

Change Comes to Cuba

Citizens' Views on Reform after the Sixth Party Congress

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Special Report



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Executive Summary

Economic reforms are causing visible changes and raising expectations in Cuba, a Freedom House survey found. Self-employment is becoming more widespread, and more Cubans now prefer to work independently than for the government. Many Cubans welcome the opportunities that self-employment brings, but others are skeptical or even resentful about the changes taking place in Cuba.

This survey is based on field research conducted in Cuba after the Sixth Communist Party Congress, which took place in April 2011. A team of researchers trained by Freedom House conducted 190 interviews with Cubans about their perceptions and experience of change, their expectations for the future, and their access to information. The interviews were conducted from June 1 to 22 in six provinces of the country.

The main findings of the survey are as follows:

- 79 percent of respondents have noticed changes in the country over the last six months, particularly the higher number of *cuentapropistas* (self-employed people). “There are more *cuentapropistas* in the streets,” a respondent said. “There is one on every corner.”
- Licenses issued for *cuenta propia* activities have become easier to obtain: 69 percent know or have heard of someone who has applied for a *cuentapropista* license; of them, 87 percent said the application was successful (and 11 percent said the application was still in process).
- A majority of Cubans—63 percent—have a favorable view of the reforms. The benefits of self-employment were summarized by a retired man who now sells ice cream: “Imagine, I can make more money selling ice cream than I ever did as an accountant for the government.” The licenses issued for *cuenta propia* activities allow entrepreneurs to work legally. As explained by a man who sold CDs illegally for many years but recently obtained a license, “Now I can work without having to hide.”
- There is a growing sense of optimism since the last round of field research conducted by Freedom House in December 2010. Forty-one percent believe the country is making progress, as compared to only 15 percent in the previous survey. Moreover, expectations are rising: 30 percent (up from 17 percent in December 2010) expect their family’s economic situation to improve in the next 12 months, although 62 percent say it will be about the same.
- The reforms have, however, created a sense of insecurity among some Cubans. A woman from Santa Clara who works for the state said that “a lot of jobs are being cut off in the public sector; I see it every day where I work; and there is no place where you can put those people to work.”

- More Cubans prefer to work in the private sector than in the state sector. Forty-nine percent say that it is better to work as a *cuentapropista*, while 44 percent feel that it is better to work for the government.
- The risks associated with self-employment are discouraging for some Cubans. As an old *mulato* taxi driver explained, “by working on your own you can make a lot of money but it is uncertain, while working for the state you get a bad salary but it is stable.” Others lack the resources to start their own business. An 18-year old woman from Villa Clara said: “I would like to be a *cuentapropista*, but the problem is that I don’t have any money to start with. I think that those who start a *cuenta propia* must first have some family in the United States who sends them money.”
- The relative success of *cuentapropistas* is creating resentment among some Cubans, particularly among educated professionals. An economics graduate complained that “It bothers me that the guy who is watching your car right now and who did not finish middle school makes more money than I do and I have six years of higher education.”
- A growing proportion of Cubans want civil liberties. When asked what reforms they would like to see in Cuba, the largest number of respondents said they want increased freedom of expression and the freedom to travel. The most frequent responses to the question about desired reforms related to civil liberties as opposed to improved economic conditions, which topped the list of desired reforms in the last Freedom House survey.
- The vast majority of Cubans—92 percent—still get their news from government sources. Only 8 percent get their news from independent sources.
- While most Cubans are informed about major government decisions (80 percent of respondents have heard about the reforms), access to information about important international events is severely limited. Only 40 percent knew what happened to Egypt’s leaders, and only 36 percent knew what started the revolution in Tunisia.
- The Cubans who receive independent news are far better informed: 57 percent knew what started the revolution in Tunisia, as compared to only 23 percent of Cubans who get their news from government sources.

Introduction

The Sixth Communist Party Congress took place in Cuba in mid-April 2011, 14 years after the previous Congress and 50 years since the beginning of Socialism in Cuba. This Party Congress approved different measures that attempt to open the Cuban economy to more private business. The measures include reducing the number of state-sector jobs, expanding self-employment in certain job categories, allowing private businesses to hire employees, and allowing the sale and purchase of houses and cars.

This special report analyzes the results of field research conducted in Cuba after the Party Congress. Interviews were conducted among 190 Cubans in different parts of the island, covering their views about the reforms, expectations about change, direct experience with change, and access to information.

This is the fourth in a series of special reports on Cuba that Freedom House has published since 2008, and the second report that attempts to quantify the results of the interviews. It explores systematically the attitudes, opinions, and expectations that prevail in the country these days, as well as changes in citizens' perceptions as the country's transformation process gets underway. (The previous report was published in June 2011, and some of its quantitative results are compared to those obtained in this newer set of interviews). Given the difficulties of conducting probability-sample-based public opinion polls in Cuba, Freedom House's in-depth interviews fill a broad gap in research concerning Cubans' perceptions of their own and their country's future. They are for now our best approach to uncovering the state of public opinions and sentiments during such an important moment for the country.

These interviews aim to assess the impact of the Party Congress' decisions on ordinary Cubans and to delve in depth into Cubans' views on key issues, such as the economic and cultural transformation brought on by the liberalization of private business. Freedom House researchers were trained on conducting interviews in a challenging environment, where they are not allowed to publicly interview people and where some respondents feel uneasy answering questions about government decisions and about the country's future. Nonetheless, many Cubans were able to express freely their opinions on the changes announced by the Party Congress. As a young man from Santa Clara said, "I want to scream in the streets what I think about the country and its politics."

Methodology

In June 2011, Freedom House sent five field researchers to Cuba to conduct in-person interviews about the reforms announced during the Sixth Communist Party Congress, people's perceptions and expectations about real change, and their exposure to information. A total of 190 face-to-face interviews were completed following an informal, semi-structured format. A standard questionnaire of 31 items was used to guide the conversation-style interviewing. Some questions were open-ended, while others required a simple yes or no answer. All questions were coded to quantify responses, and most of them were also recorded in a qualitative form.

The respondents were selected in an informal way, avoiding Cubans in the surroundings of tourist areas or hotels. The sample of respondents is not a probability sample, which is difficult to obtain in Cuba, but it covers a wide range of geographical and social variation, making this an interesting cross-sectional study of Cuban society. The selection of respondents followed criteria based on age, sex, and urban-rural residence. Race was not considered in the selection groups, but there is a diversity of ethnicities in the interviews, as described in the paragraphs below. Researchers were sent to six of Cuba's 14 provinces to conduct their interviews: Ciudad de la Habana, Camagüey, Holguín, Pinar del Río, Santiago de Cuba, and Villa Clara. Interviews were conducted in different towns and locations in these provinces.

Because of the nature of the interviews, this special report analyzes two types of data: quantitative results that derived from the coding of responses; and qualitative analysis based on the more conversational style followed by researchers, who recorded verbal reactions and phrases, witnessed living conditions and experiences, and observed contextual surroundings.

Respondents to the set of 190 interviews had the following socio-demographic characteristics: 53 percent were male respondents and 47 percent were female. By age, 23 percent of the respondents were between 18 and 29 years old, 31 percent between 30 and 49 years old, and 20 percent were 50 or older (the remaining 24 percent did not talk about their age). In terms of ethnicity, about 55 percent of respondents were classified by the researchers as white, 20 percent as Afro-Cuban, and 25 percent as *mulato*. Interviews with respondents who live in urban areas represent 78 percent, while 21 percent were respondents from rural settings.¹

Researchers asked approximately 86 percent of all respondents about their religion: 40 percent said they are Catholic, 7.4 percent Protestant, 7.4 percent *Santería*, 7.9 percent a *creyente* or believer, 7.4 reported another religion, 14.7 percent said they are atheist, and 1.6 percent did not respond. The remaining 14 percent was not asked the question.

¹ The sample of Cubans interviewed by Freedom House interviewers is not a probability sample, so the results analyzed in this report are unweighted.

Interviewers asked less than half of the respondents about their level of education. Among those who were asked, 15 percent held a university degree, 9 percent had some college-level education, 39 percent had a high school-equivalent education, 9 percent had done technical studies, and the remaining 27 percent reported a lower level of education or none at all.

In terms of profession, 22 percent of respondents said they were professionals, and 10 percent students; the rest of them mentioned various professions, from housewives to drivers, nurses, security guards (*vigilantes*), hair dressers, musicians and artists, athletes, to name a few. At least one fifth of respondents were classified under the category of “other” professions. Occupational categories, as recorded by researchers, included respondents who do professional work (13.7 percent),² non-manual workers with supervising responsibilities (4.2 percent), non-manual workers under supervision (6.3 percent), specialized manual workers (10.5 percent), non-specialized manual workers (18.4 percent), and rural workers (3.2 percent). About 8.2 percent of respondents said they were retired.

Unless otherwise indicated, the quantitative analysis presented in the following pages is based on the effective percent of responses, that is, on valid percentages without considering respondents to whom questions were not asked or who did not respond. In some cases, given the context of the interviews, researchers were not able to ask every question during their informal conversations. At the end of the report is an Appendix detailing all quantitative results, including the number of responses in each category and the effective percent that they represent.

This report also compares some of the results with those obtained in a previous round of interviews conducted in December 2010 and January 2011.³ For practical reasons, and because the largest proportion of interviews were conducted in December 2010, we will refer to that round of interviews as the 2010 research. Those interviews formed the empirical basis for a previous Freedom House special report, and some of the questions were repeated in the new set of interviews conducted in June 2011. This report also builds on two previous Freedom House studies, which were based primarily on qualitative recordings of interviews.⁴

² The discrepancy between the percent of professionals (22%) and those who do professional work shows how several Cubans with university studies do not actually exercise their profession.

³ See Freedom House Special Report, “Real Change for Cuba? How Citizens View Their Country’s Future”, June 9, 2011. http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/102.pdf.

⁴ Freedom House, *Change in Cuba: How Citizens View Their Country’s Future* (September 14, 2008), <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=383&report=69> and Freedom House, *Another ‘Special Period’ in Cuba? How Citizens View Their Country’s Future* (March 25, 2009), is available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=383&report=78>

Research Findings

Perceptions of Change

Interviews conducted by Freedom House in Cuba show that a large majority of respondents know a great deal about the reforms announced during the Party Congress in April. About 80 percent of respondents said that they had heard about the reforms, while only 20 percent did not know what the Party Congress was about or what issues were discussed. As noted by a man who works in the production and distribution of books, “The information about reforms has been very good, they tell you about them on TV and you can read the newspapers. You don’t hear much about other things, but about reforms you could hear a lot.”

Respondents were asked which of the reforms they considered most important. By far, the most frequent response was the availability of the *cuentapropista* license or *patente*, a legal permit to conduct individual private business. Half of the respondents mentioned this as the most important reform discussed during the Party Congress. A medical doctor who recently changed his occupation to run a *Paladar*—a private restaurant—said that for him, “The most significant reform is the opportunity to work as *cuenta propia*; however, the government did not introduce this reform to benefit ordinary Cubans, but because it allowed them to charge taxes on new businesses.”

The second most important reform, according to 18 percent of respondents, is the opportunity to buy or sell property. About 8 percent pointed to loans and financial support for people to start their business, and smaller numbers of respondents referenced other economic issues, such as the liberalization of the economy, capitalism, economic measures, and support for the countryside. A young law student also mentioned the government’s elimination of the *tarjeta de racionamiento*, or food-ration card.

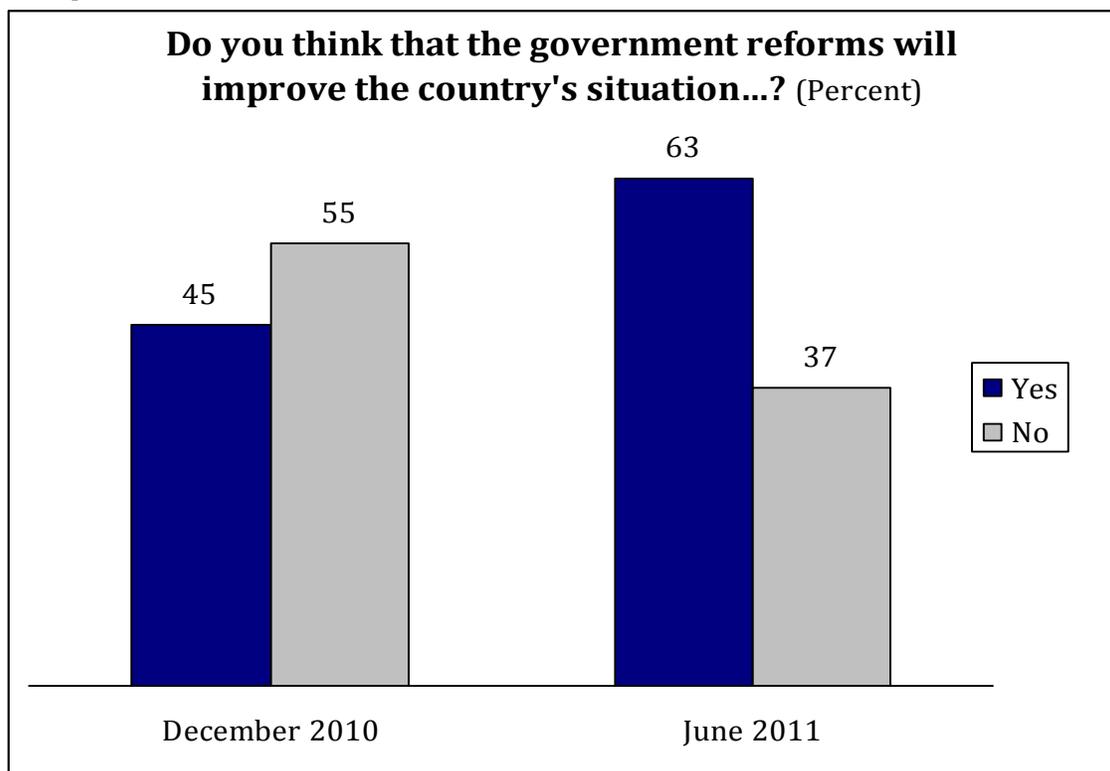
A large majority of Cubans interviewed for this study see change happening: 79 percent of respondents said that they have noticed changes in the country during the last six months. Most of those changes have to do with the higher number of *cuentapropistas* (self-employed people). A 32-year old construction worker who received his license in February this year said, “Now I have more work than ever, I don’t have to hide, and the best of all is that if I do things well I may qualify for a loan. This type of work is really new in a country where things change very slowly.” Another man who also started his own business recently said that today, “There are more *cuentapropistas* in the streets; there is one in every corner.” A psychologist for the military remarked that getting permits to work independently is now much easier than it was before: “Yes, the government gives the license to everyone that applies for it, as long as they meet all the requirements.”⁵

⁵ Cuba’s National Office of Statistics estimated the number of *cuentapropistas* in about 325,000, which represents 6 percent of the almost 5 million people in the workforce (see *Reforma*, September 5, 2011, page 23).

Researchers inquired what people thought about the government's explanations of the reforms. Before and after the Party Congress, such explanations were circulated in the form of pamphlets or tabloids. The quantitative results show that 44 percent of respondents had a favorable opinion about the government's explanations, as opposed to 26 percent who expressed an unfavorable view. The remaining 30 percent did not have an opinion on this issue. A retired man who used to work for the government and now sells mangoes argued that the official information about the reforms was abundant and well explained. "You only need to turn the news on to get good information about them," he said. A 30-year old man who sells pizzas noted the volume of information about the reforms, but claimed he can never be sure of the government's true intentions with the release of this information: "I never know what the real motivations are; the state usually thinks of nothing but itself."

The reforms announced during the Sixth Communist Party Congress seemed to have had a significant effect on Cubans' opinions and expectations. The perception that the country is progressing increased significantly in comparison to a previous set of interviews conducted by Freedom House six months earlier, and the proportion of Cubans who feel that the government reforms will improve the country's conditions turned from a minority to a majority-held view. According to the quantitative results of the study, 63 percent of respondents interviewed in June 2011 feel that reforms will improve the country's conditions, as compared to 45 percent who felt that way in the December 2010-January 2011 set of interviews (*see Graph I*).

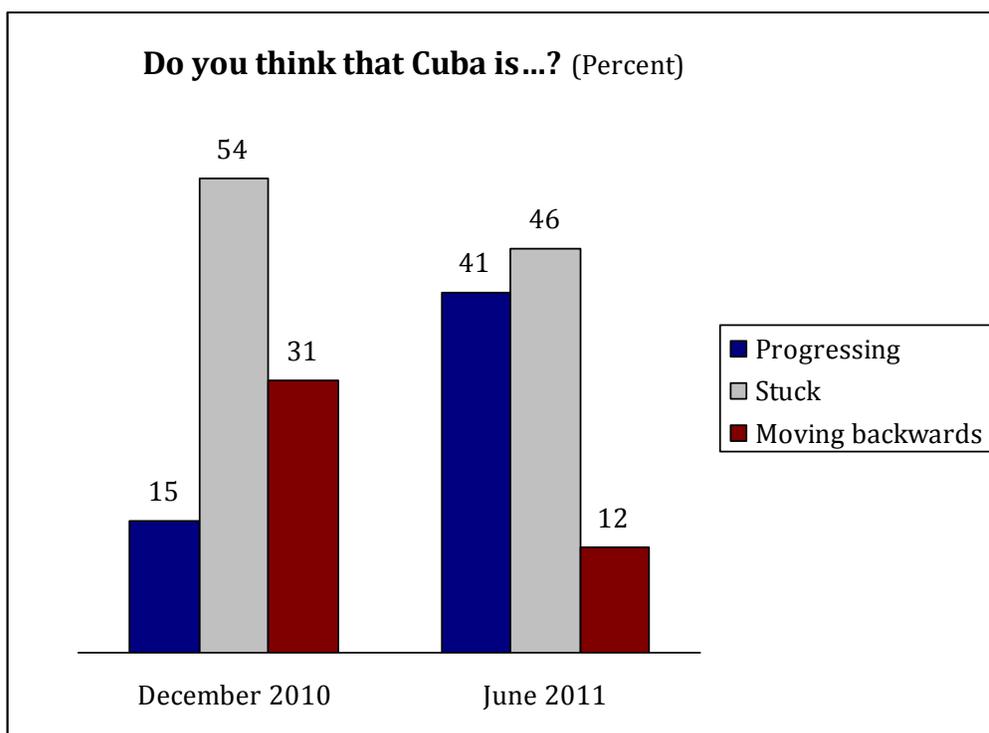
Graph I.



A young student of economics said that she believes the reforms are beneficial to the country: “These reforms should bring more incentive to work, and you should be able to get more money when you work harder.” An engineer who works for the state agrees with that: “The reforms are making things better; there are more jobs and more possibilities for Cubans to do their own business.” But he also sees some limitations: “I wish there were more chances for state workers like me to earn in *divisas* [convertible pesos].⁶ We studied a career and we work very hard, but we earn less money than people who work in tourism.”

According to the study, about 41 percent of respondents believe that the country is making progress, in comparison to 15 percent who shared that belief in the previous round of interviews conducted six months earlier (see *Graph II*). In contrast, the proportion of respondents who think that the country is moving backwards decreased from 31 to 12 percent. After the Party Congress, only 1 in 8 Cubans felt that the

Graph II.



country is moving backwards, compared to almost 1 out of 3 Cubans who shared the same feeling six months before. A businessman who lives in Pinar del Río said: “The two years that I have been in this business have been the best of my life; I am my own boss, I work at home, and I earn what I want.” A woman that recently transformed part of her house into a restaurant with the financial help of relatives who live outside

⁶ In the system of double currency in Cuba, *pesos cubanos* are usually referred to as the national currency, whereas CUC is the currency used by foreign visitors or tourists, usually referred to as *divisas*. One CUC is approximately 25 Cuban pesos.

of Cuba said: "Thanks to the reforms, now I have my own business and I can make more money than I did when I worked for the government; but even like this, life is very tough."

A woman who studies architecture believes that the country is progressing and the reforms are contributing to make things better, but she said, "They are still not enough." She explained that the *cuentapropista* licenses are limited to activities in which she has no interest: "I wish you could become a *cuentapropista* in other areas too; I am interested in constructing houses, for example. I would like to have my own business in association with friends who specialize in different aspects of building and selling houses." She hopes that perhaps the new law that allows people to buy or sell houses is a first step in that direction.

In general, Cubans have changed their position about the country's future and have adopted a more favorable perception of the situation in Cuba, a stronger sense of progress, and a positive feeling about what the reforms may bring. However, despite the perceived changes, the largest proportion of respondents, 46 percent, said that Cuba is simply not moving (either forward or backwards). The majority is still cautious about what change is taking place and what the change means for their future. A young nurse interviewed on the road between Santa Cruz and La Jagua agreed with that view: "We get the government's information, and they always say that things are going to change, but nothing ever happens."

A new *cuentapropista* who wears a tie while selling pizzas observed that in his case, "The reforms meant that I was able to open my business, and I am hoping that this helps my family to get ahead in life." His current optimism, however, is accompanied by some sense of uncertainty about where the country is heading: "I don't think there will be big changes very quickly; perhaps it will take a few more years."

Rising Expectations

Perhaps as a result of the reforms and the perception of progress in the country, many respondents said that they expect the reforms to have a positive impact for themselves and their families. Cubans identify among the most positive features of the reforms the move towards greater private entrepreneurship, the *cuentapropista* licenses, the opportunity to start your own business, and, more generally, the more favorable environment for private initiative.

A rural theater professor expressed optimism about the reforms: "Now there is more freedom to do things, and we are hoping that this increases the number of jobs and the opportunities for young people." However, she also commented on the fact that the state is cutting many jobs at the same time that it is opening the possibility for people to work on their own.

A lawyer that works for the state giving legal advice to agricultural workers reported some positive changes in her job: "We just signed a contract with a cooperative that

allows them to sell their harvest in the event that the state stock office is not able to gather it. Before, agricultural producers (*campesinos*) wasted entire harvests without being able to do anything." She also pointed out that many people in this same cooperative now have a license to sell produce on their own.

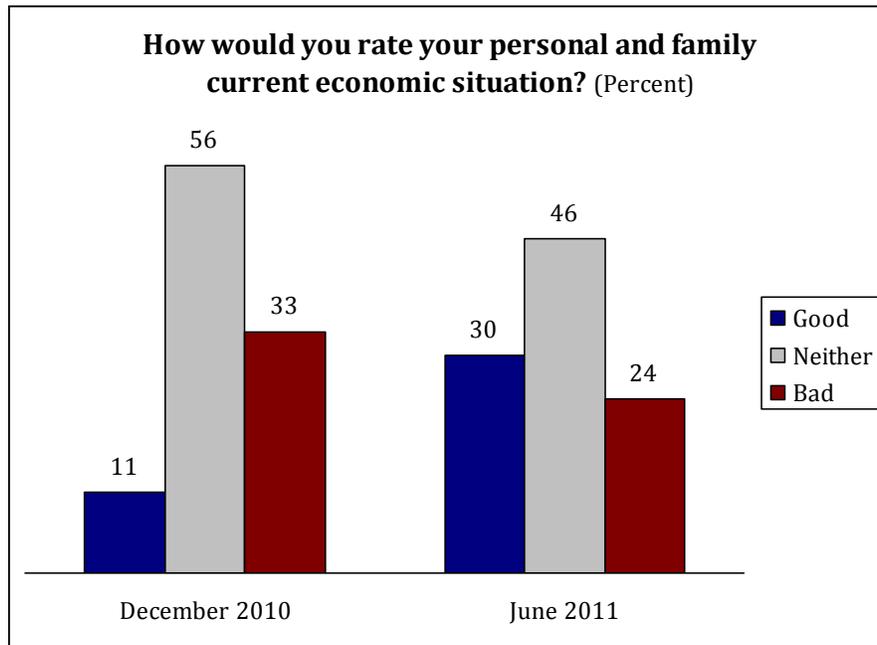
Expectations about the changes in Cuba, however, are mixed. Almost half of respondents (47 percent) said that they do not expect the reforms to have an impact in their lives. A young nurse, for example, spoke about her experience with the lack of resources in the hospital where she works: "There are not enough resources to work in the hospitals; we keep going only because human capital is very big and we always try to do our best, but the reality is that our facilities are in a much deteriorated condition."

Skepticism about respondents' personal or family future is mainly based on economic hardship. The quantitative results show, for example, that optimism about the future (both for the individual and for the country) is mainly expressed by those respondents who say that their current economic situation is good. Conversely, those who rate their current economic situation as bad are more likely to express pessimistic views about the future. This research shows that economic difficulties represent the main challenge for 66 percent of respondents. Added to the six percent who mentioned specific work-related problems, more than two-thirds say that their economic situation is the main adversity they face in their lives, as compared to only 8 percent who mentioned family problems, for example.

A woman from Santa Clara who works for the state in a social security center said that her economic situation is very bad and is getting worse: "Things are getting more expensive and the government has taken some things out of the *tarjeta*." She expressed a similar concern about the country's economic situation: "A lot of jobs are being cut off in the public sector; I see it every day where I work, and there is no place where you can put those people to work." She is also rather pessimistic about the future. In the next year, she said, "things will be the same; no, let me see, they will be worse. Prices will continue rising, there will be less jobs, and there will be almost nothing left in the *tarjeta*."

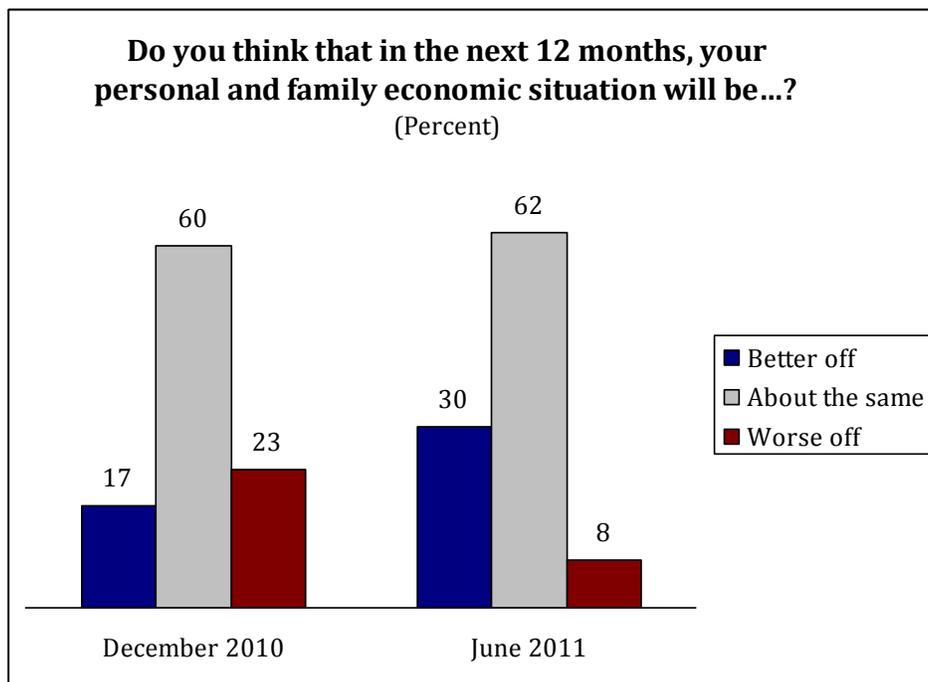
Despite a broad sense of economic difficulty, a growing number of Cubans say that their family's current economic situation is good. The portion of respondents who consider their family's current economic situation good increased from 11 percent in December 2010 to 30 percent in June 2011 (*see Graph III*).

Graph III.



Moreover, expectations for improved economic conditions have grown: 30 percent said that they expect their family's economic situation to get better in the next 12 months (compared to 17 percent who gave that answer in the previous study); and only 8 percent said that their economic situation would get worse (compared to 23 percent before, *see Graph IV*).

Graph IV.



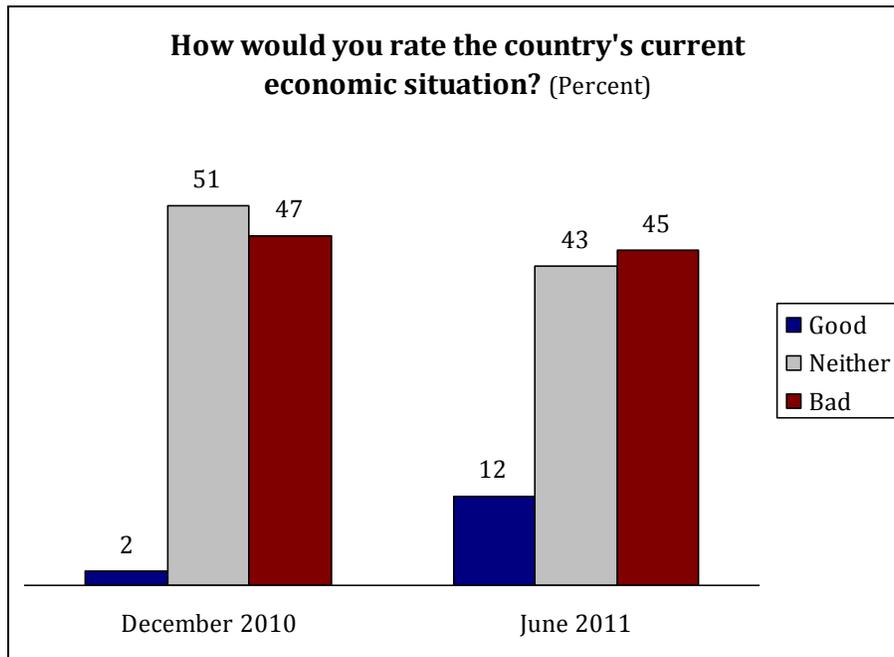
A man in his fifties who changed his job as a state accountant to sell ice cream in the streets as *cuenta propia* said that he expects to earn more money this way. "Imagine, I can make more money selling ice cream than I did as an accountant, and ice cream costs only one peso each." He said that he was able to open his own business thanks to the reforms, and with his wife's salary as a state employee, he argues that they are doing fine. In fact, his expectation is that with his new job, they will do even better. "Hers is a small salary, but it is secure, and my own business can actually be very good, all I need is a little bit of luck."

Despite the increasing optimism among several respondents about their personal economic situation, most respondents still feel that things have not changed for them. For example, 77 percent said that their economic situation was the same now as it was 12 months ago, and 62 percent said that their economic situation would not change in the next 12 months. While optimism has increased, it still is a sentiment shared by a minority of Cubans. The large majority do not feel that there has been any change in their personal or family economic situation, or that there will be any change in the near future.

A man from Santa Cruz complained that in fact things are getting worse: "There is no work or any opportunities to get ahead in life." He is now working as *cuenta propia*, and he thinks that the reforms may help, but Cuba is stuck (*estancada*) and nothing is getting better. He believes that "everything would have to change, but that's not going to happen because we have some old people hooked to power (*aferrados al poder*)", referring to the Castro brothers without mentioning their name.

Similar observations were made in response to questions about the country as a whole. The proportion of respondents that feel that the country's economic situation is good was 12 percent (up from two percent six months earlier), but the proportion that feels that the situation is bad stayed roughly the same, at 45 percent (*see Graph V*). Public sentiment still reflects a sense of difficulty and skepticism about the country's economy, despite the relative enthusiasm with which the reforms were received among the Cuban population.

Graph V.



The study shows that a large majority of people (72 percent) said that they have not noticed any change in the country's economic situation during the last 12 months. A lower percent, but still a majority (55 percent), said that the economy would remain the same over the next twelve months. Accordingly, 29 percent of respondents expect the economy to improve in the coming year, and 16 percent believe it will actually worsen.

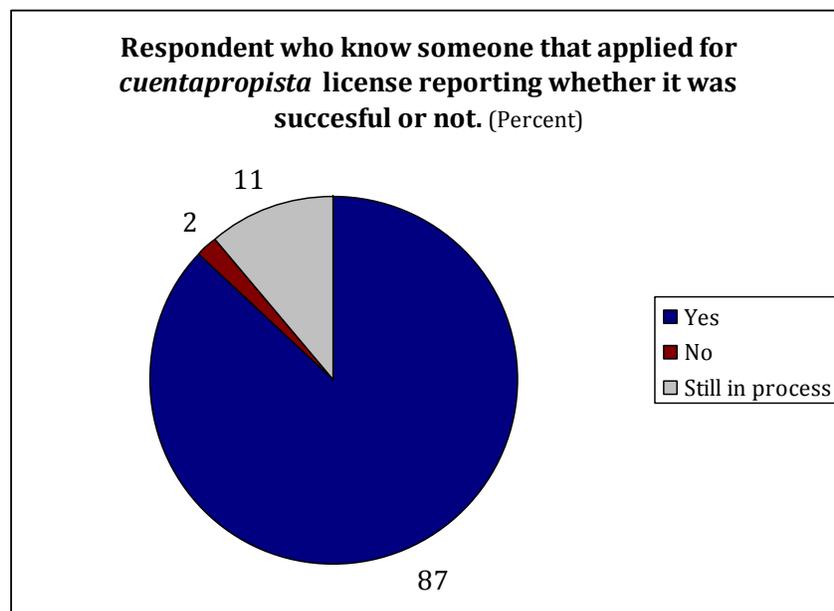
Some *cuentapropistas* even complained about the introduction of more licenses and the move towards private economic activity. A 50-year old woman who rents rooms in her house in Ciudad de la Habana argued, "The bad economic situation we find ourselves in cannot be resolved with masses of people working in the streets. Things are getting worse by the day. Those of us who rented our houses to tourists before the reforms now face excessive competition. There are now *casas de renta* everywhere in Cuba." The woman also expressed concern about the taxes she has to pay to the government, regardless of how well or badly she does: "Just worrying about those taxes gives me a permanent headache; I don't know how all this will end up."

Experience of Change

In addition to asking about perceptions of change, the Freedom House interviews also inquired about the extent to which Cubans have had a direct experience with change. The responses to this question are very revealing. For example, 69 percent of respondents said that they know or have heard of someone who applied for a *cuentapropista* license. Many respondents are impressed with how easily some people have obtained their license and started their business.

Interviewers asked the respondents who said that they know someone who applied for a *cuentapropista* license which type of business he or she applied for. About 33 percent said that the person applied for a license for a food business; 16 percent said they asked for a license for transportation; 6 percent mentioned a license to sell household products; 4 percent mentioned a license to be hired by someone; and the remaining 10 percent (to add up to 69 percent) mentioned a license for other types of activities. Impressively, 87 percent of those who know someone who applied for a license reported that the application was successful, whereas only 2 percent said that the person's effort did not succeed, and 11 percent said that the license was still in process (see Graph VI). The government appears to have granted the vast majority of applications for licenses.

Graph VI.



A woman from Santa Clara who works selling rum and tobacco for the state said that in her view, the number of *cuentapropistas* has grown over the last few months: "You can see them everywhere," she said. A man wearing a tie who sells pizzas in Villa Clara confirmed this view: "There are many more *cuentapropistas* in the streets, as you can see, there is one on every corner."

Virtually all respondents (98 percent) said that it is easier to apply and obtain a *cuentapropista* license today than it was six months ago. But several respondents pointed out that the main challenge is having the money to start your own business. A woman who works in a beef factory (*embutido*) in Camagüey said that she would like to have access to credit so she can start her own business: "If I had the money to start a business, I would prefer to work independently."

Cubans who have obtained a *cuentapropista* license welcome the fact that they can now undertake their business legally. A young man from Havana with a university degree, who is now driving a *bicitaxi* (a bicycle taxi), said, "I was working illegally for two years, but I have recently obtained a license, something that was very difficult to do before." He believes this change will help people run their own business and get ahead with their lives. A 40-year old man who travels often selling leather products explained that "I make more money now than I did before, but the difference is not that big, except that I feel better because I do this legally; I feel that my work is respected and it is a good way to make a living. Of course, now I have to pay taxes, a few hundred every month, but before I had the risk of receiving a fine of more than one thousand pesos, so financially it is about the same. Well... it is better now because I am calmed and no one will try to give me a fine for doing something illegal."

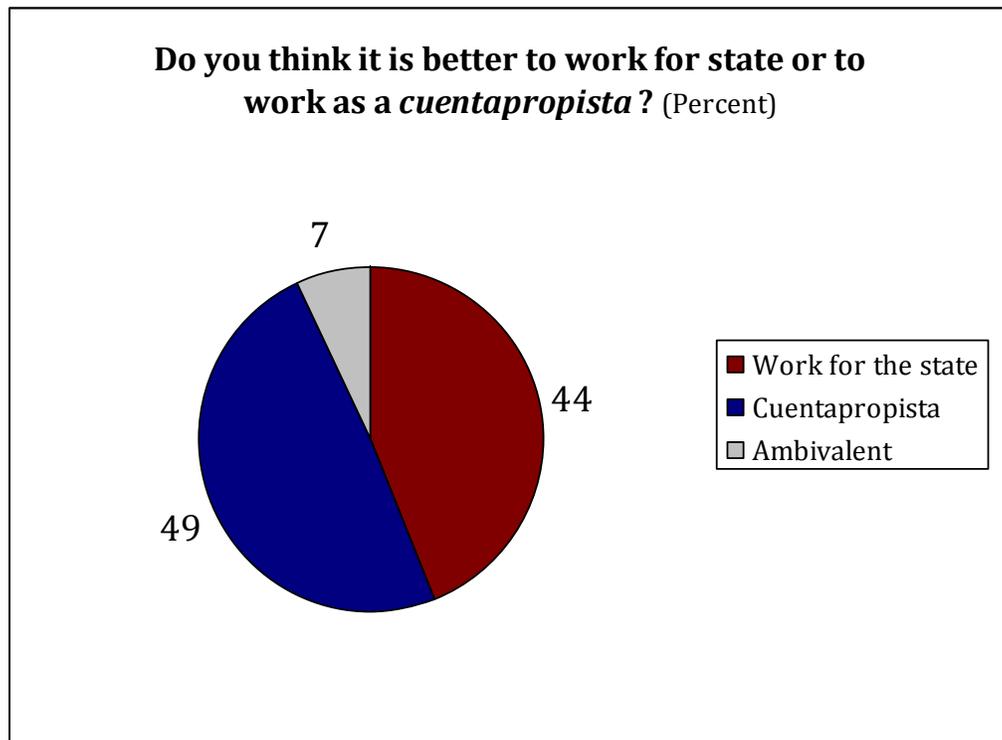
Nonetheless, several respondents suggested that illegal activities are still very common. An illegal taxi driver from the Havana, for example, said the following: "On the one hand, the government tells us do things a certain way; yet, in practice, they force us to do things differently. I know people that have obtained a license, but have reached the point of giving up their license because their business is not enough to survive on." I personally prefer to continue like this, freely, with no license. Although we illegal workers are watched more closely, I prefer to give some money to the guard from time to time instead of paying the obligatory fee to the government." Several respondents mentioned that the government is in fact forcing some individuals to get a license. A woman from Bailén, for example, reported that she has always worked making bread, and she was recently pressured by a supervisor to obtain a license. "When you work for the government," she said, "you get little money all the time. But when you work on your own, sometimes there is money and sometimes there is not. If that is the government decision, what am I going to do? I cannot take the risk of not complying."

Freedom House also asked respondents about their experience with buying or selling property. This experience, however, was very limited at the time of the interviews. Asked whether they or their family or friends had bought any property since the reforms were approved, 99 percent of respondents said no. Similarly, when asked whether they or their family or friends had sold any property, all respondents said no. However, 10 percent of the respondents said that they were planning to buy some property, and 14 percent said that they were planning to sell.

The License Divide

More Cubans prefer to work in the private sector than the state sector, but views about the benefits of *Cuentapropista* licenses are sharply divided. Asked about what is preferred, working as a government employee or working as a *cuentapropista*, 44 percent feel that it is better to work for the government and 49 percent say that it is better to work independently as *cuenta propia* (see Graph VII).

Graph VII.



According to the quantitative results of the interviews, preferences for being a state worker are more common in the rural areas and among women, older respondents (50 years or older), Afro-Cubans, individuals with middle levels of education, and those who perform non-manual work under supervision. Almost conversely, preferences for independent work are more noticeable in urban settings, among men, in the middle-age category (30-49 year olds), among white Cubans of European descent, among professionals but also housewives, among those who perform non-specialized manual work and traders (*comerciantes*), and, interestingly, among the most and the least educated, which illustrates the diversity of entrepreneurial activity and expectations derived from *cuentapropismo*.

One of the reasons opinions are divided has to do with the risks and benefits of private economic activity as opposed to the low but secure pay from working for the state. Many state employees express a risk-averse attitude towards *cuenta propia*. An old *mulato* taxi driver illustrated this very succinctly: "By working on your own you can make a lot of money, but it is still very uncertain; working for the state you get a bad salary but it is at least stable and I have to take care of my family." A medical doctor from a rural area also acknowledged that "If I had my own business I would make more money than I do as a medical doctor, but my work as a doctor is much more interesting and I have the chance to help other people."

The opposite point of view, that it is better to work on your own, was also well illustrated by several respondents. A young woman who has her own coffee shop said that "Before it was better to be a state employee because it was more secure, but now

with the reforms, being a *cuentapropista* also gives you some security. We *cuentapropistas* already get social security and pensions.” A retired 60-year old teacher said that “I always worked for the government and the security there is good, but the salary is not good for anything; food has gotten very expensive. That’s why I think that being an independent worker is better; you can try to improve your life on your own.”

Another reason behind the opinion divide on *cuentapropistas* has to do with the perception that having your own business requires more resources that not everyone has, thereby contributing to the creation of a more noticeable class system. A woman from Santa Clara who works for the state taking care of restrooms said that she sees many more *cuentapropistas* but she does not know any of them. She acknowledged that it is easier to get a license today but that those who apply for it represent a different type of people. “These are two different worlds”, she said, “I do not belong to the *cuentapropista* world; that is a different kind of people, you need to be rich to be able to have a *cuenta propia*. Among the people I know, nobody works in that.”

When asked what kind of reforms she would like to see, an 18-year old woman from Villa Clara answered without any hesitation: “I would like to be able to become a *cuentapropista* even if I don’t have a lot of money to start.” She thinks that being a *cuentapropista* is much better, but she does not think she can become one. “The problem is that I don’t have any money to start with,” she said. “I think that those who start a *cuenta propia* must first have some family in the United States; that way they can get enough money from them to open a business.”

A third reason for the opinion divide on *cuentapropismo* is the view that the jobs that people with licenses are doing lack pride or dignity, and that the new system contributes to higher social inequalities. This view is expressed primarily by educated professionals who are upset by less educated people who are doing better than them. A woman who works for the state as a psychologist says that “*cuentapropistas* earn more money, but there is no pride in their work, which usually requires little skill or qualifications. There are already many people in tourism that work humiliating themselves to get some CUCs.” She believes that the government reforms are not improving the country’s condition: “They are creating a new elite of people who work with the tourists. There is nothing wrong with what they do; it is the system that works badly. Someone who works as a tourist guide in the street may make in one day of tips what I make as a doctor in a month. You cannot motivate your children to study like this,” she said while looking at her 15-year old daughter nearby. “The system is creating new inequalities,” she added.

A young medical student whose father is a chemical engineer and brother is a *cuentapropista* without a license (and therefore illegal), emphasized the differences between the two jobs in her family: “My brother makes more money with his stupid things than our father does. The problem is that you can only be a *cuentapropista* in ridiculous things like selling ice cream.” A medical doctor interviewed near Santa Clara said that he believes the reforms are in some respects improving the country

while in some other respects they are not. When asked if these reforms were having a positive effect, he answered: "Yes, because they represent a little liberalization. No, because they are creating a new rich class that does not deserve that situation; they have not studied, and they are only rich because they are just lucky to be in tourist zones. This does not give people any incentives to study and will lead us to a decline in our human capital".

The sense of growing social inequalities in Cuba is illustrated vividly by the experience of a teacher interviewed near Villa Clara. She recently was offered a job in a museum; she loves it and feels that she has the vocation for it; she knows a great deal of history, and she makes sure to transmit her professional pride to her 10-year old daughter, for whom she "works very hard everyday." But, she also feels that state employees have a very difficult economic situation nowadays, and notices the "class differences that are growing between people who receive remittances and are able to buy nice things for their children and those who do not. Some of us do not have any family outside and do not receive any help, but my daughter compares herself to her classmates (*compañeritas*) who do; she wants a doll and I have to keep telling her to wait until next month, and every month is like that."

The Freedom House research indicates that the expansion of private markets in Cuba is causing resentment among some segments of Cuban society, particularly educated state employees who feel overshadowed by the new entrepreneurial activities.⁷ An economics graduate who works as a coordinator in a hospital and is studying for a second degree in law expressed this resentment: "Tourism is creating new social classes," he said, and noted that their rewards are not based on effort or educational level. "It bothers me that the guy who is watching your car right now and who did not finish middle school [*secundaria*] makes more money than I do and I have six years of university education. When I finish my law studies I will have twelve years of higher education, and those who work in tourism will still be making more money than me, only from tips, without really doing anything."

Despite his resentment at the lack of merit of what he considers inferior occupations, he says that he does not complain about the economic situation: "Generally, I believe that as a Cuban I am richer than anyone because I receive health care, and education, and a house; everything is free and we have no crime. If you compare me with any person from Latin America, I am rich, because security has no price.⁸ Of course, if you compare me with *jineteros* [hustlers], I feel economically poor, but I have things that they don't: education, a cultural level and dignity". He adds that "*Cuentapropistas* make more money, but their jobs are boring and have no pride; forgive my expression, but it is as if they prostitute themselves for the tourists."

⁷ Such resentments are similar to those experienced by education professionals in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. See Jennifer Patino, *Consumption and Change in a Post-Soviet Middle Class*, Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, and Chicago: Stanford University Press, 2008.

⁸ Another respondent, a medical doctor in a rural area, also made the comparison between Cubans and the rest of Latin Americans: "The Cuban poor live in better conditions than the poor from any other Latin American country. The problem is that we are all poor in Cuba".

A 50-year old woman who organizes state restaurants expressed the hope that the increase in *cuentapropistas* and private economic activity, which she welcomes, will not undermine the socialist system. “We should take the best of capitalism and bring it inside the Socialist system,” she said. “Health and education should continue to be free for everybody. Having more *cuentapropistas* is good because the government is having taxes from them and then it redistributes the gains.” Her sympathy towards private business has to do with the incentives to work more and take care of things. She is convinced that “people work more when they own their business, and that is good for everyone. If something is yours, you take a better care of it (*si algo es tuyo lo cuidas más*).”

Other Cubans feel that the changes do not go far enough. A law student who drives a *bicitaxi* to help pay for his studies wants an even more pronounced opening (*apertura*) of the Cuban economy: “Above all, the government should let private capital accumulate. Cuba has always been against that. But that is precisely what makes the economy take off. These reforms still impose a lot of restrictions. For example, if you want to hire more than five people you have to pay many more taxes, and your business cannot grow that way.”

A young man of Afro-Cuban descent who lives near Santa Clara working in a bread store was worried about the emerging class system but wanted to see fundamental changes happen in Cuba: “It is okay that people can do business, but it is irrelevant for the large majority like me because we do not have the resources to do it,” he said. “The negative part is that this creates a system of social classes: at the top you have those who work with tourism in the government, then those who have *casas particulares*, then those who receive money from their relatives living outside, and all the way down to poorly paid jobs in the government sector like mine.” He argued that *cuentapropistas* have grown richer, and the poor, among whom he includes himself, are poorer. When asked what reforms he would like to see, he looked around before answering to make sure nobody was listening to him: “I want the total fall of the system; I want total freedom and capitalism; I want credit. It is impossible right now to get a loan to start your own business. I also want to scream in the streets what I think about the country and its politics.”

Access to Information

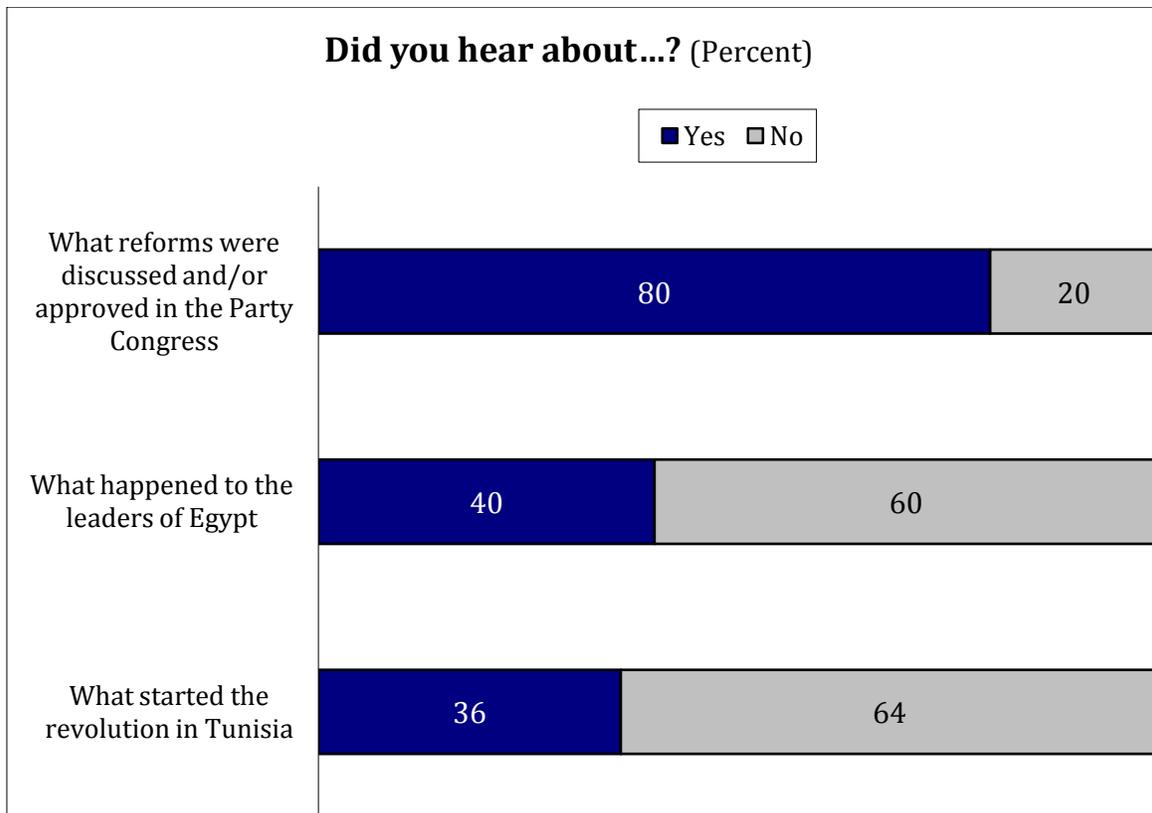
Freedom House researchers asked respondents about the news and information that they get. As in previous reports, this study confirms that most Cubans get their news from government sources. About 92 percent of respondents said the information they get comes from the government, as opposed to only 8 percent who said their main source of information is independent.

Exposure to information takes place not only through the traditional media (television, radio, and newspapers) but also through organizational channels at the workplace or through more informal conversations. New technologies and the

internet have a limited reach. A well-educated Socialist woman who works for a tobacco factory noted that in the factory there is “a person employed to read the news to workers so that they stay informed of what is happening in the world. I doubt that workers in other countries are equally informed.”

While most respondents have heard about the reforms in Cuba, few knew about important international events (*see Graph VIII*). According to the survey, only 36 percent of Cuban respondents said they knew what started the revolution in Tunisia. Among those was a 30-year old economist. He explained that a “man set himself on fire... People have no freedom, they are poor, and they were very dissatisfied with their situation.” This economist has access to the internet at work and watches Venezuelan news.

Graph VIII.



A slightly higher proportion (40 percent) knew what happened to the leaders of Egypt. The same young economist said that they were removed from power and argued that this happened because the people are very angry at the situation there: “The leaders in those Middle East countries were very corrupt and they only got rich.”

Public opinion studies since the beginning of the 20th century have suggested and later demonstrated that people's opinions are a mix of information and predisposition.⁹ Perhaps due more to predisposition than information, 51 percent of Cuban respondents were able to provide an answer to the question, "Why do you think revolutions took place in the Middle East?" Answers ranged from "poverty" and "injustice" to "it's the United States." A 50-year old man who used to work as an accountant and now sells ice cream in the street simply said: "I did not hear what happened in the Middle East, but they must have been angry, I suppose." A law student from Santa Clara provided a more elaborate response: "The type of information that we get here about other countries depends on what relationship there is between the leaders of countries and the United States. If the leader has a good relationship with them, which I believe is the case in Egypt, then information indicates that protests are justified and that people are right to be against the leader. But if the leader opposes the United States, as is the case of Libya, then we hear that the people who protest are wrong because they are supported by the Americans." Despite this elaboration, this law student was unable to explain why revolutions happened in the Middle East: "How could I possibly know? I cannot trust the government's information."

Skepticism about the accuracy of news from government sources was quite common. A medical doctor interviewed near Santa Clara said that the things he heard about the Middle East usually made the United States look bad, emphasizing their greed for oil and control. But he said that he personally did not believe that this had anything to do with the United States: "No, I don't think they have anything to do with this, I think it was the people over there that did things on their own." Government sources of news appear to influence the opinions of some Cubans, however. An older man who works in a community restaurant, for example, said that the events in the Middle East "occurred because of the United States' interest in oil; this is the same thing that happened in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan."

A man who has a *casa de renta* summarized the experiences that Cubans usually have in obtaining information: "According to the news, only good things happen in Cuba, the benefits for the people, the construction of public works, and so on, but the truth is that you never know what happens in reality."

Cubans who get independent news are better informed, according to the quantitative results of this study. For example, 57 percent of respondents knew what started the revolution in Tunisia, compared to only 23 percent of those who get the news exclusively from the government. Similarly, 57 percent of those who get independent information knew what happened to the leaders of Egypt, compared to 29 percent of those exposed only to government news.

⁹ See James Bryce, "The Nature of Public Opinion", in *The American Commonwealth*, New York: Mcmillan, 1916; and John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

The Reforms Cubans Would Like to See

Freedom House researchers recorded a long list of aspirations when respondents were asked what reforms they would like to see in Cuba. The most common responses were reforms that increased freedom of expression and the freedom to travel (28 percent). Others said they want better salaries (11 percent) or economic improvement (8 percent). Some wanted a change in government (5 percent), more private economic activity (5 percent), the elimination of the double currency (4 percent), and more jobs (3 percent). Many other responses obtained fewer mentions. It is remarkable, however, that the main response had to do with the lack of freedom and not with economic adversity.

This is a noticeable change from the previous study conducted by Freedom House, where economic changes were the top pick. In December 2010, for example, the most common single response to what reforms Cubans would like in their country was “the economy”, with 14 percent; 10 percent mentioned freedom of expression and freedom to travel.

A young woman who works in a pharmacy in Camagüey said that she dreams of getting out of Cuba, traveling to Spain and working there: “In Cuba there are no possibilities for young people to dream and have the things that others have; we cannot go out of the country.” A 60-year old woman who talked about her spiritual beliefs during most of the interview expressed a similar view: “I wish we had more freedom to travel, I wish people could go out of Cuba for vacations.”

Some respondents favor fundamental change in Cuba. A medical doctor interviewed near Santa Clara said: “I would like to see a total collapse of the system, to bring capitalism to the country. We are always told that capitalism is bad, that it creates inequality. Maybe so, but it is better to have a few rich people than have everyone poor.” The doctor was well informed about the reforms, but in his opinion, they are “only cosmetic; none of these are really important.” He argued that “most Cubans are living in the same situation or even worse than before. I don’t think there will be big changes in the country as long as the Castros are in power.”

Other respondents, in contrast, sounded nostalgic for the rule of Fidel Castro. A 20-year old student who lives from the money sent by her family in the United States, for example, expressed the view that “Cuba is moving backwards. We were better off with Fidel; we received a lot of things with him. We still have many things he gave us before the *periodo especial*, when the state gave us a refrigerator, television, a stove, and machines for the kitchen... I think that if Fidel had stayed longer in power he would have given cell phones to everybody in only two years.”

Conclusion

The findings of this survey stand in stark contrast to the findings of previous Freedom House field research conducted before the Sixth Communist Party Congress. In the December 2010 survey, announced reforms had yet to take effect. Cubans generally were skeptical that change would come, and many of them expected any changes to make matters worse. By June 2011, by contrast, change was visible, notably in the appearance of *cuentapropistas* “on every corner.” Change has generated optimism among a significant segment of the population in Cuba, where previously optimism was almost completely absent. This segment of the population is doing better and expects economic conditions to improve further.

The opening of a private sector, while still limited, is driving genuine change in Cuba. This is the most significant positive change to have taken place in Cuba since communism was introduced half a century ago. Cubans are moving from the state to the private sector, becoming entrepreneurs in growing numbers, taking the initiative to earn their own living, and in many cases succeeding to do better than Cubans in government jobs.

The changes are causing a sense of insecurity and resentment among some Cubans, as might be expected in a country where citizens were almost entirely dependent on government for their material needs and had no experience of market competition. Such insecurity and resentment accompanied the shift from communism to market economies in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. While the insecurity and resentment presents a challenge for reform in Cuba, it is also a reflection of how profound are the changes that are currently underway.

The increased desire for civil liberties is a striking finding of this survey. Perhaps the improvement in economic conditions makes Cubans more secure to seek individual freedoms, rather than focus on their poor living standards, or the independence that comes with self-employment motivates more Cubans to value free expression and personal autonomy. Either way, economic reform is accompanied by a growing interest in civil liberties and thus appears to spur aspirations for broader freedom in Cuba.

Limited access to information, however, remains a serious challenge. While state media has little credibility among most Cubans, the reach of independent news sources is extremely limited, and as a result, most Cubans remain cut off from news of major world events. They thus lack the means to become informed, let alone discuss more broadly with fellow citizens, the alternatives to the system under which they currently live.

The half century of communism still weighs down on many Cubans. Skepticism and frustration remain widespread and cause some Cubans to give up hope. A state employee interviewed for this study said that “I try not to get frustrated any more when I think about the country; I attend to my family instead and watch soap operas,

where love stories are like fairy tales and always have a happy end." A physical education teacher, who now works as a cook, lamented that "As long as this government lasts, things here will always be the same." Yet the growth of a private sector is fueling individual initiative, personal autonomy, and aspirations for greater freedom. Change is coming to Cuba.

Appendix 1 – The Provinces



Interviews were conducted in the following provinces:

PINAR DEL RÍO PROVINCE

Cuba's western-most province, Pinar del Río is home to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Viñales Valley, one of many valleys and limestone hills formed by the Cordillera de Guaniguanico. These valleys produce Cuba's prized tobacco, although Pinar del Río's natural beauty also make the province a popular hiking and rock climbing destination for tourists. The northern coast of the province borders the Gulf of Mexico and is considered one of Cuba's premier scuba diving locations.

CIUDAD DE LA HABANA

Ciudad de la Habana, or Havana, is the capital of Cuba and home to 2.2 million Cubans. It is the most visited city on the island and serves as the cultural, political, and industrial center of the country.

VILLA CLARA PROVINCE

Just 300 miles east of Havana is Villa Clara province, home to many sugar and tobacco plantations. The capital city of Santa Clara is surrounded by low hills, called Las Alturas de Santa Clara. Many students come from all over the island to attend the Universidad Central de Las Villas in Santa Clara.

CAMAGÜEY PROVINCE

Camagüey is the island's largest province, located in the eastern half of the island and stretching to include both the north and south coasts. Most of the interior of the province consists of a vast plain, making it a natural place for agriculture, the province's main industry. The capital, Camagüey, is Cuba's third largest city and carries the nicknames "City of Squares" and "Corinth of the Caribbean." It is also known as the City of Tinajones due to the continuing presence of large clay containers used to gather rainwater.

HOLGUÍN PROVINCE

The province of Holguín is located in the north-eastern part of the country. Its capital, also named Holguín, is the fourth largest city in Cuba and is home to the region's largest university. The beaches of Guardalavaca on the north coast of the province are a major tourist attraction.

SANTIAGO DE CUBA

Known historically as the Cradle of the Revolution, Santiago de Cuba is a mountainous province located in southeastern Cuba. The namesake capital city is the island's second largest city. The country's highest concentration of Afro-Cubans is found here, making Santiago the vibrant center of Afro-Cuban culture and musical tradition in Cuba.

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

The following variables were asked in the interviews.

Socio-demographic variables:

- a. Gender
- b. Age
- c. Ethnic group (European/white, Afro-Cuban, Mulato)
- d. Urban or rural residence
- e. Religion (Catholic, Protestant, Atheist, *Santería*, Other)
- f. Occupation (what the respondent does for living)
- g. Profession (what professional education the respondent has, if any)

1. In which areas of life are you most happy?
2. What are the main problems that you face in your daily life?
3. The main source of news and information that you usually get is the government information or is it independent information?
4. Did you hear about the barge that sank in April carrying \$2 million in humanitarian assistance headed for Haiti?
5. Do you know what started the Tunisian revolution?
6. Do you know what happened to leaders in Egypt?
7. Based on what you have heard, why do you think revolutions took place in the Middle East?
8. How would you rate your personal and family current economic situation?
9. Compared with twelve months ago, would you say that your personal and family economic situation is better off, worse off, or about the same?
10. In the next twelve months, would you say that your personal and family economic situation will be better off, worse off, or about the same?
11. How would you rate the country's current economic situation?
12. Compared with twelve months ago, would you say that the country's economic situation is better off, worse off, or about the same?

13. In the next twelve months, would you say that the country's economic situation will be better off, worse off, or about the same?

14. Do you think that Cuba is progressing, it is stuck, or it is moving backwards?

15. Do you think that the reforms that the government is doing will improve the country's situation?

16. How do you expect that those reforms will affect you and your family?

17. Which reforms would you like to see in Cuba?

18. Do you know what topics/reforms were discussed and/or approved during the Party Congress?

19. What do you think were the most important reforms approved during the Party Congress?

20. What do you think of the government pamphlet or tabloid explaining the reforms announced before and during the Party Congress?

21. Have you or do you know someone who applied for a license to be a *cuentalpropista* (and for what kind of business)?

22. If yes, were they – or you – successful? If no, why not?

23. Do you think it is easier to apply for/obtain a *cuentalpropia* license now than 6 months ago?

24. Do you think it is better to be employed in the state sector, or as a *cuentalpropista* (private sector)?

25. Have you/family/friends bought any property since the reforms were passed? Do you/they plan to?

26. Have you/family/friends sold any property since the reforms were passed? Do you/they plan to? If yes, what was it? If no, why not?

27. If you own a business (with a license), have you hired or do you plan to hire a non-family member?

28. Have you been hired by a non-family member for a licensed or non-licensed business?

29. What changes have you witnessed in the last six months?

30. What changes do you expect to see in the next six months?

31. What will these changes mean for you and your family?

Appendix 3 – Quantitative Results

Provinces	Interviews	Percent
City of Havana	61	32.1
Camagüey	33	17.4
Villa Clara	33	17.4
Pinar del Río	35	18.4
Santiago	22	11.6
Holguín	6	3.2
Total	190	100.0

Sex of the respondent	Interviews	Percent
Male	101	53.2
Female	89	46.8
Total	190	100.0

Age of the respondent	Interviews	Percent
18-29	44	30.1
30-49	59	40.4
50 or more	43	29.5
Total	146	100.0

Note: 44 respondents were not asked or did not answer what age they are.

Ethnic group	Interviews	Percent
European/white	105	55.3
Afro-Cuban	38	20.0
Mulato	47	24.7
Total	190	100.0

Residence	Interviews	Percent
Urban	148	77.9
Rural	40	21.1
Not recorded	2	1.1
Total	190	100.0

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Religion	Interviews	Percent
Catholic	76	47.2
Protestant	14	8.7
Atheist	28	17.4
<i>Santería</i>	14	8.7
Believer	15	9.3
Other	14	8.7
Total	161	100.0

Note: 39 respondents were not asked or did not answer what religion they profess.

Occupation	Interviews	Percent
Professional	23	13.7
Non-manual work / supervisor	8	4.2
Non-manual work / under supervision	12	6.3
Specialized manual work	20	10.5
Non-specialized manual work	35	18.4
Agricultural worker	6	3.2
Housewife	5	2.6
Student	23	12.1
Retired	8	4.2
Other	47	24.7
Total	190	100.0

Areas of Happiness	Interviews	Percent
Family	84	45
Social life	44	23
Work or profession	25	13
Health	16	9
Other	19	10
Total	188	100

Note: 2 respondents were not asked this question.

Daily problems	Interviews	Percent
Economic	125	66
Family	15	8
Work	11	6
Psychological problems	2	1
Other	36	19
Total	189	100

Note: 1 respondent was not asked this question.

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Government vs Independent information	Interviews	Percent
Government	171	92
Independent	14	8
Total	185	100

Note: 5 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Information: Sinking of ship with humanitarian help for Haiti	Interviews	Percent
Respondent knows	9	7
Respondent does not know	124	93
Total	133	100

Note: 57 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Information: What started the Revolution in Tunisia	Interviews	Percent
Respondent knows	51	36
Respondent does not know	91	64
Total	142	100

Note: 48 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Information: What Happened to the leaders of Egypt	Interviews	Percent
Respondent knows	60	40
Respondent does not know	89	60
Total	149	100

Note: 41 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Information: Why revolutions in the Middle East are taking place	Interviews	Percent
Respondent provided an answer	81	51
Respondent does not know	77	49
Total	158	100

Note: 32 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

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<u>Current Economic situation: Personal/Household</u>	<u>Interviews</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Good	57	30
Neither good nor bad	87	46
Bad	45	24
Total	189	100

Note: 1 respondent was not asked this question.

<u>Past Economic situation: Personal/ Household</u>	<u>Interviews</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Better off	17	9
About the same	147	77
Worse off	25	14
Total	189	100

Note: 1 respondent was not asked this question.

<u>Future economic situation: Personal/ Household</u>	<u>Interviews</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Better off	56	30
About the same	116	62
Worse off	15	8
Total	187	100

Note: 3 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

<u>Current economic situation: Country</u>	<u>Interviews</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Good	22	12
Neither good nor bad	80	43
Bad	82	45
Total	184	100

Note: 6 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Change Comes to Cuba: Citizens' Views on Reform after the Sixth Party Congress

Past economic situation: Country	Interviews	Percent
Better off	24	13
About the same	132	72
Worse off	28	15
Total	184	100

Note: 6 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Future economic situation: Country	Interviews	Percent
Better off	53	29
About the same	99	55
Worse off	29	16
Total	181	100

Note: 9 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Perceptions of progress in the country	Interviews	Percent
Progresssing	74	41
Stuck	83	47
Moving backwards	22	12
Total	179	100

Note: 11 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Will reforms improve the country's situation	Interviews	Percent
Yes	106	63
No	61	37
Total	167	100

Note: 23 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Change Comes to Cuba: Citizens' Views on Reform after the Sixth Party Congress

How will reforms affect you and your family	Interviews	Percent
No effects at all	74	46
<i>Cuenta propia</i>	11	7
Positively	9	6
Start own business	9	6
Economically	8	5
No effects yet	8	5
Everything is more expensive	5	3
More private business, less government	4	2
Loss of job	3	2
It will worsen	2	1
Other	26	17
Total	159	100

Note: 31 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

What reforms would you like to see	Interviews	Percent
Freedom of expresión / Freedom to travel	41	28
Better salaries	17	11
Economic	12	8
Change of government	7	5
More private business, less government	7	5
<i>Cuenta propia</i>	6	4
No more double currency	6	4
More jobs for the youth	5	3
Start own business	3	2
Support for the countryside	3	2
None	9	6
Other	32	22
Total	148	100

Note: 42 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Respondent knows what reforms were discussed/Approved in the party congress	Interviews	Percent
Yes	142	80
No	35	20
Total	177	100

Note: 13 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

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What reforms are most important	Interviews	Percent
<i>Patentes</i> and permit to sell/ <i>Cuentapropista</i>	52	49
Sale of purchase of property	19	18
Financial support for people with own business	8	8
Support for the countryside	6	6
Economic	6	6
Opening to capitalism	2	2
None	2	2
Other	10	9
Total	105	100

Note: 85 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Opinion about the explanation of reforms	Interviews	Percent
Favorable	71	44
Unfavorable	41	26
No opinion	48	30
Total	160	100

Note: 30 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Respondent knows someone who applied for <i>cuentapropista</i> license/ Yes: for what?	Interviews	Percent
Food	58	33
Transportation	28	16
Products for the household	10	6
Worker for hire	7	4
Other	20	11
Don't know	54	30
Total	177	100

Note: 13 respondents were not asked this question.

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Was it succesful?	Interviews	Percent
Yes	104	87
No	2	2
Still in process	13	11
Total	119	100

Note: 71 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Why not?	Interviews	Percent
Was not able to pay to the state	1	20
Did not answer	4	80
Total	5	100

Note: 185 respondents were not asked this question.

Is it easier to apply for a license today than six months ago?	Interviews	Percent
Yes	149	98
No	3	2
Total	152	100

Note: 38 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Is it better to work for state or as a <i>cuentapropista</i> ?	Interviews	Percent
Work for the state	71	44
<i>Cuentapropista</i>	80	49
Ambivalent	11	7
Total	162	100

Note: 28 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Have you or your family/ friends bought any property since the reforms	Interviews	Percent
Yes	1	1
No	156	99
Total	157	100

Note: 33 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

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No: Are you planning to do it?	Interviews	Percent
Yes	11	10
No	96	90
Total	107	100

Note: 83 respondents were not asked this question.

Have you or your family/friends sold any property since the reforms	Interviews	Percent
No	153	100

Note: 37 respondents were not asked this question.

Yes: What did you sell?	Interviews	Percent
Did not answer	1	1
Question not asked	189	99
Total	190	100

No: Are you planning to do it?	Interviews	Percent
Yes	15	14
No	89	86
Total	104	100

Note: 86 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

Have you hired someone (not a family member)?*	Interviews	Percent
Yes	12	28
No	31	72
Total	43	100

* If the respondent has a license. Note: 147 respondents were not asked this question.

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Have you been hired by someone (not a family member)?	Interviews	Percent
Yes	14	11
No	114	89
Total	128	100

Note: 62 respondents were not asked this question.

What changes have you noticed in the last six months?	Interviews	Percent
More <i>cuentapropistas</i>	35	22
More licenses and permits to work independently	36	22
That people can work on their own	22	14
Nothing	20	12
Less tourism	9	6
People having more money	4	2
More cell phones	2	1
Other	34	21
Total	162	100

Note: 28 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

What changes have you noticed in the last six months? Closed responses	Interviews	Percent
Respondent said that s/he has noticed changes	141	79
No changes	37	21
Total	178	100

Note: 12 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

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What changes do you expect to see in the next six months?	Interviews	Percent
A better economic situation	27	21
Approve the sale of houses and cars	17	13
More freedom	8	6
More work	5	4
Change of government	5	4
Support for the countryside	3	2
Having more money	1	1
There will be no change	10	8
Other	54	41
Total	130	100

Note: 60 respondents were not asked, don't know or did not answer this question.

What changes do you expect to see in the next six months? Closed responses	Interviews	Percent
Respondent expects to see change	87	53
No change expected	77	47
Total	164	100

Note: 26 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.

What will those changes mean to you and your family	Interviews	Percent
Nothing	30	27
More money	15	14
More work	11	10
Selling car or house	5	4
Moving to another house	5	4
Improve his/her business	5	4
Buying more	2	2
Other	37	35
Total	110	100

Note: 80 respondents were not asked, don't know or did not answer this question.

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What will those changes mean to you and your family? Summary of favorable vs. unfavorable views	Interviews	Percent
Favorable	69	44
Unfavorable	22	14
No meaning at all	65	42
Total	156	100

Note: 34 respondents were not asked or did not answer this question.