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# Ruling Parties, Supporters, and Presidents in 13 Latin American Countries



## I. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Political representation has been a key subject for political science. This subject is relevant because democratic systems rest on this idea (Manin 1998, Dahl 1992, Pitkin 1985). In this sense, political representation is understood as “a principal-agent relationship in which A (principal) authorizes B (agent) to act in his behalf” (Mainwaring et al, 2006:11). This supposes that politically equal citizens choose, through free, competitive, and fair elections, those who exercise public offices (Dahl 2009[1989]). Pitkin (1985) also presupposes that: (1) representatives are authorized by citizens to act on their behalf, (2) they act in a way that promotes the interests of their constituencies, and (3) that citizens have the capability to make their representatives accountable for their performance.

According to Powell (2000, 2004) the phenomenon of political representation can be analyzed from two approaches. On one hand, there is the procedural view, which focuses its attention on the transformation of votes into seats. On the other hand, there is the substantive view, which emphasizes observing how political preferences of citizens and positions or actions of their representatives coincide.<sup>2</sup> In this view, the differences among parties in relation to their electors, or the ties between representatives and the voters in their districts are normally studied. This of kind of relationship is labeled as “Dyadic Representation.”

The aim of this report is to examine the overlap in the ideological positions of ruling parties or coalitions, presidents, and their supporters. Are parties aligned with the positions of their supporters? How aligned are presidents with the parties or coalitions that brought them to power? How far are presidents from the political groups that elected them?

For this purpose I use the ideological scale, which works as a cognitive shortcut for citizens, reducing the costs of obtaining information about parties and candidates. Moreover, it reduces the complexity of the key issues in public opinion. In sum, this ideological scale allows citizens to summarize information about political positions, saving time and effort to position themselves in relation to competing parties' positions (Downs 1957; Freidenberg et al. 2006; Kitschelt et al. 2010).

To achieve this objective, I use data from the Latin American Parliamentary Elite Project (PELA)<sup>3</sup> and the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)<sup>4</sup>. I analyze the ruling parties or coalitions in the lower chambers of the following Latin American countries: Argentina's Frente para la Victoria– PJ (FPV-PJ) (2005-2009), Bolivia's Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) (2006-2010), Chile's Concertación<sup>5</sup> (2006-2010) and Coalición por el Cambio<sup>6</sup> (2010-2014),

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<sup>1</sup> See Powell 2004: 274.

<sup>2</sup> For a deeper discussion about the studies of dyadic representation and substantive representation, see Powell (2004).

<sup>3</sup> I thank the Latin American Parliamentarian Elite Research Project of Iberoamerican Institute at the University of Salamanca for providing access to data.

<sup>4</sup> I thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters (the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making the data available. The interpretation of the available data in the surveys is the sole responsibility of the author.

<sup>5</sup> The *Concertación Chilena* is made up of the following political groupings: Partido Socialista, Partido por la Democracia, Partido Radical Social Demócrata, Partido Democracia Cristiana.

<sup>6</sup> The *Coalición por el Cambio* is made up of the following political groupings: Partido de la Unidad Nacional, Cambio Radical, Partido Conservador, and Convergencia Ciudadana.

Colombia's Coalición Uribista<sup>7</sup> (2006-2010), Costa Rica's Partido de la Liberación Nacional (PLN) (2006-2010 and 2010-2014), Ecuador's Alianza País (AP) (2009-2012), El Salvador's Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) (2006-2009) and Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLL) (2009-2011), Guatemala's Unidad Nacional Esperanza (UNE) (2008-2012), Honduras' Partido Liberal de Honduras (PLH) (2006-2010) and Partido Nacional Hondureño (PNH) (2010-2014), Nicaragua's Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) (2007-2011), Panama's Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD) (2004-2009), the Dominican Republic's Partido Liberal Dominicano (PLD) (2006-2010), and Uruguay's Frente Amplio (FA) (2005-2010 and 2010-2015).

The report is structured in three sections. The first section compares the ideological mean positions of legislators, supporters, and presidents in each of the analyzed cases. Second, I show distributions of the ideological self-placement of legislators of the ruling parties and their supporters and show the levels of coherence between the two. Finally, I offer some conclusions in regard to the analyzed data.

## II. Positions and Ideological Differences

Table I shows the mean positions of legislators and supporters on the left – right ideological scale; it also shows the differences between the self-reported placements of congressmen and their supporters. For elites' ideological location I used the following question from the PELA surveys: When one talks of politics the expressions left and right are typically used. On a scale in which 1 is the left and 10 is the right and, on that same scale, where would you place your own party?

For citizens' positions of citizens, I have used the following question from LAPOP surveys: *On this card there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. The number one means left and 10 means right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale? Tell me the number.*

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<sup>7</sup> The Coalición Uribista is made up of the following political groupings: Partido de la Unidad Nacional, Cambio Radical, Partido Conservador, Convergencia Ciudadana.

**Table 1: Mean Ideological Self-Placement of Representatives of Ruling Parties or Coalitions and Their Supporters**

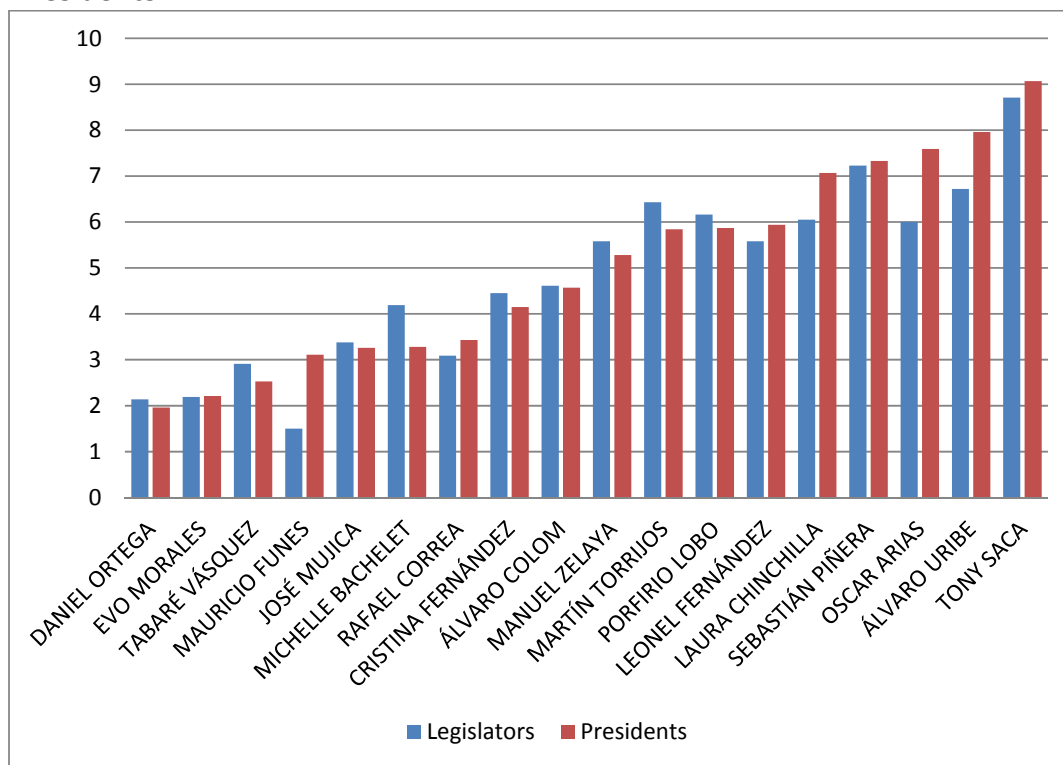
Ruling Parties Or Coalitions	Legislators	Supporters	Difference
FMNL (SAL_2)	1.50	3.36	-1.86
FSLN (NIC)	2.14	4.16	-2.02
MAS (BOL)	2.19	4.01	-1.82
FA (URU)	2.91	3.26	-0.35
AP (ECU)	3.09	4.23	-1.14
FA (URU_2)	3.38	3.2	0.18
CONCERTACIÓN (CHI)	4.19	4.17	0.02
FPV-PJ (ARG)	4.45	5.62	-1.17
UNE(GUA)	4.61	6.05	-1.44
PLH (HON)	5.58	6.38	-0.80
PLD (RDOM)	5.58	7.57	-1.99
PLN (CR)	6.00	7.35	-1.35
PLN (CR_2)	6.05	6.63	-0.58
PNH (HON_2)	6.16	7.29	-1.13
PRD (PAN)	6.43	6.14	0.29
Coalición Uribista (COL)	6.72	7.41	-0.69
Coalición por el Cambio (CHI_2)	7.23	8.10	-0.87
ARENA (SAL)	8.71	8.37	0.34

Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Table 1 shows that, in the analyzed cases, the congress members of the ruling parties or coalitions are equally distributed on the ideological spectrum. On one hand, I find the cases of the FMNL, the FSLN, the MAS, the FA (both analyzed legislatures), the AP, the Concertación, the FPV-PJ, and the UNE. In all these cases, legislators placed themselves below position 5 on the ideological scale. On the other hand, I found that the congress members of ruling parties or coalitions that placed themselves above 5 on the left-right spectrum are from: ARENA, the Coalición por el Cambio, the Coalición Uribista, the PNH, the PLN (in both analyzed legislatures), the PLD, and the PLH.

The majority of the ruling parties or coalitions (14 of 18) are to the left of their supporters. The cases with the greatest differences between legislators and supporters include the FSLN from Nicaragua, which is more than two points to the left. Another case is in the Dominican Republic, where the PLD is also almost two points to the left of its partisans. The Bolivian MAS party has a difference of 1.82 points to the left of its base. For their part, only four parties or coalitions are to the right of their supporters. In El Salvador (2006-2009), ARENA is 0.34 points to the right of its supporters. In Panama, the PRD is 0.29 points to the right. In Uruguay (2010-2014), the Frente Amplio is 0.18 to the right. Lastly, in the case of the Concertación Chilena, it is only 0.02 points to the right of its followers. This is the ruling party or coalition with the best performance in terms of ideological representation of its supporters.

**Figure I: Ideological Location of Ruling Parties or Coalitions and their Presidents**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Figure I shows the differences in left-right placement between legislators in ruling parties or coalitions and their placement of the incumbent presidents at the time of their legislative session. We can see that nine of the eighteen presidents are located to the left of their parties. These presidents are: Rafael Correa (-0.76), Tabaré Vázquez (-0.38), Cristina Fernández and Manuel Zelaya (-0.30), Porfirio Lobo (0.29), Daniel Ortega (-0.18), José Mujica (0.12), Leonel Fernández (-0.06), and Álvaro Colom (-0.04). The other nine presidents are to the right of the legislators of their political groups: Mauricio Funes (1.61), Álvaro Uribe (1.24), Óscar Arias (1.16), Laura Chinchilla (1.02), Tony Saca (0.36), Martín Torrijos (0.26), Michelle Bachelet (0.19), Sebastián Piñera (0.10). Lastly, Evo Morales (0.02) is the president who, according to the placement of the legislators of his own party, shows the smallest difference in relation to his party in terms of the left-right scale.

**Table 2: Ideological Location of Presidents and their Supporters**

<b>Presidents</b>	<b>Mean Presidents</b>	<b>Mean Followers</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Daniel Ortega</b>	1.96	4.16	-2.20
<b>Evo Morales</b>	2.21	4.01	-1.80
<b>Tabaré Vázquez</b>	2.53	3.26	-0.73
<b>Mauricio Funes</b>	3.11	3.36	-0.25
<b>José Mujica</b>	3.26	3.20	0.06
<b>Michelle Bachelet</b>	3.28	4.23	-0.95
<b>Rafael Correa</b>	3.43	4.17	-0.74
<b>Cristina Fernández</b>	4.15	5.62	-1.47
<b>Álvaro Colom</b>	4.57	6.05	-1.48
<b>Manuel Zelaya</b>	5.28	6.38	-1.10
<b>Martín Torrijos</b>	5.84	7.57	-1.73
<b>Porfirio Lobo</b>	5.87	7.29	-1.42
<b>Leonel Fernández</b>	5.94	7.35	-1.41
<b>Laura Chinchilla</b>	7.07	6.63	0.44
<b>Sebastián Piñera</b>	7.33	8.10	-0.77
<b>Oscar Arias</b>	7.59	6.14	1.45
<b>Álvaro Uribe</b>	7.96	7.41	0.55
<b>Tony Saca</b>	9.07	8.37	0.70

Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Table 2 shows the mean ideological locations of presidents and supporters of the governing parties in each of the analyzed cases. It can be seen that, as in the analysis of political parties, the majority of presidents are to the left of their supporters on the ideological scale (13 of 18). So, Daniel Ortega is the president with the greatest difference in regard to those who voted for his party, as he is more than two points to the left of them. Following him are Evo Morales, Martín Torrijos, Álvaro Colom, Cristina Fernández, Porfirio Lobo, Leonel Fernández, and Manuel Zelaya, with more than one point of difference to the left of their followers. With less than a point of distance are former presidents Michelle Bachelet and Tabaré Vázquez, as well as presidents Rafael Correa, Sebastián Piñera, and Mauricio Funes.

In regard to leaders who are located to the right of their supporters, we find former presidents Oscar Arias, Tony Saca, and Álvaro Uribe with 1.45, 0.70, and 0.55, respectively. President Laura Chinchilla is 0.44 points to the right of her supporters. Finally, President José Mujica is the president of the countries analyzed who is closest to citizens who expressed support for his party, the Frente Amplio, in 2009.

### **III. Distributions and Ideological Coherence**

The following section analyzes the ideological distribution and coherence of legislators of the ruling parties or coalitions and their supporters. By ideological coherence I mean “the degree of convergence that exists among the members of a party on issues of potential relevance in the political-partisan arena” (Ruiz Rodríguez, 2007:4).

Thus, the tables show the distribution of ideological self-identification of representatives and supporters of the governing parties or coalitions and their levels of ideological coherence.

In Table 3, we can observe the standard deviations and number of cases for both groups. Following Ruiz Rodríguez (2007), standard deviations can be used as an indicator of the internal coherence of parties and citizens' ideological positions. The greater dispersion, the lower the coherence; conversely, the lower the standard deviation, the greater the coherence.

**Table 3: Standard Deviations, N, and Level of Coherence of Legislators and Supporters of Ruling Parties or Coalitions**

Country	LEGISLATORS			CITIZENS		
	Standard Deviation	N	Coherence <sup>8</sup>	Standard Deviation	N	Coherence <sup>9</sup>
FPV-PJ (ARG)	0.574	55	High	2.108	165	High
FMLN (SAL_2)	0.882	28	High	2.092	385	High
UNE(GUA)	0.919	31	High	2.54	104	Medium
COALICIÓN (CHI_2)	1.111	39	Medium	1.61	78	High
FA (URU_2)	1.115	40	Medium	1.779	659	High
MAS (BOL)	1.119	53	Medium	2.217	506	Medium
FA (URU)	1.177	45	Medium	1.985	465	High
FSLN (NIC)	1.208	28	Medium	3.376	247	Low
PLN (CR_2)	1.253	22	Medium	2.703	227	Medium
PNH (HON_2)	1.315	50	Medium	2.24	360	Medium
AP (ECU)	1.324	44	Medium	2.71	304	Medium
Coalición Uribista (COL)	1.363	56	Medium	2.44	98	Medium
CONCERTACIÓN (CHI)	1.424	48	Medium	1.987	146	High
PLH (HON)	1.577	43	Low	2.333	281	Medium
PLN (CR)	1.581	25	Low	2.635	259	Medium
PLD (RDOM)	1.613	52	Low	2.585	562	Medium
ARENA (SAL)	1.82	28	Low	1.898	191	High
PRD (PAN)	2.004	35	Low	1.945	273	High

Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Table 3 shows that the FPV-PJ, the FMLN, and the UNE have the highest levels of ideological coherence among parties or governing coalitions. It also shows that the PLD, ARENA (2006-2010), and the PRD show the lowest levels of coherence. Among supporters of the ruling parties or coalitions, ideological coherence is highest for those who sympathize with the Coalición por el Cambio (2010-2014) in Chile, the Frente Amplio (2009-2014) in

<sup>8</sup> Legislators' ideological coherence has been classified based on the standard deviations: high coherence: 0.574-1.051; medium coherence: 1.052 – 1.528; low coherence: 1.529-2.006.

<sup>9</sup> Supporters' ideological coherence has been classified based on the standard deviations: high coherence: 1.61-2.199; medium coherence: 2.200 - 2.788; low coherence: 2.789-3.378.

Uruguay, and ARENA (2006-2009) in El Salvador. By contrast, supporters of the FSLN in Nicaragua, the Alianza País in Ecuador, and the PLN in both terms in Costa Rica have the lowest coherence.

Table 4 shows the types of parties found by crossing the levels of ideological coherence of legislators and their supporters.

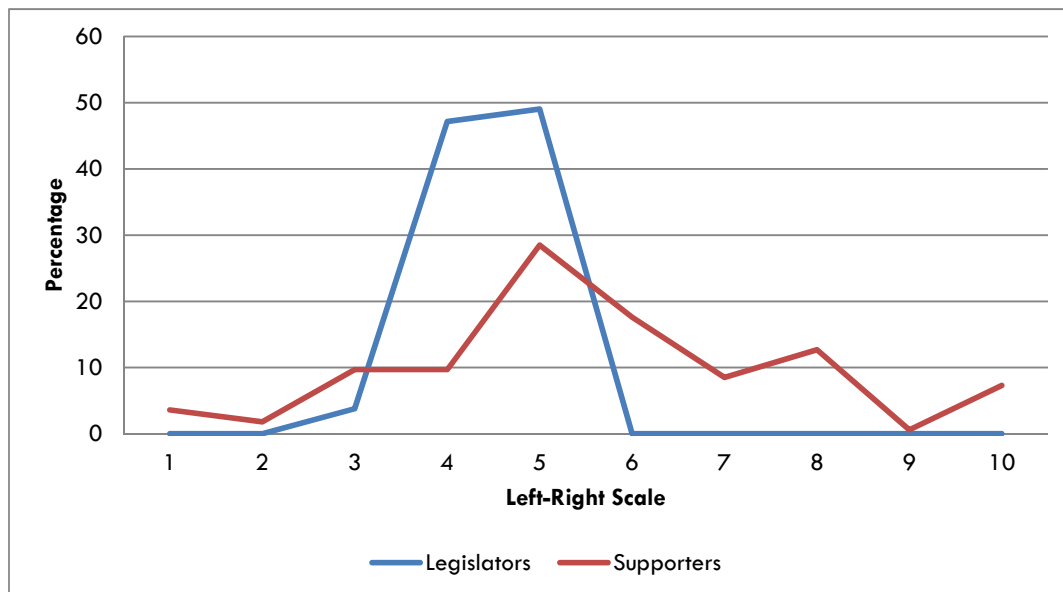
**Table 4: Types of Ruling Parties or Coalitions, by the Ideological Coherence of their Legislators and Supporters**

Ideological Coherence of Legislators	Ideological Coherence of Supporters		
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
HIGH	FPV-PJ (ARG), FMLN (SAL_2)	UNE (GUA)	-----
MEDIUM	COALICIÓN (CHI_2), FA URU_2), FA (URU), CONCERTACIÓN (CHI)	MAS (BOL), PLN (CR_2), PNH (HON_2), AP (ECU), Coalición Uribista (COL)	FSLN (NIC)
LOW	ARENA (SAL), PRD (PAN)	PLH (HON), PLN (CR), PLD (RDOM)	-----

Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

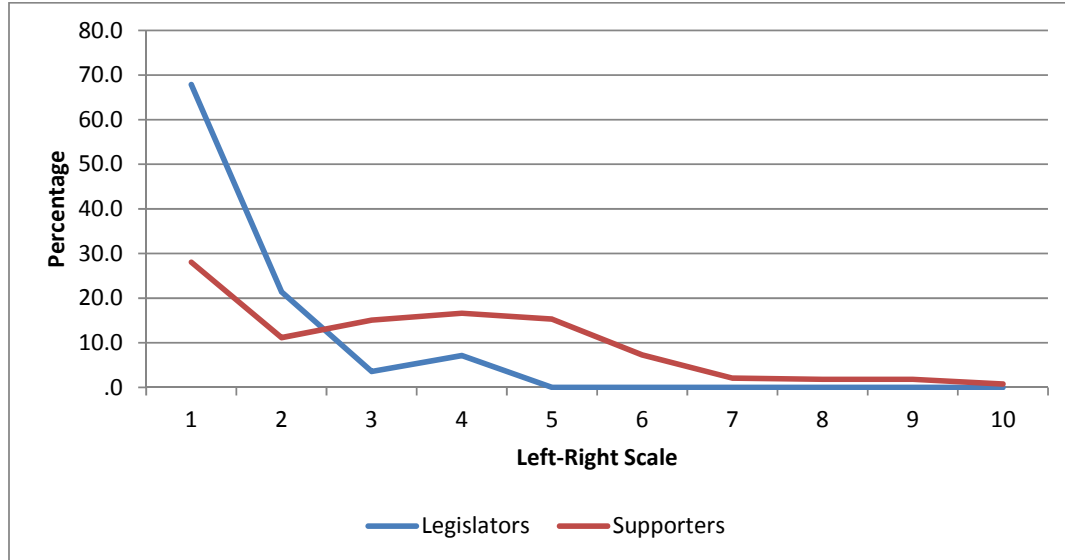
First, there are two parties in which both supporters and legislators have high levels of coherence: the Argentinean FPV-PJ and the FMLN in El Salvador (2009-2011).

**Figure 2: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of FPV-PJ (ARG)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

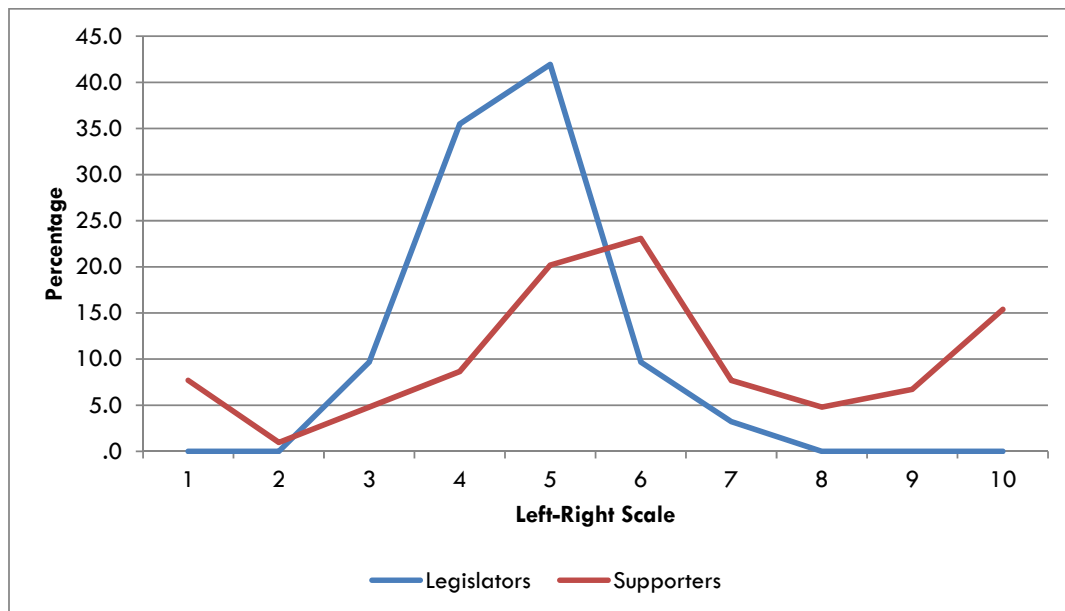
**Figure 3: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of FMLN (SAL\_2)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Second are parties with legislators that have high levels of ideological coherence but with supporters that have medium levels of coherence; in this category we only find UNE in Guatemala.

**Figure 4: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of UNE (GUA)**

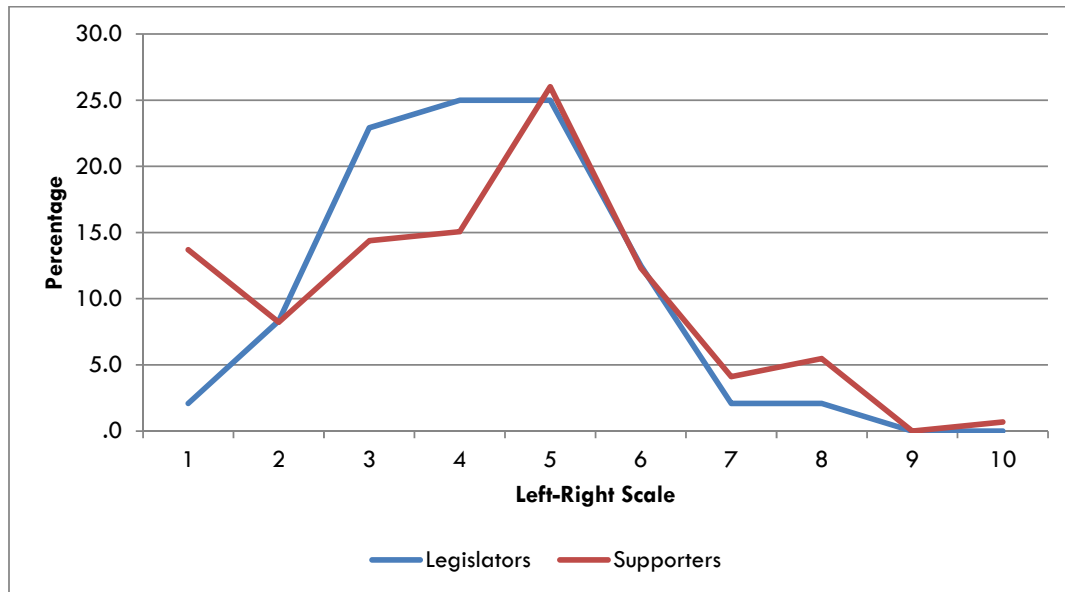


Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Third, there are political groups that have medium levels of coherence within parliamentary elites but high levels of coherence among supporters. These include the Concertación

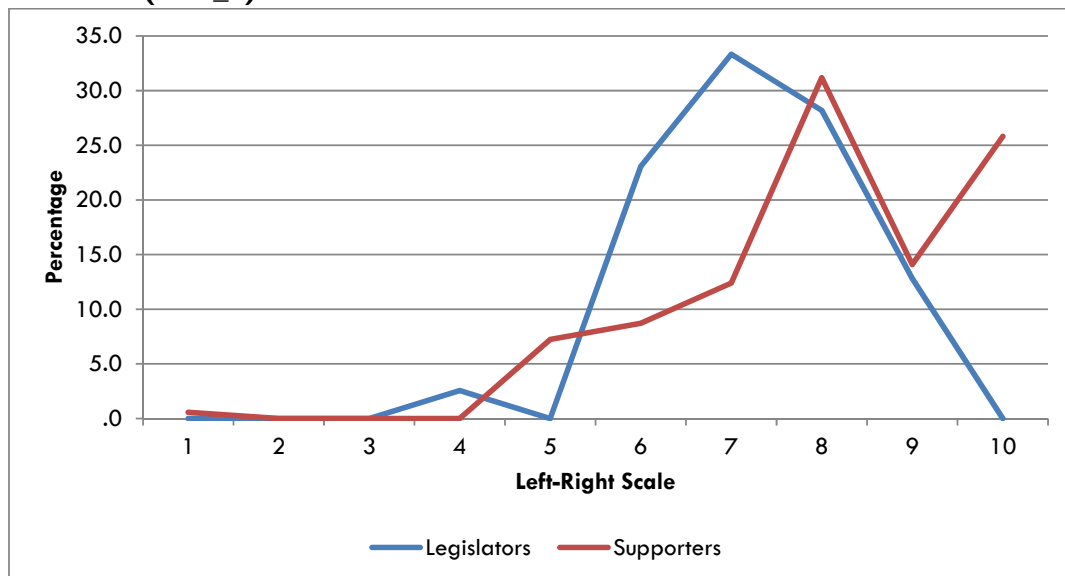
(2006-2010), the Coalición por el Cambio (2010-2014) in Chile, and both legislatures analyzed from the Frente Amplio in Uruguay.

**Figure 5: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of the Concertación (CHI)**



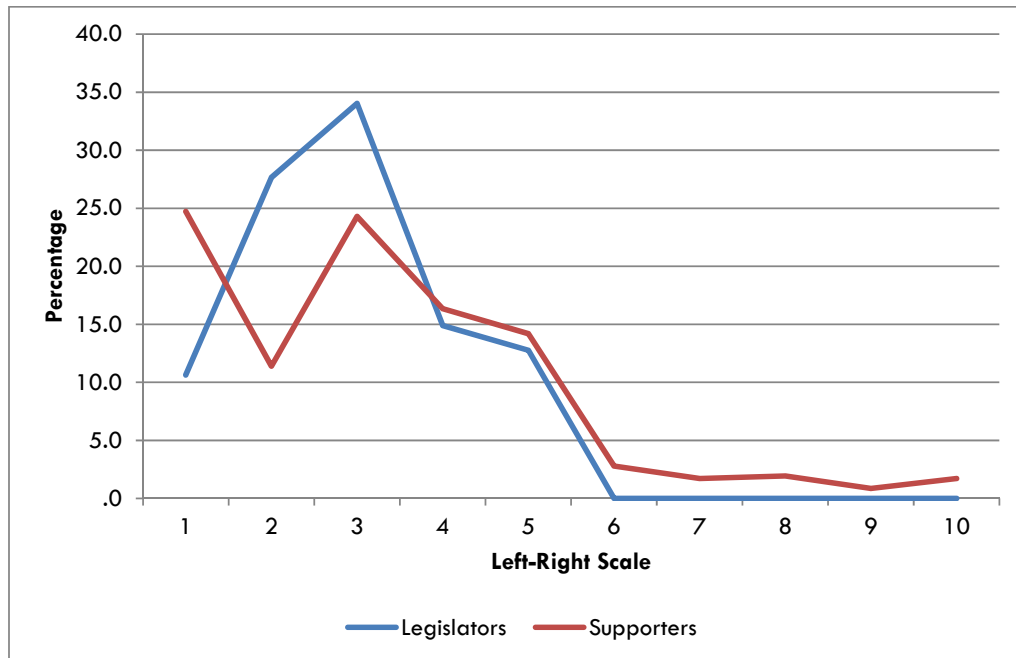
Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 6: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of "Coalición por el Cambio" (CHI\_2)**



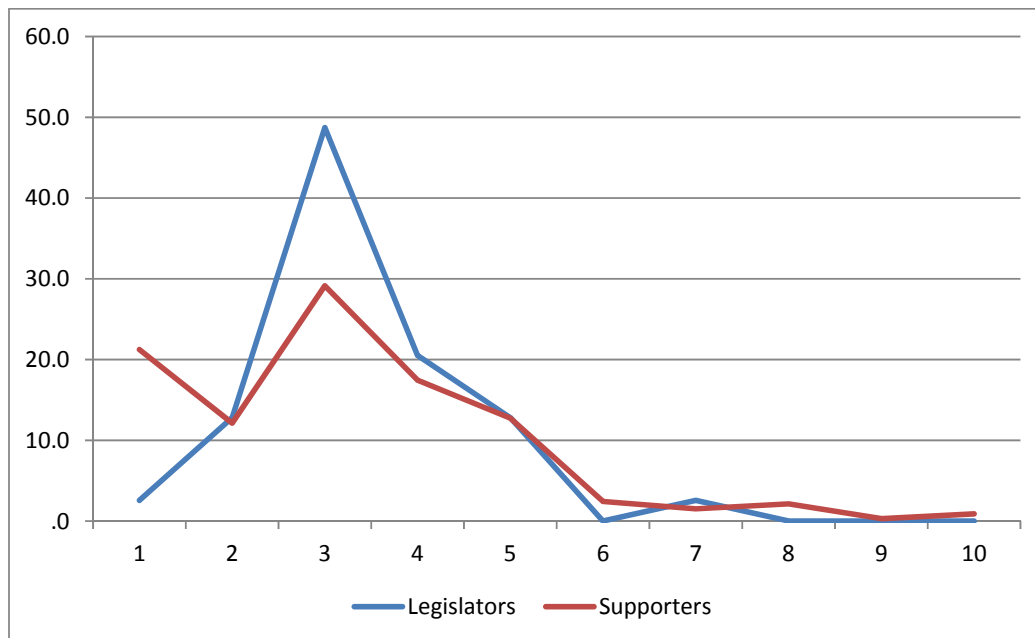
Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 7: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of "Frente Amplio" (URU)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

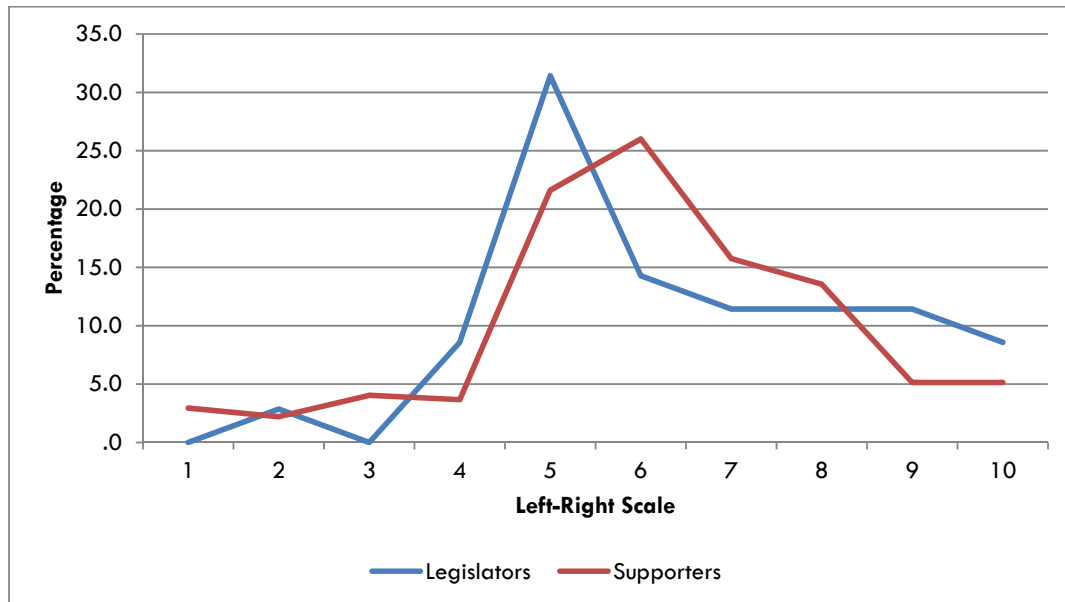
**Figure 8: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of "Frente Amplio" (URU\_2)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

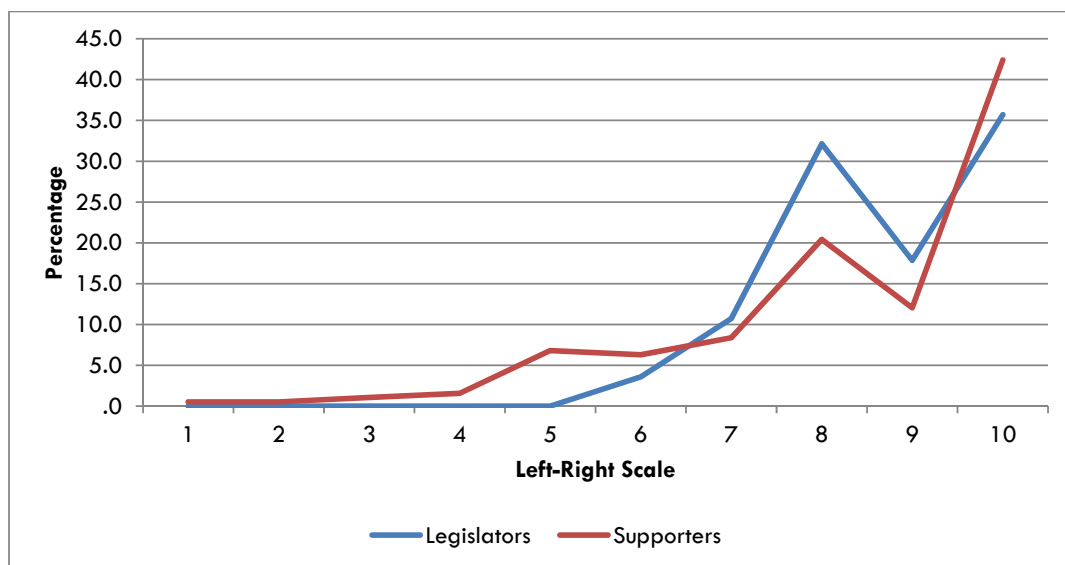
A fourth group of parties that we can observe in Table 4 are those in which legislators have low levels of coherence but, in contrast, supporters show high levels of ideological coherence. These parties are ARENA in El Salvador and the PRD of Panama.

**Figure 9: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of PRD (PAN)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

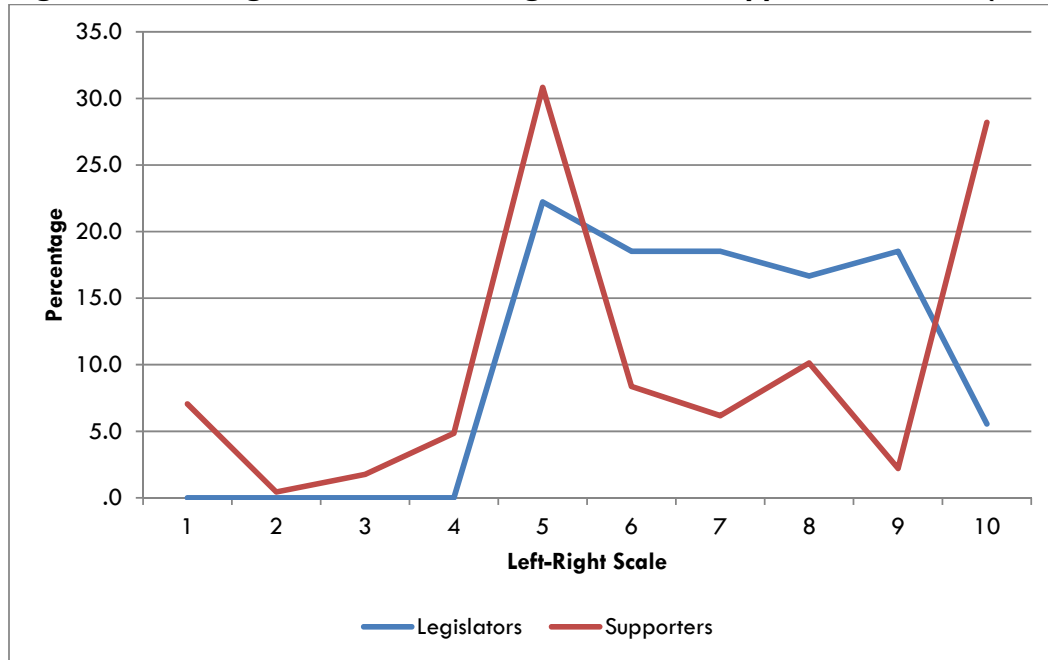
**Figure 10: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of ARENA (SAL)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

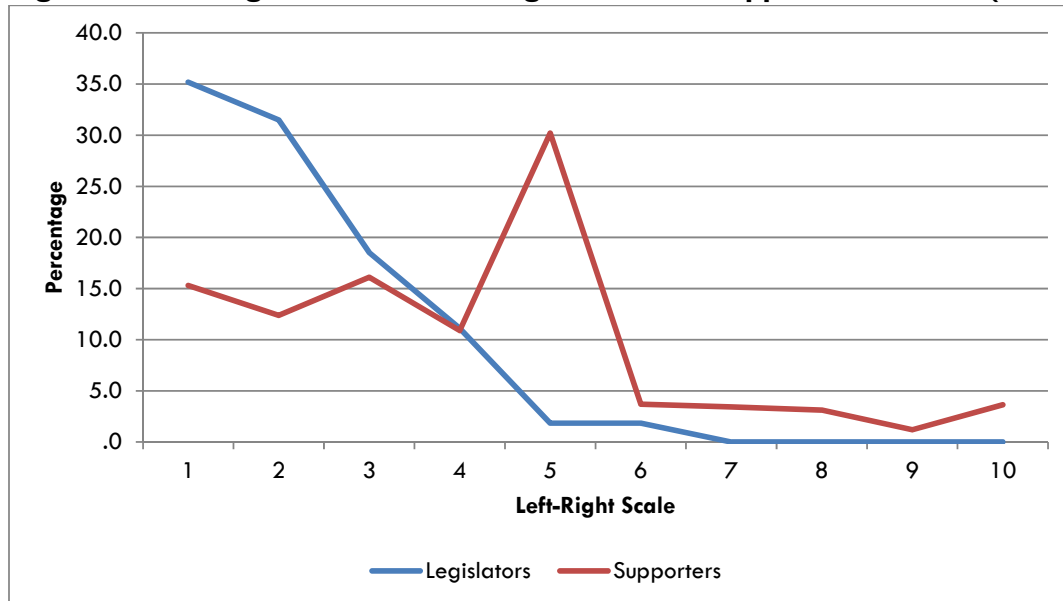
The fifth group of parties includes those in which both legislators and supporters show medium levels of coherence on the left-right spectrum, including MAS of Bolivia, the PNH in Honduras, the Coalición Uribista in Colombia, the PLN in Costa Rica (2010-2014), and the Alianza País in Ecuador.

**Figure 11: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of PLN (CR\_2)**



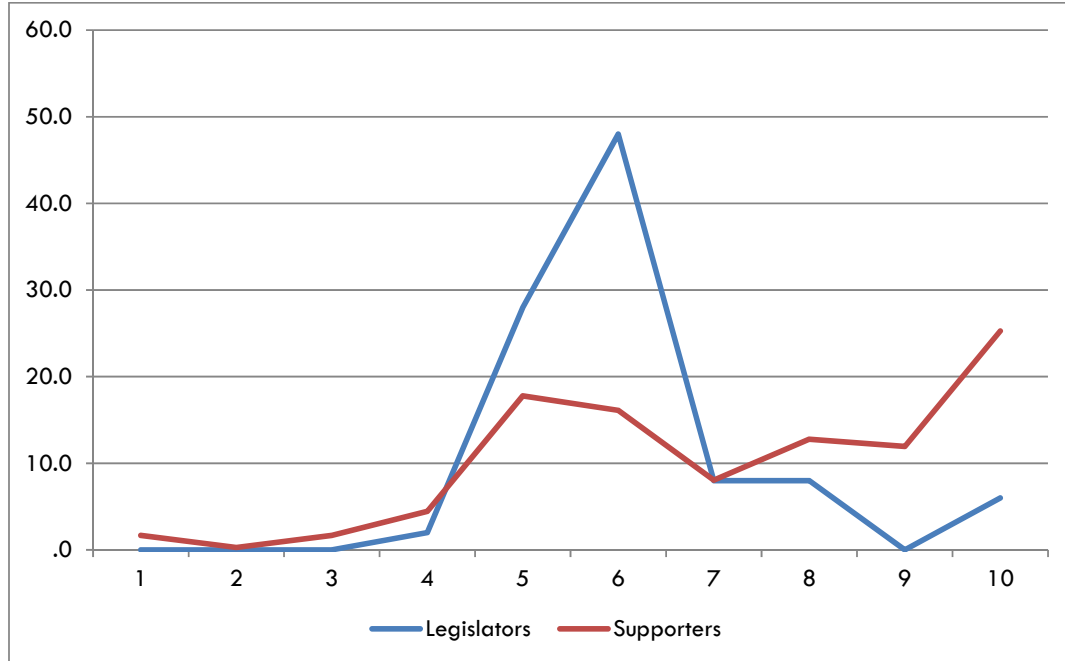
Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 12: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of MAS (BOL)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 13: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of PNH (HON\_2)**



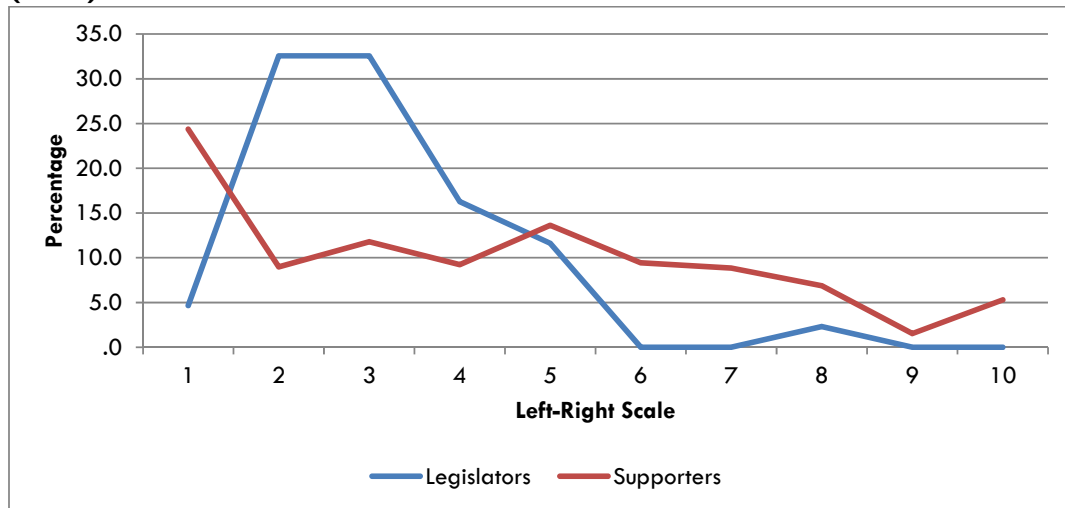
Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 14: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of the Uribista Coalition (COL)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

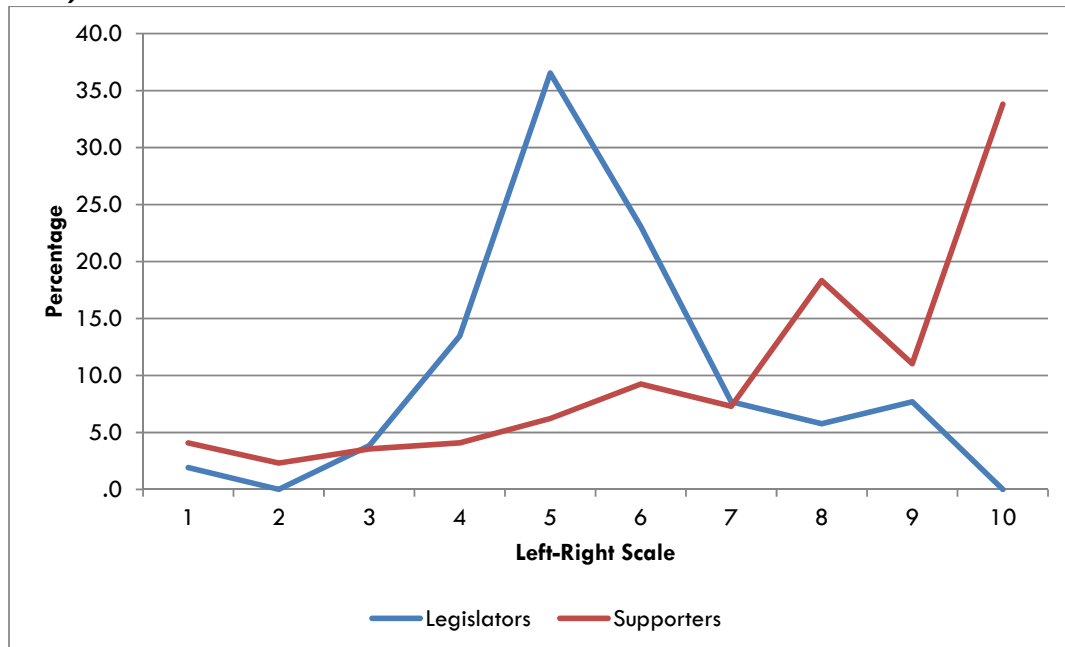
**Figure 15: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of Alianza País (ECU)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

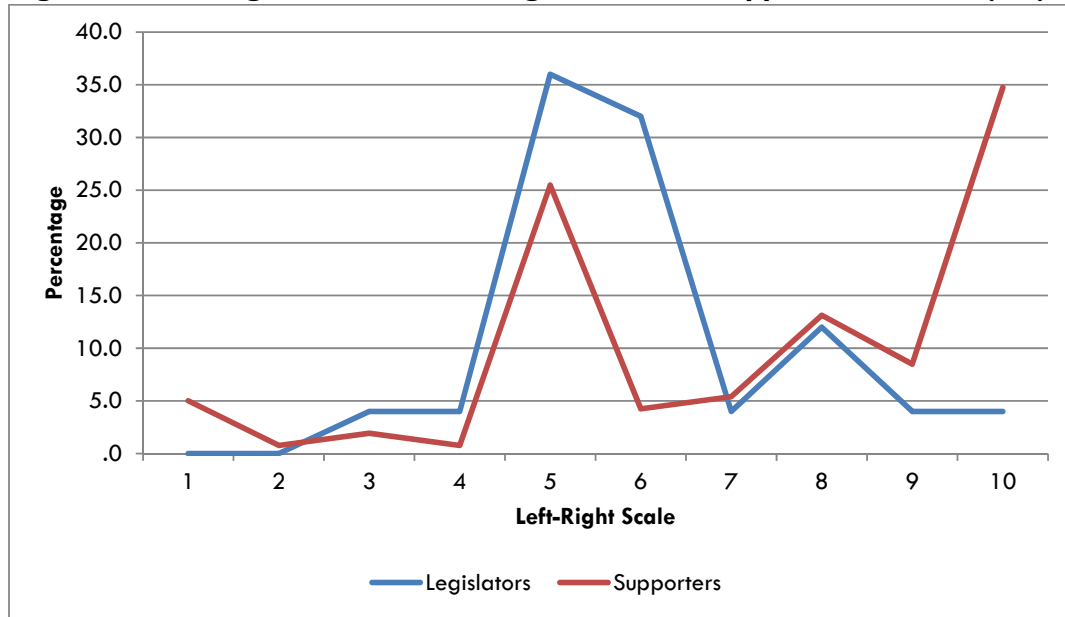
A sixth group of ruling parties is composed of those in which legislators have a low level of coherence on the left-right scale and their supporters show medium levels of ideological coherence, including the PLH in Honduras, the PLN in Costa Rica between 2006-2010, and the PLD in the Dominican Republic.

**Figure 16: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of PLD (DOM REP)**



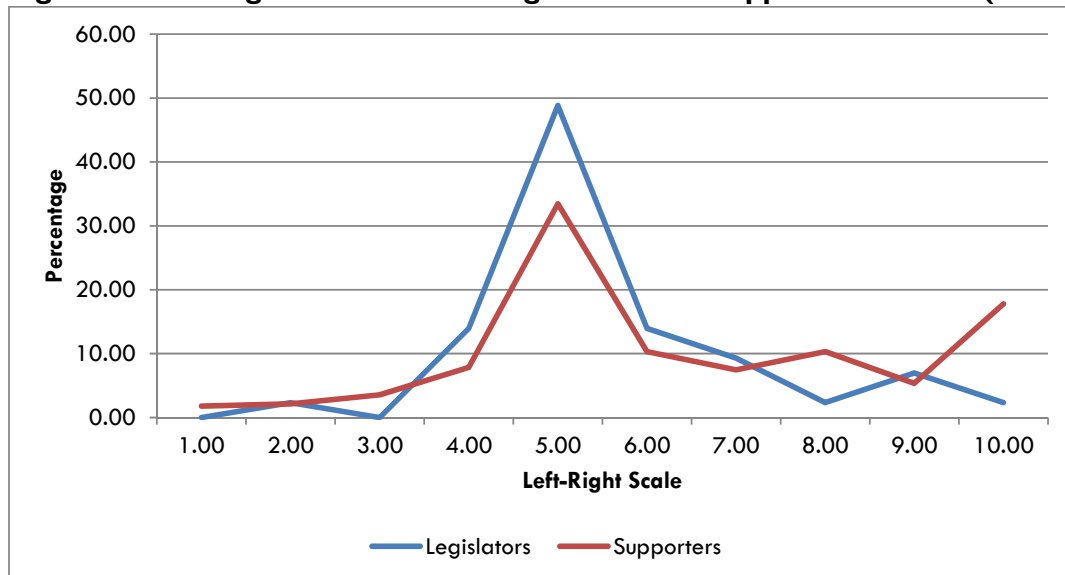
Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 17: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of PLN (CR)**



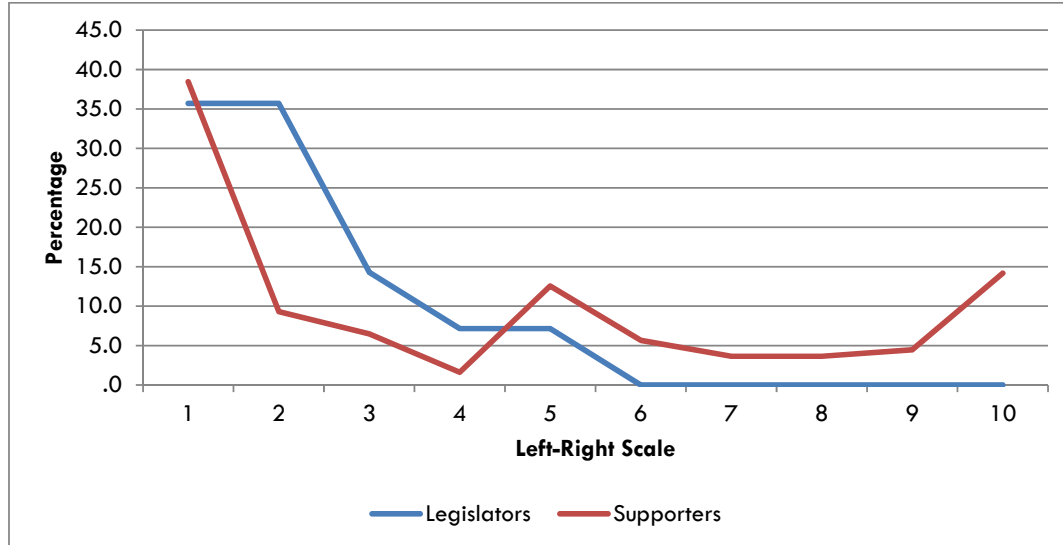
Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

**Figure 18: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of PLH (HON)**



Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

Finally, the FSLN in Nicaragua shows average levels of coherence among parliamentary elites and low levels of coherence among followers.

**Figure 19: Ideological Positions of Legislators and Supporters of FSLN (NIC)**

Source: Prepared by the author with data from PELA and LAPOP.

## IV. Conclusions

The aim of this report has been to understand the dyadic representation of ruling parties or coalitions and their supporters in terms of their location in the left-right scale. In addition, I have examined the ideological proximity (or lack thereof) of presidents in relation to their own political groups and supporters. The analysis is useful for evaluating how ruling parties and presidents respond to the positions of their constituencies. In this sense, it serves as a measure of the responsiveness of those in power and allows us to observe the performance of Latin American democracies.

The first relevant conclusion from the analysis is that the majority of legislators of the political parties in government themselves are located to the left of their supporters (14 of 18). It is important to highlight the case of the Concertación Chilena, where leaders and supporters are located in almost exactly the same place on the ideological spectrum. By contrast, the FSLN in Nicaragua is the party with the greatest distance from their supporters.

In terms of the location of presidents or former presidents in relation to their parties, the data show similar numbers to the right and to the left of their political organizations. Thus, 9 of the 18 heads of state are to the left of their political groups, while the other half are to the right. In this regard, President Evo Morales shows the least ideological difference from his party. By contrast, Óscar Arias and Cristina Fernández show the greatest differences in ideological position relative to their parties.

Regarding leaders' proximity to supporters, 13 of the 18 presidents or former presidents are to the left of their parties' voters. José Mujica is the president closest to the ideological position of his party's supporters, while, President Daniel Ortega has the greatest difference from those who support the FSLN.

Regarding the distributions of ideological positions of parties and voters, only the Argentinian FPV-PJ had high levels of coherence on the ideological axis among both party members and supporters. Meanwhile, the PRD in Panama is the political organization with the lowest ideological coherence. The Coalición por el Cambio in Chile (2010-2014) has the most ideologically coherent supporters, while the FSLN in Nicaragua has the lowest coherence among its supporters.

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**VI. Appendix**

RESPONSES FROM PELA, BY PARTY, TO THE QUESTION: When one talks of politics, normally the expressions of left and right are used. On a scale in which 1 is the left and 10 is the right, where would you place your own party?			
Ruling Party or Coalition	Valid Answers	Total seats of the party or coalition	% valid answers
FPV-PJ	55	128	42.97%
MAS (BOL)	53	72	73.61%
CONCERTACION (CHI)	48	65	73.85%
COALICIÓN (CHI_2)	39	58	67.24%
URIBISMO (COL)	56	85	65.88%
PLN (CR)	25	25	100.00%
PLN (CR_2)	22	24	91.67%
ARENA (SAL)	28	34	82.35%
FMNL (SAL_2)	28	35	80.00%
UNE(GUA)	31	51	60.78%
PLH (HON)	43	62	69.35%
PNH (HON_2)	50	71	70.42%
FSLN (NIC)	28	38	73.68%
PLD (RDOM)	52	96	54.17%
AP (ECU)	44	59	74.58%
PRD (PAN)	35	42	83.33%
FA (URU)	45	52	86.54%
FA (URU_2)	40	50	80.00%

RESPONSES FROM LAPOP, BY PARTY, TO THE QUESTION:			
<i>On this card there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. The number one means left and 10 means right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale? Tell me the number.</i>			
RULING PARTIES OR COALITIONS	N	TOTAL INTERVIEWS	% RESPONDED OUT OF TOTAL
FPV-PJ	165	1486	11.10%
MAS (BOL)	506	3003	16.85%
CONCERTACIÓN (CHI)	146	1224	11.93%
COALICIÓN (CHI_2)	78	1965	3.97%
URIBISMO (COL)	98	1503	6.52%
PLN (CR)	259	1503	17.23%
PLN (CR_2)	227	1500	15.13%
ARENA (SAL)	191	1549	12.33%
FMNL (SAL_2)	385	1550	24.84%
UNE(GUA)	104	1538	6.76%
PLH (HON)	281	1522	18.46%
PNH (HON_2)	360	1596	22.56%
FSLN (NIC)	247	1540	16.04%
PLD (RDOM)	562	1507	37.29%
AP (ECU)	304	3000	10.13%
PRD (PAN)	273	1536	17.77%
FA (URU)	465	1500	31.00%
FA (URU_2)	659	1500	43.93%