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Elections in the Dominican Republic

2020 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Americas

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Dominican elections authorities as of June 30, 2020, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Electoral Board postponed the general elections originally scheduled for May 17 to July 5, 2020, with a possible runoff on July 26.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

In the 2020 general elections, Dominicans will vote for:

- The president and vice president;
- 190 deputies to the Chamber of Deputies; and
- 32 senators to the Chamber of Senators.

All elected officials will serve four-year terms. In the presidential election, if no candidate gets at least 50 percent of the vote, a runoff will be held on July 26, 2020. Article 5 of Law 157-13 states that the D'Hondt method will be used to proportion the votes for each party or party alliance.¹

Who can vote? How many registered voters are there?

All Dominican citizens who are at least 18 years old have the right to vote, except members of the armed forces, national police, those who have lost Dominican citizenship or those whose suffrage rights have been suspended.² Voting is optional, and all citizens must register with the Central Electoral Board (JCE) at least 120 days prior to elections.³

As of February 2019, the Dominican Republic's population is 10,996,774, and the average turnout is 61.95 percent.⁴ According to the JCE, there are 7,529,932 registered voters, 3,850,393 of whom are women. Additionally, the JCE estimates that 2,223,484 voters under the age of 30 are registered for this year's elections, representing 29.53 percent of the electoral roll, and there are 595,879 registered voters abroad, representing 7.91 percent of the electoral roll.⁵

Who are the presidential candidates?

Six presidential candidates will be contesting the 2020 general elections.⁶

- Gonzalo Castillo
 - Party: Dominican Liberation Party
 - Vice President: Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez

¹https://jce.gob.do/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?EntryId=16174&Command=Core_Download&language=es-ES&PortalId=1&TabId=190

² https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Dominican_Republic_2015.pdf?lang=en

³ Dominican Republic, Electoral Law No. 15-19, Article 82.

⁴ <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/62/>

⁵ https://jce.gob.do/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?EntryId=16897&Command=Core_Download&language=es-ES&PortalId=1&TabId=190

⁶ <https://twitter.com/juntacentral/status/1273992961919979521>

Gonzalo Castillo was the minister of public works and communications from 2012-19 and is running with the ruling party.

- Luis Abinader
 - Party: Modern Revolutionary Party (PRM)
 - Vice President: Raquel Peña

Luis Abinader is the opposition candidate and was also the PRM candidate in the 2016 general elections.

- Leonel Fernández
 - Party: People's Force
 - Vice President: Sergia Elena de Séliman

Leonel Fernández served three terms as president of the Dominican Republic, from 1996-2008.

- Guillermo Moreno
 - Party: Country Alliance
 - Vice President: Agustin Gonzalez Morel

Guillermo Morenos a lawyer and a politician.

- Ismael Reyes
 - Party: Institutional Democratic Party
 - Vice President: Frank Troncoso Hache

Ismael Reyes is a lawyer, businessman and politician.

- Juan Cohen Sander
 - Party: National Citizen Will Party (PNVC)
 - Vice President: Hugo Mc – Farlane Kaluche

Juan Cohen Sander is an economist, politician, businessman and member of Parliament. He was a presidential candidate in the 2016 elections for the PNVC.

Why are these elections important?

The 2020 electoral cycle has been a particularly complex year for Dominican elections. In February, the Central Electoral Board (JCE) suspended the nationwide municipal elections after discovering issues with the electronic voting system. As a result, widespread protests were held for 11 consecutive days, demanding explanations for the interruption of elections on February 16 and the protection of citizens' right to vote. The municipal elections were then rescheduled for March 15, making the Dominican Republic the first Latin American country to host elections during the coronavirus pandemic.⁷

⁷ <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-dominican-republic-gears-two-crucial-elections>

Given growing concerns about the rapid spread of COVID-19, the Dominican Republic postponed its general elections from May 17 to July 5. These elections will take on added importance as countries around the world grapple with how to organize safe elections amid COVID-19 and election management bodies look to their peers for positive examples. In addition to dealing with the public health crisis in the Dominican Republic, the JCE has the difficult task of accommodating the nearly 600,000 Dominican registered voters abroad, many of whom are in countries with severe outbreaks, such as the United States, Italy and Spain.

Aside from the challenge of administering elections during the COVID-19 pandemic, these are the first Dominican elections in which all authorities are elected directly and concurrently, making them the most complicated in Dominican history. Dominicans in country will fill out three separate ballots on Election Day, and out-of-country voters will fill out two.⁸ It also represents a politically historic election, as the ruling Dominican Liberation Party has held the presidency for all but four years since 1996. That hold on political power is in jeopardy, due in part to former President Leonel Fernandez's decision to run a third-party bid with the People's Force.

What provisions are in place to support the equal participation of women?

In 1942, Dominican women gained the right to vote with the adoption of constitutional reforms. Since then, women's rights organizations have been pushing for more equal representation, and in 1997 the Dominican Republic enacted its first gender quota law.

Article 68 of the electoral law states that at least 33 percent of candidate lists for the Chamber of Deputies must be women. Additionally, the Central Electoral Board will not accept any political party list that does not meet this minimum. This law extends to local and municipal elections, where there is the addition that if the principal mayoral candidate is a man, the alternate candidate must be a woman and vice versa.⁹

Will there be observation during Election Day?

The Organization of American States (OAS) will deploy its 18th observation mission to the Dominican Republic for the 2020 general elections.¹⁰ Transparency International's local chapter in the Dominican Republic, *Participación Ciudadana* (PC), will also have 2,500 observers in the Dominican Republic and in out-of-country polling stations.¹¹ This will be PC's third time observing out-of-country elections.

⁸ <https://listindiario.com/la-republica/2020/03/19/609271/la-jce-aprueba-tres-formatos-distintos-para-boletas-de-mayo>

⁹ <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/96/35>

¹⁰ https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-062/20

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/pciudadana/status/1268657541724110850?s=21>

How will voters cast their ballots and what precautions are being taken to ensure their safety amid COVID-19?

Voters will be able to cast their ballots in the Dominican Republic and in 20 countries abroad.¹²

On May 26, the Central Electoral Board (JCE) approved a sanitary protocol for poll workers, political parties, electoral police and voters. The protocol acknowledges that the 2020 general elections are taking place in the context of a pandemic and, as such, require special, practical measures that have not customarily been part of past elections. The JCE established the protocol using resources from the World Health Organization, Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance, Organization of American States, National Election Commission of the Republic of Korea and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' recent paper, [Safeguarding Health and Elections](#).

The protocol's 10 resolutions address the primary risks associated with the spread of COVID-19 and adopt precautions to prevent the transmission of the virus. Important and significant adaptations to the conduct of the elections include the use of personal protective equipment by poll workers and voters, the spacing of polling stations and the institution of social distancing outside polling areas.¹³

Additionally, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the JCE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on June 25 to affirm their collaboration to safely, credibly and transparently conduct the general elections amid the pandemic. Under the terms of the MoU, IFES is supporting the JCE to implement the health protocol adopted on May 26 to protect both voters and election workers. IFES is also advising the JCE's Communications Directorate in the development of a strategic approach to combat misinformation and disinformation regarding COVID-19 and elections, enhance voter education and increase transparency.¹⁴

When will official results be announced?

Official results announcements are expected to be delayed because of COVID-19 precautions, which will slow down the counting and transmission processes. The Central Electoral Board (JCE) has stated that the presidential count will be the first official result announced on the JCE's website and across its social media accounts.

¹²https://jce.gob.do/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?EntryId=16897&Command=Core_Download&language=es-ES&PortalId=1&TabId=190

¹³ Resolution No. 53-2020

¹⁴ <https://www.ifes.org/news/ifes-supports-dominican-republics-central-electoral-board-holding-safe-credible-and-transparent>

Resources

- [Central Electoral Board website](#)
- [Dominican Republic's Constitution of 2015](#)
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) [COVID-19 Briefing Series](#)
- IFES' [ElectionGuide](#)