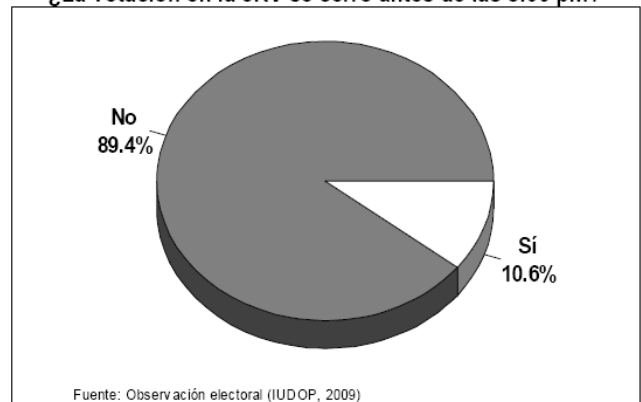
observed the situation on two occasions, and 8.2 percent of the sample recorded between three and five cases at their assigned voting station.

Of IUDOP's network of observers, 2.6 percent indicated that there were people voting with a clear inkstain visible on one of their fingers; 1.2 percent recorded the presence of voters with weapons in the voting center who were permitted to vote; and 7.9 percent mentioned other situations of lesser import.

Closure of voting and tabulation

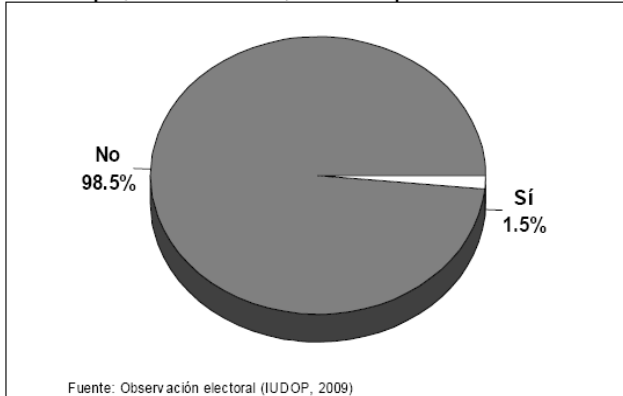
Only 10.6 percent of observers reported that, in the voting station they observed, voting ended before the official time (5:00 p.m.).

Gráfica 9
¿La votación en la JRV se cerró antes de las 5:00 pm?



Additionally, we asked if people had been in line, without being able to vote, once voting was closed at 5:00 p.m. Only 1.5 percent of observers answered affirmatively; in these few cases, the majority responded that it was a matter of one to four people.

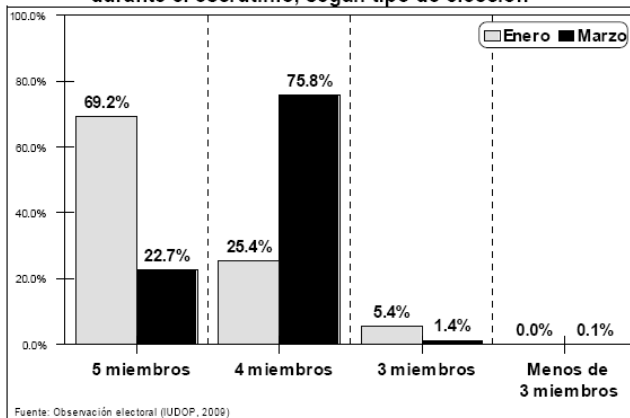
Gráfica 10
Si la votación se cerró a las 5:00 pm, ¿hubo personas a las que, estando en fila, no se les permitió votar?



99.8 percent of the observations from the afternoon indicated that the tabulation had occurred at the voting station, and 99.9 percent were able to witness it in its entirety.

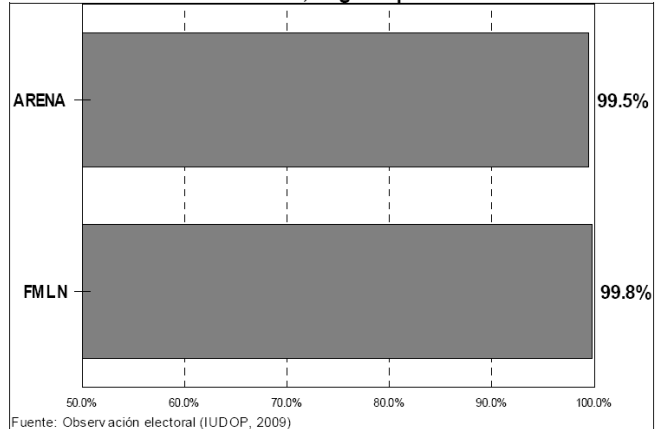
As shown in Graph 11, in the majority of cases, the counting took place in the presence of the stipulated four members of the elections boards (whether original members or substitutes). However, the irregularity indicated in the section of this report discussing voting station installation persisted, as more than one-fifth of observers indicated the presence of five members on the elections board.

Gráfica 11
Número de miembros (propietarios o suplentes) presentes durante el escrutinio, según tipo de elección



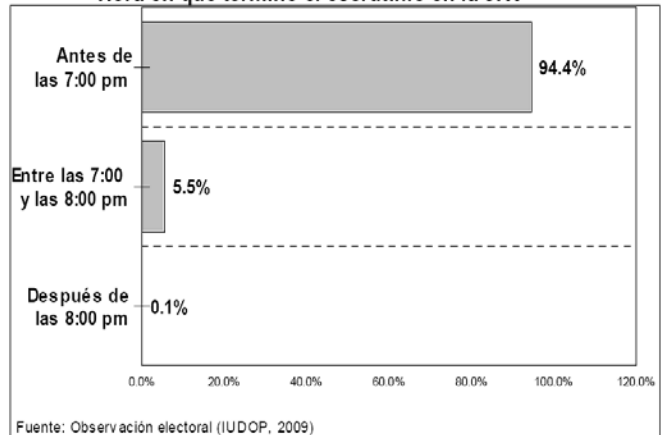
The data provided by IUDOP's observer network allows us to establish that in the majority of voting stations, pollwatchers from both competing parties were present. As can be seen in Graph 12, pollwatchers from ARENA (99.5 percent) and FMLN (99.8 percent) were present at almost all voting stations during the counting process.

Gráfica 12
Número de miembros (propietarios o suplentes) presentes durante el escrutinio, según tipo de elección



At 94.4 percent of the voting stations observed during the afternoon and evening, the tallying process ended before 7:00 p.m.; at 5.5 percent, it ended between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m.; and only 0.1 percent finished after 8:00 p.m.

Gráfica 13
Hora en que terminó el escrutinio en la JRV



Problems during the counting process

Regarding irregularities reported during the counting, 14.9 percent of IUDOP's network of observers reported confusion on the part of members of the elections boards in completing the reports (*actas*). While this was a lesser frequency than reported for this indicator in January (33.9 percent), it is important to highlight that problems persist in training members of the elections boards, which impacts their duties and responsibilities on election day.



Nationwide, at 13.4 percent of elections boards, disagreements occurred between members of the board that could not be resolved and required the intervention of an electoral authority. This percentage was similar to that from January’s elections (14.6 percent).

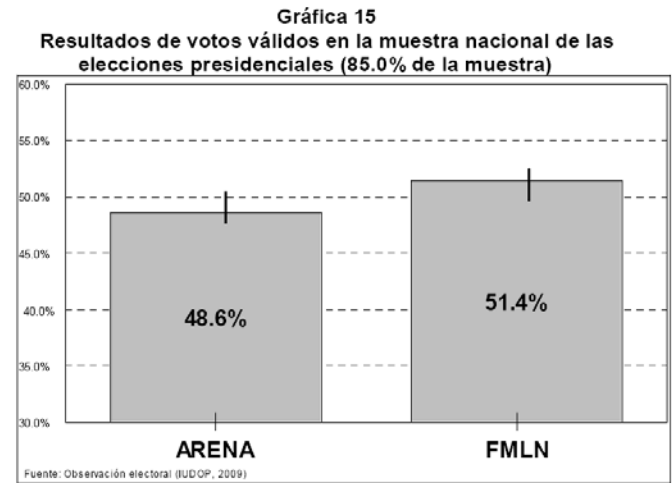
In at least five of every 100 voting stations, party pollwatchers impeded the progress of the count, and at 4.3 percent of voting stations, observers noted ballots without the secretary’s signature or seal. Again, we asked observers to quantify the number of ballots lacking a signature and seal to try to establish the magnitude of this irregularity. Of the 4.3 percent that reported this situation, 67.0 percent indicated five or fewer ballots; 20.9 percent said that there were between 100 and 300 ballots; 4.4 percent said that there were more than 300 ballots; and 7.7 percent could not count them.

Finally, 1.9 percent of elections boards observed did not complete the Closing and Counting Report (*Acta de Cierre y Escrutinio*), while this document was missing at 1.0 percent of voting stations.

Parallel Vote Tabulation results

Based on the sample of voting stations randomly selected from the universe of stations nationwide, we provided an estimate of the presidential election results. Graph 15 and Table 5 present these results, which given the sample size (85 percent of the intended total) are subject to a margin of error of +/- 1.14 percent with a 95 percent confidence interval. This means that, in the case

of ARENA, the result was between 47.4 and 49.7 percent.



In the case of the FMLN, with the same margin of error, the result could fall between 50.3 and 52.6 percent.

Tabla 5
Resultados de votos válidos en la muestra nacional de las elecciones presidenciales (85.0% de la muestra)

	Partido	Resultados
Votos válidos	ARENA	48.6%
	FMLN	51.4%
Otros votos	Impugnados	0.2%
	Nulos	0.7%
	Abstenciones	0.8%
Margen de error: +/- 1.16%		

Media monitoring

The media monitoring system conducted a systematic tracking of 25 radio, television, and Internet media outlets to support IUDOP’s election observation process.¹ This took place from 6:00 in the morning until the closure of election day.

¹ The outlets monitored were, on radio: KL, YSU, MI GENTE, YSUCA, Chévere, CUSCATLÁN, RADIO NACIONAL, ARPAS, Maya Visión. National TV: TCS, Canal 8, TV12, Canal 21, Canal 33. Cable TV: CNN, Univisión, Telemundo, TV Azteca. Internet: elsalvador.com, laprensagrafica.com, bbc.com, elpais.com, elfaro.com, contrapunto.com, lapagina.com, TSE.

During the day, we tracked and analyzed news that addressed topics relevant to the electoral process, parties, and candidates, the TSE, and domestic and international observer missions, and completed two partial reports. The first corresponded to the period from 6:00 to 11:00 a.m. and the second to the period from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

In the first period monitored, inequality was evident in the media coverage by various outlets. Television stations had a predominance of sources close to ARENA or who were government workers making declarations favoring the governing party. Radio coverage of the first hours of the day was dominated by reports by journalists that did not cite specific sources. Among the few sources cited about the electoral process, there was a predominance of official sources whose principal arguments were supported by perceptions. This was particularly evident in complaints of irregularities and in reporters' comments on the electoral process and about the two parties.

Media coverage from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. continued to favor official sources, with the presence of government and governing party officials, above all on the radio. On television and on the Internet there was a greater diversity of sources and topics covered, in contrast to the earlier hours of election day. The international press provided more complete and equal coverage.

In covering the electoral process, the media emphasized the normality with which election day passed. However, national media also covered some complaints of irregularities and the intervention of the competent institutions. Among the situations indicated were the presumed participation of foreigners, irregularities with identity documents or persons with more than one identity document.

The media also reviewed sporadic violent incidents that occurred during the day, both those directly linked to the election as well as typical violent episodes.

News about the election observation was sporadic. These reports privileged the opinion of international observers; these observers generally upheld the normality of the process and drew attention to certain complaints of irregularities.

There was an absence of coverage of the domestic observation carried out by the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDDH) and by IUDOP, even though these two entities deployed the greatest number of observers for the electoral process.

Conclusions and recommendations

A first consideration, derived from IUDOP's systematic observation of the January 18 election, refers to the clear improvements to the process since January in organizational, logistical, and administrative terms. This was reflected in the reduction of delays in the time of installation of the voting stations and starting the voting process. Likewise, we report a decrease in problems associated with the unfamiliarity of elections board members with the procedures established for election administration, including both procedures relative to installation as well as those relating to closure and the final counting process.

This improvement can largely be explained by the TSE's appropriate implementation of corrective measures, aimed at addressing deficiencies in training and other aspects related to organization and performance on election day. This contributed to substantially improving the quality of the electoral process.

Notwithstanding this quite positive evaluation of election day in general, the systematic observation conducted by IUDOP reveals that some irregularities and problems persist. Although reported in lower percentages than in January, they should be addressed in the medium term with the goal of contributing to greater transparency in the next elections, in 2012.

1. Greater regulation of the role of political party pollwatchers

Cases persisted during this election of voting stations where party pollwatchers induced voters to vote in favor of their respective. Although this occurred in only six out of every 100 voting stations, this is a clear overreach of the functions assigned to party pollwatchers. At the same time, one-fifth of voting stations observed reported cases in which pollwatchers were physically located with the elections board and/or assuming authorities in the administration of the electoral process. This points to the need to more clearly regulate the authority, attributions and restrictions

conferred on party pollwatching staff in electoral legislation, as well as to provide for penalties.

2. Improve verification of the authenticity of identity documents

IUDOP's observer network found that in 3.6 percent of voting stations, one or more voters used an apparently falsified identity document. It is the responsibility of the municipal elections boards and the members of the elections boards at the voting stations to guarantee that all citizens cast their votes with authentic identity documents. It is possible, though not in all cases, to identify the falsity or authenticity of an identity document without any special equipment. The TSE should take the necessary measures so that the persons administering voting know how to verify basic security codes contained in identity documents.

3. Promote a comprehensive review of the voter registry

A key aspect in guaranteeing greater electoral transparency, inclusion and participation is the review and revision of the voter registry. Although initiatives oriented at improving the registry have been promoted, it is important that the TSE and the political parties support a comprehensive audit that would permit the implementation of measures to guarantee a clean and efficient registry.

4. The residential vote

It is fundamental for the TSE to promote the residential vote system, utilized both in January and in March in the department of Cuscatlán, on a national scale. This will reduce barriers to electoral participation, both barriers of a motivational type as well as those of an institutional type.