

Our conversations with voters at dozens of polls demonstrated that they had no reservations about responding to questions about the process and the importance of the elections for the future of Guatemala. There was no evidence of the military at or near voting stations.

There appears to be consensus in Guatemala that the election is a significant first step in the move toward democratic civilian government. In this context, it is a matter of record that over 50 percent of the Guatemalan population is illiterate and therefore many of these individuals are absent from the national register. An unacceptable proportion of these persons are women. The low participation of women was particularly noted at some of the polls visited in the countryside. Part of the explanation for this may have to do with cultural tradition, lack of obligation to vote by illiterate people, long distances to voting centres compounded by inclement weather and lack of transport.

We were given no evidence that the candidates were restricted from conducting a vigorous election campaign, and the countryside was replete with political posters.

It is our conclusion that the process for the election on November 3 offered the Guatemalan people a fair, honest and open opportunity to express their political preference.