

# Costa Ricans Split Ahead of CAFTA Vote

Angus Reid Global Monitor

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Adults in Costa Rica are almost evenly divided before this year's referendum on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), according to a poll by Universidad de Costa Rica. 50.2 per cent of respondents would ratify the deal, while 48 per cent would vote against it.

In May 2004, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua agreed to the CAFTA with the United States. The Dominican Republic followed suit in August. The agreement—which would reduce or eliminate taxes and tariffs on imports—must be approved by each country's legislative branch. To date, Costa Rica remains the only country that has not ratified the CAFTA.

Óscar Arias—a member of the National Liberation Party (PLN)—won the February 2006 presidential election with 40.92 per cent of all cast ballots. He was sworn in for the second time in May 2006. Arias supports the CAFTA.

On Apr. 13, Arias announced that Costa Ricans would be asked in a referendum whether they want the country to ratify the CAFTA or not. The plebiscite—which can only be binding if at least 40 per cent of all registered voters take part—is scheduled for Oct. 7.

On Aug. 19, former PLN presidential candidate Rolando Araya called on voters to get informed, adding, "If people have doubts about the CAFTA, they should not just vote 'Yes.' A lot of people have doubts, because this is too complicated a topic for everyone to have enough knowledge about."

## Polling Data

How will you vote in the referendum on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)?

Yes	50.2%
No	48.0%
Undecided	11.8%

*Source: Universidad de Costa Rica*

*Methodology: Interviews with 717 Costa Rican adults, conducted from Jul. 12 to Jul. 19, 2007. Margin of error is 3 per cent.*