

Public Opinion in El Salvador in Relation to Disappearance Rates

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Table of Contents

I.	Abstract.....	3
II.	Introduction.....	4
III.	The History of the Term “Disappearance” and Its Significance in Central America..	5
IV.	The History of Gangs in El Salvador.....	8
	a. Mauricio Funes.....	9
	b. Salvador Sánchez Cerén.....	13
	c. Violence Against Women.....	15
V.	Research in Public Opinion’s Connection to Violence.....	17
VI.	Project- Methods and Hypotheses.....	19
	a. Data Source Analysis.....	19
	b. Selection and Categorization of Survey Questions.....	23
VII.	Analysis of Disappearance Rates.....	29
VIII.	Results.....	34
IX.	Conclusion.....	47
X.	Appendix.....	50
XI.	Bibliography.....	55

I. Abstract

During recent years, gangs in El Salvador have become increasingly powerful. Additionally, people in El Salvador continue to feel the effects of the gangs in the form of violent crimes and corrupt and controlled local governments. A crime often attributed to the gangs is disappearances. Disappearances cause fear and propagate awe of the power that the gangs hold. These effects need to be evaluated, this is done in this paper by looking at if there is correlation between public opinion, evaluated through a yearly survey, and disappearance rates per 100,000 people during the years 2010-2017. The data is separated on a regional basis to look at the variances in different parts of the country, as well as on a gendered basis to look at male and female residents. Both of these categories will be evaluated in three public opinion sections to measure the impact of disappearance rates. The first section measures whether there is a correlation between perception of crime and the biggest issues facing El Salvador, and disappearance rates. The second measures whether there is correlation between trust in public institutions and disappearance rates. Finally, the third measures whether there is correlation between a desire to leave the country and disappearance rates. I have found that while the first and third sections indicate little correlation between the variables, the second section, evaluating trust in public institutions, did show some correlation between variables. This demonstrates that people may be attributing disappearance rates to a failure of public institutions in their local regions to effectively control gang violence.

II. Introduction

Between the years 2010 to 2017, almost 13,000 people were disappeared in El Salvador. While a homicide signifies the death of the victim, a disappearance instead signifies not only a death, but an erasure of the victim as their body has been taken, and with it the possibility of justice for the victim. In El Salvador, the erasure of people has been going on since the Civil War in the 1980s and early 1990s, when the government disappeared its own citizens. The ability to disappear people signifies power and control, which in the past was in the hands of the government, but currently is in the hands of gangs. The symbolic nature of this action leads me to believe that its perpetuation influences the opinions of citizens about the power and effectiveness of their government, and its ability to control crime in the country.

In this paper, I will examine the trends of disappearances in El Salvador from 2010 to 2017, and their relation to public opinion during the same period. As the perpetuation of disappearances is not a new phenomenon in El Salvador, this term has a long and storied history. Subsequently, the practice may also impact people both because of the action it describes and the history it references. However, in contrast to historical disappearances perpetuated by the government, disappearances are now perpetrated primarily by politically motivated gangs, rather than directly by state actors. Due to this connection to the history of El Salvador, I believe that the disappearances committed by the gangs impact public opinion in the country. I demonstrate this through analyzing correlations between public opinion and disappearance rates. I establish that disappearance rates are impacting the citizens' views of public institutions like the central government, as well as the police in the years since the treaty between the gangs has collapsed. Next, I establish that there is little correlation between disappearance rates and respondent's desire to leave El Salvador. This indicates that the desire to leave is more strongly connected to

another factor, such as homicide rates or poverty, rather than disappearance rates. Finally, I establish that there are gendered differences in the influences of disappearance rates, resulting in wide ranging correlations when comparing women and men, while different regions do not seem to greatly impact the amount of influence that disappearance rates have.

Before looking at these changes in public opinion, I establish a recent history of El Salvador. I will begin by establishing the history of forced disappearances in El Salvador, specifically during the Salvadoran Civil War from 1980 to 1992. Through this I will show that while disappearances enforced by the government are not the main cause of the disappearances analyzed in this research, the history of disappearances in the country still has resonance in what has occurred more recently. Moving from the disappearances that occurred during the Civil War to those that have occurred most recently, I will examine that approach of the two recent presidential administrations, Mauricio Funes and Salvador Sanchez Cerén, have not only impacted the gangs' power and the levels of crime that they commit, but also the general public opinion of the ability and success of public institution's attempts to control gang violence. Finally, I analyze the correlation between the level of disappearances in each year and the public response to several questions about the state of the country and its public institutions. These questions are divided into three sections: the first analyzes the general opinions on gangs and gang violence in the country, the second analyzes the trust of the citizens in public institutions, and the third analyzes whether people would like to leave El Salvador within the next year.

III. History of the term disappearances and its significance in Central America

The violent history of El Salvador and the rest of Central America has been well documented, both in academic literature and in public discourse. This history began in the conquest of Latin America by Spain, and continued with the history of dictatorships, especially

during the 20th century. As disappearances perpetuated by the government in El Salvador did not begin in a vacuum, I can trace the practices in El Salvador to other regimes in Latin America. One of the earliest was the Pinochet regime in Chile, which was responsible for the deaths of thousands during the dictatorship which lasted from 1973 to 1990. It was during this time that Operation Condor was established, a state terror regime that “enabled governments to send death squads on to each other’s territory to kidnap, murder and torture enemies – real or suspected – among their emigrant and exile communities.”¹ Francisco Morales of Peru and Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay were also key partners in Operation Condor. Although these leaders were eventually overthrown, their methods and tactics of disappearing opponents continued in other countries, including in El Salvador.

The seeds of revolution in El Salvador that led to violent civil war came from the inequality in the distribution of land throughout the country. During 1979, 1% of the population owned 77% of the land and were using it primarily to grow cash crops. This frustrated citizens, and widened wealth gaps between those who held land, and therefore power, and those who did not. In 1980, five different organizations took up arms against the government of El Salvador and called themselves the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, or the FMLN. This war would last 12 years and cost the lives of thousands of Salvadorans. Although the US held the position that there was extremism on both sides, throughout the war the Salvadoran government was using death squads to disguise that they were responsible for the killings. This allowed the US to continue to sponsor the government even while they knew about these human rights violations. They framed their involvement in the conflict as an attempt to rescue the citizens of

¹ Giles Tremlett, “Operation Condor: the cold war conspiracy that terrorized South America,” *The Guardian*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/sep/03/operation-condor-the-illegal-state-network-that-terrorised-south-america>.

El Salvador from communist revolutionaries, although it was the government of El Salvador that was responsible for the vast majority of the violence and killings. As in the dictatorships of the past, much of the violence was perpetuated through disappearances. It is estimated that throughout the war 8,000 Salvadorans were disappeared by the government.² When perpetuated by governments, disappearances are “designed to produce uncertainty, leaving no corpses, no traces, no explanations, and hence, no accountability.”³ If there is no body, there is no crime. While the people are gone, there is no evidence of what happened to them, or even that something happened at all. This tactic of killing leaves no room for accountability to the government, or to anyone. Family and friends of the disappeared are left to wonder what happened to them, while not being validated for their loss or concern. Even many years later, there is no room for closure. This form of violence left a mark on society as it instilled fear in the population as they were attacked by their own government, while at the same time the government denied all accountability for the lives and deaths of its people. It also produced a culture of silence that still permeates today,⁴ as people are fearful of the consequences of speaking out against authority. According to the El Salvador Truth Commission, about 85% of the violence was committed by state agents of the Salvadoran Government⁵.

² Mary Beth Sheridan and Anna-Catherine Brigida, “Disappeared in El Salvador: The return of a Cold War nightmare,” *The Washington Post* (October 19, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/disappeared-in-el-salvador-amid-a-cold-war-nightmares-return-a-tale-of-one-body-and-three-grieving-families/2019/10/19/d806d19a-e09d-11e9-be7f-4cc85017c36f_story.html.

³ Kristen Weld, “Because They Were Taken Alive,” *ReVista* 13, no 1 (Fall 2013): 8, <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/discovering-dominga>.

⁴ Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine, “Violence in a Post- Conflict Context,” *The World Bank* (December 2001): 4.

⁵ Truth Commission, “Commission on the Truth for El Salvador,” 1992, <https://www.usip.org/publications/1992/07/truth-commission-el-salvador>.

At the end of the war, a commission for the truth was mandated as a part of a UN Peace Treaty.⁶ Although in 2017 they established a commission to find remains of those disappeared, the government has not brought closure to these families in the form of finding the bodies of their loved ones. This is important to this research because the lack of success of the government to respond, even 27 years later, to earlier disappearances is likely weighing on the minds of Salvadorans as the government continues to fail to protect its citizens from gang perpetuated disappearances. In addition, the connotation of this term across Latin America, as defining a group of people who were killed by those in power, but are not acknowledged as dead, brings with it a sense of despair.

Although forced disappearances, or government-sponsored disappearances, still happen in El Salvador, they are much less common than during the Civil War. Instead, people are being disappeared as a form of gang violence. However, because of the large number of people who were disappeared by the government in the history of El Salvador, this action perpetuated by gangs signals their strength and power. While the majority of disappearances are now perpetuated by gang members, the history of enforced disappearances still produces fear and uncertainty, especially because not only are the gangs often more powerful than the police or government, but they are now politically acting in many areas. The term *disappeared*, as well as the action it describes, people it represents and has represented in the past, remain a part of the narrative of El Salvador decades later.

IV. The History of the Gangs in El Salvador

In yet another link to the violent war in El Salvador, the creation of the most active gangs began in the United States as Salvadorans fled the Civil War. Many moved into areas of

⁶ Truth Commission, "Commission on the Truth for El Salvador," 1992.

Southern California and felt that they needed protection. As Oscar Martinez puts it, the gangs “began with migrants fleeing a US-sponsored war. And, in fleeing, some of these young men found themselves living in an ecosystem of gangs already established in California. And so they came together to defend themselves.” As gang members were implicated in crimes, politicians advocating a tough on crime approach advocated for their deportation. This included people in the United States illegally, but was not limited to that. US citizens were also deported. As this occurred, the problem of gang violence deported as well, and the gangs continued to develop in El Salvador.⁷

Currently, the most active gangs in El Salvador are Mara Salvatrucha 13 and Barrio 18.⁸ It is estimated that 50,000 people are directly involved with the gangs, and up to another ½ million are economically dependent on them.⁹ These gangs have become more and more powerful in El Salvador; so has widespread violence. The government has attempted several interventions, but none so far have resulted in long term solutions.

a. Mauricio Funes

During this period of study, 2010-2017, El Salvador had two different administrations who took different approaches to fixing the problem of gang violence. The first president, Mauricio Funes, took office in 2009 and remained in office until 2014. He was a candidate of the FMLN party. Before his administration a *mono-durismo* approach was popular with the government, but he planned to reverse these policies. The government at this time was also willing to attribute the high number of gang members to structural problems within the society,

⁷ Oscar Martinez, *A History of Violence* (London: Verso, 2016), XX.

⁸ Carlos Carcach, Evelyn Artola, “Disappeared persons and homicide in El Salvador,” *Crime Science* 5: 13 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40163-016-0061-x>.

⁹ Jon Lee Anderson, *Forward, A History of Violence*, (London: Verso, 2016), XIII.

specifically marking marginalization as a risk that could lead to gang integration. However, implementing reforms was much more difficult than anticipated, and Funes soon reintroduced *mono-durismo* policies by sending the Salvadoran military back into the streets and eventually, into the prisons as well, where corruption was rampant. During this time, public pressure, as well as pressure from the United States, continued to grow to control the gangs. In 2012, a truce between the gangs was facilitated by the government, which resulted in a 41% decrease in homicides by the end of 2012.¹⁰ However, it has now been established that while homicide numbers dropped, disappearances rose during the year. It is possible that the gangs continued to perpetuate the same amount of violence, however, they became better at hiding it. This analysis of the 2012 drop in homicides is echoed by Farah in an analysis of the crime rates after the first half of 2012. He states that “accomplishments to date seem less than hoped for. While homicide rates were down, human rights monitors, including the Catholic Church, reported a significant uptick in persons disappeared. The Supreme Court’s Office of Legal Medicine reports that 876 people disappeared in the first quarter of the year, with more than 600 of those taking place since the truce went into effect. This is double the amount reported in the same period the year before.”¹¹

In 2012, IUDOP, the survey organization that I use to compare public opinion and disappearance rates, asked a number of questions about the truce between the gangs. Therefore, we can analyze if Salvadorans believe that the truce was effective. At the end of 2012, in response to the question, “how much trust do you have in the treaty between the gangs: a lot,

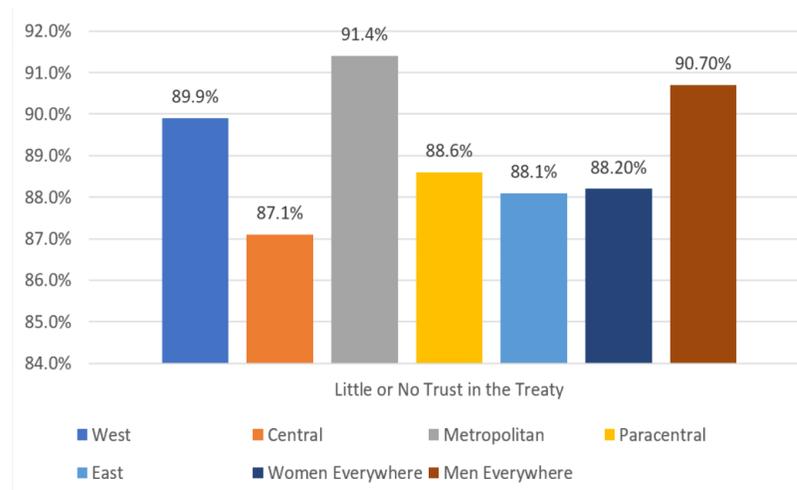
¹⁰ Chris van der Borgh and Wim Savenije, “Securitizing and Re-securitizing Gang Policies. The Funes Government and Gangs in El Salvador,” *Journal of Latin America Studies* 47:1 (February 2015): 149 - 176.

¹¹ Hannah Stone, “El Salvador sees drop in murders but rise in disappearances,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 2012, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/Latin-America-Monitor/2012/0522/El-Salvador-sees-drop-in-murders-but-rise-in-disappearances>.

some, little, or none?” 65% of respondents had no confidence that the treaty was effective.

Additionally, when asked whether they felt that the treaty was reducing crime, 66.4% felt that it was doing little or nothing. This can also be split up by region, as seen below. The metropolitan region has the least confidence in the treaty between the gangs. As can be seen below, this is also where the highest number of disappearances occurred, although the central region did not have the highest disappearance rate per 100,000 people. Men also had a more pessimistic view of the effectiveness of the treaty, with 90% stating that they had little or no trust in the treaty.

Figure 1: Respondents with a lack of trust in the treaty¹²

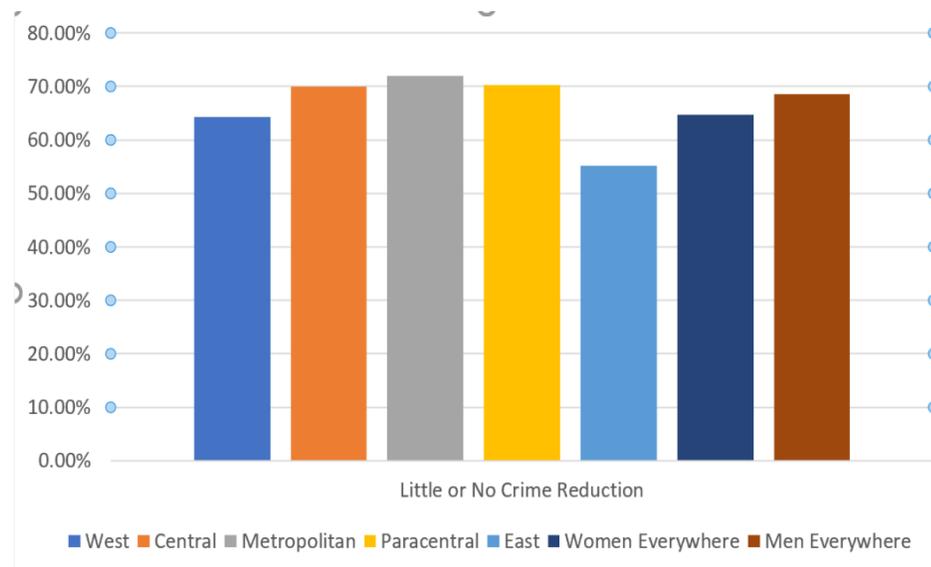


In 2012, the survey also asked respondents if the treaty between the gangs is reducing crime. The results of this question can be seen below for each region and for male and female respondents all over the country. The vast majority of people in all regions said little or no confidence. Interestingly, the east region was below any of the other regions in both this question and the question above. In addition, the east region falls below the other regions in the rate of disappearances per 100,000 people. This low rate of disappearances could be a reason that they

¹² ¿Qué tanta confianza le genera la llamada tregua entre las pandillas: mucha, alguna, poca o ninguna?”

have more confidence that these treaties were working. If in general they had less crime, they may have had more confidence in its effectiveness.

Figure 2: Responded that gang treaty is not reducing crime (2012)¹³



The perpetuation and possible increase of disappearances during this time could be a reason that, despite the drop in homicides, Salvadorans did not feel that the treaty was effective in reducing crime.

During this time the government also attempted to disavow the truce due to the public perception of negotiating with gangs, however it quickly became clear that they were involved in negotiations. The side effects of the treaty were also important, as it “contributed to a situation of growing unity and organizational strength of the gangs.”¹⁴ By 2013 and 2014, the treaty began to

¹³ En su opinión, ¿qué tanto cree que la tregua entre las pandillas está reduciendo la delincuencia? In your opinion, how much do you think that the treaty between the gangs is reducing crime? Answered Little or None

¹⁴ Van de Borgh and Savenije, “Securitizing,” 149-176.

unravel. The gangs' power continued to develop, becoming so powerful that it can be argued that they became, and continue to be, political actors. As Patrick McNamara argues, “gang factions in El Salvador began to coordinate joint anti-State operations after the collapse of a 2012–2014 truce with the Government.”¹⁵ The collapse of the treaty resulted in gangs having more power than before. The FMLN and the Funes administration were attacked as soft on the gangs in the campaign for the 2014 election due to their involvement in treaty negotiations. Because of this, they “began to return to its policy of confronting the gangs” and “conditions devolved into a trilateral war between the government and the two largest gangs.”¹⁶

b. Salvador Sánchez Cerén

The Sánchez Cerén administration began in 2014, and inherited violence levels comparable to those before the treaty was enacted. He continued the crackdown on gangs, including “declarations of states of emergencies in several prisons and policies that have increased militarized public security.” This administration also criminalized negotiations with gangs, which resulted in the arrests of several major officials from the Funes administration, including Raul Mijango, who was the main negotiator in the 2012 truce.¹⁷ In 2015, homicides rose drastically, to a level that has not been seen since the 1992, the end of the Salvadoran Civil War. Salvadorans were asked at the end of 2015 to what or whom they attributed an increase in homicides. Although this research addresses disappearances, the responses show us a general picture of how people perceived who was responsible for the violence. As can be seen below, the

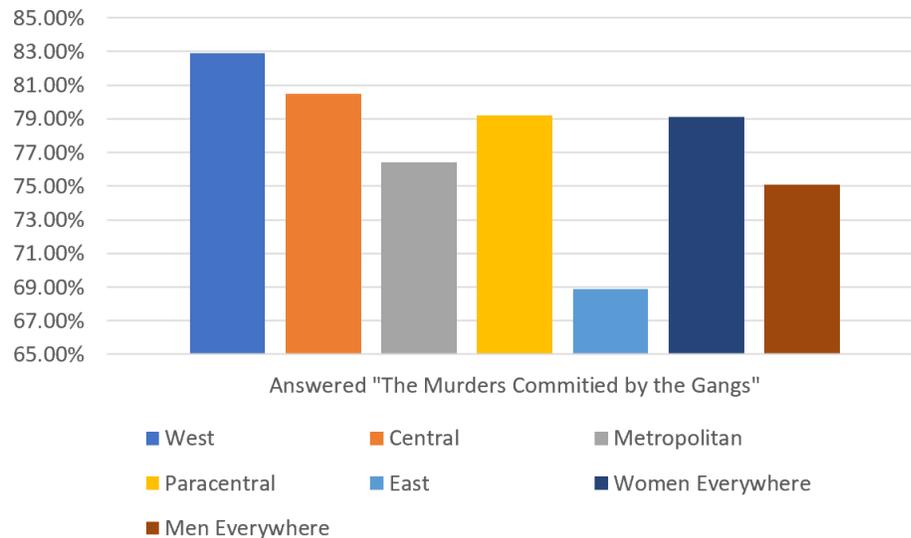
¹⁵ Patrick McNamara, “Political Refugees from El Salvador: Gang Politics, the State, and Asylum Claims,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 36 (2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdx011>.

¹⁶ Siniša Vuković and Eric Rahman, “The Gang Truce in El Salvador,” *Oxford Research Group*, April 18, 2018, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/the-gang-truce-in-el-salvador>.

¹⁷ Christine Wade, “El Salvador’s ‘Iron Fist’: Inside Its Unending War on Gangs,” *World Politics Review*, June 6, 2016, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/18982/el-salvador-s-iron-fist-inside-its-unending-war-on-gangs>.

vast majority of respondents answered that they attribute this increase to murders committed by the gangs across all regions and genders. Again, the east region had a lower response rate of gangs then the other regions, continuing the trend that was seen in the 2012 truce analysis.

Fig. 3. Increased Murders Committed by Gangs, 2015¹⁸



This shows that Salvadorans are attuned to the violence committed in the country and attribute this violence to the actions of the gangs in their communities.

During the Cerén administration, police death squads also reemerged as a result of the “all-assault posture” that was encouraged against the gangs.¹⁹ This posture from the administration culminated with the creation of a new, “heavily armored unit to fight gangs in rural areas” in 2016, shortly after declaring a state of emergency at several prisons where high

¹⁸ Los reportes de las autoridades indican que los homicidios han aumentado considerablemente este año. En su opinión, ¿cuál es la principal razón del aumento de los homicidios durante este año?

Los asesinatos cometidos por las pandillas

The reports from authorities indicate that homicides have increased considerably this year (2015). In your opinion, what is the primary reason for this increase in homicides during this year?

¹⁹ Héctor Silva Ávalos, “Ex-President Sánchez Cerén Leaves El Salvador Facing Same Threats,” *InSight Crime*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/ex-president-sanchez-ceren-leaves-el-salvador-facing-same-threats/>.

level gang members were being housed.²⁰ Although homicides rates did decline from their high of 17 per 100,000 people in 2015, they still remained extraordinarily high through the end of the Sanchez Cerén administration. He was criticized by the left wing for his tough approach against the gangs and was succeeded by Nayib Bukele in 2019, who had roots in the FMLN but ran as a member of the right wing GANA party,²¹ demonstrating a strong rebuke from the policies of the Sanchez Cerén administration.

c. Violence Against Women

A continuous thread throughout this history of gang interactions in El Salvador is violence against women. Latin American culture promotes a male-dominated, patriarchal structure, but the violence against women is a result of the combination of many different facets of society that disenfranchise the agency of women including the gender wage gap, lack of reproductive rights, influence of the Catholic Church, and Machismo. Even as across Latin America women have made strides in recent years, “in spite of these strides, violence against women and economic disparity between genders remain exceptionally high.” Additionally, although women have joined the workforce at much higher rates than in previous decades, this work is generally in the low paying service sector.²² This prevents women from becoming economically independent. Women in El Salvador also lack reproductive rights, as abortion continues to remain a contentious issue. El Salvador currently has a complete ban on abortion, preventing women from having control over their bodies and the number of children that they

²⁰ “El Salvador unveils new military force to fight gangs,” *BBC*, April 21, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36098486>.

²¹ Merlin Delcid and Jack Guy, “The strange political path of Nayib Bukele, El Salvador's new President,” *CNN*, February 10, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/09/americas/el-salvador-president-bukele-profile-intl/index.html>.

²² Nikhil Kumar, “The Machismo Paradox: Latin America’s Struggles with Feminism and Patriarchy,” *Brown Political Review*, April 30, 2014, <https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2014/04/the-machismo-paradox-latin-americas-struggles-with-feminism-and-patriarchy/>.

have.²³ We have seen in other countries that this prevents women from making strides to close gender gaps in other areas of society, including the workforce. Additionally, supporting more children can keep women in poverty. The Catholic Church had a large role in promoting the law to make abortions illegal, an institution that already has great power and influence on cultural and political issues, but was able to move into the legal space as well. Finally, Latin America has a long history of machismo, which, as defined by Avelardo Valdez, “has come to have a number of negative connotations, such as a chauvinistic and tyrannical male character, an exaggerated masculine posture, extramarital sexual activity, involvement in physical abuse and violence, displays of physical courage or daring, heavy drinking, and the imposition of restrictions on women's freedom of movement.”²⁴ Machismo, in combination with the patriarchal structure mentioned above, results in the widespread abuse of women, including femicide and disappearances. This violence can be used as a form of control by the gangs to instill fear in local populations. According to “El Informe Sobre el Estado y Situación de la Violencia Contra las Mujeres, 2017,” the majority of this violence is perpetrated against women between ages 18 and 30.²⁵ Additionally, we can see in the graph below (figure 4) that there have been large fluctuations in the rate of violent deaths of women between the years 2012 and 2016. It is because of this that I believe we may see changes in public opinion correlated with the changes in the rate of disappearances. As explained above, there is a gendered power disparity. Because of this position of inferiority, I feel that women may be sensitive to changes in disappearance

²³ Gilad Thaler and Kate Smith, “‘They don't know our reality’: Lives impacted by El Salvador's abortion ban,” *CBS News*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/abortion-ban-el-salvador-lives-affected/>.

²⁴ Avelardo Valdez, “Machismo,” *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism* 3, 2 (2013), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX4190600280/GIC?u=umn_wilson&sid=GIC&xid=f3ca65b5.

²⁵ ISDEMU, “Informe sobre el Estado y Situación de la Violencia contra las Mujeres en El Salvador,” October 2017.

levels of other women as a self-protection instinct. In the data below of disappearances of women, we can see that there are fluctuations as well (figure 7).

Figure 4: Violent Deaths of Women 2012- 2016²⁶



V. Research in Public Opinion's Connection to Violence

Research on public opinion of violence has been researched in many different areas of the world, especially during periods of internal conflict or high crime rates. In the United States and in other countries, opinions on government force and violence are gendered. In 2019 Richard Eichenberg published a book that outlined the differences in public opinions on military use based on gender. He found that women are concerned with the violent consequences of the use of the military, which can result in their hesitance to promote military force. While this is not directly connected to the public opinion based on violence research that I did, it does

²⁶ ISDEMU, "Violencia contra las Mujeres," 2017.

Graph Title: Rate of Violent Deaths of Women per 100,000 Women. 2012- 2016

demonstrate that opinions and concerns about violence are gendered.²⁷ This led me to believe that opinions that I believe to be based on violence would be gendered as well.

In addition, in Guatemala, a country closely related to El Salvador in both geography and violent history, Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine identified that the three types of violence: political, social, and economic, were interrelated in Guatemala, but also that the perceptions of these violence differed across regions, ages, and genders. For example, in interviews for the study, adult women “discussed educational and health concerns and intrafamily violence, while adult men focused on infrastructure and rarely mentioned the latter concerns. Young people were especially concerned with problems related to gangs, particularly with drug-related issues.” The issues most prevalent in people’s lives are what most impacts their opinions on what the biggest problems facing the country are. In addition, Moser and McIlwaine use focus groups to establish the special connection with violence, noting that perceptions of danger were strongly linked to drug consumption as well as gangs.²⁸ In addition, they note that some areas of the city are more dangerous for women than for men. While the majority of their study was focused on the areas of a specific city that were more or less dangerous, I believe that this can also be expanded to a regional and county wide level based on the crime rates in each location.

In El Salvador, this specific area of study has been under-researched. As has been noted above, there has been research on disappearances as well as on gang activity. However, I was unable to find a significant amount of research on the correlation between gang-related violence and public opinion. Instead, researchers have relied on interviews with people affected by these crimes, or those that are attempting to leave El Salvador and/or request asylum in the United

²⁷ Richard Eichenberg, *Gender, War, and World Order: A Study of Public Opinion*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 1-10.

²⁸ Moser and McIlwaine, “Violence in a Post- Conflict Context,” 3.

States. While these interviews are incredibly important, both to establish the effects of the violence and to establish whether or not asylum should be granted to those requesting it, they also narrow the sample dramatically to the people most affected by the violence. In this analysis, I will attempt to tell the story of how disappearances in El Salvador are creating and perpetuating a culture of fear among the general population. While huge numbers of people are both directly and indirectly involved with the gangs, whether through membership, violence, or financial dependence, the fear that is created by the gangs floods through the entire country, especially as the gangs move into the political realm. The IUDOP survey, which is what I use to study public opinion in El Salvador, is able to give snapshots of public response to specific events as well as trends of violence over time, including people both explicitly and passively affected by the violence. It is important to remember that these opinions are influenced by violence, but this violence also greatly influences the lives of those in El Salvador, so much so that many are willing to travel through several countries to attempt to escape this danger. While personal stories are not explicitly expressed in this research, this data represents a conglomeration of thousands of individual stories of people impacted by the violence in the country.

VI. Project- Methods and Hypotheses

a. Data Source Analysis

The first set of data, the statistics on disappearances and homicides in El Salvador, was obtained from the Department of Justice and Public Security within the government of El Salvador. Although the government engaged in a cover up of crimes during the Salvadoran Civil War, their actions now can be seen as an attempt to overcome their previous lack of transparency, which was uncovered by the Truth Commission many years later, as well as a

response to the Peace Accords, which established that government agencies should be transparent. The information released now by the government, including the statistics used for this analysis, is considered accurate due to a transparency law that guarantees data release from governmental institutions. Applicable language of the law, the Law of Access to Public Information²⁹, states the following:

Art. 1- The current law guarantees the right of access of all persons to public information, with the aim of contributing to the transparency of the operation of institutions of the state.³⁰

Art. 2.- All people have the right to ask for and receive information generated, administered, or held by public institutions and other obligated entities in a timely and truthful manner, without regard to any specific interest or motivation.³¹

Due to this law of transparency, the disappearance data can also be regarded as accurate, especially in relation to the trend lines. One obstacle that can influence the accuracy of the data is the intimidation and fear felt by the families of the victims. Additionally, as mentioned above, a

²⁹ Asamblea Legislativa Republica de El Salvador, “Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública,” *Decreto 534*, 2011.

³⁰ Art. 1.- La presente ley tiene como objeto garantizar el derecho de acceso de toda persona a la información pública, a fin de contribuir con la transparencia de las actuaciones de las instituciones del Estado.

³¹ Art. 2.- Toda persona tiene derecho a solicitar y recibir información generada, administrada o en poder de las instituciones públicas y demás entes obligados de manera oportuna y veraz, sin sustentar interés o motivación alguna.

disappearance implies that there has been no recovery of a body. This means that the burden of reporting falls on the family, as without them coming forward to report it, there is likely no evidence of a crime being committed. Although the fear and uncertainty that accompanies a disappearance can dissuade families or loved ones from reporting the disappearance and could cause the number of disappearances to be undercounted, it is likely that the same percentage of disappearances is counted each year. This allows me to analyze the trend lines of the disappearance data, both individually and in relation to the survey questions. Finally, disappearances are assigned to the localities where the person disappeared is originally from, and not necessarily where the crime was committed. This is different from other crimes, as with homicides the crime is assigned to where the body is found.

The disappearance data covers the years 2010 to 2017. It can be disaggregated in many different forms, including by sex, by age, by state that the crime was committed and further by the municipality the crime was committed in. This will allow many different trends to be analyzed in comparison with the survey data.

The second set of data comes from a public opinion survey, also from the years 2010-2017. This data was collected by the Institute of Public Opinion, a subset of the José Simeón Cañas Central American University. This organization was founded in 1986 in an effort to collect public opinions at the time, and they have continued to conduct surveys since then, collecting information relevant to current events in the country. The survey on the state of the country is conducted at the end of the year, in the last weeks of November and the first weeks of December. The respondents are asked questions in seven different sections, with topics pertaining to:

1. Demographics (sex, age, and preferred political party)

2. The direction of the country during the year (poverty, the economy, and emigration)
3. Perceptions of security and justice within the country
4. Confidence in different government entities
5. Specific events of the year
6. Legislative and election events
7. Current issues including desire to migrate as well as personal demographics about religion, education, work

Although some of the sections were specific to the year of the survey, many were asked year after year in an effort to gauge changes in public opinion. These annual questions include those about security and justice, confidence in different public entities, and desire to migrate to another country. I analyzed questions primarily from these sections, and I have chosen them because these questions are the most directly tied to possible responses to disappearances within the country.

In relation to accuracy, in 2017 the survey commission states that:

The total number of surveys to be carried out considering 95% reliability (Z), a variance of 50% (σ^2) and a sampling error (E) of 2.76%, was 1,260 interviews and was established by using the following formula designed for large or infinite populations:

$$n = Z^2 pq / E^2$$

where,

$$n = (1.96)^2 (0.50) (0.50) / (0.027608372)^2 = 1,260^{32}$$

The surveys were then conducted in different areas based on the share of the population that lived there. Because of the demographic questions that were asked in the survey, the answers can be disaggregated into region, sex, age, socio-economic status, religion, education level, and political party preference. For this analysis, sex and region will be the main focus for comparison and correlation between the survey data set and the disappearance statistics. The collection of data for all of the years that I examine, 2010-2017, was done using similar methods and the data can be disaggregated in the same ways, with adjustments of sample size as population changed.

b. Selection and Categorization of Survey Questions

Between the years of analysis, 2010 and 2017, the survey asked each respondent between 73 and 113 questions related to their personal lives, confidence in the government, justice, poverty, and law. After looking through the survey questions, I chose those that were related to justice, confidence in public institutions, and possible action because of those results. Then, I selected questions that were asked during most of the years of analysis so I could establish trend lines in the responses of the population.

i. Section 1:

The first section of the survey questions is used to analyze the populations most general opinions about crime during the year. The 2 questions selected are:

³² Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública Universidad, “Encuesta de evaluación del año 2017,” *Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas*, January 2018. Taken directly from the IUDOP Survey of the Evaluation of 2017

1. In your opinion, what is the biggest problem facing El Salvador? ³³
 - i. Gangs
 - ii. Violence
 - iii. Crime

2. In comparison with last year, do you think that crime in the country has increased, stayed the same, or decreased? ³⁴

The first question is the most general, analyzing whether there is a correlation between disappearance rates and the percent of people answering that the biggest problem facing the country is gangs, violence, or crime. This question offers insight into what is at the forefront of Salvadorans' minds each year, and if they attribute issues directly to the gangs. These will be analyzed based on the percentage of people each year that answer each of the three responses. If respondents are sensitive to the levels of disappearance rates, as well as attributing these changes to gangs, I expect that as disappearance rates increase, the percentage of people who say that the biggest problem facing El Salvador this year is gangs will also rise.

H1: Rise in disappearances per 100,000 → Rise in the percentage of people who select gangs as the biggest problem facing El Salvador

³³ En su opinión, ¿cuál es el principal problema que enfrenta actualmente El Salvador?

³⁴ En comparación con el año pasado, ¿cree usted que la delincuencia en el país aumentó, siguió igual o disminuyó?

H2: Rise in disappearances per 100,000 → Rise in the percentage of people who select violence as the biggest problem facing El Salvador

H3: Rise in disappearances per 100,000 → Rise in the percentage of people who select crime as the biggest problem facing El Salvador

The second question is more specific, asking what people think about the level of crime in comparison to last year. This question will help me to understand whether people believe that crime is changing with the increase or decrease in disappearances. I can then interpret whether people are accurately gauging changes in disappearance levels, or whether their responses are based on a different factor.

H4: Rise in disappearances per 100,000 → Increase in the percentage of people who say that crime has increased over the past year

ii. Section 2

The second set of questions relate to the confidence of Salvadorans in government institutions. This question provides insight into whether or not the changes in disappearance levels could be correlated with a lack of trust in public institutions or attributing the rise in disappearance rates to a lack of ability on the part of government institutions. The survey questions selected are:

1. Could you tell me, how confident were you during the year 20XX, in the following institutions: National Civil Police³⁵
2. Could you tell me, how confident were you during the year 20XX, in the following institutions: Central Government³⁶

In all of these, I will be examining a correlation between the homicide and disappearance rates and the percentage of survey respondents who say that they have little or no confidence. The first survey question will offer a judgement on whether the citizens feel that the police are able to execute their job to police and prevent crime. If there is a rise in disappearance levels, this would mean that police have less control of crime in the given area. If citizens are accurately gauging this lack of control, a rise in disappearance levels could show up in the opinion poll as more people selecting “little” or “none” in response to confidence in the PNC.

H5: Rise in disappearance levels → Decrease in Confidence in the National Civil Police

Finally, the second question will analyze how far this trust or mistrust is carried in the government, and therefore whether the central government is also impacted. If citizens feel that the central government has not been able to effectively control disappearances perpetuated by the

³⁵ Podría decirme, ¿cuánta confianza tuvo durante el año 20XX, en las siguientes instituciones: Confianza en la Policía

³⁶ Podría decirme, ¿cuánta confianza tuvo durante el año 20XX, en las siguientes instituciones: Confianza en Gobierno Central

gangs, a rise in disappearance levels will result in an increase of citizens answering “little” or “none” to the amount of confidence that they have in the Central Government.

H6: Rise in disappearance levels → Decrease in Confidence in the Central Government

iii. Section 3

The final set of survey questions aims to examine a correlation, or lack thereof, between the disappearance rates and the desire of survey respondents to leave El Salvador. Only one survey question has been selected for this section:

1. Do you wish to migrate (or go to live) to another country? ³⁷

This question will show if there is a correlation between the number of disappeared people and the number of people wishing to migrate to another country. As many Salvadorans leave the country and move towards the US Southern Border, violence is often listed as the primary reason for leaving. Additionally, the gang violence in Central America has been cited as a reason for the increase in migrants and asylum seekers in the United States. For these reasons, I believe that as disappearance levels increase, people's desire to leave El Salvador will also increase.

H7: Rise in disappearance levels → Rise in people who wish to leave El Salvador

³⁷ ¿Desearía usted migrar (o irse a vivir) a otro país?

Each of these hypotheses will be analyzed in several ways. First, the data is separated on a regional level. This is targeting five separate regions of El Salvador, all of which are experiencing differing levels of gang control and gang violence. Because of these differing levels of violence, I expect that in areas of higher violence there will be increased correlation in the survey responses in that region. Next, I tested each hypothesis with statistics related to men and women respectively on a full country level.

To accurately compare the regionally separate survey questions with the disappearance data, the disappearance data too had to be separated regionally. According to the survey, the respondents were divided into five separate regions as follows:

Western Zone (Zona Occidental)	Ahuachapán, Santa Ana and Sonsonate
Central Zone (Zona Central)	La Libertad, Chalatenango and the rural area San Salvador
Metropolitan Zone (Zona Metropolitana)	Urban Area of San Salvador and Urban Area of Antiguo Cuscatlán y Santa Tecla
Paracentral Zone (Zona Paracentral)	Cuscatlán, Cabañas, San Vicente and La Paz
Eastern Zone (Zona Oriental)	Usulután, San Miguel, Morazán and La Unión

38

³⁸ For map, see appendix.

As can be seen above, three out of the five zones are easily divided by department within El Salvador, however two of the zones include both rural and urban areas, so they must be divided between them. To accomplish this, I have examined the population density of the different municipalities in San Salvador. Although there is much dispute about what should be considered an urban area in the international community, I have used the definition provided by the European Commission. This states that in order to be considered an Urban Cluster, a local “must have a minimum of 5,000 inhabitants plus a population density of at least 300 people per square kilometer (km²).”³⁹ Using this definition and the population density determined by the last census in El Salvador, taken in 2007, just 3 years before the start of the period of study, I separated the municipalities into urban and rural areas and therefore the Central and Metropolitan Zones.

After establishing in what zones the departments and municipalities are separated into, I am able to move on to establishing the rate of disappearances per 100,000 people in each zone. By establishing this rate, the number of disappeared can be compared not only within each zone, but also between zones. The disappearance rates can be seen below:

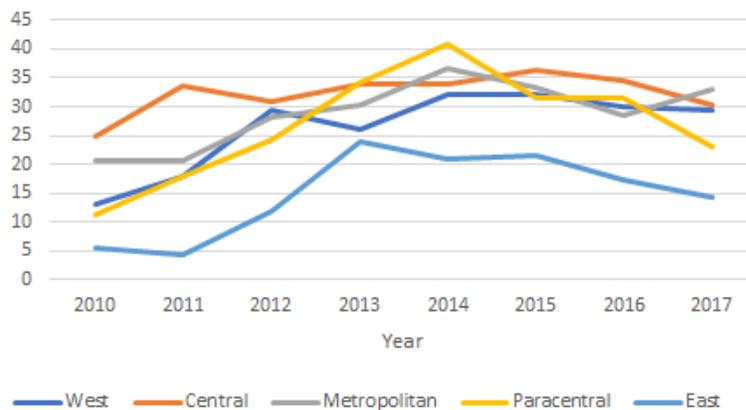
³⁹ Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, “Urbanization,” The World in Data, last modified November 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanization>.

VI. Analysis of Disappearance Rates

Figure 5: Disappearances per 100,000 People by Region

<u>Zone</u>	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
West	13.08	17.89	29.25	25.99	32.18	32.15	30.06	29.32
Central	24.70	33.47	30.79	34.07	33.82	36.46	34.41	30.14
Metropolitan	20.65	20.66	28.21	30.22	36.67	33.27	28.46	33.02
Paracentral	11.28	17.93	24.35	34.12	40.80	31.46	31.59	23.08
East	5.53	4.26	11.94	24.05	20.86	21.55	17.22	14.27

Figure 6: Disappearances per 100,000 People by Region



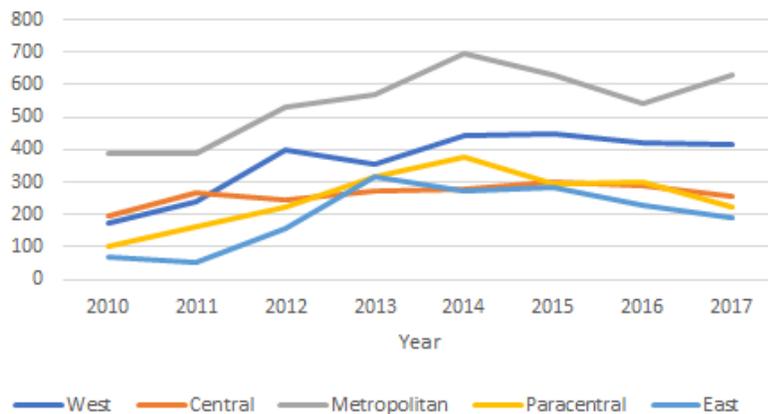
After analyzing these disappearance rates per 100,000, I can see that the average for the central zone was the highest overall, followed by the metropolitan zone, paracentral zone, west zone, and finally, east zone. As a note, if the zones are ranked by the number of disappearances

instead of by the rate per 100,000 people, the metropolitan zone has a much higher number of disappearances (4,367) than the other zones. The rank of the other zones in terms of number of disappearances would follow as west, central, paracentral, and east. The number of disappearances in each zone during each year can be found below:

Figure 7: Disappearances in Each Region

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
West	176	242	398	356	444	447	421	414	2898
Central	194	265	246	275	276	301	287	254	2098
Metropolitan	387	388	531	570	693	630	540	628	4367
Paracentral	101	162	222	314	379	295	300	222	1995
East	71	55	155	314	274	285	229	191	1574

Figure 8: Disappearances in Each Region



The second part of the study has a gendered focus, with women and men’s responses being compared with the disappearances rates of women and men throughout the entire country. This evaluates if the opinions of women in general have changed with the change in disappearance rates of women, as well as for the same structure for men. This analysis is not regionally specific. Although making it regionally specific may allow for a more specific analysis, the analysis of these changes on an entire country basis shows the proliferation of disappearance fears. It will show whether news of increased or decreased rates of disappearances of women and men reaches other areas of the country.

Figure 9: Disappearance Rates Per 100,000 by Gender

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Women	12.39	13.74	17.69	20.56	18.98	16.25	15.80	14.60
Men	17.98	21.37	24.86	29.13	27.97	30.76	27.73	25.90

Figure 10: Disappearance Rates Per 100,000 by Gender

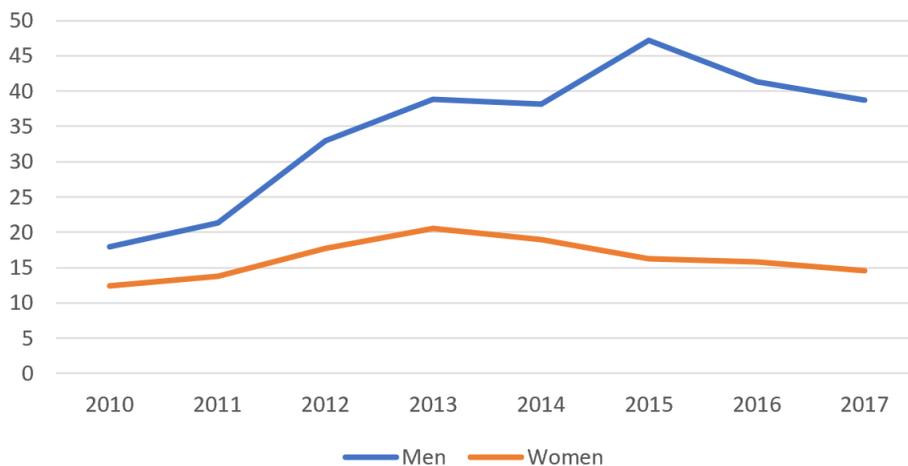
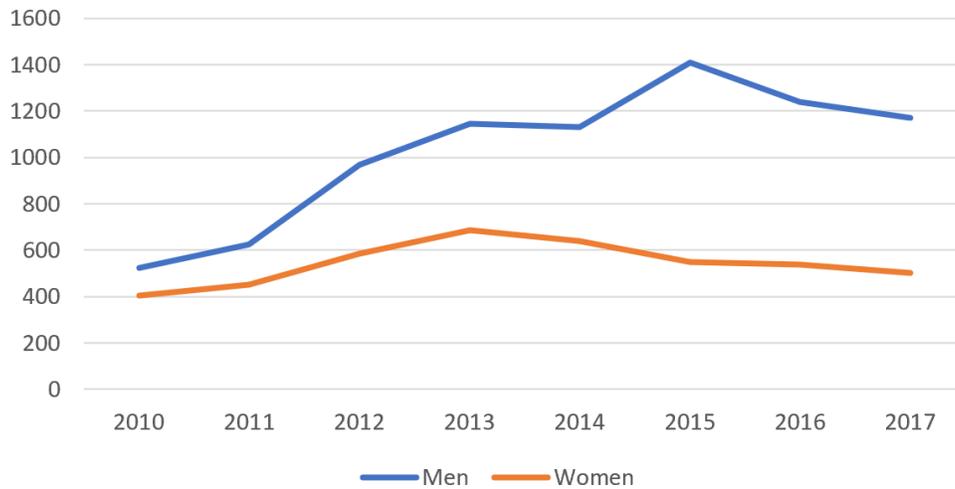


Figure 11: Disappearances of Women by Year

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Women	405	452	586	686	638	550	539	502
Men	524	625	968	1146	1132	1409	1239	1170

Figure 12: Disappearances of Women by Year



With both the rates per 100,000 people and the disappearance numbers, we can see that the highest year for women was in 2013 and for men was in 2015, and that it was lower on either end of the study period.

In order to analyze whether there is a correlation between the rates of disappearances by gender / in each zone and the survey response, I ran a correlation analysis. The R then represents the amount of correlation between the sets of numbers. If the correlation coefficient were to be one (1), it would represent a perfect positive correlation. If a correlation coefficient were to be

negative one (-1), it would represent a perfect negative correlation. Coefficients close to zero (0) represent data sets that have very little or no correlation. Next, the data sets could be further analyzed by the squaring R. This shows the percentage of the correlation that should be attributed to the independent variable.

VII. Results

a. Section 1

i. Hypothesis 1

As I stated earlier, the first section of survey questions ask generally about crime in El Salvador, including whether the respondent felt that crime went up during the last year, and what the respondent felt is the biggest problem facing El Salvador. The first hypothesis was tested by comparing what percentage of people answered “gangs” as the biggest problem facing El Salvador to the disappearance rates in each area. There was not a strong correlation between these variables. The strongest was .465 in the west region. The R squared coefficient for this region was .216, which means that 21.6% of the change could be explained by the independent variable. The other regions were significantly weaker than the west region. The correlation rates were similar when looking only at the rates and responses of female residents. The correlation (R) was .415 and therefore 17.2% of the change could be attributed to the independent variable. For men it was lower, at .133. For those reasons, the first hypothesis has been disproven. There is little correlation between the number of respondents that say that gangs are the biggest problem facing El Salvador and rate of disappearances.

ii. Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was similar in its statements, however this time respondents answered that the biggest problem facing El Salvador during the year was violence. All of the

regions also had low R values, the highest being in the metropolitan area at .466. However, when looking at the responses and rates for females, the correlation jumps drastically to .662, which means that 43.8% of the change can be attributed to the independent variable. For this, we can say that there is a correlation for this specific section of the population. In comparison, the correlation for men had a significantly lower value of .122. This represents a very large gender disparity. It suggests that women are responding that violence is the biggest problem facing the country as the disappearance rates for women all over the country go up and down. The percent of people to answer violence is not correlated to the disappearance rate in each area, however for women, there is a relation between these two variables.

iii. Hypothesis 3

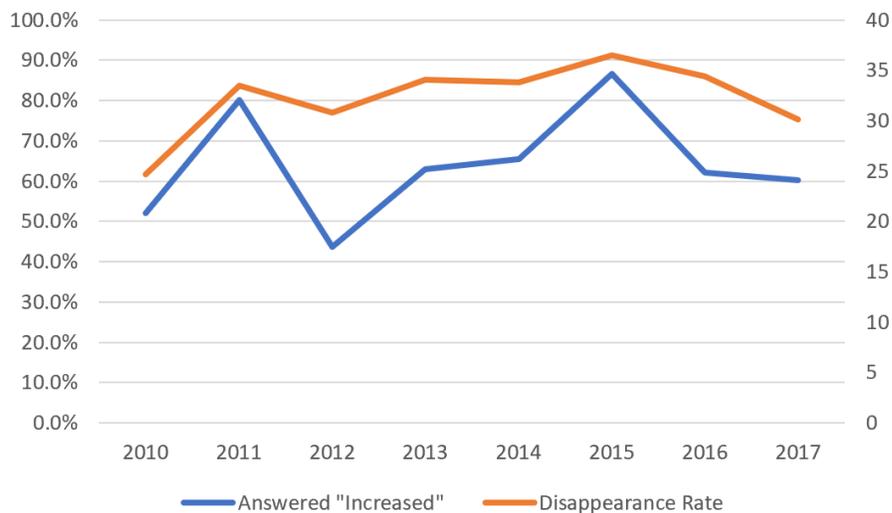
The third hypothesis also correlates responses for the biggest problem facing El Salvador, crime, and disappearance rates. When analyzed for correlation with the disappearance rates in the different regions, the correlation was higher than in the previous two questions. All of the correlation coefficients fell between .304 and .549, and the top four fell in a much closer range, between .476 and .549. This establishes that, averaged, 23% of the change could be explained by disappearance rates. Additionally, if the outlier is taken out, the percentage is raised to 27%. When analyzing the rates for women, the correlation coefficient is significantly lower, .1. For men, it reaches .414. This represents another significant difference between the correlation rates of men and women. In addition, because of these major differences, I cannot conclusively say that this hypothesis has been proven, but I can establish a gendered difference in influence.

iv. Hypothesis 4

The final hypothesis for this section correlates disappearance rates with the respondents view of crime levels in the past year. Respondents were asked whether they feel that crime has

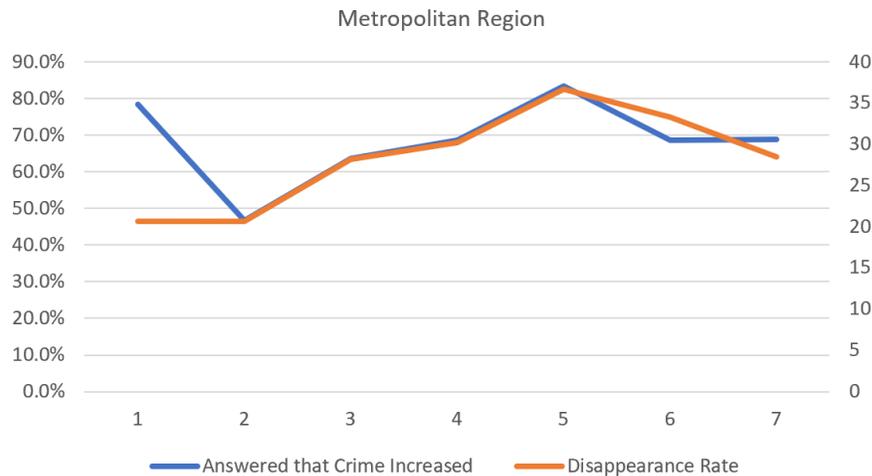
increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the year. The dependent variable is the percentage of people that feel that crime has increased over the past year. As can be seen in the table in section 1, the data from this section resulted in an extremely wide range of correlation coefficients. The lowest, in the east, was .052, while the highest, in the central region, was .674. This means that there are differences in what types of violence each region is resulting in respondents selecting crime as the biggest problem facing the country. In the central region, a significant amount could be related to disappearances. It is also important to note that the percentage of respondents who answered “crime” as the biggest problem facing El Salvador was between 34% and 68%, much higher than the other responses (gangs and violence). This means that the correlation in these variables represents a larger sample of the population than the responses above. This wide range of correlation coefficients also represents the major differences in the regions. The correlation for female respondents falls in the middle of these two, with .307. The graph for the central region, which had the highest correlation, can be seen here:

Figure 13: Crime Increased in Past Year- Central



Another notable part of the analysis of this question can be observed in the graph below.

Figure 14: Crime Increased in Past Year- Adjusted One Year

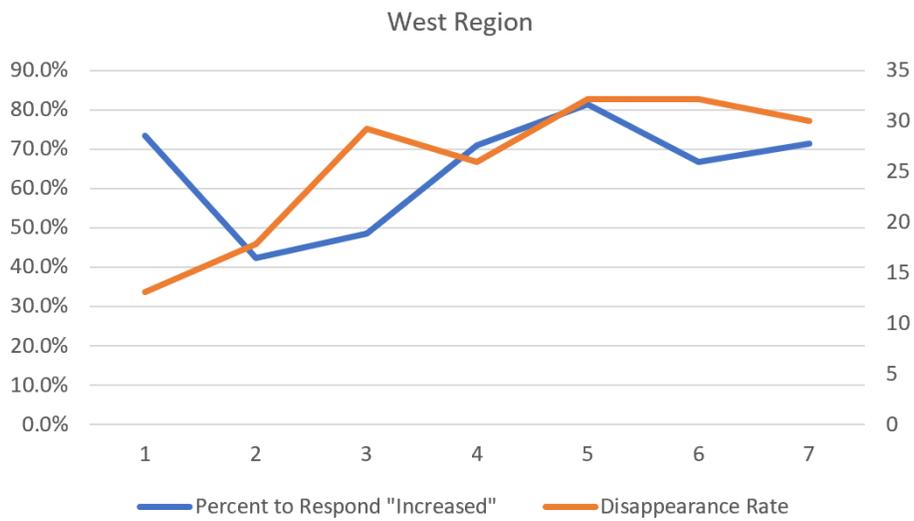
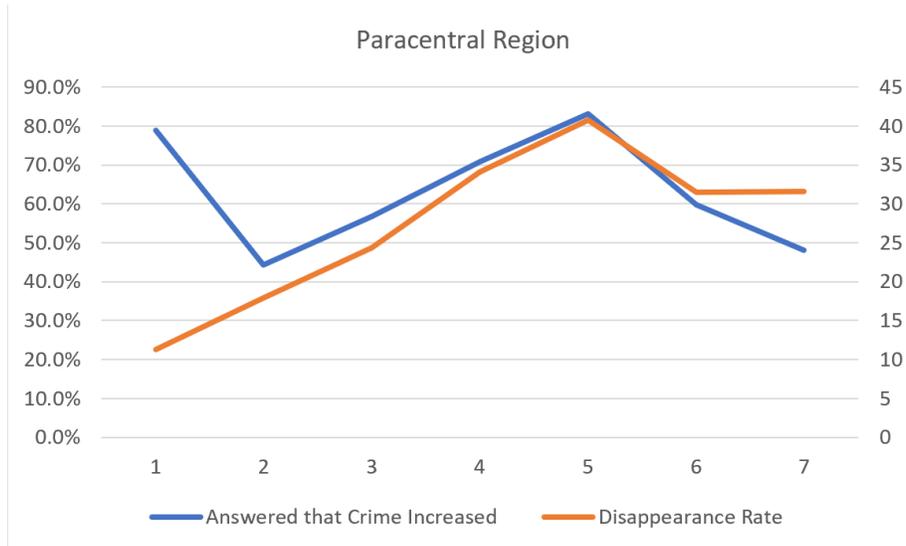


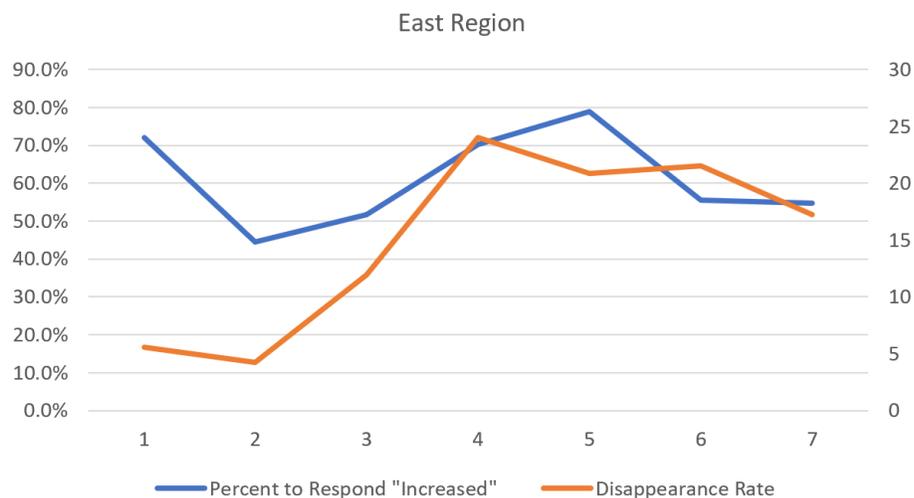
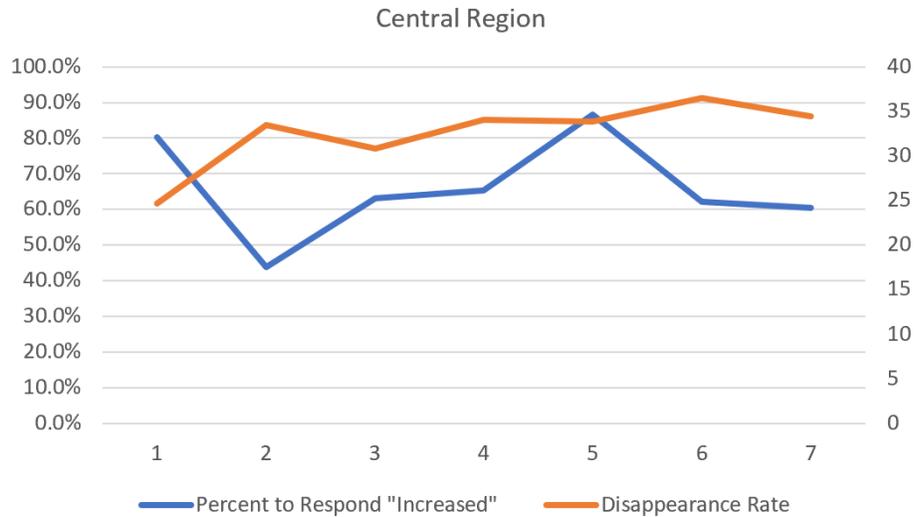
This graph shows that when the disappearance rate is shifted one year in the metropolitan region, the lines become much more correlated. In this analysis, the disappearance rate for 2010 is correlated with the responses in 2011 that crime increased during the previous year. This could indicate that people in this area are interpreting the rise in crime in a delayed manner. It could take time before the people notice a change in the number of disappearances, and therefore responding that crime is increasing may not happen until the following year. Although the lines appear to follow the same pattern, the first set of data points are not close together. This results in a correlation coefficient of .516. However, if the first data sets are discarded, the correlation attributed to the independent variable is raised to 91%.

Because of this observation, I graphed the other regions in the same manner. As can be seen below, some of the regions appear to show similar trend lines between disappearance rates shifted one year and the percentage of respondents who said that crime had increased over the

past year. These appear to be especially pronounced in the paracentral region and the east region, in addition to the metropolitan region already mentioned above.

Figure 11: Crime Increased in Past Year- Adjusted One Year





Overall, the first section appears to show that there is not a relationship between the rate of disappearances and the percentage of people who say that the biggest problem facing El Salvador is gangs, violence, or crime. Because disappearances are usually perpetrated by the gangs, and fall under both violence and crime, I expected the rate of disappearances to have an effect on the percentage of respondents choosing them. However, it is likely then that another form of violence could also be influencing these answers. Additionally, because respondents

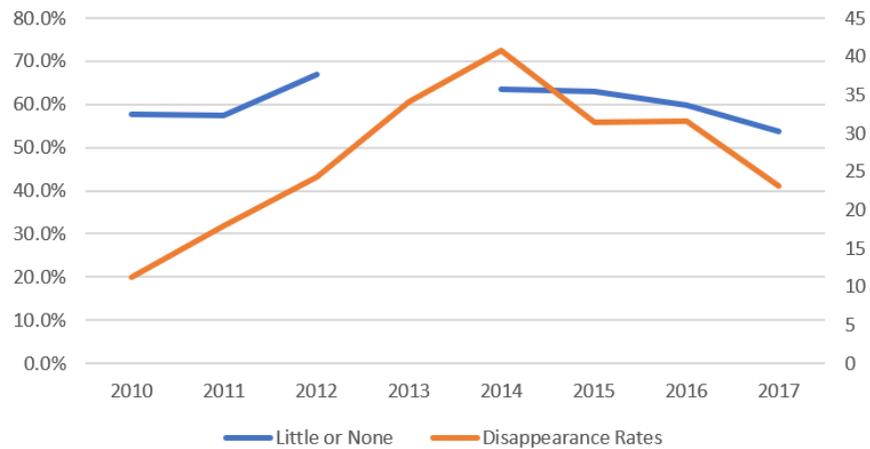
must state what they feel is the biggest problem, it is possible that in some years, issues such as poverty may have seemed more evident or urgent. The final question does address whether respondents' sense of the increase of crime matched disappearances. Although the correlation coefficients were low overall, by moving the disappearance rates one year, the lines are much more closely related. This indicates that in some regions, people may be sensing the changes in disappearances and answering survey questions accordingly.

b. Section 2

i. Hypothesis 5

As I stated above, the second set of survey questions examines the correlation of disappearances with confidence in public institutions. I would expect to see a decrease in confidence with an increase in disappearances if people feel as though the government should be controlling crime. The first correlation I looked at is between disappearances rates in each area and confidence in the police. The survey did not ask this question in the year 2013, so correlation is examined for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. Through these years, the highest correlation (R value) was in the paracentral region. This value was .487, and the R squared value for this region was .237. This can be interpreted to mean that 23.7% of the change in survey answers can be attributed to the change in disappearances. As mentioned before, this is the highest number from the group. The graph of these two factors together can be seen below.

Figure 15: Trust in Police- Paracentral



Among the other regions, the lowest correlation (R Value) is in the central region, with .133. The rest of the regions fall between those values. On average, the correlation is .291, which is low. For the responses and disappearances in the rates of men and women, the correlation coefficient is extremely low, with .003 for women and .010 for men. This means that there is no correlation between trust in the police and disappearance rates by gender.

Another interesting observation is the metropolitan region during the years 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017, or the second half of the observation period. In this region over this time, the correlation between these two variables jumps to .973, meaning that 94.7% of the change in survey responses can be explained by the change in disappearance numbers. This is very high, and the correlation can be seen in the graph below.

In the other regions, this increased correlation in the latter years of study also occurs, although not to the extent that is seen in the metropolitan region. The paracentral region has the second highest correlation in the second half of the years studied. The correlation (R) jumps from .487, the highest of the correlation numbers by region for this survey question, to .873. The R squared value is then .763, meaning that 76.3% of the change can be attributed to the change in

disappearance numbers. This is not only a very high correlation but also a large change from when the whole region was studied. The graph of the correlation for the second half can be seen below.

In the east region, this pattern of increased correlation in the second half of the time period studied holds, with a correlation (R Value) of .600 in the years 2014-2017. This establishes an R Squared value of .359 or 35.9% of change attributed to the dependent variable, the disappearance rate. The central region, which earlier had the lowest correlation of all five regions, in the years 2014-2017 jumps from .133 to .456. Although it is less than the other regions above, this is still a large increase in comparison to the correlation established when using the data from all of the years studied (2010-2017, withholding 2013). The final region to look at using the second half data is the west region, and it does not follow the above pattern, in fact, it sees a decrease in correlation in comparison to the full data set for this survey question.

Figure 16: Trust in the Police 2014-2017



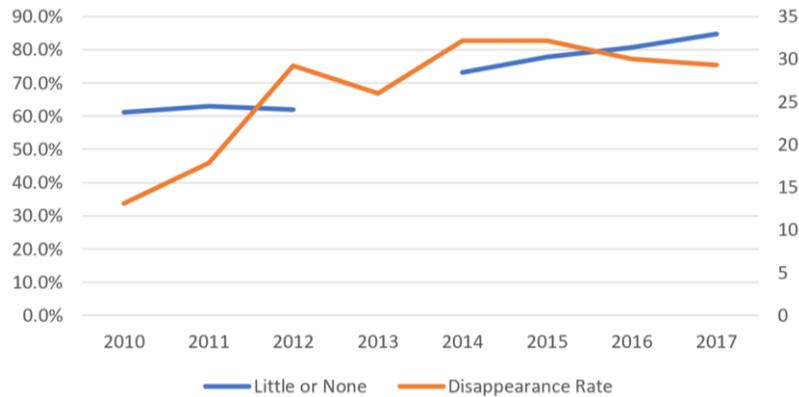
Although using the entire data set for this survey question does not confirm the hypothesis, using the second half of the data set, specifically the years 2014-2017 does establish a much stronger relationship between the two variables. When averaging the correlation variables for 2014-2017 in each region, the correlation is .636. This is much higher than for the whole time period, which as stated above, was .291. It indicates that the hypothesis is true for the

second half of the time period studied. This could also indicate that as the years have gone on, the citizens of El Salvador, have become more aware of disappearances and have attributed these changes in the rate of disappearances to the success (or lack thereof) of the police.

iv. Hypothesis 6

The next survey question that is analyzed is the amount of trust that people have in the central government. The hypothesis states that an increase in the disappearance rate will increase the percentage of people that state they have little or no trust in the central government. For data for this survey question, the overall correlations are very high in comparison to the other survey questions analyzed. Additionally, they carry across all of the years and across all of the regions, rather than selectively as in the previous survey question in this section. The highest correlation coefficient (R Value) in this set came from the east region, with .770. This means that in this region, 60.3% of the changes can be explained by the change in disappearance levels. The lowest correlation was in the central region with .606, and 36.8% of the changes being explained by the change in disappearance levels. All of the other regions fall between these two values. Because of the high levels in all of the regions, and the average correlation is .677, this hypothesis is correct, there is a correlation between the disappearance rates and the trust in the central government. For the correlation of rates of disappearances of and responses by gender, the correlation for men was very high at .899, while the correlation for women is significantly lower at .191. The rate of men being disappeared is closely connected to the rate of men having little or no trust in the central government. This represents another gendered difference, in which men seem to attribute responsibility for controlling disappearances to the central government. The graph of these two variables in the region with the highest correlation, the east region, can be seen below.

Figure 17: Trust in the Central Government- East

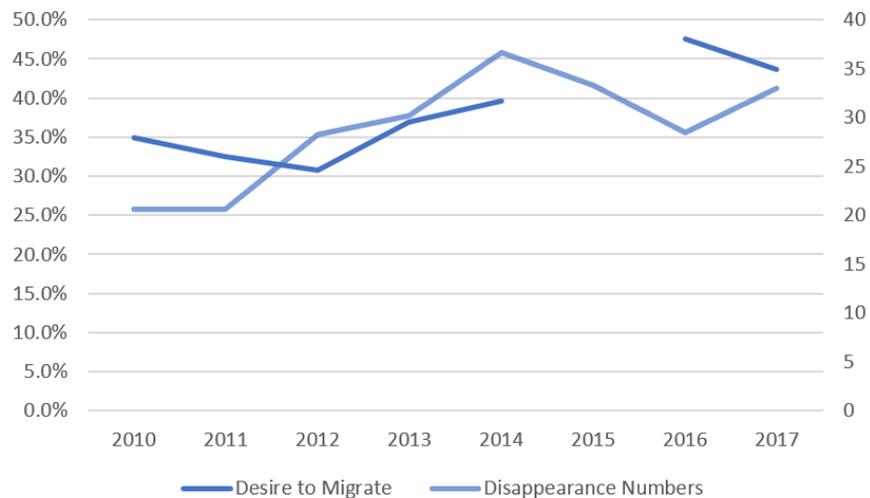


This establishes that there is a correlation between the trust in the central government and the disappearance rate within the regions. Although this does not mean that the disappearances are the cause, it is possible that people feel that it is the central government's duty to control these. Additionally, it is interesting that there is a stronger correlation over the data period for trust in the central government and disappearance rates than trust in the police and disappearance rates. I expected that the correlation with trust in the police would be stronger because of the location of the police as the first intermediary between citizens and crime, and as the purpose of the police is most related to controlling crime. While the central government should keep citizens safe, they have other objectives as well. However, if the disappearances are a cause of the change in confidence levels in the central government, it could mean that the citizens see the disappearances as a failure of the central government to control the gangs as a whole, rather than the failure of the police to control crime in their region.

A. Section 3

The final section of questions aims to look at actions people may be taking/may want to take in response to the disappearance rate. The data is analyzed to look at whether there is a correlation between the disappearance rate per 100,000 people and the desire of people to leave the country. I expected that as disappearance rates increase, so would people's desire to live in another country. This question was asked in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017 so those will be the years used to establish a correlation or lack thereof. For this question, the highest correlation was in the metropolitan region, with a correlation coefficient (R Value) of .488. A graph of these two variables can be seen below.

Figure 18: Desire to Migrate- Metropolitan Region



The lowest value in this set is in the paracentral region, where the correlation coefficient is approaching zero with .057. This means that there is almost no correlation at all between these two variables. For clarification, as mentioned above, this does not mean that there is a negative correlation, as a negative correlation would be established with a value close to -1. A value

approaching zero signifies a complete lack of correlation. Only 3% of the change can be attributed to the independent variable. The other region's values fall between these two, although none are as low as the paracentral region. The average correlation coefficient for the regional set of data is .274. For the data of females disappeared and female responses, the correlation is also low, with .082. The overall low correlation values and the low average correlation value for this survey question data set signifies that the hypothesis established above cannot be proven to be true. There also is very little correlation between the disappearance rates and the desire of people to leave the country in the gendered analysis.

This could mean that the citizens of El Salvador do not see the rate of disappearance as a reason for migration. However, this does not have to be the case. It is also possible that the challenges to leaving the country are simply too great in comparison to the risk of violence within the country. It is well known that the US has been implementing even more immigration challenges, especially during the presidency of Donald Trump, which started near the end of the time period of the research. While the survey does not establish where citizens would like to migrate to, many of the people who migrate from El Salvador go to the US.

VIII. Conclusion

The correlations in this study between disappearance rates and public opinion questions ranged very widely. It does not demonstrate clearly that all public sentiments studied are influenced by public opinion, however there are conclusions based on specific sections and patterns that can be drawn.

Although the metropolitan region appears to have slightly higher correlations between public opinion and disappearance rates, overall, there is not one region that has significantly

higher levels of correlation. The metropolitan region has the highest number of disappearances, but not the highest rate per 100,000 people. A higher rate of disappearances does not result in more influence on the responses of the people of the region.

This also shows the gender differences in the influence of disappearances in public opinion. Men's disappearance rates were highly correlated with trust in the central government, while women's correlations were significantly lower. The majority of the questions have large differences between the men's and the women's correlation rates. The overall low rates of correlation among gendered responses could also be a result of the general nature of the data, as both sets of the data combine information from all over the country. People may not feel the effects as immediately as when the disappearances are occurring on a regional basis.

I was expecting that correlations would be the highest in section one and decrease in the other sections as the survey questions became less directly connected to disappearances. However, this was not the case. The highest correlations are in section two, in connection with public institutions. These results demonstrate that among some groups, there are correlations between public opinion about public institutions and disappearance rates, especially after the treaty collapsed in 2014. The results show that throughout 2010-2017, as disappearance rates go up and down, so do people's opinions of the central government. This could mean that throughout this time they believe that it is the duty of the central government to control gang violence. However, looking at another public institution, the police, it appears that Salvadorans did not attribute disappearances to a failure of the police until after 2014. During the second half of the study period, the correlation between trust in police and disappearance rates goes up dramatically. In addition, this is the time when the treaty negotiated by the government to control the gangs in El Salvador collapsed. This event could have dramatically changed how people

view the role of the government and the police, and this shift can be seen in the changes in correlation between trust in the police and disappearance rates.

In addition, these results show that disappearances do not seem to be influencing people to want to leave the country. It is likely that decisions are being made based on violence in a broader sense, homicides, or other challenges the country faces, such as poverty. In addition, it could be a result of the measures taken by governments that receive Salvadorans fleeing the country, such as the stricter measures put in place by the Trump Administration in the United States.

Finally, the data suggests, based on the results for how much violence has increased in the past year and its correlation to disappearance rates, that the influence of disappearances is being felt more than one year after the disappearances have occurred. This could mean that in the future, using time periods larger than a year could yield more accurate results as to what is influencing the response of the population. Future gendered studies could also be done to gain a more accurate knowledge of what influences public opinion. For example, women are still impacted by the experiences of men and vice versa. Therefore, the correlation could be repeated with female respondents, but with all disappearances included as the independent variable. Another factor that may affect public opinion is age, which could be analyzed on a countrywide, regional, or departmental scale. Additionally, regional analysis could be separated by sex to allow for a more detailed analysis. Finally, these same questions could be analyzed on a departmental level instead of a regional level to allow for a more specific analysis of the correlations.

IX. Appendix

a. Survey Zones and Departments Map



b. Section 1 Tables

Disappearance Rates and Percent of Respondents who Answered X to Biggest Problem Facing El Salvador

		West	Central	Metropol itan	Paracentr al	East
Correlation(R) of Disappearanc e Rates and	Percent to Answer Gangs	.465	.036	.134	.150	.174
Correlation(R) of Disappearanc	Percent to Answer Violence	.261	.281	.466	.301	.038

e Rates and						
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and	Percent to Answer Crime	.304	.476	.544	.497	.549

		Women	Men
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and	Percent to Answer Gangs	.415	.133
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and	Percent to Answer Violence	.662	.122
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and	Percent to Answer Crime	.100	.414

Disappearance Rates and Percent of Respondents who Felt Crime Increased
2010-2017

Region	West	Central	Metropolitan	Paracentral	East
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and Percent of Respondents who felt crime increased	.222	.674	.214	.105	.052

	Women	Men
Correlation(R)of Disappearance Rates and Percent of Respondents who felt crime increased	.307	.223

c. Section 2 Tables

Correlation between Disappearance Rate and Trust in Police- 2010-2017 (excluding 2013)

Region	West	Central	Metropolitan	Paracentral	East
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates Trust in Police	.330	.133	.344	.487	.160

	Women	Men
Correlation(R)of Disappearance Rates Trust in Police	.003	.010

Correlation between Disappearance Rate and Confidence in Police- 2014-2017

Region	West	Central	Metropolitan	Paracentral	East
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and Trust in Police	.279	.456	.973	.873	.600

Correlation between Disappearance Rate and Trust in the Central Government- 2010-2017
(excluding 2013)

Region	West	Central	Metropolitan	Paracentral	East
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and Trust in Central Government	.678	.606	.701	.628	.770

	Women	Men
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and Trust in Central Government	.191	.899

d. Section 3 Tables

Correlation between Disappearance Rate and Desire to Leave the Country- 2010-2017
(excluding 2015)

Region	West	Central	Metropolitan	Paracentral	East
Correlation(R) of Disappearance Rates and Desire to Leave the Country	.174	.371	.488	.057	.281

	Women	Men
Correlation(R)of Disappearance Rates and Desire to Leave the Country	.083	.308

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