

## PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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### 1. THE ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS IN A DEMOCRACY

In a democracy, the citizenry entrust their government to high public officials, some elected, and others appointed, directly or indirectly, by those who have been elected. The periodic assessment of the performance of these high officials is a basic part of the civic responsibilities of the citizens. The high officials, in turn, are expected to be sensitive – not for their personal benefit merely, but for the sake of the nation – to the assessments made of them by the citizens.

Sample survey research is the chief means by which public opinion about the state of governance is scientifically monitored in modern democracies. The population that needs to be sampled and interviewed for these surveys is the *electorate*. Thus, Philippine public opinion is the collective of opinions of all Filipino citizens at least 18 years old, i.e., those entitled to vote.

A survey of about 1,000 adults, which is more or less in the international norm, is sufficient to estimate the proportion who have a specific opinion on an issue, plus or minus about 3 percentage points assuming it is a simple random sample. (However, simple random sampling typically requires traveling to as many different locations as the number of people to be interviewed, which is rather expensive. Thus the standard sampling procedure is complex rather than simple – taking, for instance, a random sample of 200 locations as a first stage, and then a random sample of 5 adults in each location, as a second stage. The margin for sampling error in cluster-sampling is somewhat higher than in simple sampling, by a so-called design factor, which is difficult to estimate.)

Statistical capability, however, is the least of one's problems in undertaking public opinion surveys. The most important condition, by far, is democratic space: (1) *the freedom of citizens to speak out their minds, especially when their opinion runs counter to powerful forces, governmental or otherwise;* (2) *the freedom of researchers to record and to analyze the opinions of the citizens who are interviewed;* and (3) *the freedom to disseminate the survey results, not only to financial supporters, but also to the general public.*

The statistical capability and the democratic space to do public opinion surveys exist in the Philippines. They are not the province or prerogative of any group; competition is quite possible, and should be encouraged. (Institutions that have published opinion surveys, aside from Social Weather Stations, have been the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference in 1984-85, the Philippine Social Science Council in 1985, and Ateneo de Manila University jointly with SWS in 1986-87 and on its sole account in 1988-92). The more telling constraints on public opinion surveys, at present, are *institutional commitment* and *financial viability*, which are needed so that survey indicators of public opinion can be regularly tracked over time.

This paper discusses public opinion about public officials in the Philippines, based on the surveys of Social Weather Stations, a private, non-stock, non-profit academic institute, founded in 1985, which specializes in data-generation through social survey research. SWS conducts periodic Social Weather Surveys, on a quarterly basis since 1992, supported by institutional and individual subscriptions, as well as by ad hoc research projects requiring survey data from the same sampling frame. These surveys are the foundation for the constantly growing SWS Survey Data Bank on Philippine social, economic, and political indicators.

## 2. SURVEYING SATISFACTION WITH A PUBLIC OFFICIAL'S PERFORMANCE

Although opinion about a public official can be expressed in many ways – aside from words, such acts as voting, marching in demonstrations, body-language, etc. are all political statements – this paper focuses on standard opinion surveys, which are oral interviews with respondents, using explicitly written-out questions having, for the most part, closed-ended answers.

The survey item most frequently applied by SWS to obtain opinion about a public official, about a public institution, and about how the government is handling a specific issue, is the *satisfaction rating*. The exact wording of this item is found in Box 1, which gives the various language versions.

The key operative term is *nasisiyahan* in Tagalog (the base language, simply because it is the one with which the researchers are most familiar), *kontento* in Bikol, Cebuano, and Ilonggo, and *napnek* in Ilocano, all meaning satisfied in English – which, incidentally, even in Metro Manila, is preferred by only about 30% of the respondents as the language of the interview. The answers are set into a symmetric 5-point scale, where the middle point is indecision between satisfied and dissatisfied, and the two outer points are very (*lubos, talaga, gyud, gid*) satisfied, and very dissatisfied.

Since there are no simple either/or answers in social surveys – even when a question only asks for a Yes or a No, inevitably some answers will be Can't Decide, Don't Know, or No Response – often the dominant response will not be



QUESTIONNAIRE WORDING ON  
THE RATING OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Maaari po bang pakisabi ninyo kung gaano kayo nasisiyahan o di nasisiyahan sa pagganap ng tungkulin ni (pangalan) bilang (posisyon). Kayo ba ay lubos na nasisiyahan, nasisiyahan, maaaring nasisiyahan/maaaring hindi, hindi nasisiyahan, o lubos na hindi nasisiyahan?

*Please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are in the performance of (name) as (position). Are you very satisfied, satisfied, maybe satisfied/maybe not, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?*

Box 1. Translations of Response Categories

Tagalog	Bikol	Cebuano	Ilocano	Ilonggo	English
Lubos na nasisiyahan	Talagang kontento	Kontento gyud	Talaga nga napnek	Kontento gid	Very satisfied
Nasisiyahan	Kontento	Kontento	Napnek	Kontento	Satisfied
Maaaring nasisiyahan/ maaaring hindi	Puwedeng kontento; puwedeng dai	Mahimong kontento/ mahimong dili	Mabalin nga napnek/ mabalin nga saan	Mahimo nga kontento/ mahimo nga indi	Maybe satisfied/ maybe not
Hindi nasisiyahan	Dai kontento	Dili kontento	Saan nga napnek	Indi kontento	Dissatisfied
Lubos na hindi nasisiyahan	Talagang dai kontento	Dili gyud kontento	Talaga nga saan nga napnek	Indi gid kontento	Very dissatisfied

that of a majority (meaning strictly above 50%), but only that of a plurality (not more than 50%). Sometimes it is even the middle, or neutral, response which has the plurality. This explains SWS practice, when summarizing findings, of computing the *net satisfied*, which is defined as the *gross* percentage satisfied or very satisfied minus the *gross* percentage dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. *Net satisfied* can range, theoretically, from +100 to -100; its sign shows whether public opinion is dominantly positive or negative.

To analyze survey replies as to satisfaction with an official's performance, the initial tabulations are done according to location (urban or rural), broad region (Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas or Mindanao), socio-economic class (based on a market-research classification system), age, and gender of the respondent. These standard tabulations give the basic socio-demographic profile of the performance rating.

The Social Weather Surveys are obtaining satisfaction ratings for official *institutions* as well as for official personalities. For a number of institutions, Table 1 gives both gross and net satisfaction ratings as of April 1995, while Table 2 tracks net satisfaction ratings over eleven national surveys undertaken since September 1992, i.e., the entire set of SWS surveys during the Ramos administration thus far. The survey ratings of officials tend to be significantly related to the survey ratings of the institutions for which they are responsible; this will be illustrated later in the paper.

The Social Weather Surveys are also obtaining ratings of satisfaction with the performance of the national administration on a large number of *subject matters*. For instance, Table 3 shows the public's gross and net satisfaction ratings in March-April 1995 for government performance on 19 separate subjects, as well as on overall performance. Table 4 tracks net satisfaction ratings over the surveys from September 1992 to April 1995. It can also be shown that the survey ratings of officials tend to be significantly related to the survey ratings of government on the specific subjects for which these officials are responsible.

A typical SWS opinion survey includes not only tracking items (i.e., variables intended for time-series analysis) but also items on *contemporary topics*. An example of the latter is the issue of the ability of Philippine embassies and consulates abroad to help Filipinos in need in their areas, which was surveyed in April 1994 (Table 5). The survey showed that 14% of Filipino families have at least one member who has been abroad, that over one-fifth of such travellers have had occasion to need assistance while abroad, and that assistance was obtained in three-fourths of the cases. When the same survey contains items about various officials and also about contemporary topics, it becomes possible to discover statistical associations between the topical items and public opinion about the officials.

Table 1. Awareness and Performance Ratings of Government Agencies, Philippines, March-April 1995

	Aware	Satis- fied	Un- decided	Dis- satisfied	Net Satis- fied
National Administration in general	—	39	31	30	+ 9
Presidential Anti-Crime Commission	86	48	29	19	+29
Police in respondent's place	100	50	26	23	+27
Military in respondent's place	99	48	27	22	+26
Supreme Court	96	43	30	25	+18
Armed Forces of the Philippines	98	42	30	26	+16
Senate	97	38	34	25	+13
House of Representatives	87	37	34	26	+11
Bureau of Internal Revenue	97	38	29	29	+ 9
Philippine National Police	100	40	25	34	+ 6
President's Cabinet as a whole	85	28	34	34	- 6

Table 2. Net Satisfaction with Government Institutions (% Satisfied minus % Dissatisfied), Philippines, September 1992-March 1995

	Sep92	Dec92	Apr93	Jul93	Sep93	Dec93	Apr94	Aug94	Nov94	Dec94	Mar95
The national administration in general	+32	+31	+23	+31	+14	+24	+15	+14	+16	+17	+09
Mayor in R's place									+64		+59
Governor in R's place									+54		+41
PACC	+54	+53	+64	+63	+44	+56	+54	+44	+45	+44	+29
Police R's place	+35	+30	+32	+29	+21	+26	+32	+31	+29	+31	+27
Military in R's place	+35	+29	+29	+32	+26	+27	+34	+31	+29	+30	+26
Local Courts			+12	+16		+22					
PNP		+16	+19								
Supreme Court	+31	+24	+18	+23	+23	+29	+27	+29	+19	+17	+18
Senate	+34	+27	+20	+32	+21	+30	+25	+16	+18	+15	+13
House of Representatives	+25	+25	+21	+25	+16	+28	+21	+12	+14	+10	+11
BIR							+20	+11	+14	+8	+9
National Power Corporation			-40	-35	-41	+6	+9				
President's Cabinet as a whole							+16	+9	+12	+9	-6

Note: R = survey respondent



Table 3. Performance Rating of the Present National Administration on Specific Issues, Philippines, March-April 1995

	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied	Net Satisfied
Overall performance	39	31	30	+ 9
Free and peaceful elections	54	25	20	+34
Environment	57	18	24	+33
Work for peaceful society	43	26	30	+13
Livelihood	40	28	32	+ 8
Tell the Truth	40	26	32	+ 8
Funds for government projects	36	28	32	+ 4
Do what people want	36	29	34	+ 2
National security	36	27	35	+ 1
Justice	37	23	38	- 1
People empowerment	32	32	34	- 2
Foreign relations	33	25	40	- 7
Decide quickly	31	24	43	-12
Weaken insurgency	29	26	43	-14
Keep promises	28	28	43	-15
Budget management	26	27	42	-16
Decrease crimes	30	21	48	-18
Graft and corruption	26	19	53	-27
Protecting OCWs rights	25	17	56	-31
Inflation	22	20	56	-34

Table 4. Net Satisfaction with the Present National Administration, Philippines (% Satisfied minus % Dissatisfied)

	Sep92	Dec92	Apr93	Jul93	Sep93	Dec93	Apr94	Aug94	Nov94	Dec94	Apr95
Overall performance	+32	+30	+24	+31	+14	+24	+15	+14	+16	+17	+9
Reconcile w/ mil. rebels	+38	+37	+42	+42							
Human rights	+39	+38									
Taking care of env.	+25	+30	+28	+35							
Elections										+28	+34
Clean up environment								+43		+48	+33
Disaster relief		+58	+57							+29	
Discipline military	+31	+23									
Reconcile w/ the NPA	+33	+36	+39	+36					+22		
Local businesses	+24	+18	+17	+26	+7	+21					
Help worker	+11	+23	+11	+15	+5	+37	+20				
Help farmers	+16	+22	+15	+17	+9	+34	+18				
Foreign investments	+14	+7	+14	+14					+18		
Land reform	+19	+24	+21	+24	+14	+23	+17	+15	+16		
Go after tax evaders					+1	+13					
Work for peaceful soc.	+49	+44		+39	+31	+39	+31	+33	+24	+28	+13
Tax collection	+15	+19	+16	+12							
Livelihood	+24	+32	+24	+24	+15	+28	+21	+23	+21	+24	+8
Tell the truth	+27	+30	+20	+23	+17	+29	+13	+23	+15	+15	+8
Foreign debt	+1	+8									
Collecting tax fairly								-1	+3		
Do what people want	+26	+24		+23	+11	+18	+11	+13	+5	+10	+2
National security										+31	+1
Justice	+27	+26	+11	+16	+10	+23	+16	+16	+9	+12	-1
People empowerment	+16	+19	+8	+11	+2	+16	+4	+3	+4	+5	-2
Foreign relations	+28	+34	+27	+35	+24	+36	+21	+24	+26	+22	-7
Decide quickly	+18	+17	+12	+13	+6	+16	+5	+5	+4	+2	-12
Weaken insurgency	+23	+25	+20	+16	+8	+15	+5	+6	+4	-1	-14
Keep promises	+2	+10	0	0	-6	+10	0	-2	-6	-8	-15
Budget management										-7	-16
Decrease crimes	+26	+28	+9	0	0	+13	-3	-3	-14	-16	-18
Graft and corruption	+10	-1	-7	-6	-8	-4	-16	-14	-19	-23	-27
Protect OCW rights										+17	-31
Inflation	-7	-8	-24	-24	-42	-16	-35	-23	-25	-27	-34
Provide adequate elec.				-17	-35						



Table 5. Filipinos in Need of Government Assistance Abroad, Philippines, April 1994

	RP	NCR	ABC	D	E
Whether there are family members who have travelled to a foreign country					
Yes	14%	37%	38%	13%	4%
None	86	63	62	87	96
Whether family members while abroad ever were in need of assistance from Philippine Embassy/Consulate					
(Base: Those with family members who have travelled abroad)					
Yes	22	25	23	21	24
No	74	74	73	75	76
Whether the embassy/consulate was able to help					
(Base: Those with family members who needed Phil. Embassy assistance)					
Able to help	76	71	73	80	49
Was not able to help	21	29	27	20	0
Don't know	3	0	0	0	51

### 3. PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT PUBLIC OFFICIALS IN THE PHILIPPINES

#### Rating Presidential Performance

The most closely watched performance rating is, of course, that of the President. Data on this are available for three presidents. Table 6 shows the gross and net satisfaction rates of President Marcos in April 1984 and July 1985, which are the only national surveys in the SWS Survey Data Bank having ratings for Marcos. It shows that less than half were satisfied, and about one-fourth were dissatisfied, with his performance at that time. Given that freedom of speech was much impaired in the Marcos period after martial law was declared in 1972, it is advisable to interpret the large proportion of Undecideds and Don't Knows regarding Marcos as more *negative* than neutral. Beginning in 1986, after basic democratic institutions had been restored, interpretation of the middle answer as strictly neutral seems already appropriate.

The regional profile of the data shows that Marcos was much more popular in Luzon, especially rural Luzon, than in the Visayas and Mindanao. The socio-economic class and educational profiles – which are, of course, inter-correlated – show lower popularity among the upper + middle classes (ABC) and among the more educated, which is a very common pattern for politicians' satisfaction ratings.

Table 7 gives the profiles of the satisfaction ratings of President Aquino at the start and at the end of her term, while Table 8 gives the profiles for President Ramos at the start of his term and in early 1995. The time-trends of their net satisfaction rates, from 13 surveys during the Aquino period and 11 surveys thus far during the Ramos period, clearly shows an initial 'honeymoon' phase in net satisfaction, followed by up-and-down fluctuations around a broad downward trend (Chart 1). There is a negative relationship of net satisfaction to class evident for Mrs. Aquino, at the end of her term; however, this relationship is not much evident for President Ramos.

#### International Comparisons

From international experience, the erosion over time in public support for a president is a very common phenomenon, and therefore one should take care not to develop an over-anxiety about it. In the US, all post-war presidents experienced this erosion, with the notable exception of Eisenhower. Past President Bush, over 1989-92, had extremely volatile approval ratings; his record-high after the Gulf War proved to be a temporary interruption to the earlier downward trend, and he plunged into net disapproval throughout 1992 (Chart 2). [Note the Gallup Poll practice of using the term 'approval', which translates to 'sang-ayon' in Tagalog; SWS uses 'satisfaction' since our operative term is 'nasisiyahan' and not 'sang-ayon'.]

Table 6. Performance Rating of President Ferdinand Marcos, 1984-85

Percentages of Survey Respondents

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Net Satisfied	
	Apr84	Jul85	Apr84	Jul85	Apr84	Jul85
Philippines	47	44	24	25	+23	+19
Metro Manila	44	45	25	25	+19	+20
Urban Luzon	47	46	20	25	+27	+21
Rural Luzon	57	56	16	13	+41	+43
Urban Visayas	45	32	31	31	+14	+ 1
Rural Visayas	47	41	28	32	+19	+ 9
Urban Mindanao	34	33	29	36	+ 5	- 3
Rural Mindanao	40	36	34	30	+ 6	+ 6
ABC	na	38	na	32	na	+ 6
D	na	43	na	24	na	+19
E	na	48	na	25	na	+23
College dipl. +	38	39	26	30	+12	+ 9
H.S. dipl. only	41	43	30	22	+11	+21
H.S. unfinished	53	46	21	26	+32	+20

Notes: Missing percentages from 100% are accounted for by Undecided, Don't Know, No Response, etc. The source document is Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, The BBC Nationwide Sociopolitical Opinion Surveys of 1984 and 1985, August 1985, Pandacan, Manila. The surveys were conducted during April 3-24, 1984 and during June 15-July 22, 1985. Both surveys had samples of 2,000 respondents, drawn from a total of 280 urban and 60 rural clusters; the 1984 and 1985 samples were independently drawn. na = not available.



Table 7. Performance Rating of President Corazon C. Aquino, May 1986 and April 1992

## Percentages of Survey Respondents

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Net Satisfied	
	May86	Apr92	May86	Apr92	May86	Apr92
Philippines	60	38	7	31	+53	+ 7
Metro Manila	65	34	10	36	+55	- 2
Urban Luzon	59	33	6	31	+53	+ 2
Rural Luzon	48	33	9	25	+39	+ 8
Urban Visayas	62	42	6	37	+56	+ 5
Rural Visayas	74	49	4	28	+70	+21
Urban Mindanao	59	33	9	43	+50	-10
Rural Mindanao	62	49	8	27	+54	+22
ABC	62	34	6	37	+56	- 3
D	59	37	9	31	+50	+ 6
E	60	45	6	27	+54	+18
Male	60	40	8	33	+52	+ 7
Female	60	37	6	29	+54	+ 8
18-24	59	33	9	30	+50	+ 3
25-34	56	37	8	36	+48	+ 1
35-44	59	40	7	28	+52	+12
45 & above	65	41	6	31	+59	+10

Notes: Missing percentages from 100% are accounted for by Undecided, Don't Know, No Response, etc.

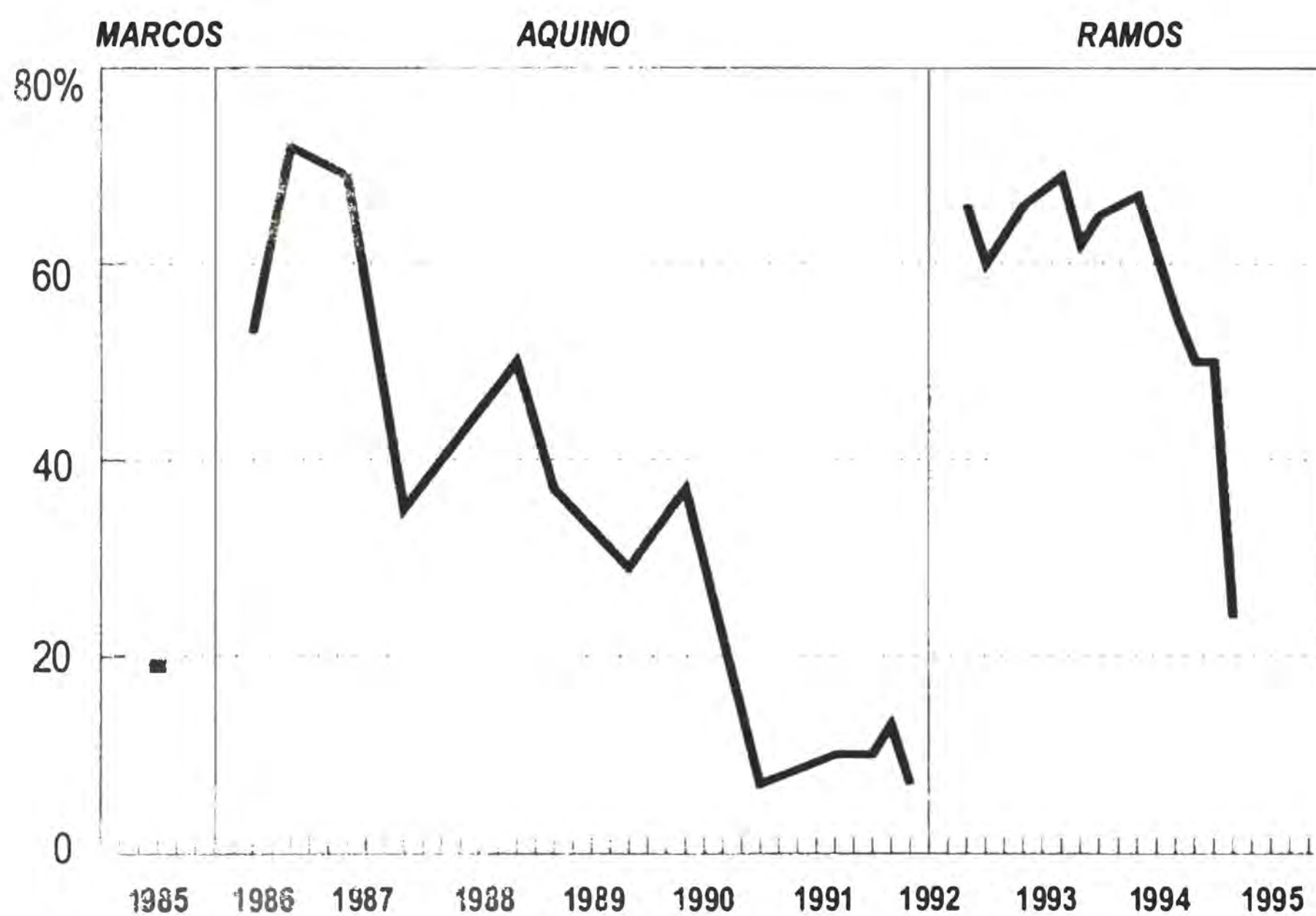
Table 8. Performance Rating of President Fidel V. Ramos, September 1992 and April 1995

Percentages of Survey Respondents

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Net Satisfied	
	Sep92	Apr95	Sep92	Apr95	Sep92	Apr95
Philippines	70	49	4	25	+66	+24
Metro Manila	66	41	5	29	+61	+12
Urban Luzon	77	50	3	22	+74	+28
Rural Luzon	66	54	2	21	+64	+33
Urban Visayas	62	41	5	36	+57	+ 5
Rural Visayas	72	45	6	31	+66	+14
Urban Mindanao	71	49	5	26	+66	+23
Rural Mindanao	73	58	7	21	+66	+37
ABC	66	48	5	26	+61	+22
D	70	49	4	24	+66	+25
E	72	51	5	28	+67	+23
Male	71	52	4	23	+67	+29
Female	69	46	4	27	+65	+19
18-24	74	47	5	25	+69	+22
25-34	70	45	4	29	+66	+16
35-44	70	47	4	26	+66	+21
45 & above	68	56	4	22	+64	+34

Notes: Missing percentages from 100% are accounted for by Undecided, Don't Know, No Response, etc.

**Chart 1: NET SATISFACTION\* WITH THE PRESIDENT**  
**Philippines, 1986-1995**



Net Satisfaction		
MARCOS	Jul85	+19
AQUINO	May86	+53
	Oct86	+72
	Mar87	+69
	Oct87	+35
	Sep88	+50
	Feb89	+37
	Sep89	+29
	Apr90	+37
	Nov90	+7
	Jul91	+10
	Nov91	+10
	Feb92	+13
	Apr92	+7

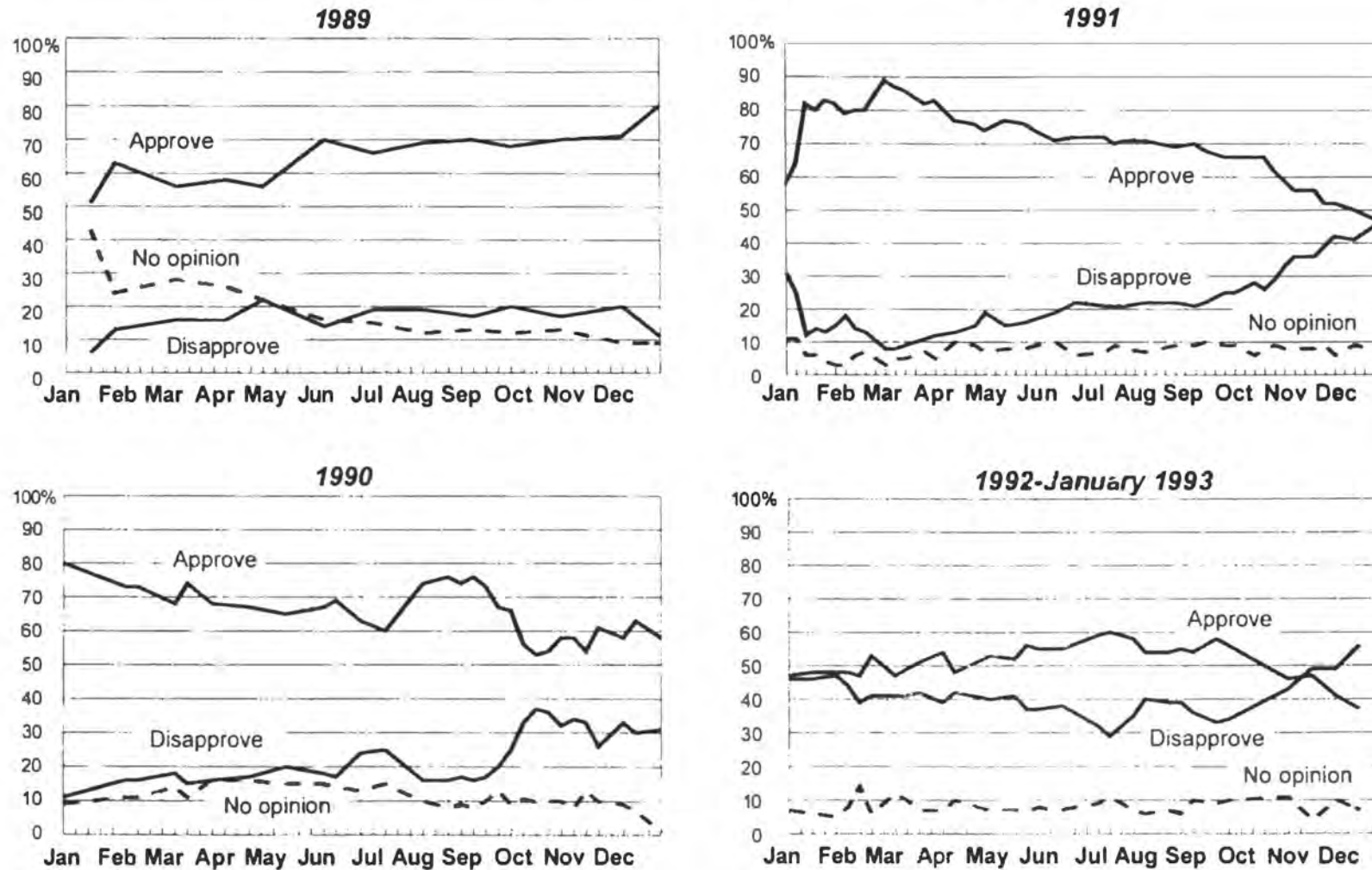
Net Satisfaction		
RAMOS	Sep92	+66
	Dec92	+60
	Apr93	+66
	Jul93	+69
	Sep93	+62
	Dec93	+65
	Apr94	+67
	Aug94	+55
	Nov94	+50
	Dec94	+50
	Mar95	+25

\*Net Satisfied = % Satisfied minus % Dissatisfied



Chart 2: APPROVAL RATING OF PRESIDENT BUSH  
United States, January 1989 - January 1993

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as president?



Source: Gallup Poll Monthly, January 1993

In Britain, on the other hand, Mrs. Thatcher was Prime Minister for a full decade despite being highly *unpopular* almost all of the time (Chart 3). Her re-elections in mid-1983 and mid-1987 occurred during very brief interludes when her net satisfaction [not 'approval'] was positive instead of negative. (Note that, in the British parliamentary system, what count in becoming and staying Prime Minister are (1) *partly popularity* with the general public, and (2) individual popularity *with the members of the ruling party*, rather than with the general public.)

### Ratings of Other Officials

When evaluating a president's rating, the proper comparison is with earlier presidents, or with presidents in other countries, at a similar stage during their term of office. Similarly, the present Vice-President, Senate President, and Speaker of the House should be compared, neither to the President nor to each other, but to their predecessors. Charts 4-6 show that the honeymoon-then-erosion phenomenon applies to such officials as well.

The SWS Data Bank has satisfaction ratings about many other officials from the Cabinet and other executive offices, the legislature, the judiciary, constitutional commissions, etc. The data include military as well as civilian officials. Again, it is more advisable to compare the rating of an official with that of her or his predecessors than with those of other officials with different functions. The higher the official, the more likely that data exist regarding the performance of predecessors.

The survey ratings of public officials have apparently played a role in their election fortunes, especially at the stage of competition for candidacy. The series of SWS surveys leading up to the 1992 presidential elections is discussed in my 1994 book, *THE PHILIPPINE SOCIAL CLIMATE*. Many of the senatorial candidates in the 1995 elections had high survey ratings of performance as public officials.

It must be clarified, however, that there is no evidence that candidates win elections because the surveys have influenced the votes of the electorate. It is the political players, not the electorate, who make use of surveys in making their decisions. Surveys are only an observation device: *they can listen to the public, but they cannot tell the public what to think or do*. The correlation between having a high satisfaction rating and subsequently winning an election is statistically very significant - not less than 60%, by my personal guess - but is by no means perfect.

### An Official and His Institution

Cross-tabulations show that the public's satisfaction with an official and satisfaction with the office which he heads tend to be highly correlated. This is

Chart 3: PERFORMANCE RATING OF PRIME MINISTER THATCHER  
Britain, 1979-1989

*Question: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way Mrs. Thatcher is doing her job as prime minister?*

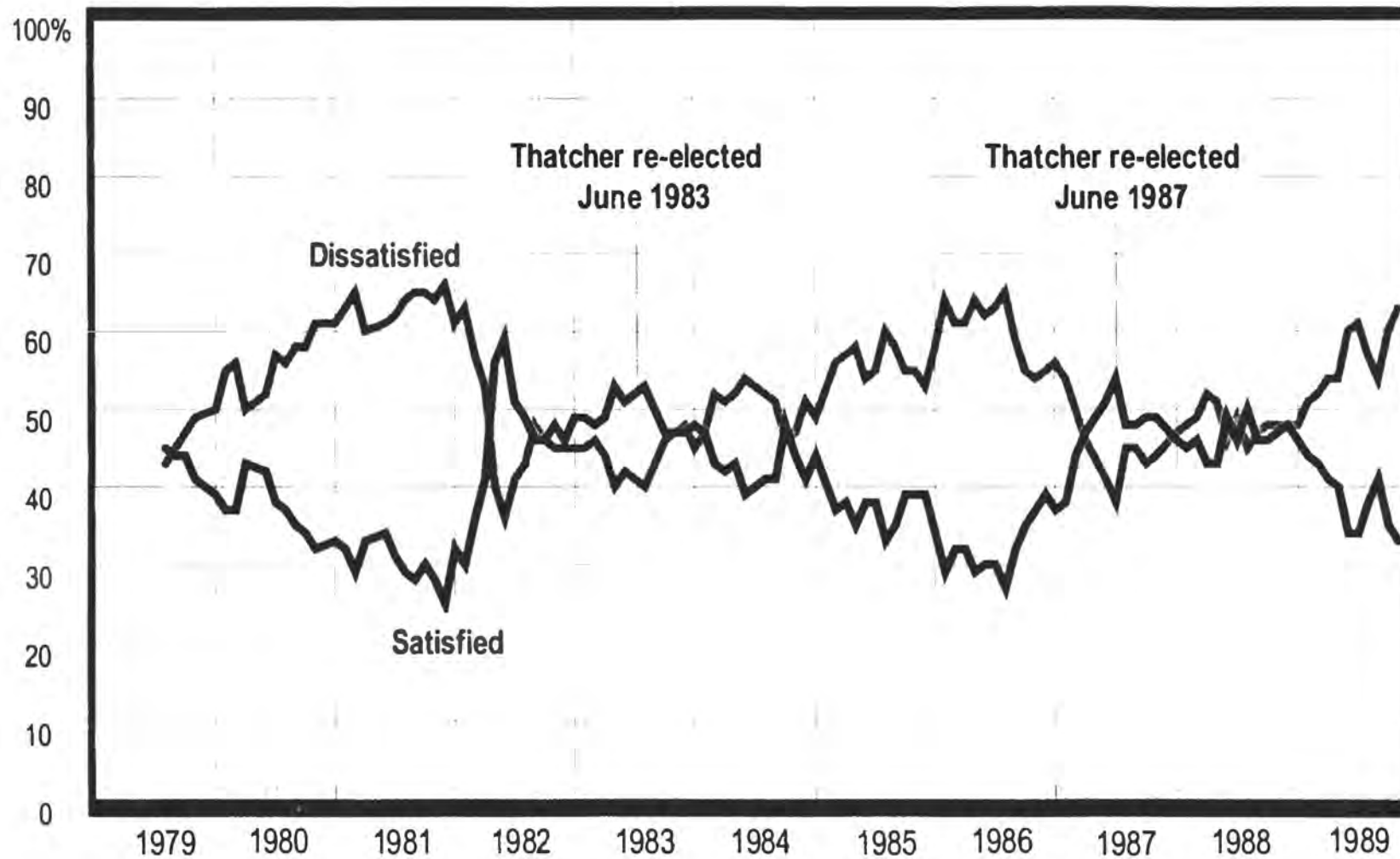
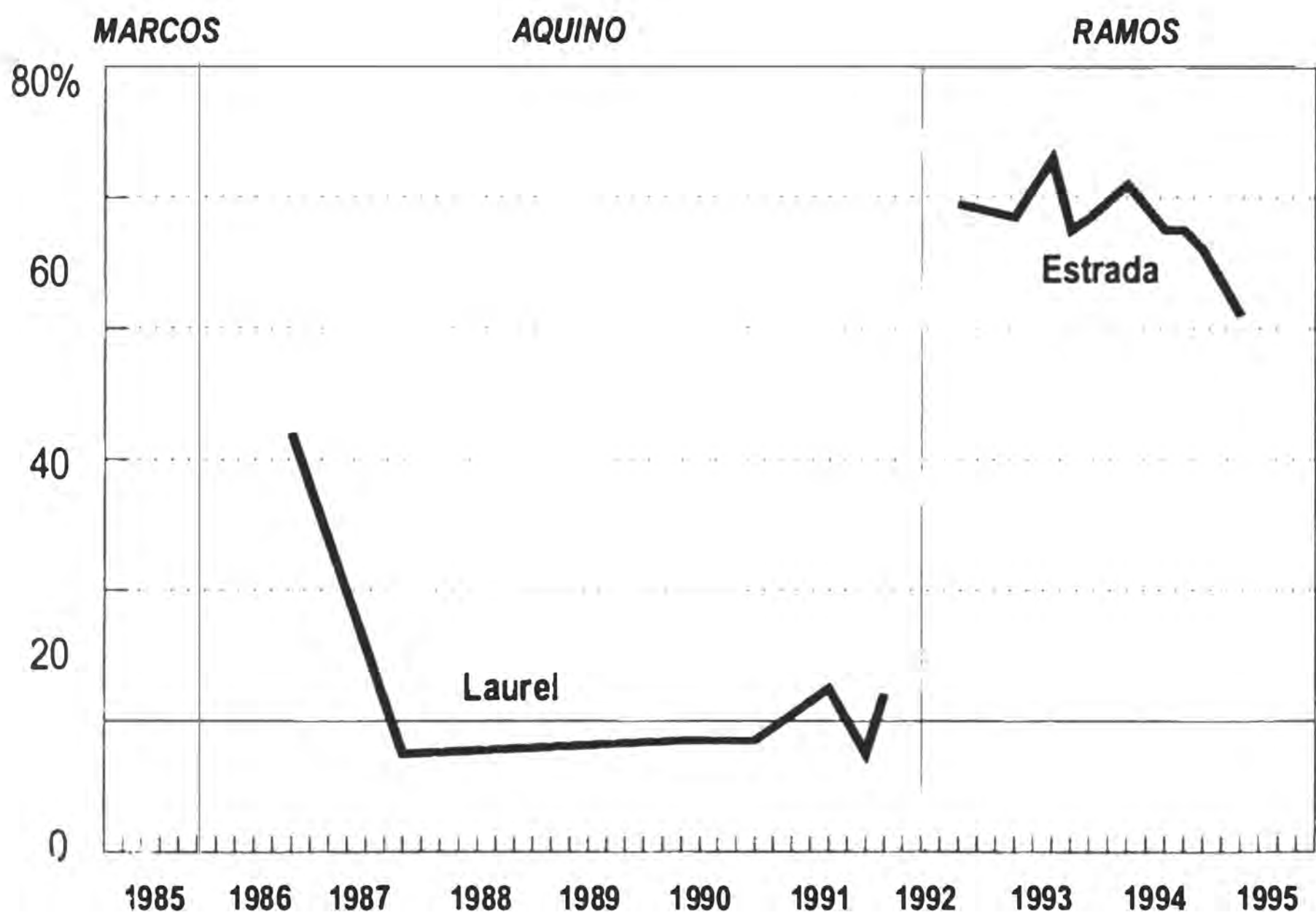




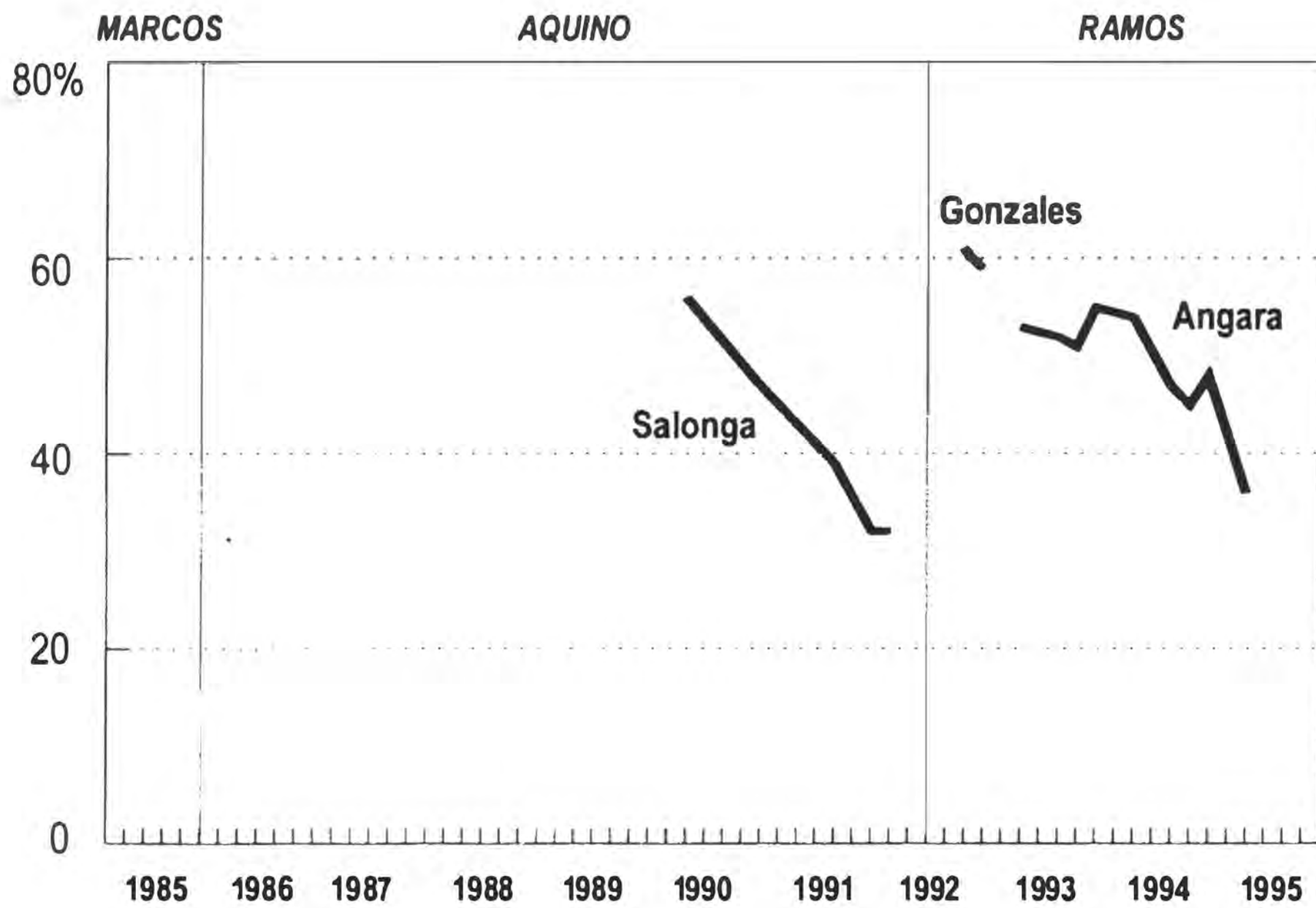
Chart 4: NET SATISFACTION\* WITH THE VICE- PRESIDENT  
Philippines, 1989-1995



Net Satisfaction			Net Satisfaction		
Salvador Laurel			Joseph Estrada		
AQUINO	Oct86	+44	RAMOS	Sep92	+79
	Oct87	- 5		Apr93	+77
	Apr90	- 3		Jul93	+86
	Nov90	- 3		Sep93	+75
	Jul91	+ 5		Dec93	+77
	Nov91	- 5		Apr94	+82
	Feb92	+ 4		Aug94	+75
				Nov94	+75
				Dec94	+72
				Mar95	+62

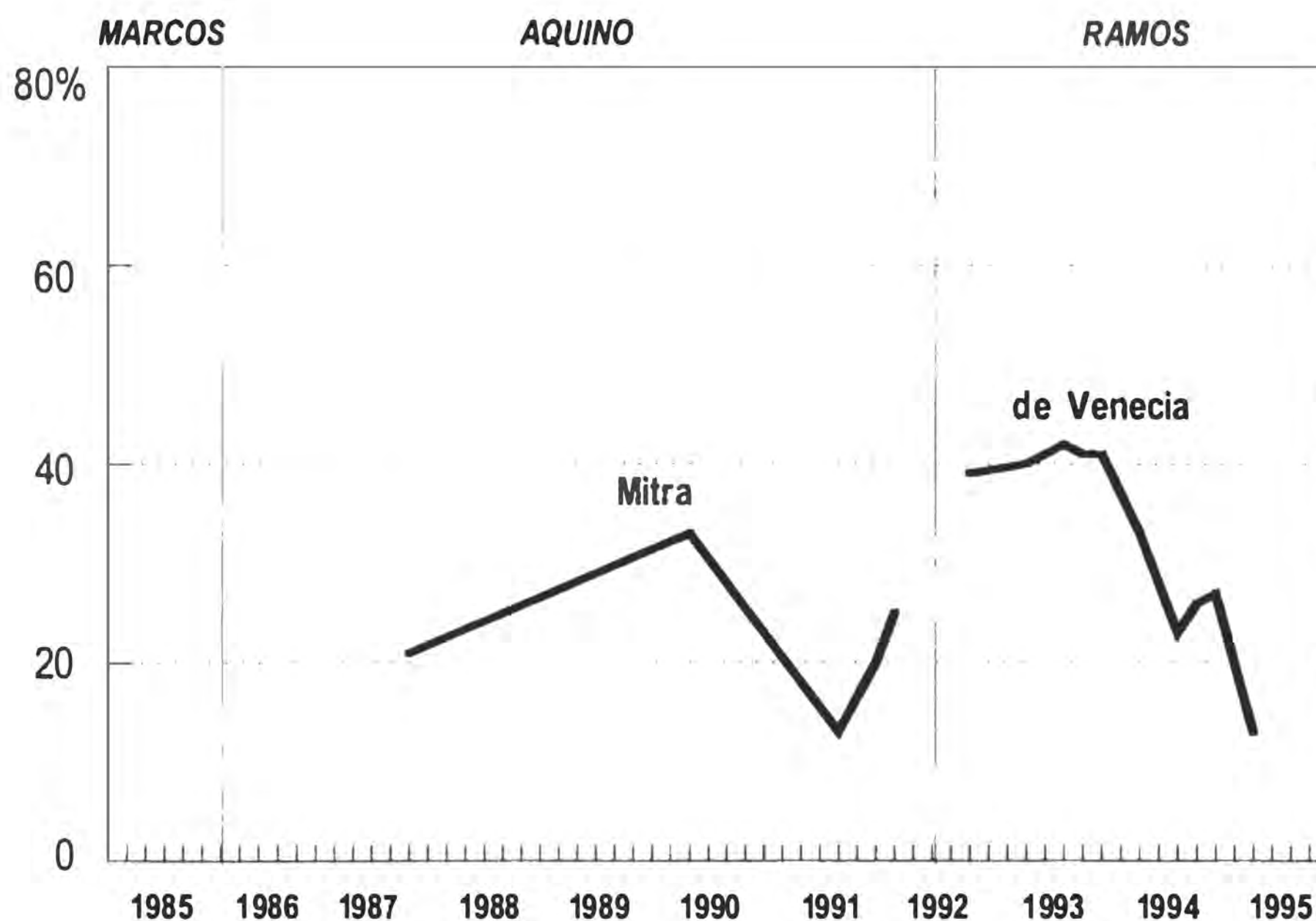
\*Net Satisfied = % Satisfied minus % Dissatisfied

**Chart 5: NET SATISFACTION\* WITH THE SENATE PRESIDENT  
Philippines, 1989-1995**



\*Net Satisfied = % Satisfied minus % Dissatisfied

**Chart 6: NET SATISFACTION\* WITH THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Philippines, 1985-1995**



Net Satisfaction			Net Satisfaction		
Ramon Mitra			Jose de Venecia		
AQUINO	Oct87	+21	RAMOS	Sep92	+39
	Apr90	+33		Apr93	+40
	Nov90	+23		Jul93	+42
	Jul91	+13		Sep93	+41
	Nov91	+20		Dec93	+41
	Feb92	+20		Apr94	+33
				Aug94	+23
				Nov94	+26
				Dec94	+27
				Mar95	+13

\*Net Satisfied = % Satisfied minus % Dissatisfied



illustrated in Table 9, which relates the performance rating of Vice-President Estrada to that of the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission. The upper part of the table shows that the net rating of Estrada is +84 among those satisfied with the PACC, compared to only +19 among those dissatisfied with it. The lower part shows that the net rating of the PACC is +45 among those satisfied with Estrada, compared to -40 among those dissatisfied with him. The table also reveals another common phenomenon: *citizens tend to be more generous in rating official personalities than in rating official institutions.*

### An Official and His Function

Reasonably enough, satisfaction with an official is also well-correlated with satisfaction in the performance of government in certain functions for which the official has some responsibility. To illustrate, Table 10 crosstabulates the 'popularity' of Interior and Local Governments Secretary Alunan, whose function includes overseeing the Philippine National Police, and the public's rating of the government's performance in fighting crime. It shows that his net satisfaction rating is +53 among those satisfied with the crime-fighting effort, and only +31 among those dissatisfied with it.

### A Contemporary Topic: The Flor Contemplacion Tragedy

Earlier this year, the tragic case of Flor Contemplacion, the overseas worker thought to have been unjustly executed in Singapore, was an event, tremendously publicized, which led the public to feel gravely disappointed in the seeming incapability of the government to protect the basic human rights of Filipinos abroad. This event led to the drastic fall, from consistently positive levels in previous years to a highly negative level in 1995, in the net satisfaction ratings of the foreign affairs and the labor secretaries, who were subsequently replaced, obviously to placate public opinion.

The Contemplacion case affected the public so deeply as to cause a visible across-the-board decline in their satisfaction with high government officials, including not only the cabinet officials directly involved, but also the President, the Vice-President, and many other high officials. Table 11 illustrates this cross-sectionally, showing that (a) people aware of the Contemplacion case gave President Ramos a net rating of +23 in March-April 1995, or 15 points lower than people unaware of the case, who gave him a rating of +38; and (b) among those aware of the case, those paying it much or very much attention gave him a net rating 16 points lower than those paying it a little or very little attention.

Table 9. Philippines, March-April 1995

Net Satisfied with Vice-President Joseph Estrada  
By Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with the Performance  
of the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission

Among those . . . with the PACC			
	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
The net rating of Vice-President Estrada is. . .	+84	+60	+19

Net Satisfied with the PACC  
By Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with the Performance  
of Vice-President Joseph Estrada

Among those . . . with the performance of VP Estrada			
	Satisfied	Undecided	Dissatisfied
The net rating of the PACC is. . .	+45	- 2	-40

Table 10. Net Satisfaction Rating of DILG Sec. Rafael Alunan by Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction with the Performance of the National Administration on Fighting Crime, Philippines, December 1994

	Net satisfied with Sec. Alunan
Rating of the national administration on fighting crime	
Among satisfied	+53
Among undecided	+48
Among dissatisfied	+31

Table 11. Net Satisfaction Rating of Pres. Fidel Ramos by Awareness of the Flor Contemplacion Issue and Degree of Attention Given to It, Philippines, April 1995

	Net satisfied with Pres. Ramos
Awareness of the Flor Contemplacion issue	
Among aware (99%)	+23
Among not aware (1%)	+38
Degree of attention given to the Contemplacion issue	
Among very big/big (81%)	+21
Among undecided (10%)	+24
Among very small/small (9%)	+37



#### 4. SUMMARY

**This paper has two main points:**

1. *Filipinos rate their officials generously, yet critically and responsibly:* granting them, as citizens in other democracies do, the grace of a 'honeymoon' at the start of their terms; and, when periodically assessing their officials, being consistent with their evaluations of the performance of the officials' institutions, the performance of government in the officials' area of responsibility, and specific contemporary events with which the officials could have been expected to be concerned.

2. *Public opinion surveys are part of a modern democracy, providing a guide both for public officials and for the general citizenry.*

#### REFERENCE

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