

Attitudes Towards the Implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement in Tumaco

On November 24, 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC signed a revised, comprehensive peace agreement, following the rejection of the initial accords via popular referendum. Independent reports indicate that a number of the components of the agreement have been implemented according to schedule, yet we know little about public attitudes towards implementation, particularly in locations deeply affected by conflict-related violence. This paper examines support for individual provisions of the agreement and attitudes towards their implementation.

Brief Points

- Overall support for the peace process among residents of Tumaco remains low.
- There is considerable support for individual components of the peace accord.
- Both support for the peace process and perceptions of its implementation vary by gender.
- People believe the security situation in Tumaco is critical and has deteriorated.

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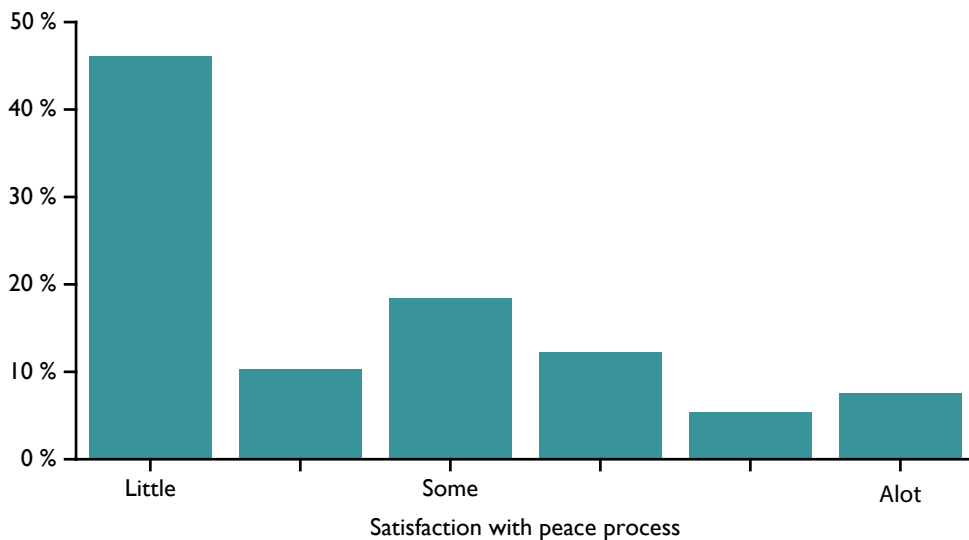


Figure 1: How satisfied are you with the peace process?

Peace Fatigue?

The peace accord signed between the Colombian government and the FARC in November 2016 is a major achievement for a country that has seen nearly sixty years of continuous armed conflict. Given its progressive approach to transitional justice, including an ambitious reparations program and a strong commitment to addressing the historical roots of the conflict, including inequality and rural development, the accord is among the most ambitious peace agreements ever signed. The success of the deal, however, will depend fundamentally on people's perceptions of and experience with the peace process. Should ordinary citizens fail to see tangible benefits of peace, the successful implementation of the peace deal will be made considerably more difficult, if not impossible.

We have developed a systematic survey tool for measuring people's perceptions towards the peace agreement and its implementation, and have piloted this tool in Tumaco, in the department of Nariño, one of Colombia's most violent municipalities. In this paper, we discuss some preliminary findings from our survey of a representative sample of just over one thousand residents of this Pacific port.

Tumaco is ground zero for a number of interrelated and complex post-conflict challenges. Its geographic characteristics have made it an attractive location for organized crime and guerrilla activity. Sitting on the Pacific Ocean and

close to the Ecuadorian border, Tumaco has suffered waves of violence born of competition among different armed groups, due to its strategic location. Coca and its refined end product, cocaine, pass through Tumaco en route to Central America and Mexico. Indeed, the rural part of Tumaco, composed of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, among others, now claims the dubious distinction of producing the most coca of any municipality in Colombia.

In the aftermath of the FARC's demobilization, competitive dynamics among armed groups have heightened, leading to a sharp increase in violence. For these reasons, Tumaco is a high priority for the Colombian government, with Vice President Oscar Naranjo leading a set of initiatives directed at reducing the community's reliance on coca, undercutting the influence of armed groups, and promoting economic development.

Given the government's desire to eliminate dissidents of the FARC in Tumaco that have refused to demobilize; to focus on implementing coca substitution programs in Tumaco's rural areas; and to confront other criminal organizations in the city (including the Clan del Golfo) that have been responsible for killing civil society leaders, Tumaco has become an important and extremely difficult test case for the implementation of the peace agreement. Here, we do not assess how well the agreement is being implemented in Tumaco, but rather how its residents *perceive* the implementation of the agreement.

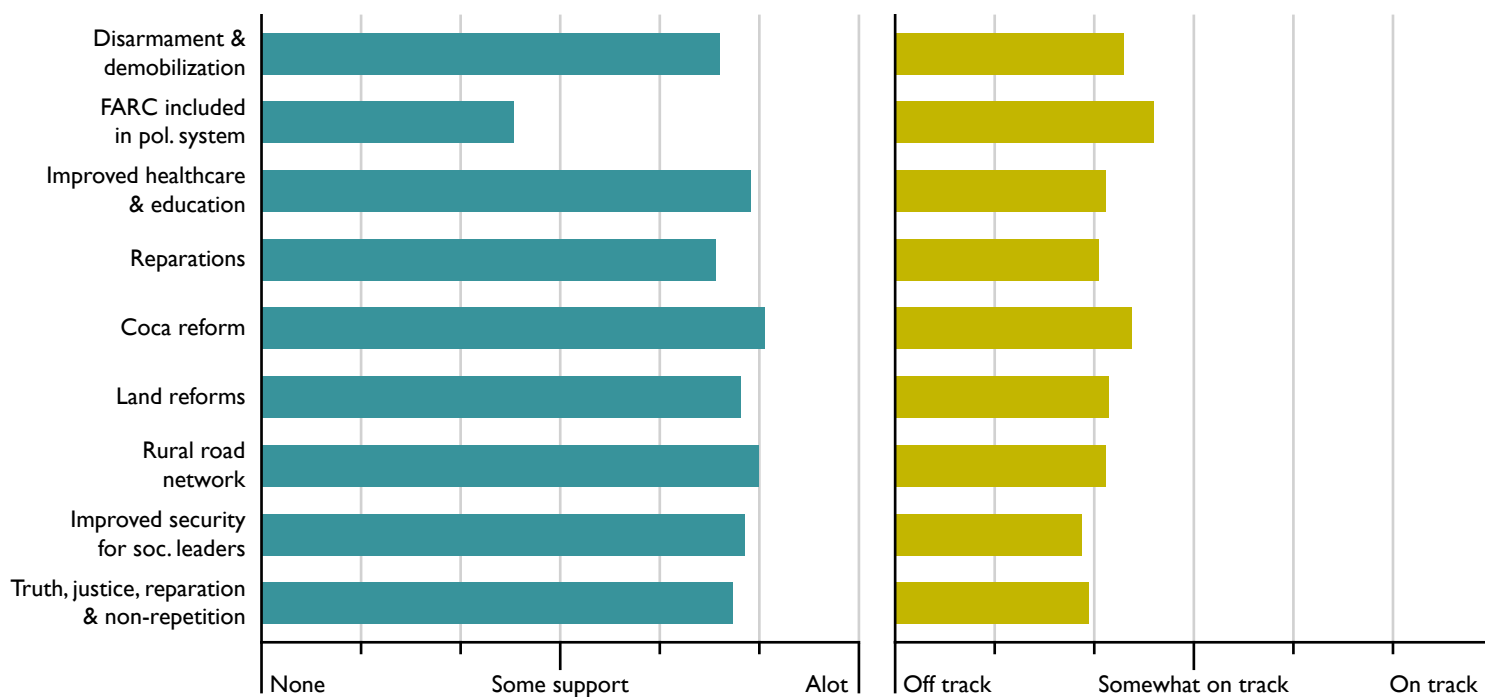
Attitudes Towards Components of the Peace Agreement

Figure 1 shows overall levels of satisfaction with the peace process among 1,000 individuals that we surveyed in Tumaco. Our survey was carried out by Cifras y Conceptos, a Bogotá-based survey firm that has worked extensively on conflict issues and that relied on a local Tumaco-based team of enumerators. Residents of Tumaco are not satisfied with the overall peace process: a majority of respondents report that they are minimally or somewhat satisfied. Given the amount of violence still seen in this region, and the considerable work that remains in terms of reconstruction and improving state services, this is not surprising. But recall that Tumaco is a municipality that voted overwhelmingly (71%) in favour of the peace agreement in the October 2, 2016 plebiscite. In our survey, people that voted in favour of the accord are, on average, more satisfied with the peace process to date.

We also find some tentative indications that, on average, people in Tumaco that report having been victimized by the conflict between the FARC and the government are slightly more supportive of the peace process than those who have not been victimized.

We do, however, encounter significant support for specific components of the peace agreement (Figure 2). The level of support for specific components is on average higher than support for the overall peace process. People in Tumaco are thus supportive of the goals of the peace accord, but, as we show below, remain dissatisfied with progress in its implementation to date.

Figure 2 shows respondents' support for a set of key provisions in the peace accord. The general picture is one of considerable support across core provisions, from disarmament to land reform. As noted, Tumaco today is ground zero for the production of coca. In light of this, and given the peace accord's provisions meant to incentivize farmers to stop growing illegal crops, support for the peace agreement's provision on coca reform – which includes incentives for crop substitution – have especially widespread support. The only core item in the peace accord without comparable levels of support is the provision to integrate members of the FARC into the political system, which has traditionally been a sensitive issue for Colombians.



Figures 2 & 3: Average level of support for peace accord components (left), and off or on track of peace accord implementation (right).

Support for the different components varies considerably by gender. On average, men are much more supportive of truth and reparation efforts, land reform components, and efforts to improve the security situation for social leaders than women are. This could indicate that women experience fewer of the tangible benefits of peace when compared to men; to build an inclusive peace, this gender disparity in support for agreement provisions needs to be rectified.

Attitudes on How the Agreement Is Being Implemented

Figure 3 moves beyond asking about people's support for the individual components and focuses more directly on their perception of how these components are being implemented. Comparing Figures 2 and 3, one issue stands out: people are, on average, quite supportive of the components of the peace accord, but this is *not* matched by their perceptions of how implementation has proceeded. While we found high levels of support for most components of the agreement, Tumaco residents on average believe that implementation is not even somewhat on track. Colombia is still in the early phases of implementation of the accord, so this is perhaps unsurprising, doubly so in Tumaco. However, for the peace process to be successful, it is critical to ensure that ordinary

civilians feel that the costs associated with implementing the peace deal are justified.

Indeed, the success of the peace accord will depend fundamentally on people's perceptions of and experience with the peace process, making systematic and rigorous efforts to measure such perceptions crucial. Failing to measure people's perceptions of and experience with the peace process leaves decision-makers in Colombia in the dark about how policy interventions and the implementation of specific aspects of the accord are perceived on the ground, and how such interventions shape crucial political support for the peace process overall.

Across the different components of the agreement, we see little difference in attitudes towards implementation. Surprisingly, how respondents voted in the 2016 peace deal referendum appears not to have an impact on views about the implementation of different components of the agreement. This is encouraging, as it implies that the political polarization that characterized the referendum appears not to be driving attitudes towards implementation of the agreement, and also that perhaps perceptions about implementation are more malleable and subject to change via informational campaigns or other government efforts.

Is the Situation Improving?

A core concern in any post-conflict situation is security. This is particularly true in Tumaco. Figure 4 reports respondents' evaluations of the current security situation and whether it has improved over the last year. A majority of respondents report that the security situation in their neighbourhood is very bad or bad, and only around 10% rate security conditions as very good. For the time being, these same respondents have yet to see the peace process translate into an improvement in the security situation. Again, a majority (almost 60%) also report a deterioration in the security situation, rather than any improvement at all, over the last year.

Approximately 20% report major improvements in the level of security. Figure 4 only shows the results for security, but we find comparable sentiments when focusing on the present state and improvements in health services and the quality of schools. Figure 5, for instance, shows how people evaluate the quality of schools in their neighbourhood and how these have improved over the last year. In general, respondents report medium quality for schools, but again we find little evidence of recent improvements, which further underscores the tremendous challenge facing the Colombian government as it seeks to demonstrate to citizens the tangible benefits of peace, especially in conflict-affected areas.

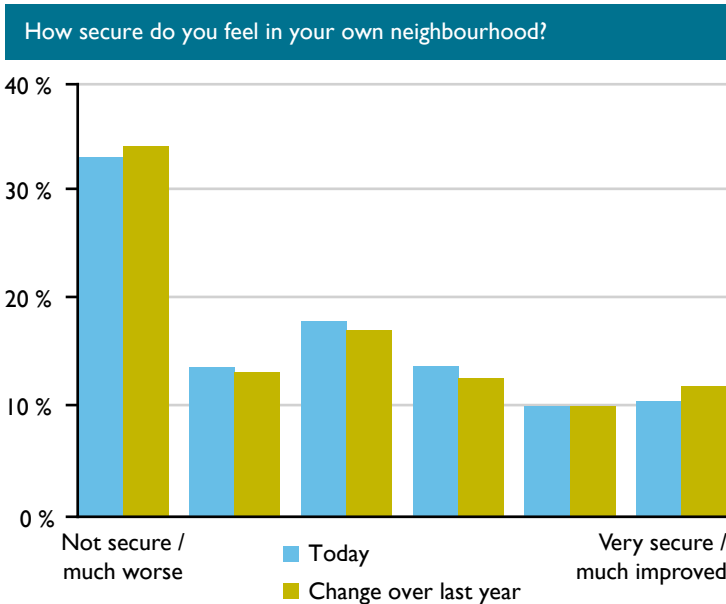


Figure 4: How secure do you feel in your neighbourhood?

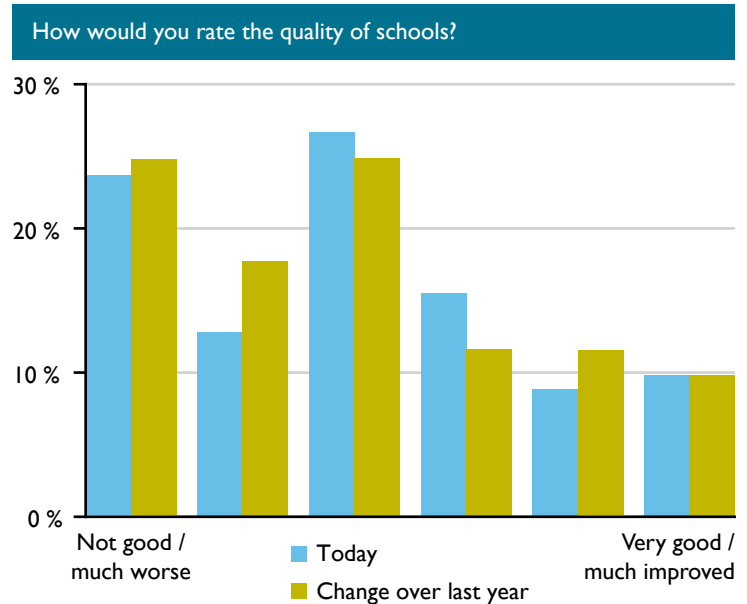


Figure 5: How would you rate the quality of schools?

Conclusion and Next Steps

This paper has provided preliminary results from a pilot survey of one thousand respondents in Tumaco. A full report documenting the range of findings from the surveys in both Tumaco and another conflict-affected municipality, Mesetas (Meta) is forthcoming. The full report will delve deeper into what determines people’s perception of the implementation of the peace accord, particularly examining how experiences with the conflict and victimization, as well as trust in institutions, shape support for particular aspects of the agreement and the peace process overall.

Our pilot survey in Tumaco has shown that it is feasible to measure people’s perceptions of and experience with the peace process, and that it is possible to do this under very demanding conditions. This pilot constitutes the first step in the Monitoring Attitudes, Perceptions, and Support

of the peace process in Colombia (MAPS) project, which seeks to develop an innovative survey to measure people’s perceptions of the peace agreement and its specific provisions; provide an assessment of the current situation in the country, including implementation of the accord related to security and social services, among other factors; and measure opinions about transitional justice and peacebuilding efforts more broadly.

The larger survey stemming from this project will cover all regions of Colombia, yet with a special focus on conflict-affected areas, and produce systematic knowledge and representative data at the regional level. The survey will also be directly useful for local-level efforts to measure and track several of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those that pertain to SDG 16 on achieving peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The project will serve as a tool for policymakers and international organizations

both implementing and overseeing the implementation of the peace accord, helping to inform the design of public policies by diagnosing local needs and examining whether changes in ‘objective’ local conditions produce corresponding changes in perceptions. The survey will also produce novel academic knowledge on peace processes more generally, with the aim of developing a survey tool and set of findings from Colombia that can be applied beyond Colombian borders. The primary goal is to allow international, governmental, and civil society actors in Colombia to better understand complex processes of attitude formation and transformation in areas heavily affected by conflict. Our contention is that this is a necessary step in the construction and consolidation of a lasting peace in a country that faces its best hope in more than half a century of escaping vicious cycles of violence. ■

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THE PROJECT

This Paper is an output from the Monitoring Attitudes, Perceptions, and Support of the peace process in Colombia (MAPS) project. MAPS is a collaboration between PRIO, Universidad de los Andes, and the UNDP Country Office in Colombia. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre funded this project.

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