

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Technical note

In a historic day, Chile will have a new Constitution

Santiago de Chile
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After the so-called Social Outbreak of October 18, 2019 (18-O), the different political forces joined in an "Agreement for the Peace" which was aimed at working on legislation that would give way to a plebiscite for the population to decide whether or not they want a new Constitution to be developed. Yesterday, October 25, this fact materialized with a historic result in terms of the number of voters and the gap that differentiated the "Approve" and the "Rejection".

WHAT DOES THIS PLEBISCITE AND ITS RESULT INVOLVE?

These are unprecedented results in the modern history of the Chilean elections since the voluntary vote was implemented in 2012.

On October 25, nearly 7.5 million Chileans came to vote - just over 50% of the electoral roll - for their corresponding polling stations to exercise their right. During a pandemic, and with a voluntary vote, it was the country's largest participation in an electoral process in recent times.

And, with surprising absolute results: the "Approve" option -to modify the current Constitution- reached 78.27% of the votes.

But in addition, the new Magna Carta of the country will have to be developed based on the Constituent Convention system, the option most voted with 78.99% of the votes. This means that a second "parliament" will be formed, parallel to the one that already exists

and jointly, where the constituents will have to work on the preparation of this new letter for the next two years. But where do these constituents come from?

As was foreseen in the 2019 agreement, on April 11, 2021, there will be a second instance of voting, where Chileans will have to vote for lists of people who want to represent them in this hemicycle.

Meanwhile, the "Rejection" option obtained 21.73% of the votes and the Mixed Constitutional Convention option, obtained 21.01% of the preferences.

The results, despite being expected, were surprising in numbers. Considering the political differences, it was shown that most of the country wants to reform the Constitution that was drawn up during the Pinochet dictatorship (1980).

Those who gambled for the rejection were greatly diminished, mainly the right, which is

the ruling sector of the country. For some, this shows the disconnection of the ruling class, both political and business, with what is happening in the rest of the country.

However, political parties of any color cannot take joyful accounts, since the majority support for the Constitutional Convention is a sign that the people do not like the traditional politicians within the body that must write a new Constitution.

FIRST CONSTITUTION DRAWN UP BY PARTY IN THE WORLD

Now that Chile has made the decision to draw up a new Constitution, with a Constitutional Convention, from this point on, a whole process begins. Now what is the Constitutional Convention?

This Constituent Convention will be made up of 155 people, however it has a caveat: half will have to be women, which gives way to the first constitution to be drawn up under a parity system in the world.

In order to select the conventional constituents, political parties, social and independent organizations will have to form lists. In the case of independents, they may be part of a list, as long as they manage to collect signatures in the district they seek to represent, whose total number of adherents will have to be equivalent to 0.4% of the people who voted in that district in the last elections of deputies.

In order to be part of the Constitutional Convention as independent, in addition to meeting the above requirements, they must be over 18 years of age and have not been sentenced to afflictive punishment.

HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS LAST?

After the conventional constituents are defined on April 11 of next year, the President of the Republic has three days to be able to call this convention. However, with a certain margin of error or an extended term, this convention could be operating in the last weeks of April 2021.

From they have their first session, the constituent convention will have 9 months to be able to propose a new constitution to the public, a term that it may be extended, only once, for a further three months. Finally, it gives a maximum period of one year for the constitutional convention to issue a proposal, which must be approved by the citizens in a referendum with mandatory voting, better known as an exit plebiscite.

Therefore, in 2022 Chile will be able to see a new Political Constitution.

SOME SCOPE OF THE RESULTS

This plebiscite, in addition to obtaining a historic vote since the voluntary vote was established in the country, reaching 50.8% of the electoral roll, which implies more than 7.5 million people, also showed interesting results in relation to where the different options won.

In Santiago, for example, of the 52 communes in the capital, only in 3 of these won the option "Rejection", being Las Condes, Vitacura and Lo Barnechea. At the country level it is even more surprising, since in only 5 communes of the country it led the "Rejection" option.

For some, this illustrates the elite's disconnection with what is happening in

Chile, reflecting the low approval ratings of the government and politicians in general.

Taking a brief X-ray of the process, the different options were polarized Right, Center or Left.

According to a survey by Cadem, in relation to **gender** of the voters, 24% of the men voted "Reject", while the other 76% supported the option "Approve". In the case of women, 21% voted for "Rejection" and 79% for the "Approve" option.

In relation to **the socioeconomic level**, 68% of the voters who went for the "Approve" option belong to the high segment, while 32% of those who voted "Reject" belong to this level. In retrospect, 89% of those who voted "Approve" belong to a low socioeconomic group, while only 11% of those who voted "Reject" belong to this same economic level.

Regarding the **political trend**, 68% of those who voted "Rejection" identified themselves as Right, while only 32% of those who voted "Approve" identified with this color. In relation to the Left, 95% of those who identify with this political color voted "Approve" and only 5% voted "Rejection".

All in all, the plebiscite figures show a common view of what the country needs, beyond what the polls and social networks reflect.

And although in 2022 the political polarization is expected to continue -in addition to the large number of electoral processes among which are elections for mayors, parliamentarians and presidential-, there remains the hope that Chile managed to order this constituent process through an Institutional pathway, which makes it possible to reduce acts of violence and regain a

certain stability that has characterized the country in recent years.

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