



IRI Cuba Index

The latest survey was conducted February 29-March 14, 2012. Among the key findings from the survey:

- Cubans' access to nongovernment-sponsored information is still severely limited. Only *four percent* of Cubans reported having access to the Internet, while only eight percent reported using email, even infrequently.
- Cubans still overwhelmingly (nearly 70 percent) desire multi-party elections, free expression and other elements of political freedom and democracy.
- Cubans remain very concerned about their economic future. Meanwhile 70 percent do not have confidence that the Castro regime will succeed in resolving those concerns.
- Seventy-four percent of Cubans say their family's economic situation is the same or worse as it was one year ago. Additionally, 85 percent of Cubans say that have not directly benefitted at all from the Cuban regime's recent economic reforms.
- In a question measuring perceived levels of liberty in their country, 40 percent of Cubans think zero out of 10 of their fellow citizens practice free speech, while another 10 percent estimate that only one out of 10 citizens speak their mind.

Findings:

Economic Concerns

- Economic concerns remain predominant in Cubans' lives with more than half (51 percent) citing low salaries and high cost of living as their country's biggest problem. Another 16 percent of Cubans cited the country's double currency standard – which affects purchasing power on the island – as the biggest problem.
- While low salaries and the high cost of living remain a major concern among all age groups, the percentage of those citing food scarcity rose by nearly 10 points since IRI's last poll in [June 2011](#). According to many analysts, food prices in Cuba rose an average of 20 percent in the last 12 months, while the average salary remained only \$19 per month.
- Despite the Cuban regime's implemented reforms, including the authorization of select types of self-employment, liberalization of cell phone ownership and the leasing of land for local farming, only 23 percent of Cubans say their family's economic situation has improved from one year ago.

(more)

IRI Cuba Index – Page Two

Lack of Confidence

- Cubans have very limited confidence in the regime's ability to address problems and needs. Upon Raul Castro's arrival to office [in 2008, 27 percent](#) of Cubans felt that he could solve Cuba's economic problems. After three years and a series of reforms which have been highly publicized by international press, only *19 percent* now have confidence in the regime's ability to solve their biggest problems.
- In looking to the future, only 27 percent of Cubans believe the economic situation in Cuba will improve in the next year.

Reforms

- When asked if the government reforms have directly benefited them, Cubans overwhelmingly (85 percent) said no.

Desire for Change

- Seventy percent of Cubans desire fundamental political change in the form of a multi-party system, freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Over the last year Cuban authorities have intensified their efforts to crack down on individuals trying to exercise fundamental freedoms. There were more than 2,300 political arrests between January-March 2012, according to some reports.
- Nearly nine-in-10 adults between 18-29 years of age desire fundamental political change.
- Four-in-five Cubans (80 percent) support greater economic freedom, including private property rights. According to [The Wall Street Journal/Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom](#), Cuba has one of the world's least free economies, with only Zimbabwe and North Korea ranking lower.
- Approximately 55 percent of Cuban citizens do not believe that substantial change to their economic system is possible *without* corresponding political reforms.

Perceptions About Their Own Freedom

- Even as Cubans hope for changes to their political and economic systems, they acknowledge their inability to openly express hopes or ideas that run contrary to the regime's current policies. In a question measuring perceived levels of liberty, 40 percent of Cubans think zero out of 10 of their fellow citizens practice free speech, while another 10 percent of respondents estimated that only one out of 10 citizens speak their mind.

(more)

Cubans' Lack of Access to Information Technology

- Cubans' access to information technology is severely limited. Only four percent of Cubans reported having access to the Internet, while only eight percent reported access to email. These low figures – among closed societies only Zimbabwe and Burma have fewer citizens connected – exist despite expectations to the contrary when Cuba and Venezuela touted a new fiber optic cable in 2010 which promised to expand Cuba's Internet access and connection speeds.
- Despite Cuba's removal of the prohibition on cell phone ownership in 2008, only 21 percent of Cubans currently report having access to such devices. This figure represents the number of persons who may own or share a mobile phone with friends or family members. Independent researchers estimate Cuba's *mobile phone penetration rate* – the number of citizens who own phones and have accounts – to be approximately [10 percent](#). Haiti has the second-lowest penetration rate in the Americas at 35 percent – more than three times that of Cuba.

###