

This section complements the “The 2019 Elections in Bolivia” chapter authored by Sebastian Urioste and published in DABÈNE, Olivier (ed.). *Latin America’s Pendular Politics: Electoral Cycles and Alternations*. Springer Nature, 2023. Located on footnote number 38 (page 237), it analyses data collected during an electoral survey conducted at the exit of the “Club de Leones” polling station on Sunday 21 October 2019.

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Electoral survey at the “Club de Léones” school

The “Club de Léones” school is a reference polling station for an electoral survey¹ as the results of the last three presidential elections in this school correspond to trends and patterns at the national level. In fact, according to data provided by the Plurinational Electoral Body, more than 60% of electors enlisted in that polling station voted in favor of the MAS in 2014 (in the second immediate re-election of Evo Morales) but less than 47% voted for the party in government in 2019 (in the third continuous re-election attempt of the incumbent president) but eventually more than 54% trusted Luis Arce, Evo Morales's runner-up in 2020 (see Charts 2 and 3).

For the purpose of this section, this polling station is mainly relevant in order to comprehend the reasons that motivated voters to turn away from Evo Morales in 2019, while a strong sympathy for MAS distinguished them from the rest of the population of the city of La Paz, although without showing an unconditional adhesion to it². Correlatively, this survey has consulted an urban electorate, constituted by working class³ and modest middle class⁴ electors propitious to cast their vote in favor of the MAS - especially as 56,25% of those surveyed said that they had personally benefited

¹ This electoral survey was carried out by the *Observatoire Politique de l'Amérique latine et de la Caraïbe* (OPALC, CERI-Sciences Po), in partnership with the *Institut de droit, sciences politiques et sociales* of the *Université Paris 13* and the *Centre d'étude de la vie politique* (CEVIPOL) of the *Université libre de Bruxelles*. It took place at the exit of the “Club de Leones” polling station on Sunday 21 October. Of the 209 people consulted, 54.81% were men and 45.19% were women. The average age was 42.62 years. The author would like to express his gratitude to Elise Gadea, Victor Audubert, Kévin Kermoal, Jorge Dulong, Yerko Ilijic, Bernardo del Castillo, Olivier Dabène and Frédéric Louault for their support and commitment during the various stages of this survey.

² According to the data provided by the Plurinational Electoral Body, in percentage terms the pro-MAS votes in the ‘Club de Leones’ school were lower than those at the level of the department and provinces of La Paz (both considered as ‘strongholds’). Nevertheless, there is an over-representation of this vote when compared to the city of La Paz as a whole or to the three ‘macro-neighbourhoods’ where the polling station is located (district 9). This loyalty to Evo Morales and his party is confirmed when looking at the results of the 2016 constitutional referendum (see Chart 4). On this occasion, a small majority of voters (50.92%) voted in favor of the constitutional reform that would have allowed Evo Morales to stand for re-election without having to go through the PCC (a difference of 9 points with the vote of the whole of the city of La Paz, whose voters were very clearly opposed to such a reform), but still more moderately than the whole of the department of La Paz, where the vote in favor of the reform was very clear (55.83%).

³ 38.94% of the respondents considered themselves to belong to an ‘indigenous or Afro-Bolivian nation or people’; 80.29% were in the labor force, but half of the sample stated that they were not affiliated to a health insurance fund (indicating that a large number of them carried out their economic activities in the ‘informal’ sector). In addition, 54.81% claimed to earn less than the minimum wage (i.e. \$10.25 per day) and 20.19% received \$14 per month (i.e. \$2.02 per day).

⁴ One third of the people consulted received double the minimum wage (\$20.5 per day) and 44.71% owned their own home. 48.65% had either accessed or completed university.

or that a family member had access to public transfers in the form of bonds. These results should be read with caution, however, as the survey was conducted in a climate where some respondents were sometimes reluctant to answer divisive questions in public⁵.

One of the main findings of the survey is that 61.54% of respondents had "little or no confidence" in the institutions in charge of the elections. This figure confirms the data provided by polling institutes before the elections and sets the tone for the extent to which the integrity of the SET was questioned on the day of the elections and even before the official results were published. At the same time, 53.85% of respondents said that "stability" in the country was preferable to democracy, a statistic that shall be addressed in the last section of this chapter.

When asked about the choice they had just made, 40.8% had voted in favor of Carlos Mesa and 35.1% had given or renewed their confidence in Evo Morales. However, when asked about the 2014 elections, 67.31% said they had voted for MAS, confirming a significant loss of votes in favor of the president. Consulted on the electoral offer, only 11.06% had been motivated by "the fear of a return to neoliberalism" and 23.08% by "the fear that MAS would win the elections"; thus, far from a "progressivism" versus "conservatism" divide, the electoral preference seemed more in tune with "personality of the candidates" (28.85%). This detachment from ideological markers displayed during the campaign was confirmed as, when asked about the most decisive aspect of their choice of vote in economic matters, voters placed last the "industrialization of natural resources" promoted by the party in government (19.23%), far behind the "current economic situation in Bolivia" (44.23%) and "access to employment" (30.29%). This tendency to de-ideologization was confirmed when 30.77% of the respondents answered that the most important factor in their choice was social networks, placing "party" or "union affiliation" in last place (10.10%). The same is true for "corruption" (58.17%), a motivation that surpassed the pre-election "cabildos" that preceded the election (15.38%). In fact, 92.79% considered the corruption situation in Bolivia to be "worrying or very worrying". Gradually, a shift in opinion towards Evo Morales' candidacy emerged, as 67.31% of those surveyed considered it "less important or unimportant" that the candidate was "indigenous", while 60.58% said it was "important or very important" that he was "new". When asked directly about the quality of governance of the outgoing president, an overwhelming majority said that the governments between 2006 and 2014 had been "good" or "very good", but 50.48% considered that the one between 2014 and 2019 had been "bad" or "very bad". This orientation was consolidated when 30.77% considered that the governmental policy had influenced "positively" their personal situation in the last 5 years, whereas 67.31% considered it as "negative" or "without influence".

Therefore, these initial collected data call into question a reading of the Bolivian electorate's vote in 2019 that would have been motivated by a categorical choice between "left" or "right". Above all, it manifests a degree of the impatience of the electorate regarding their immediate aspirations, also strongly concerned about corruption; voters who considered that a new term of office for Evo Morales was not

⁵ If we compare the data provided by the Plurinational Electoral Body and this survey, we can see that those who agreed to answer the questions 'who did you vote for today' and 'who did you vote for in 2014' showed less preference for the MAS than the official results reveal: a difference of 7.39 points in 2019 and 4.97 points in 2014. Paradoxically, however, this gap diminishes when the respondents were consulted about the constitutional referendum: according to the electoral authorities, 48.7% of the voters had voted in favor of the referendum, compared to 45.5% according to our survey, resulting in a 3.2-point difference.

desirable in terms of administration, as the last years of government were evaluated unfavorably. The figure of the "good manager" was called into question.

Furthermore, this assessment turns into disenchantment when examining the responses of the electors declaring that they had voted for MAS in 2014 but had not renewed this vote in 2019. The first lesson is that 68.66% of this electorate had approved the constitutional reform of 2016, which nuances a principled rejection of continuous re-election - even if 74.63% had "little or no confidence" in the institutions in charge of the elections (13 points above the average). However, the political distancing from Evo Morales is far more discernable than with the rest of the voters: 41.79% were "afraid that the MAS would win the elections" and only 1.49% had voted out of "fear of the return of neoliberalism". Nonetheless, it should not be concluded that these voters aligned themselves with the "Citizen Platforms" or joined opposition rallies: for 67.16% of them, corruption was the main reason for their vote, overtaking the pre-election "cabildos" (4.48%). In the background, there was a disillusionment with Evo Morales, as 77.61% considered it unimportant or less important that the candidate was indigenous (10 points more than the average) and 67.16% considered it important or very important that the candidate was "new" (7 points more than the average). The disappointment became clear when asked about the quality of the outgoing president's governance: 74.62% considered the 2006 and 2014 governments "good or very good", but 68.66% considered the 2014 and 2019 governments "bad or very bad" (18 points above average).

Considering the size of the sample of this survey, the data collected must be taken with discernment. Nevertheless, it allows us to understand the decline in Evo Morales' popularity, beyond the mobilizations in the streets demanding compliance with the 2016 referendum. Elected in the first round with 53.74% of the votes in 2005 and more than 60% in 2014, former president Morales had gained the support of an electoral coalition constituted by rural and urban voters; yet, such support fell to 47,08% in 2019. A study of the motivations of the "Club de Leones" voters suggests that a segment of the urban, popular and middle-class electorate, which had supported MAS in previous presidential elections, cast a pragmatic replacement vote in 2019, which became a "useful vote" favoring Carlos Mesa: the industrialization of hydrocarbons and lithium was a distant horizon and the preference was for a new candidate who would be able to manage everyday life. At the same time, another segment of this electorate cast a vote of sanction: amenable to his reelection, these voters found themselves disappointed by the last term of the outgoing president. Both groups were concerned about the level of corruption. Hence, even though more than 40 per cent of voters were willing to cast or renew their votes for the incumbent, his electoral support had weakened, and a run-off election was not out of the question if the conditions for a peaceful contest had been met and a second round of voting had taken place. The popularity of Evo Morales had waned, and he no longer found the same resonance in the cities when he asked the population to defend the results of the first round as communicated by the TSE.

Chart 2

MAS results in the 2014 Presidential elections (%)

	Bolivia (National territory)	Department of La Paz	Municipality of La Paz	« Club de Leones » voting station
MAS	61,01	68,92	41,92	62,34

Source : Plurinational Electoral Body

Chart 3

2019 and 2020 Presidential Elections 2019 (%) - MAS and CC results

year	Political parties	Bolivia (National territory)	Department of La Paz	District 9	« Club de leones » Voting station
2019	MAS	46,64	53,16	42,46	46,21
	CC	36,83	29,83	44,14	38,8
2020	MAS	54,73	68,36	49,64	56,46
	CC	29,16	28,58	43,31	39,5

Source : Plurinational Electoral Body

Chart 4

2016 Constitutional referendum results (%)

	Bolivia (National territory)	Department of La Paz	Municipality of La Paz	« Club de leones » Voting station
Yes	48,7	55,83	41,92	50,92
No	51,3	44,17	58,08	49,08

Source : Plurinational Electoral Body