

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/do-citizens-preferences-matter/>

This video discusses the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia, signed between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), marking the end of over 50 years of civil conflict. The article examines the complex interplay of citizen and elite attitudes towards peace agreements, as well as the challenges in forming public opinion and the role of legislators in the process.

The peace agreement was initially rejected in a referendum but was later approved by Congress. The study highlights the importance of understanding how citizens and legislative elites form their preferences regarding peace agreements, especially in the context of security issues, where the connection between legislators and citizens tends to weaken.

The article's authors aimed to use an experimental design to analyze legislators' perceptions of public support for specific provisions of the peace agreement. They partnered with a Colombian NGO to conduct surveys to obtain direct insights from legislators, focusing on how well they understand citizens' attitudes toward various peace agreement provisions, including the creation of special congressional seats for conflict-affected areas.

Key findings indicate a misalignment between citizen support and legislative attitudes, often influenced by partisan lines. The study revealed that while citizens largely supported the provisions, legislators' support was polarized based on their political affiliation. Interestingly, providing legislators with accurate information about public support did not significantly change their positions.

Ultimately, the research underscores that while citizens play a critical role in the democratic process, their influence on policymakers, particularly in the context of peace agreements, is limited. The findings suggest a need for greater accountability and sensitivity among legislators to ensure that peace agreements are implemented effectively, highlighting the potential for conflict recurrence if such agreements are not honored. The research contributes to a broader understanding of the dynamics between citizen preferences, elite attitudes, and the stability of post-conflict peace arrangements.