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STRENGTHENING
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IN LATIN AMERICA

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Chile

Presidential and legislative elections Pre-election report



Executive summary

On November 21, Chileans go to the polls to elect their next President, to take office in March 2022. Also up for grabs are seats in Congress for the period 2022 - 2026. The electoral system establishes that for a president to be elected in the first round, he/she must get at least 50 percent of the votes. Such a margin of victory seems unlikely for any candidate, meaning a runoff is likely, which would be on December 19. In all, seven candidates are competing for the Executive, of whom two predominate: the conservative José Antonio Kast (Republican Party) and the leftist Gabriel Boric (Apruebo Dignidad).

Chile heads into these elections amid looming constitutional reforms sparked by social unrest in 2019 and with a charged political climate threatening to upend its traditional party structure. The 2019 protests centered on demands for access to health, education, environment and the pension system among other issues. They saw violent clashes with security forces, which in turn led to [‘pact’](#) between different parties to propose constitutional reforms responsive to public grievances.

The ruling coalition Vamos Chile, meanwhile, continues to hemorrhage support at the hands of its increasingly unpopular leader, President Sebastián Piñera. On November 16, the Congress weighed ousting Piñera over alleged misdeeds in the purchase and sale of a mining project coming to light in the Pandora Papers. Although the Legislative Branch finally opted against this his image and that of the government were badly bruised as a result.

The two main political forces in the country (the ruling Chile Vamos and the current coalition Unidad Constituyente, formerly Nueva Mayoría) both come to the elections in a weakened state. This has created space for the emergence and indeed consolidation as favorites in the race of two outsiders: Kast and Boric.

Beyond the presidential elections and probable runoff, the new Congress will be defined on November 21. The population will have to renew all 155 deputies and elect 27 senators. The Legislative Branch will have two institutional novelties: the Senate will increase in size (from 43 to 50 seats, concluding the final phase of the 2015 political reform), and this will be the first parliamentary election under the new law limiting MPs' reelection (deputies may be elected a maximum of three times and senators twice).

If there is a runoff, the next president will likely contend with a Congress needy of finely balanced dialogue, consensus building and alliance-making to push forward the government's agenda.

Basic questions

Who are being elected?

On November 21, Chileans will elect the President of the Republic and 182 members of Congress (27 senators and 155 deputies) for the 2022-2026 term.

Will there be a runoff?

In the event that none of the candidates obtains more than 50% of the votes or an absolute majority (not counting null and blank votes, which are considered as not cast). The tie-breaker would be on December 19, 2021 between the two candidates who have obtained the two highest relative majorities.

How many are the presidential candidates?

Chile will choose among 7 candidates: Sebastián Sichel (Chile Vamos), José Antonio Kast (Frente Social Cristiano), Yasna Provoste (Democracia Cristiana) Gabriel Boric (Apruebo Dignidad), Franco Parisi (Partido de la Gente), Eduardo Artés (Unión Patriótica) and Marco Enríquez-Ominami (PRO).

When will the next government take office?

The new president and the elected congressmen will take office on March 11, 2022 for a period of four years, ending on March 11, 2026.

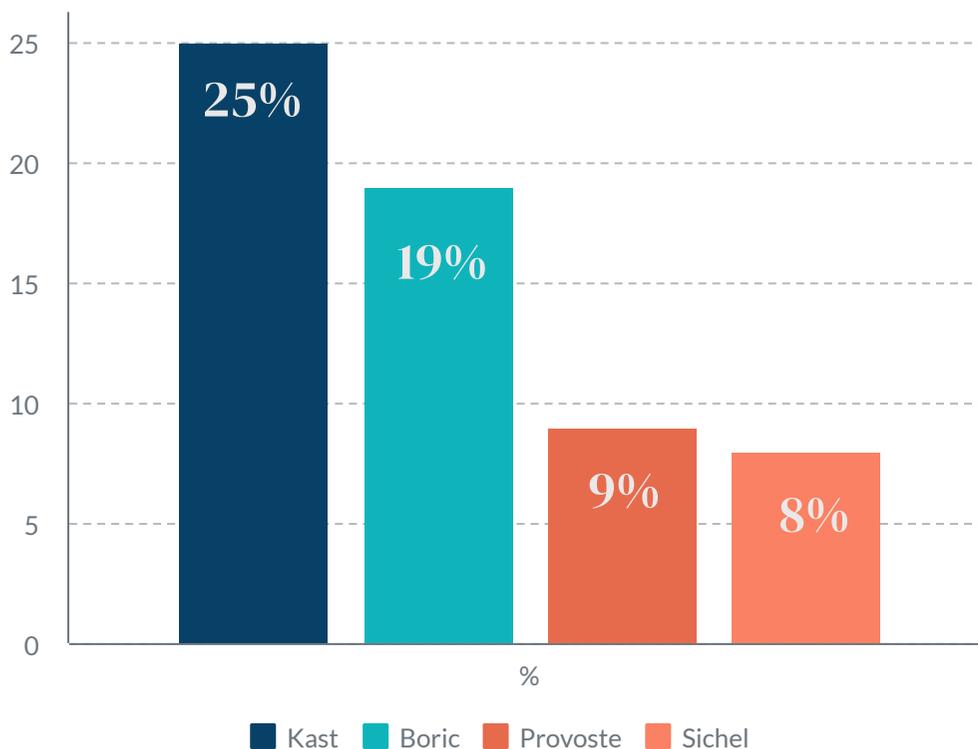
Regardless of whether or not there is a second round to define the next president, the composition of the Congress will be defined in the November 20 elections.



Political context

The elections on November 21 are heavily tinged by the 2019 social unrest. This proved so powerful at the time that the demands for socioeconomic progress (including health, environment, work, education) severely undermined President Piñera forcing his government into proposing a referendum on constitutional reform.

However, the main opposition coalition (Unidad Constituyente) also saw its chances of returning to government hampered by the unrest. This is because citizens largely attribute the persistent inequality to both sides of the traditional political spectrum – as was reflected in the public’s choice of the Constituent Convention members (tasked with moving ahead with the reform process), most of whom are independents as opposed to representing the traditional parties.



Source: based on local pollsters

On top of all this, the Pandora Papers leak has heaped further pressure on President Sebastián Piñera, accused of malfeasance in the sale of the Dominga mining project. The disclosure of new information in recent months led to an impeachment process, which while dropped could still be costly for him once out of office, facing as he does then the real chance of being barred from public roles in future. Opponents of the government had argued Piñera should be stripped of the Presidency over conflicts of interest surrounding the sale of the mining project.

Finally, alleged inconsistencies by the President and ministers over the withdrawal of pension funds approved by Congress have impacted the popularity of the ruling party candidate Sebastián Sichel, who in another blow suffered the loss of a key ally in the Independent Democratic Union party. The decline in approval of the ruling party contrasts with significant support for José Antonio Kast who with Gabriel Boric is some way ahead of the field. Kast and Boric, then, look to be the candidates set to fight out a likely runoff on December 19.



Who are the contenders for the presidency?

Chile will choose among 7 candidates: Sebastián Sichel (Chile Vamos), José Antonio Kast (Frente Social Cristiano), Yasna Provoste (Democracia Cristiana), Gabriel Boric (Apruebo Dignidad), Franco Parisi (Partido de la Gente), Eduardo Artés (Unión Patriótica) and Marco Enríquez-Ominami (PRO).

Gabriel Boric



He is the youngest candidate. He was president of the Student Federation during 2011-2012 and led protests for free, free and quality education. In 2018 he founded the Convergencia Social party and the Apruebo Dignidad coalition, for which he is running for president. In 2014 he took office as deputy and was re-elected for the period 2018-2022.

Government Plan: It has four cross-cutting themes: "Decentralization, feminism, climate crisis and decent work".

Proposals:

- Increase of the minimum wage and reduction of the working day to 40 hours a week.
- Create a public, free and quality education system.
- Guarantee Internet as a basic service.
- In environmental matters, he proposes a framework law on Circular Economy and Waste Management. In addition, to create a national lithium company.

José Antonio Kast

He is a lawyer and current president of the Republican Party. He was deputy and presidential candidate in the 2017 elections. He served as councilman of Buin between 1996 and 2000, and as deputy between 2002 and 2018. Son of a family of German immigrants, he was a historical militant of the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) until the announcement of his resignation on May 31, 2016. In the previous elections he came in fourth place, while this time he has serious chances of going to the second round and winning the ballotage.



Partido 
Republicano

[Government Plan](#). The central ideas of his government plan are based on three axes: "The Republic, Freedom and the Family".

Proposals:

- Modify the Labor Code to allow freedom of working hours, hourly work and teleworking in the public and private sectors. In addition, establish that all employment contracts must include severance pay for years of service.
- Reform the Antiterrorist Law and integrate the National Intelligence Agency with specialists from the three branches of the Armed Forces, the Carabineros and the PDI.
- Create a specialized unit of the Investigative Police to actively search for illegal immigrants.
- In environmental matters, oversee emissions from industrial complexes to ensure that they comply with current regulations.



He is a law graduate with a master's degree and doctorate in public law. He is one of the creators of the digital newspaper El Dínamo. He was director of public affairs at Burson-Marsteller, and also participated as managing partner of the lobbying agency Paréntesis Estrategia. He started his public activity in 2000 by joining the Christian Democratic Party and supporting Michelle Bachelet's two presidential candidacies. In 2017 he decided to support the current president Sebastián Piñera.

[Government Plan.](#) The proposals are based on five pillars: Better State, integration and social protection; sustainable development; economic recovery, SMEs and entrepreneurship; and democracy and participation.

Proposals:

- Updating the personal data protection regulation to comply with international standards, as well as the creation of a future data protection authority.
- Promote a bill to regulate incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation, with a focus on prevention, education and punishment.
- Promote a climate change framework bill.
- Promote a bill on popular initiative that will establish mechanisms for organized citizens to promote legislative initiatives, which will be subject to a specific process.

Yasna Provoste

Physical education teacher. Between 1997 and 2001, during the government of President Ricardo Lagos, she served as governor of the province of Huasco. In addition, between 2001 and 2004, she was Intendant of the Atacama Region and Minister of Planning between 2004 and 2006. In Michelle Bachelet's first administration, she was Minister of Education until 2008 when she was dismissed by the Senate through a trial process that disqualified her from holding public office for five years. She returned to public office in 2013 when she was elected deputy and then senator four years later.



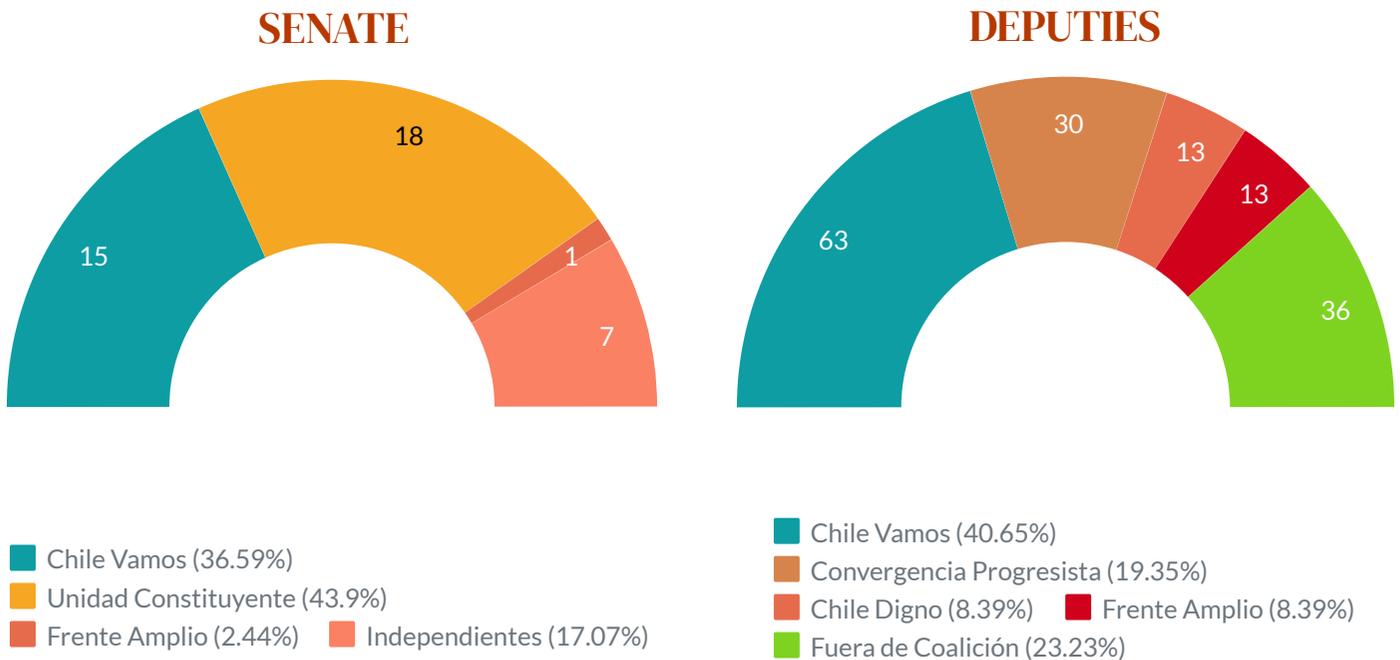
[Government Plan.](#) It is divided into five strategic pillars: sustainable development, social protection, community life, the role of the state and social inclusion.

Proposals:

- Eliminate or modify exemptions, benefits or special tax treatments.
- Create the National Cybersecurity Agency.
- Environmental agenda for water conservation and efficiency, including the creation of a new institutional framework called the National Water Authority.
- Create new public companies: Empresa Nacional de Hidrógeno Verde (National Green Hydrogen Company) and Empresa Nacional del Litio (National Lithium Company).

Legislative elections

The current Congress has a majority opposition to the government. Still, the pro-government alliance (Chile Vamos) is the largest single group holding close to 40% of seats in both chambers.



As of 2022, the Senate will have 50 seats in accordance with the provisions of the last electoral reform enacted in 2015; a limit on the reelection of parliamentarians that has already prevented 37 deputies and 6 senators from running for re-election will be in force. For its part, the Chamber of Deputies will continue to have 155 members, as has been the case since 2018.

Although the scenario of political instability and the nomination of independent candidates in the different regions of the country complicate the forecasts for the new Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, it is expected that the most conservative groups of the Chilean political spectrum (including the ruling party and the alternative represented by Kast) will lose the dominant place they currently hold in Congress, as well as the traditional center-left alliance, which could lose up to eight deputies.

The opposite looks to be the case for the coalition Apruebo Dignidad, led by Gabriel Boric, which would not only have a more important representation of deputies - who could go from 32 seats to a total of 44 in an optimistic scenario- but would also gain presence in the Senate denied them in previous years.



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