

Report: Cuba: exploring citizen opinions under the Díaz-Canel government

Team: Armando Chaguaceda (Universidad de Guanajuato), Elaine Acosta (Florida International University), Juan Manuel Trak (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello) and Rodrigo Salazar-Elena (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO, [Latin American School of Social Science]) México)

- 1- Introduction to the study: the present as subjective malaise and the future as a stagnating promise
- 2- The socioeconomic dimension: personal sentiment, general situation, and social policy
- 3- The political dimension: pluralist aspirations and demands for public debate
- 4- Economic Reform and Political Reform: mutually reinforcing or separate compartments?

1- Introduction to the study: the present as subjective malaise and the future as a stagnating promise

In spite of its apparent immobility, Cuban society has changed. The government itself recognized at the end of the nineties that, as an effect of the supervening economic crisis after the collapse of the socialist block, “an unwanted social differentiation occurred.”¹ However, the expectations, fears, and needs derived from the so-called “growing complexity of current Cuban society”² have not been sufficiently addressed by the scientific community. The effort of this study, carried out from June 4 to 11, 2018, is oriented in the direction of capturing and understanding new or previously existing biases in a Cuban society such as the present one, increasingly diversified and stressed by the processes of change taking place against – or not – the intentions or directives of the government headed by Miguel Diaz-Canel, who in this month of July passes his first hundred days in office.

The sample to which the questionnaire is applied consists of Internet users residing on the Island by means of the tool developed by *CubaData* (N = 2,287). It is a non-probability “sample of volunteers,” and therefore not generalizable to the Cuban population as a whole. Nevertheless, *CubaData* has some strengths that permit exploring relationships between groups, the results of which have more than satisfactory relevance in understanding the national reality. The sample's intrinsic bias has an advantage.

Given the thematic nature of the questionnaire, it is probable that one characteristic that makes the sample different with respect to the rest of the population is their specific level of interest and/or knowledge of issues that affect public policy, institutional change, and economic reform. In studying issues related to support for change, the groups most involved in politics are ultimately the most prone to stating their satisfaction or rejection, and ultimately, to express themselves and/or take action in one direction or another, especially when dealing with situations in which taking action is costly and therefore requires special

¹ Draft *The party of unity, democracy, and human rights that we defend*, V Congress of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC, [Cuban Communist Party]), Editora Política, Havana, May 1997, p. 4.

² Figueroa, Galia (2010). “Social sciences, challenges, and debates at the start of the century,” *Temas [Issues]*, No. 62-63, pp. 199-209.

motivation. Thus, the type of bias to which our sample is susceptible makes it a group that, although not representative, can be justifiably called “crucial.”

This same characteristic gives the responses a greater degree of accuracy than responses from the general public. Once again, this advantage, present in democratic contexts,³ should be expected to be stronger in authoritarian situations. An additional advantage is the size of the sample.⁴ Having more than 2,000 observations does not strengthen the representativeness of the sample, as this factor depends on the sampling procedure. However, lack of responses always represents a risk for the purposes of the analysis of relationships between variables. A representative sample of 1,200 in multivariate analysis can in effect be seen as reduced to, for example, 580 observations due to the effect of lack of responses on multiple items. For certain techniques such as those used below, the data available can be insufficient for obtaining substantive results.

Lastly, knowing the characteristics that distinguish the sample from the population permits determining up to what point it is plausible to assume that a substantially similar result would be obtained if the analysis were replicated on a probability sample. We will soon be offering responses along these lines.

2- The socioeconomic dimension: personal sentiment, general situation, and social policy

First, we will present the socioeconomic module of the survey. Its objective was to investigate Cubans' perceptions of daily life, their biases regarding the current situation, and their perspectives on the future of the Island in a context of political and economic uncertainty, given the transfer of power and the first months of the Díaz-Canel government. The analysis of what the people feel and think, their hopes and fears, is proposed as a strategy for responding to questions that come up with processes of social change.

In this section, the assessments made by the Cubans that were interviewed are analyzed along three basic dimensions. The first is aimed at understanding their assessment of their current **daily lives** and their **prognosis regarding Cuba's future**. The second investigates their perception of the **general economic situation** on the Island, and along with that, how their **personal economic sentiment** is evaluated. For such purposes, they were asked about a collection of measures or actions that have been questioned within the context of the economic reforms promoted since 2008, which are considered critical points that the Cuban government has been reluctant to move past. In particular, survey respondents were asked about the contracting of Cuban workers by foreign companies operating on the Island, the participation of nationals in

³ Chang, Linchiat & Krosnick, Jon A. (2009): “National Surveys Via Rdd Telephone Interviewing Versus the Internet: Comparing Sample Representativeness and Response Quality,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 73(4), pp. 641–678.

⁴ If, for example, we compare it to the sample sizes of the main studies previously carried out: a) 1000 survey respondents in the Gallup study (2007) <http://media.gallup.com/WorldPoll/PDF/TFcuba022207.pdf>; b) 1200 respondents in the Bendixen & Amandi survey

(2015) <http://huelladigital.univisionnoticias.com/encuesta-cuba/index.html>; and c) 840 interviewees in the University of Chicago survey

(2017) http://www.norc.org/PDFs/Survey%20of%20Cuban%20Opinion/NORC_Cuba_Report_2017_DTPv7r1.pdf

import and export activities, the maintaining or eradication of dual currencies, and the possibility of Cuban professionals on the Island establishing businesses and companies within their professions.

Lastly, they were asked about two of the **pillars of social protection** developed during the period after 1959, **health and education**. In regard to public health, they were asked about their current status, taking into account the situation of hospitals and polyclinics, primary care, access to specialists, pharmacy supplies, and the effectiveness and scope of campaigns for the prevention of illnesses and epidemics. Within the educational sphere they were asked about the quality, considering the professors' training, the students' food, and the state of learning centers, books, notebooks, computers, and laboratory tools.

Between dissatisfaction with current daily life and a pessimistic view of the future.

The majority of the survey respondents (53.1%) were dissatisfied with their daily lives. Within this group, there were 20% whose level of dissatisfaction was very high. This perception draws a picture of general dissatisfaction with respect to daily life in Cuba today. The group of satisfied respondents amounted to 40%. When they were segmented by age and gender, young people and women were the ones who felt the most satisfied.

The perspective put forward by the interviewees *with respect to the future is not rosy, considering that 42.7% think that Cuba has stagnated and 15.6% believe that it is clearly regressing.* A little over a third have an optimistic view, considering the 35.9% of the population who see the country as making progress. This percentage is greater than that of the region, which only reached 25% in this category. The optimists are led by the youngest and the men. If we compare these results with the regional outlook, the perception of the future of the country is not very different. According to Latinobarómetro (2017),⁵ 47% of Latin Americans think that their country is stagnating.

When asked about their prognosis with respect to Cuba's immediate future (*within three months Cuba will be...*) their positions are fairly conservative or pessimistic. The majority (40%) think that conditions in Cuba will be the same, and 20% feel that it will be worse. The older the survey respondents are, the more pessimistic their view is. A minority group thinks that the country could experience a slight improvement (23.8%). In the region, when asked about the future economic situation, 35% do not expect significant changes, 31% believe that economic conditions are going to improve, and 28% think that they are going to worsen.⁶

National economic situation and personal economic sentiment: pessimism as the predominant sentiment

From a subjective point of view, the economic sentiment of Latin Americans in 2017 is that the countries are stagnating, with the insistence that poor economic conditions are persisting. Economic pessimism is particularly notable in Brazil and Venezuela.⁷ In the interviews with Cubans, pessimism is the prevailing sentiment with respect to the economy. 75% feel that the economic conditions have remained the same or

⁵ Latinobarómetro (2017). *Final report*, Corporación Latinobarómetro, Santiago de Chile. Available online at: <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latNewsShow.jsp>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

have worsened. Only 20% think that they have improved, with the view of slight improvement dominating among them. It is important to take into account that the evaluation of the economic situation, considering a time horizon of two months prior, is more pessimistic than the general evaluation of the country that was previously evidenced.

When asked about their personal assessment of the economic situation, their perception of income can be measured/quantified without the complication of the value of the currencies, but rather more subjectively in the assessment of each one. This exercise is similar to the one that the Latinobarómetro survey is carrying out, which has detected that in Latin America over a period of 22 years between 1995 and 2017, the perception of the four income groups has not substantially varied in spite of the fact that during this period two significant economic crises have occurred. Those who are able to save have increased from 38% in 1995 to 42% 2017. Those in great difficulty have reduced from 36% to 31% over the same period. When broken down by country, Venezuela leads in income poverty with 78%, followed by the Dominican Republic with 60%, and Brazil leads as the country where there are the least number of citizens who do **not** have enough, with 31%. However, over the last six years the region has not been able to make progress in the dismantling of poverty.⁸

In the Cuban case, 10 years after the initiation of economic reforms, ranked by experts as slow and oscillating, half of the survey sample feels that their personal economic situation is *okay* (49.8), but there is almost a third (27.8%) that have a negative assessment. Among this latter group, it is the men who see themselves in the worst economic situation, and those over 22 years old. A smaller percent feel that their economic situation is good, representing 20%, with the youngest and the women filling out this group.

The vast majority of survey respondents want workers in Cuba to be able to be contracted by foreign companies (92.8%), with greater emphasis on the group between 22-35 years old, on men, and on those who have a university level education. This last piece of information is consistent with the growing presence in Cuba of an educated labor force that cannot find work in activities with high productivity and added value.⁹ This categorical position shows the opposition towards Cuban legislation in this regard, which is considered more restrictive than China's, for example, in preventing the contracting and direct payment of Cuban workers by foreign companies.¹⁰ Among those who favor contracting, the greatest percentage (53.8%) want contracting that is direct and independent of the State, while those who think that the procedure should be carried out only through the state Employer Agency only constitute 9.4%. One third think that the procedure can be done both ways.

In regard to the possibilities of importing and exporting products, there is an overwhelming rejection (of 90%) of the State maintaining the monopoly over these transactions, considering that only 10% state that they are in favor of *only* the Cuban State being able to carry them out. The men, the youngest individuals, and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Vidal, Pavel (2018). "The decapitalization of the economy seems to me the most visible and concerning symptom that must be addressed with the highest priority," *Cuba Posible*, February 1, available at <https://cubaposible.com/pavel-vidal-la-descapitalizacion-la-economia-me-parece-sintoma-mas-visible-preocupante-debe-ria-atenderse-mayor-prioridad/>.

¹⁰ Mesa-Lago, Carmelo (2018). "The greyhound and the tortoise: the economies of China and Cuba," *Cuba Posible*, April 30, available at <https://cubaposible.com/galgo-la-jicotea-las-economias-china-cuba/>.

those who have the highest educational levels are those who most oppose the State's leading role in this matter. More than half (63.2%) lean towards both the State and Cuban citizens being able to do so on equal terms. There is also close to 20% who say that every Cuban should have this right (18.7%). Those who do not know how to resolve this restriction are predominantly women.

The dual currency in Cuba, in force for more than 20 years, is experiencing an enormous gap (24 CUP for 1 CUC), which is causing serious distortions. Neither one is quoted in world markets. By contrast, China has unified its currencies since 1993, and 25 years later the RMB is the eighth most exchanged currency internationally.¹¹ ***Given the current dual currency existing in Cuba, the majority of survey respondents favor its elimination*** (77.1%). Within this position of favoring the eradication of the dual currency, 44.4% would eliminate the CUC and keep the CUP. A little more than a third (32.7%) would eliminate the Cuban peso and keep the convertible peso. The strategy of keeping the Cuban peso is supported by those who are older, while the opposite occurs in regard to keeping the convertible peso, which is supported by most young people. Only 15.9% are in favor of maintaining the dual currency, with women constituting the greatest percentage within this group. There is a non-negligible 7.9% who do not know what the government should do in this case, essentially led by men.

In the context of an accelerated and constant loss of professional human resources from the country, survey respondents support the ***possibility of the government permitting Cuban professionals to establish businesses and companies on their own within their professions*** by an overwhelming majority (87.6%). When disaggregated by gender, it is the men who are the most categorically in favor, supported by those between 22 and 35 years of age and those who went to university. This possibility would permit retaining or keeping many of the professionals, an issue that many analysts have suggested is essential for the country's economic development.

The pillars of social policy in decline: health and educational services worsen and are commercialized.

Although access to health and education in Cuba continues to be universal and free, it is no secret that the lack of financial sustainability of said services has forced all of them to make significant cutbacks, causing a deterioration in quality. In parallel, strategies of focusing the social policy and orienting it around family have begun to be introduced, transferring more responsibilities onto the family and referring others to the market, in the context of a decline in real income, income differentiation, access to consumption, and the possibility of satisfying basic needs among different social groups.

Faced with this outlook, there is the ***generalized perception among survey respondents of a deterioration of the conditions of public health services*** in Cuba, with most of them ranking the quality offered from mediocre to poor (62.9%). There are a little more than a third (35.5%) that consider it good or very good, an opinion basically sustained by people under 35 years old and by men. Similar to health, ***a majority assess the quality of education as mediocre to very deficient*** (64.7%). The negative perception increases along with age.

In response to this deterioration, individuals and their families have turned to a collection of strategies that allow them to improve access and the quality of the service that they receive. One of the most recurring

¹¹ Ibid.

practices has been the payment – in money or in kind – of healthcare professionals, technicians, and personnel to accelerate and improve medical care. This practice is confirmed by majority of survey respondents (61.7%), who responded affirmatively that they have had to resort to these types of actions one or more times. This confirms the introduction of a collection of commercial practices that questions the free nature of the service, while at the same time deepening social inequality.

According to the Americas Barometer,¹² the regional outlook with respect to the perception of educational services varies a lot. For example, there are no clear patterns between national wealth and satisfaction with schools; some of the poorest countries are among those that have the highest level of satisfaction (Nicaragua, Dominican Republic), while richer countries (Chile, Argentina) closer to the end of the list are less happy with educational services. This pattern, the report indicates, could be a result of the fact that greater resources create higher expectations. This stands out in the measurement of Venezuela's decline. It is now in second place, after Haiti, with the lowest satisfaction with public education, a dramatic fall for a country that is substantially richer than many in the region.

With respect to health services, which have a lower level of satisfaction than educational services, four countries have a relatively low ranking: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Haiti. Chile, often seen as an economic and political model for the region, receives significantly lower evaluations than countries of similar wealth (17 degrees lower than Uruguay). As with public schools, evaluations of public healthcare services have dramatically lowered in Venezuela (from 52.1 in 2012 to 29.4 in 2016/17), adding more evidence that the crisis of governability in Venezuela is impacting public evaluations of government performance.¹³

In summary, the results show at least four general assertions supported by the responses of the individuals consulted in this survey. The diagnosis on Cuban public opinion can be refined from them to contribute to the development of a deeper public debate.

- a) General dissatisfaction with respect to daily life in current-day Cuba and a relatively conservative or pessimistic view of the future. Along with those who are dissatisfied and pessimistic, there is a non-negligible group that experiences their daily reality in a happier way and looks towards the future with greater optimism.
- b) Existence of subjective malaise with respect to one's personal economic situation and that of the country. On a social level, the view that economic conditions have stayed the same or worsened is predominant. A minority considers that the country is progressing or experiencing an improvement. Nevertheless, said malaise coexists with positive, although not predominant, assessments on the individual economy and that of the country.
- c) Generally favorable view of deepening and broadening economic reforms, eliminating existing restrictions, reducing the State monopoly, and expanding the economic freedoms and rights of all Cubans. Specifically, the majority of survey respondents supported the contracting of Cuban workers by foreign companies in Cuba, the participation of nationals in import and export

¹² Cohen, Mollie J., Lupu, Noam & Zechmeister, Elizabeth J. (2017). *The political culture of democracy in the Americas, 2016-2017: A comparative study of democracy and governance*, LAPOP-AmericasBarometer, available at [file:///C:/Users/Elaine%20Acosta/Desktop/Encuesta%20Cuba/Encuestas%20Socioecon%20A%20Latina/AB2016-17 Comparative Report English V2 FINAL 090117 W.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Elaine%20Acosta/Desktop/Encuesta%20Cuba/Encuestas%20Socioecon%20A%20Latina/AB2016-17%20Comparative%20Report%20English%20FINAL%20090117%20W.pdf).

¹³ Ibid.

- activities, the eradication of dual currencies, and Cuban professionals on the island establishing businesses and companies within their professions.
- d) General dissatisfaction with healthcare and education services, and in parallel, recognition of the existence of commercialization strategies for access and use of healthcare.

In reading these results, it is important to consider that people do not only take action as a result of dissatisfaction with their personal lives. Nor is it a question of dismissing or minimizing the malaise, because that would imply wasting its potential for transformation. The scenario in Cuba today makes it necessary to take into account the reality of subjectivity, and how it corresponds to long-term changes that have been happening in the world and in Cuban society itself. In this context, although economic variables continue to be important, they are not capable of explaining the social changes and demands if demands for social recognition, new aspirations, and the questioning of the legitimacy of institutions and public actors are not taken into consideration at the same time.

3- The political dimension: pluralist aspirations and demands for public debate

Whether democratic or authoritarian, all political systems require the obedience of a significant part of the population for them to be sustained. According to Weber,¹⁴ there could be multiple reasons for this obedience, whether due to custom, interests, purely rational calculations, or simply fear. However, these reasons are not sufficient to guarantee the maintenance of power for those who hold it; leading the political process requires legitimacy in order to guarantee control. According to Linz, legitimacy can be defined as “the belief that in spite of their limitations or failures, the existing political institutions are better than those that could have been established, as result of which they can demand obedience.”¹⁵

According to Robert Dahl,¹⁶ in democratic systems, legitimacy is achieved by means of free, fair, and transparent elections; in an environment which there is a true pluralistic public debate. In other words, democracy requires, at minimum, the existence of parties and politicians from various ideological orientations that can compete for citizens' votes on equal terms. This is in a context in which public debate is based on freedom of expression, multiple media alternatives, and the possibility of criticizing the government and asking the people for support without this entailing legal or de facto consequences for the opponents.

On the other hand, in nondemocratic regimes such as the Cuban regime, even when they hold elections, legitimacy does not come from the ballot box but rather the efficacy of the policies adopted by the authoritarian regime itself and the belief that this system is superior to all others, including democracy, in achieving social objectives. However, if there are no vertical control mechanisms (free elections) or horizontal

¹⁴ Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1997).

¹⁵ Juan J. Linz, *The bankruptcy of democracies*, 1st. ed., 4th. reprinting, Alianza universidad 497 (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), 38.

¹⁶ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition* (Tecnos Editorial S A, 2009).

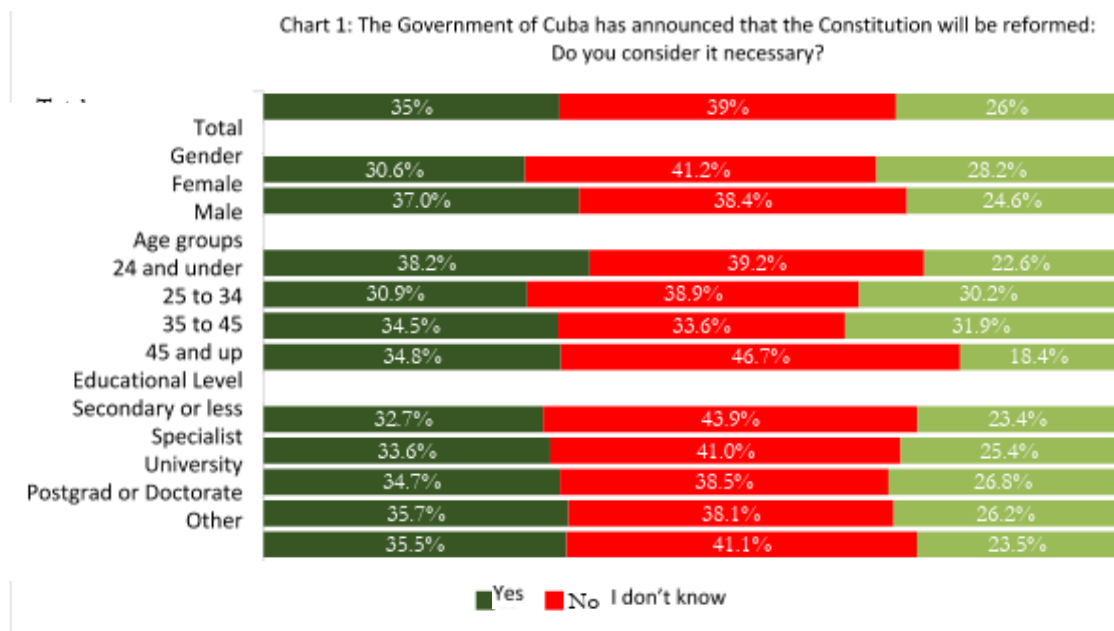
ones (independent branches), repression of civil society and the co-opting of State institutions and social organizations become essential pillars in achieving obedience.

It is in this context that the results of the survey carried out by *CubaData* make sense. The political module of the survey allows for sounding out the two basic dimensions referred to earlier. On one hand, the survey investigates expectations of change in constitutional reforms announced by Díaz-Canel, mainly in regard to **pluralistic political participation**. On the other hand, satisfaction with the quality of the **public debate** on the Island is measured.

Aspiring to more pluralism

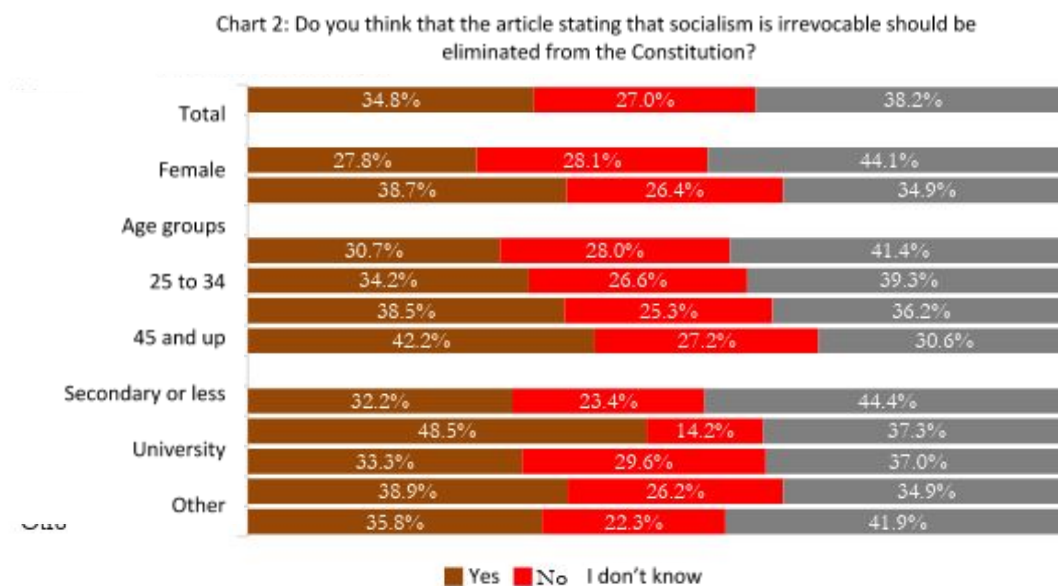
This section analyzes the feelings of the Cubans interviewed in regard to constitutional reform proposed by Díaz-Canel. First, the interviewees' position on whether said reform is necessary or not is shown. Second, three hypothetical constitutional reforms are analyzed: the elimination of the article declaring the irrevocability of socialism; the possibility of permitting the creation of party organizations other than the Cuban Communist Party; and finally, the possibility of introducing direct presidential elections.

In Chart 1 it is observed that *4 out of every 10 Cubans interviewed do not believe that the constitutional reform announced by the government is necessary, while 35% of them say that it is and 26% of survey respondents indicated that they do not know*. When segmenting the results by gender, it is men who most believe the constitutional reform to be necessary with 37%, while only 30% of the women consider it necessary. According to age groups, those under the age of 24 most support the reform announced by the government, while those over the age of 45 support it the least. In terms of educational level, no significant differences were observed between the groups, *with the idea that a reform is not necessary slightly predominating*.



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

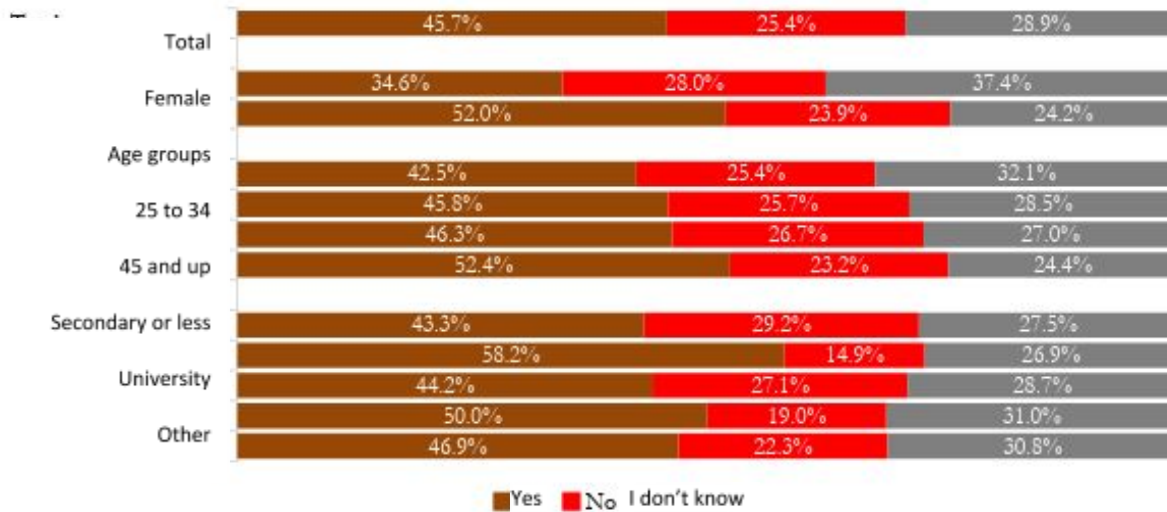
Chart 2 shows interviewees' feelings regarding the elimination of the irrevocability of socialism in the Constitution. In general, **35% of the Cubans interviewed state that the constitutional reform should eliminate the article in which socialism is made irrevocable, 38% indicate that they do not know, and 27% say that it should not be eliminated.** Upon segmenting the information by gender, it is observed that men are more disposed to eliminate said article than women, who mostly prefer not to have an opinion. In terms of age, those over the age of 45 are most willing to agree with the elimination of the article, while the youngest age groups say they do not know. Likewise, according to educational level, those who have studied a specialty most support a reform of this kind, followed by those who have studied at a graduate level, while for the rest of the educational levels the most common response is “I don't know.” Negative responses are stronger among university graduates with 30%, although 33% of them say that it should be eliminated.



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

Chart 3 shows the results of the question on a reform that would permit the creation of political parties other than the Communist Party. The data collected show that **46% of the Cubans interviewed believe that the existence of parties other than the Communist Party should be permitted**, while only 25% believe that it should not and 29% state that they do not know. After segmenting according to gender, 5 out of every 10 men approve of a reform aimed at party pluralism in Cuba, while among women only 35% feel that it is relevant, although 37% of them say that they do not know. In terms of age groups, 5 out of every 10 people over the age of 45 support permitting more party pluralism, while in the group of 24 or under, 42% support this position. Similar to the previous question, specialists and those who have studied at a graduate level most support constitutional changes that would permit the entry of political organizations with ideologies other than the communist ideology.

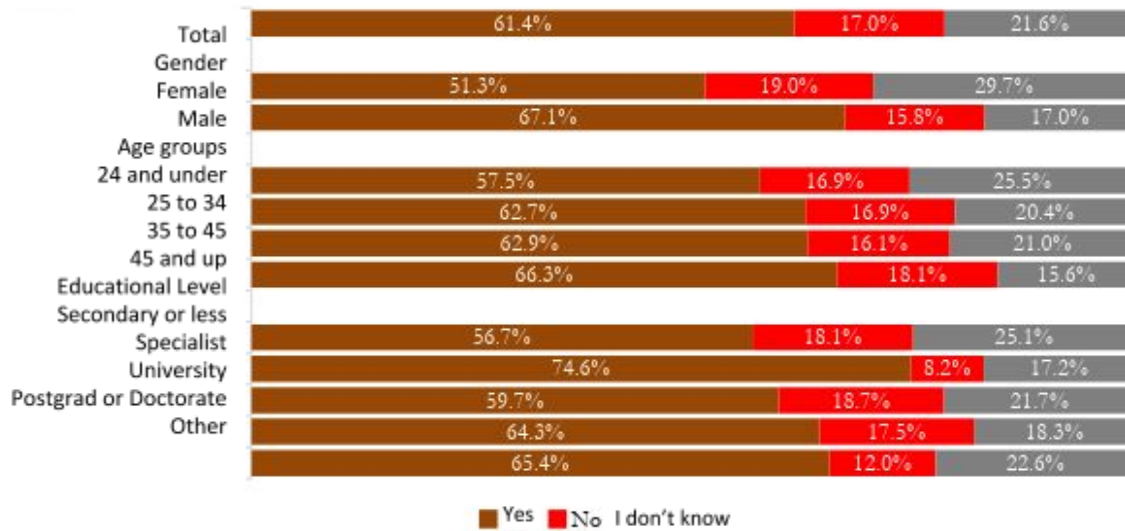
Chart 3: Do you think that the possibility of creating other political parties besides the Communist Party should be permitted in the Constitution?



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

Chart 4 shows the results of the question on the constitutional change regarding the direct election of the president. In this respect, **6 out of every 10 Cubans interviewed believed that the president should be elected by means of direct elections**, only 17% oppose this idea, and 22% do not know. In this case, in all groups a majority believe that the president should be elected by means of direct elections. Nevertheless, this belief is higher among men, at 67%; in comparison to women, 51% of whom approve of it, although 30% of them responded that they do not know. According to age groups, 66% of those over the age of 45 agree with the election of the head of State, while 57% of those under 24 support this change. When segmented by educational level, 3 out of every 4 of those who have achieved the educational level of a specialist approve of the direct election of the president. Among those who have reached the level of secondary education or less, this idea exceeds 55%, and for the rest of the levels supported it is 60% or more.

Gráfico 4: En la próxima reforma constitucional, ¿crees que debería cambiarse la
 Chart 4: In the next constitutional reform, do you think that the Constitution should be changed
 to permit direct presidential elections?



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

These results show *three coexisting trends among the Cubans interviewed*, which will be the subject of future analysis:

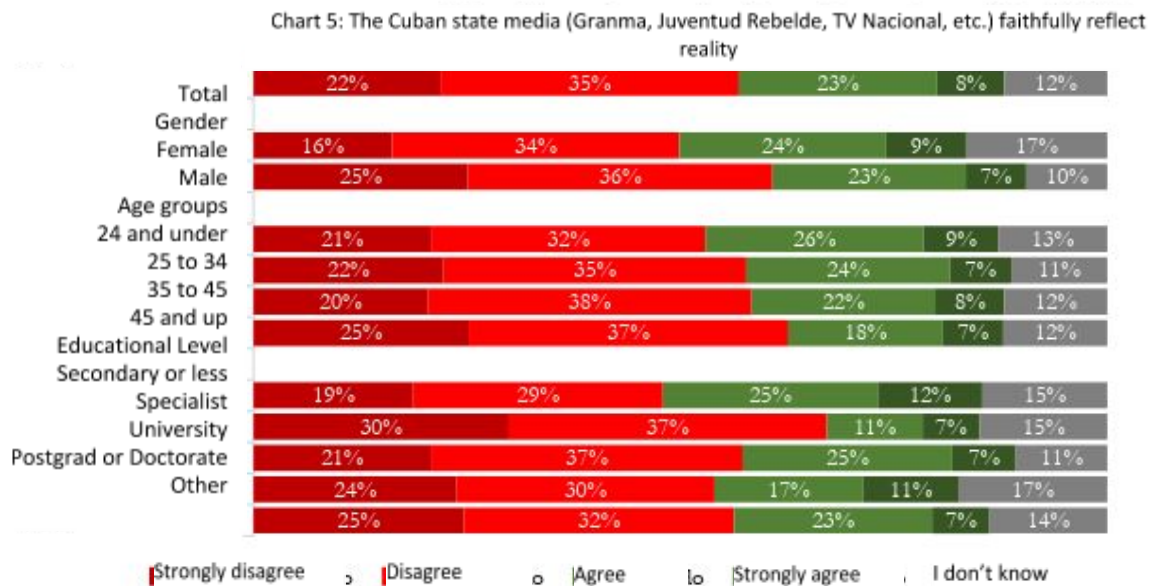
- First, a group of people were identified who want the constitutional reform to permit a liberalization of Cuban politics, meaning the direct election of the president in an ideologically pluralistic system in which socialism stops being irrevocable, and as a consequence, one in which political parties other than the Communist Party can participate. We could call them *consistent reformers*
- Second, a group of persons systematically state that they do not know. Given the authoritarian context under which the survey was carried out, it is probable that a significant number of those who say they do not know chose to hide their preferences due to fear of possible repercussions against those who would answer sincerely. This situation is most common among young people, women, and those with the lowest educational level. We could call them *apparent apathetics*
- Third, there is a third group of interviewees who prefer the status quo, meaning the irrevocability of socialism and a one party system, although they have mixed positions regarding the direct election of the president. These we identify as *consistent loyalists*

Information and public debate

This section analyzes the feelings of the Cubans interviewed in regard to the quality of public debate on the Island. First, the interviewees' assessment of the trustworthiness of the information reflected by the state media is shown. Second, the interviewees' evaluation of the state media's recognition of a plurality of opinions within Cuban society is analyzed. Third, Cubans' assessments with respect to freedom of opinion present in

the public debate on the Island are evaluated. Finally, their opinions on Cubans' access to the Internet are investigated.

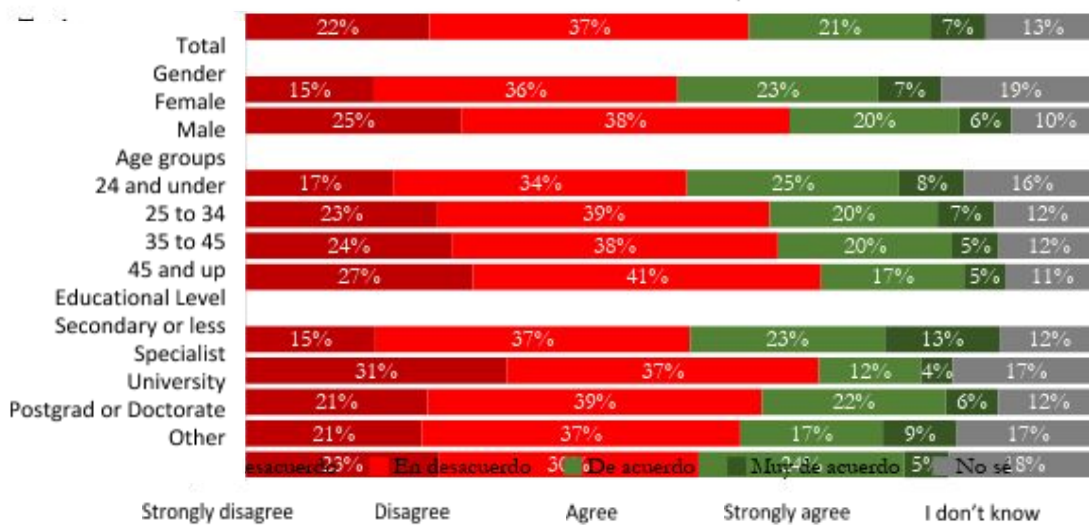
In Chart 5, data are shown on the interviewees' levels of agreement with respect to the following assertion: *The Cuban state media (Granma, Juventud Rebelde, TV Nacional, etc.) faithfully reflect reality*. It was observed that **the majority of the Cubans interviewed, 57%, feel that the state media do not faithfully reflect reality**, while 31% agree that they do, and only 12% say they do not know. This critical view of the official media is more pronounced among men (61%) than among women (50%). In terms of ages, the age group of 45 or older disagrees most strongly (62%) with the fact that the state media faithfully reflect the reality of what is going on, on the Island. Among the group aged 24 or less, this disagreement continues to be the majority position (53%), but less strongly. In relation to educational level, specialists show much more criticism towards the media than the rest of the educational groups; 67% of those who reached said level disapprove of the assertion, while on the contrary, those that have studied up the level of secondary education or less are less critical.



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

Chart 6 shows survey respondents' levels of agreement in regard to the assertion *The Cuban state media reflect the diversity of opinions present in Cuban society*. **The data show that almost 6 out of every 10 Cubans say that they disagree with it**, while 3 out of every 10 feel that the media do reflect the diversity of opinions, and 1 out of every 10 do not know. As with the previous question, men (63%) disagree more than women (51%). In relation to age groups, those over 45 (68%) are more critical about the diversity of opinion in the official media, while this opinion is less strong among people under 24 (51%). In terms of educational level, the specialists (67%) are most likely to disapprove of said assertion, while those with a secondary level of education or less disapprove less (52%)

Chart 6: The Cuban state media reflect the diversity of opinions present in Cuban society

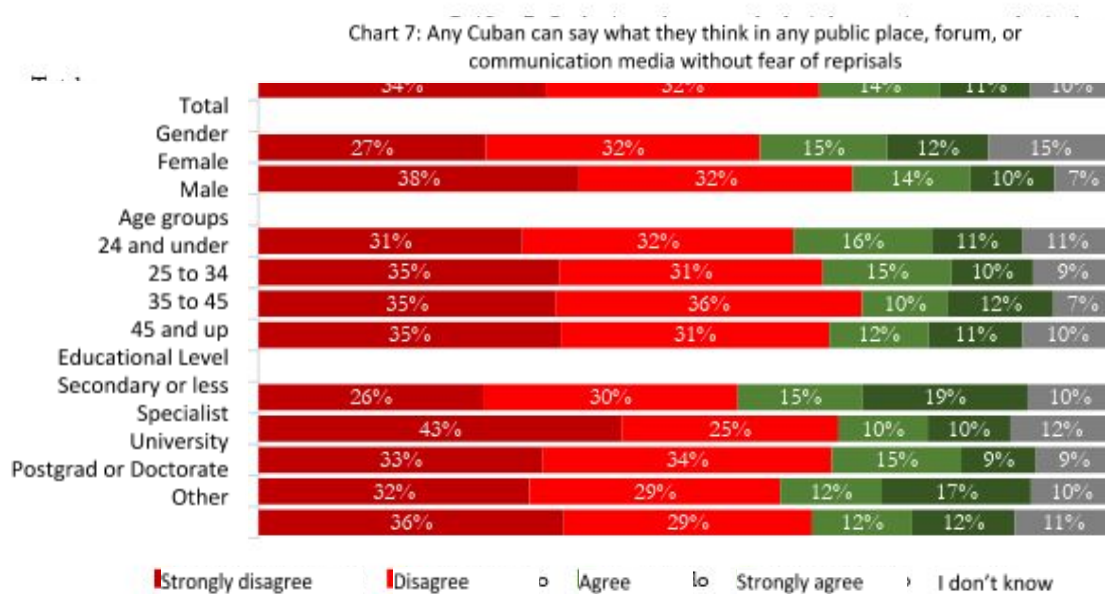


Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

Chart 7 shows the level of the interviewees' agreement or disagreement with the sentence *Any Cuban can say what they think in any public place, forum, or media without fear of reprisals*. The results indicate that **66% of the Cubans interviewed feel that any Cuban cannot say what they want in the public debate without suffering reprisals as result**. Upon segmenting according to gender, 7 out of every 10 men disapprove of said assertion, while among women rejection is 59%. In terms of age groups, almost 7 out of every 10 of those aged between 35 and 44 stated that they disagree, while in the group aged 24 or less, the disapproval was 63%. Similar to the previous question, specialists (68%) are the most critical of this assertion, followed by university

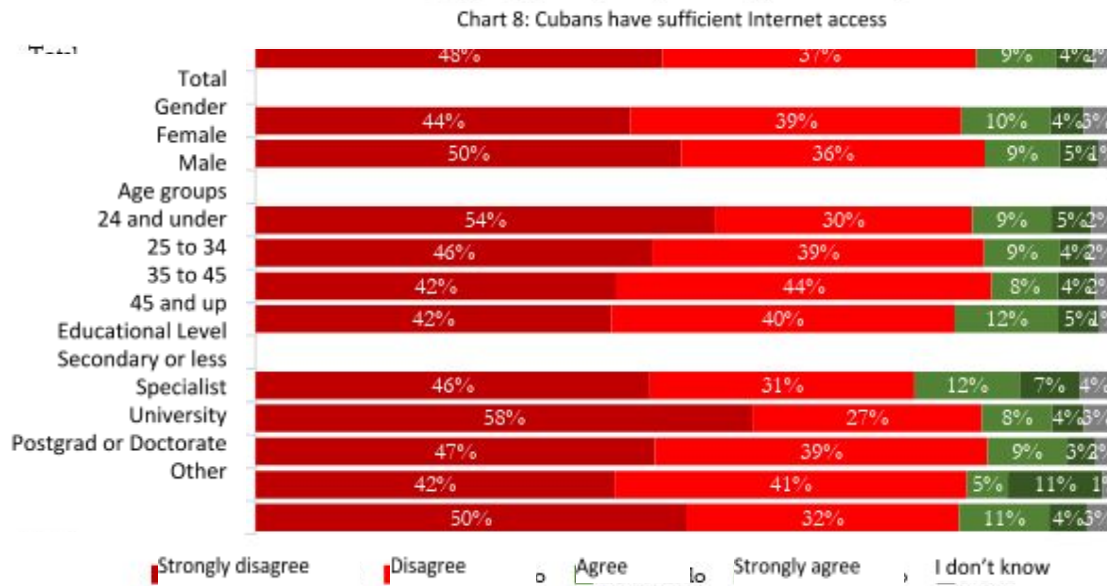
graduates

(67%).



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

Finally, with respect to the public debate, the Cubans interviewed were asked if they agreed with the assertion *Cubans have sufficient access to the Internet*. Chart 7 shows the results for that assertion generally and by segment. **85% of the interviewees feel that Cubans do not have sufficient access to the Internet**, and only 13% believe otherwise. Furthermore, for almost 50% of survey respondents, the rejection of the assertion is very strong, since the majority answer that they are very much in disagreement with the idea that the Island's inhabitants have sufficient access to the Internet. In this case, there is a social consensus among Cuban society, as more than 75% of almost all segments analyzed in this report state that they disagree with this idea, and for all of them the strongest negative option is above 40%.

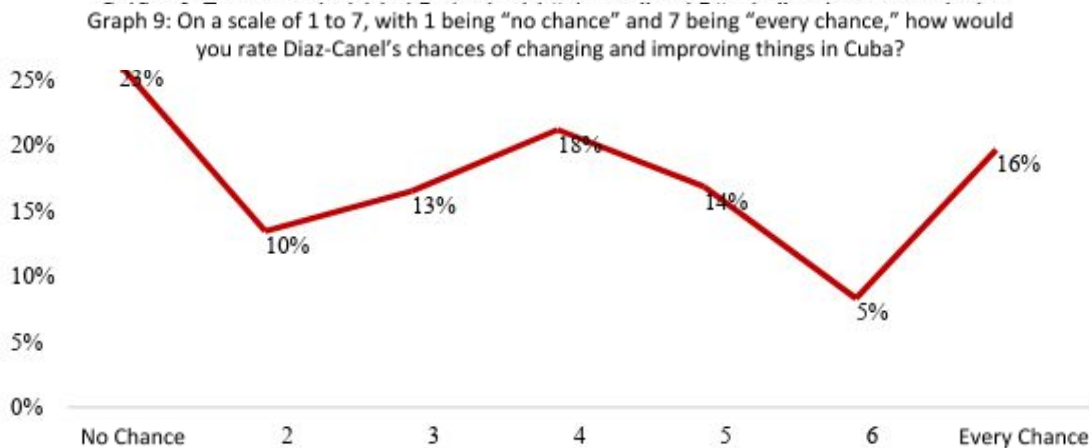


Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

In terms of the evaluation of the public debate, *the data reflect a society that is dissatisfied with the existing restrictions on freedom of expression and access to information*. Most of the interviewees feel that the state media do not represent the reality experienced on the Island, nor do they provide space for opinions that are different from the official ones, and that there is no freedom to express opinions and preferences without the fear of being punished for them. Likewise, the interviewees' demand for greater access to the Internet is clear, and there is a consensus among the Cuban interviewees that current access to the network is insufficient.

Finally, in the survey carried out by *CubaData*, survey respondents' expectations regarding the possibility that a new Cuban president might be able to change and improve things on the Island were investigated.¹⁷ The data show significant polarization among the surveyed population. On one hand, 46% of the responses are concentrated between 1 and 3, meaning that this percentage of people believe that Díaz-Canel has little chance of achieving change. It is important to point out that half of this percentage believes that there he has no chance. On the other hand, 35% of Cubans believe that the new head of State has great chances of improving things in Cuba, and 16% believe that he has every possibility. In the middle of these two groups are those who are indecisive, representing 18% of those interviewed.

¹⁷ Chart 9 shows the distribution on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means no chance, 2 very low chance, 3 low chance, 4 neutral chance/unknown, 5 high chance, 6 very high chance, and 7 every chance.



Source: *CubaData*, June 2018

4- Political reform and economic reform: mutually reinforcing or separate compartments?

In contexts such as the Cuban one, in which both political and economic institutions are monopolistic, a change of model means a transition along two lines: towards a market economy and towards a competitive democracy.

For various countries in Eastern Europe, both transformations were relatively simultaneous. Even in the Polish experience, political liberalization undertaken by the government was motivated by the hope of obtaining support for economic reforms. In any case, in several of these countries the public initially maintained a high level of support for both transformations. In the case of Latin American countries, political change generally preceded economic change, and public support for market reforms varied from country to country depending on the efficiency with which problems such as hyperinflation were resolved.

We have seen that *CubaData reports that a majority support transformations in both the economic and political spheres*. However, it could be the case that the groups supporting change are totally unconnected to each other. In other words, their positions with respect to economic change could be independent of their positions on political change.

What is to be expected when the government of a regime such as the Cuban regime has control over the management of change and the public attitudes towards the two arenas of change have almost no bearing on each other? This is an ideal situation for the group in power, as it allows them to exploit cyclical preferences in their favor. In other words, under such conditions governments can leave the institutions that guarantee their continued domination untouched, leaving one majority unhappy, but obtaining the support of another majority by means of concessions in the area of economic structures. This, for example, has been the path taken by China and Vietnam, as well as by the Mexican Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, [Institutional Revolutionary Party]) regime for a certain amount of time.¹⁸

¹⁸President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994) explicitly asserted that his action plan consisted of undertaking *Perestroika* immediately and postponing *glasnost* indefinitely.

The analysis of the information collected by *CubaData* could provide some ideas on the existing relationships between the support for political change and the support for ideological change. For the purposes of estimating the relationships between support for economic reform and support for political reform, an analysis was carried out of factors associated with support for political change along three dimensions: support for eliminating the irrevocability of socialism from the constitution, support for permitting parties other than the Communist Party, and support for direct presidential elections. Given that these are dichotomous variables (support or no support), the analysis technique used was binomial logistic regression. In the following table (A1), the results from the three models can be observed.

Table A1. Cuba 2018. Factors associated with support for political change.

Variables	Binomial logistic regression		
	Model 1 Eliminate irrevocability of socialism	Model 2 Allow parties other than the Communist Party	Model 3 Allow direct presidential elections
I would say that Cuba... (Baseline: Is regressing)			
Has stagnated	0.0799 (0.252)	0.221 (0.257)	0.221 (0.257)
Is making progress	-0.308 (0.291)	-0.630* (0.284)	-0.630* (0.284)
The state media faithfully reflects reality (Baseline: Strongly agree)			
Agree	0.0325 (0.329)	-0.439 (0.300)	-0.439 (0.300)
Disagree	0.838* (0.335)	0.423 (0.308)	0.423 (0.308)
Strongly disagree	1.565*** (0.372)	1.148** (0.354)	1.148** (0.354)
Any Cuban can say what they			

think (Baseline: Strongly agree)

Agree	-0.802*	-0.163	-0.163
	(0.323)	(0.298)	(0.298)
Disagree	-0.432	-0.00815	-0.00815
	(0.278)	(0.268)	(0.268)
Strongly disagree	0.338	0.468	0.468
	(0.290)	(0.282)	(0.282)
Assessment of Díaz-Canel	-0.256***	-0.270***	-0.270***
	(0.0453)	(0.0435)	(0.0435)

Economic situation of the country compared to two months ago (Baseline: Much worse)

Slightly worse	-0.998*	-0.487	-0.487
	(0.399)	(0.386)	(0.386)
Same	-1.177**	-0.605	-0.605
	(0.374)	(0.352)	(0.352)
Slightly better	-1.136**	-0.403	-0.403
	(0.417)	(0.397)	(0.397)
Much better	-0.225	0.0199	0.0199
	(0.544)	(0.512)	(0.512)

Contracting of Cubans by foreign companies (Baseline: Not possible/by means of state agency)

By agency and independently	0.303	0.756**	0.756**
	(0.294)	(0.271)	(0.271)

Independently of the state	0.875** (0.273)	0.883*** (0.252)	0.883*** (0.252)
Importation/exportation should be (Baseline: state monopoly)			
State and Cubans	0.323 (0.257)	0.588* (0.245)	0.588* (0.245)
Allow all Cubans	0.611* (0.293)	0.789** (0.283)	0.789** (0.283)
Dual currency (Baseline: Keep dual currency)			
Only CUC	-0.0494 (0.239)	0.0184 (0.235)	0.0184 (0.235)
Only CUP	-0.237 (0.227)	-0.358 (0.221)	-0.358 (0.221)
Allow businesses and companies	0.689* (0.340)	0.655* (0.318)	0.655* (0.318)
Gender (female)	0.0300 (0.173)	-0.309 (0.167)	-0.309 (0.167)
Constant	0.346 (0.626)	0.341 (0.604)	0.341 (0.604)
Observations	1138	1262	1262
Standard errors in parentheses			

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Own analysis with data from *CubaData*, June 2018

Among the predictors of support for political change are included the responses to the question on three perspectives of economic reform: the contracting of Cubans by foreigners, the possibility for any Cuban to import and export, and the possibility of professional Cubans to open businesses and companies. We say that those who feel that foreign companies should not contract Cubans or that they should do so through the State, that importation and exportation should be a state monopoly, and that professionals should not be allowed to have their own businesses have a *“pro-State” profile*. Those who feel that foreign companies should contract Cubans independently of the state, that any Cuban should be able to import and export, and that professionals should have to be able to have their own businesses have a *“pro-market” profile*.

From the results in table A1, the probability of support for the three dimensions of political change for the three profiles is estimated, while keeping the rest of the variables constant at their average value. Said results show that *there is a very close relationship between support for political reform and support for economic reform*.

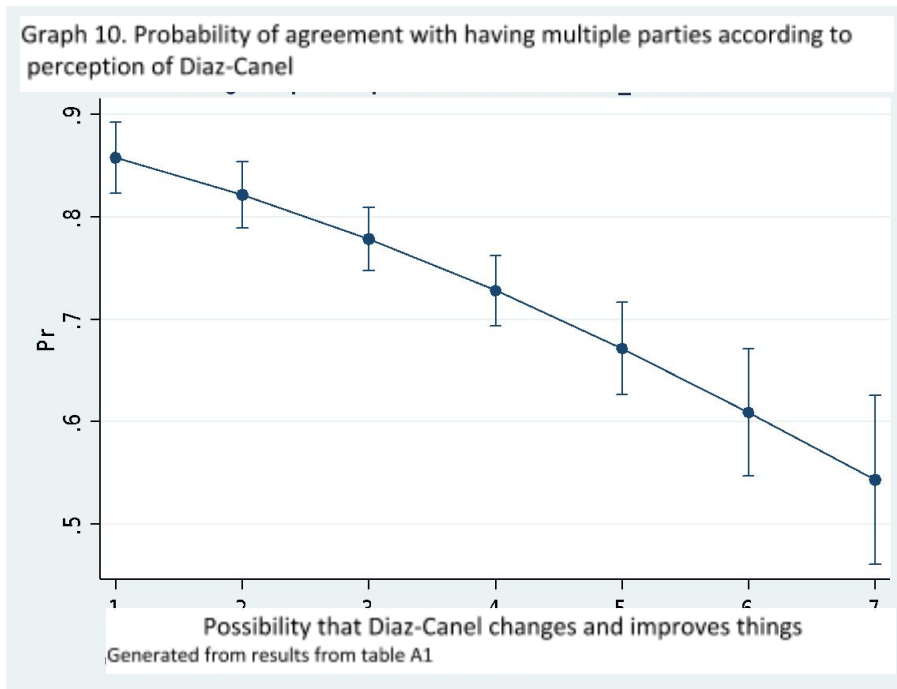
Cuba 2018. Probability of support for political change for two attitude profiles with respect to the market.

	Eliminate socialism	More parties	Direct elections
Pro-State profile	0.288	0.319	0.323
Pro-market profile	0.771	0.825	0.824

Estimate from the results of table 1.

Thus, the pro-State profile has a probability of 31.9% of supporting parties other than the Communist Party, while the probability for the pro-market profile is 82.5%. The results are similar for the other dimensions of political change, and confirm that *a convincing transformation would have to be in both dimensions, implying political and economic openness*.

Another point to mention is that *the judgment of Díaz-Canel's capacity to transform the country is negatively associated with support for political change*. This can be seen in the sign of the coefficient with respect to the three models from table A1. For illustrative purposes, the following graph shows the probability of support for permitting parties other than the Communist Party for the different values of their opinion of the president.



This shows the paradoxical result that *the perception of Diaz-Canel's capacity to generate changes is associated with less support for effective change.*

In summary, the *CubaData* analysis suggests that a strategy by the governing elite along the lines followed by the Communist parties in China and Vietnam, of economic openness without political change, could have less of a warm reception than might be expected, due to the fact that those who favor economic change are, in comparison with the most conservative, also those who hope for the democratization of the country, and therefore, their expectations would not be satisfied with a strategy of *perestroika* without *glasnost*.

In contrast, the results suggest that there is a relationship between the demand for institutional change in the political system and confidence in President Díaz-Canel as a person: people who support constitutional changes that would direct the country towards a democratic system are, in turn, those who have the least confidence in the president's capacity to change the country.

Conclusions

Like any other country immersed in processes of social change and institutional reforms, Cuba is the object of the international community's attention. At the same time, its citizens and those governing it need information identifying the main trends, demands, and difficulties impacting national development. Hence the availability of studies on these problems is relevant.

This study, the first delivery of a major effort, attempts to contribute to the production of new information on the real country that is well-founded and useful. To this end, it takes advantage of the expertise of an international, multidisciplinary team and the opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies (NTICs, Nuevas tecnologías de la información y las comunicaciones). And it addresses elements that—in the phases of planning, undertaking, and processing— need to be perfected in light of previous surveys.

We feel that this study—in step with those previously performed, duly referred to in the current report— contributes to a greater understanding of the social, political, and economic situation in Cuba today. It allows for capturing the existing biases (traditional and emerging) in current Cuban society and understanding their individual and collective feelings and positions within a social structure that is increasingly diversified and complex. All of this is produced within the context of a society that demands more space for private initiatives, a review of the social policies in force, and the closing of the gap between dynamic personal expectations and the rigid state agenda.

At the same time, in a context that is clearly restrictive to autonomous investigation, information, and communication, works such as this permit identifying trends that are not so visible in relation to the sociopolitical positions of the seemingly monolithic Cuban population. The study detects the nexus between demands for economic reform and political change, as well as how they correspond to specific population profiles. Last but not least, it reveals the disparate expectations existing within the Cuban people in regard to current president Miguel Díaz-Canel's capacity to steer the nation down essential paths for sustainable and inclusive development.