

# *Dominicans will go to the polls on Sunday*

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By María Josefina Arce

More than 8 to designate the new president of the country and the members of the National Congress. Nine candidates from different political organizations aspire to the Head of State, among whom is the current president Luis Abinader, for the Modern Revolutionary Party and who is leading the polls.

Behind Abinader are former president Leonel Fernández, from Fuerza del Pueblo, who is seeking a fourth term. He was already in charge of the country from 1996 to 2000 and from 2004 to 2008 and from that year until 2012.

Also for the Dominican Liberation Party is Abel Martínez, former mayor of Santiago de los Caballeros, the second largest city in the Caribbean nation.

The polls point to a victory in the first round for President Abinader, with approximately 60% of the votes, while his closest rivals would obtain 25% Fernández and further away with 11% Martínez.

Dominicans already went to the polls last February in municipal elections, in which the ruling party prevailed. The Modern Revolutionary Party established itself as the country's leading political force, winning 121 of the 158 mayoralties at stake.

For many experts this was the preamble to what could happen on the coming 19th, although they also drew attention to the high abstentionism recorded of more than 50%, which they consider as a message from citizens to the political class.

This Thursday the electoral campaigns close in a process, described as calm, but that has not escaped the crisis in Haiti, a country with which the Dominican Republic shares almost 400 kilometers of border.

The economy has also been in the focus of attention, because although the nation has performed well in this area in recent years, inequalities still persist and greater protection of the most vulnerable sectors is necessary.

Next Sunday the question will be resolved as to whether what the opinion polls predict comes true and the next president of the country is elected in the first round, or whether we will have to go to the second round on June 30.

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