

LOOKING AT SOCIETY THROUGH THE SURVEYS: CHOOSING FREEDOM

- Citizens consistently show that the responsibility for development and individual well-being does not fall on the State, but rather on personal effort.
- The social effervescence of 2011, which triggered a boom of egalitarian concepts, where the “regime of the public” seemed to gain more sense among the citizens, has gradually vanished.
- Currently, the predominating viewpoint appreciates the progress of ideas expressed in the public policies of the last 25 years and, at the level of concepts and values instilled in the society, the notion of free society seems more valid than ever.

FURTHER INFORMATION

http://www.cepchile.cl/docs/archivo_5762_3637/EncuestaCEP_Noviembre2014.pdf

http://www.adimark.cl/es/estudios/documentos/9_eval%20gobierno%20nov_2014.pdf

<http://encuestabicentenario.uc.cl/resultados/2014-2/>

Recently, a series of opinion polls were released, which deal with the current political and social scenario in Chile. As expected, political interpretations have captured a major interest among the public opinion. However, the reading of the society modules of the survey of the Center of Public Studies (CEP, in Spanish), as well as those of Adimark and UC Bicentennial, allow observing in perspective the opinions of a citizenship mostly inclined towards ideas and concepts which are the core of a free society. Contrary to what the more revisionist viewpoints have formulated about the badly called “model”, the citizens, through the opinion of the interviewees, reward the values of merit, effort and individual responsibility, the possibility of choosing, and express a preferential option for the market above the State when evaluating its role as the entity responsible for people’s wellbeing.

As a consequence of the social mobilization process of 2011, multiple voices warned about the beginning of a new political and social cycle. Some of the figures in the public opinion polls supporting this diagnosis showed a progress of own ideas of egalitarian views of the society, mainly during the period 2011-2013, where the State role emerged as a viable solution for public problems; center-left public intellectuals insistently talked about vindicating the “regime of the public” in order to give rise to a new hegemony.ⁱ

However, the thesis of the new political and social cycle assumes that this change has a temporary projection, with a rising gradualism, an issue that is not present when observing data of the recently published surveys. The opinions of Chileans, contrary to what these analysts and intellectuals have expressed, seem to have normalized in relation to the scenario prior to the 2011 situation and, therefore, own ideas of the free society, far from showing a regression, are gaining support.

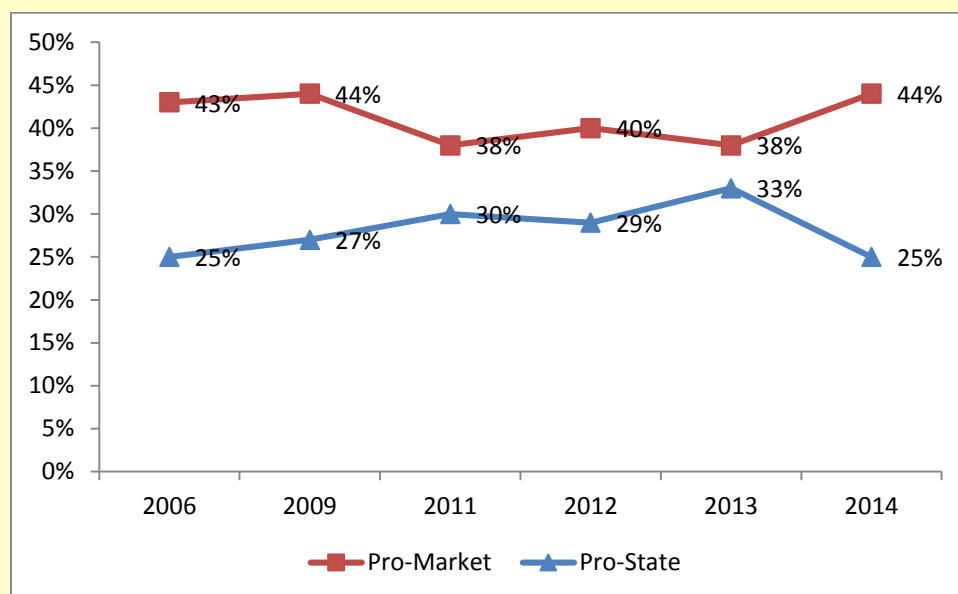
ROLE OF THE STATE AND THE MARKET

If there was a cross-cutting element among all critical narratives arising in 2011, it was the voice demanding greater State presence in key areas of social development. Although it is true that in the 2011-2013 period, there was a regression of the “pro-market” viewpoint when explaining if individuals or the State should worry more about their wellbeing, this regression seems to reverse when observing data for this year in the UC-Adimark Bicentennial Survey (Chart 1). In fact, in this survey, the pro-State view for 2014 shows a statistically significant drop of 8 percentage points in relation to the 2013 measurement. In return, 44% of the respondents indicated that the market is the main responsible for wellbeing; this option increased by 6 percentage points in relation to the 2013 measurement.

As we can observe, the 2014 scenario is very similar to that prior to the 2011 situation, a year when the protest and vindication climate permeated an important sector of the population, either naturally due to own personal experience, to the media agenda or to discursive signifiers of that period. Data are clear and allow sustaining the hypothesis that the effervescence for greater State responsibility and action seems to have vanished; so, without the climate of latent agitation, the pro-market concept is legitimized again in the opinion of the respondents.

THE PRO-MARKET OPTION IS LEGITIMIZED AGAIN

Chart 1: Responsibility for wellbeing, pro-State and pro-market position



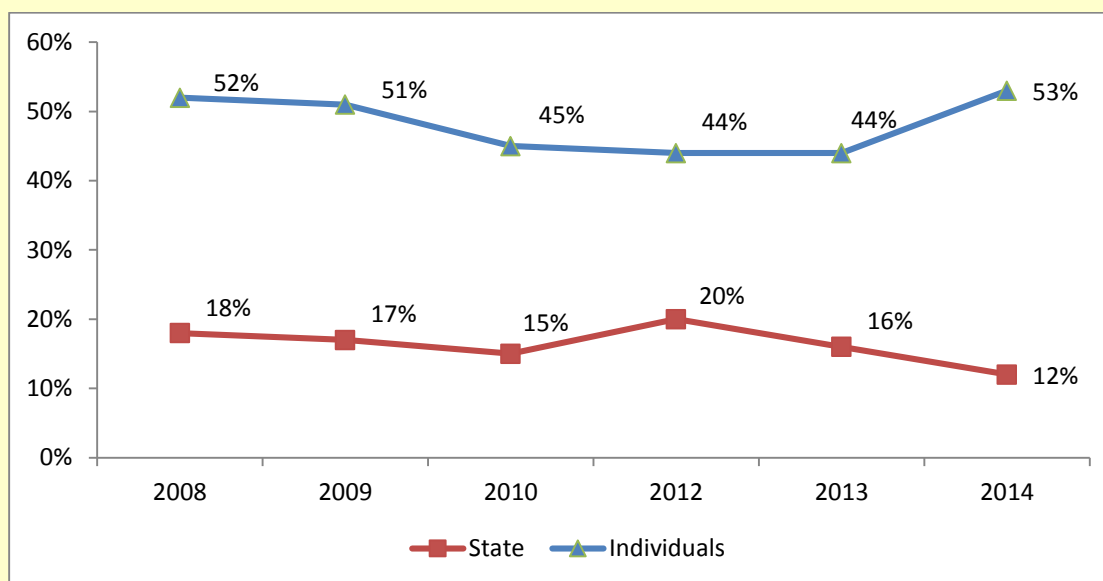
Source: Prepared by L&D based on Adimark-UC Bicentennial Survey 2014.

ETHICS OF WORK, MERIT AND EFFORT AS DETERMINANTS OF DEVELOPMENT

The regression of the ideas granting the State a determinant role in the structuring of their lives is also present in other areas of the surveys mentioned above. The respondents categorically indicate that the responsibility for economic sustenance falls on individuals (53%), with a statistically significant increase of 9 percentage points in relation to the previous measurement (Chart 2), while those who assign this responsibility to the State reach only 12% of the total.

RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ON INDIVIDUALS

Chart 2: Responsibility for the economic sustenance of individuals

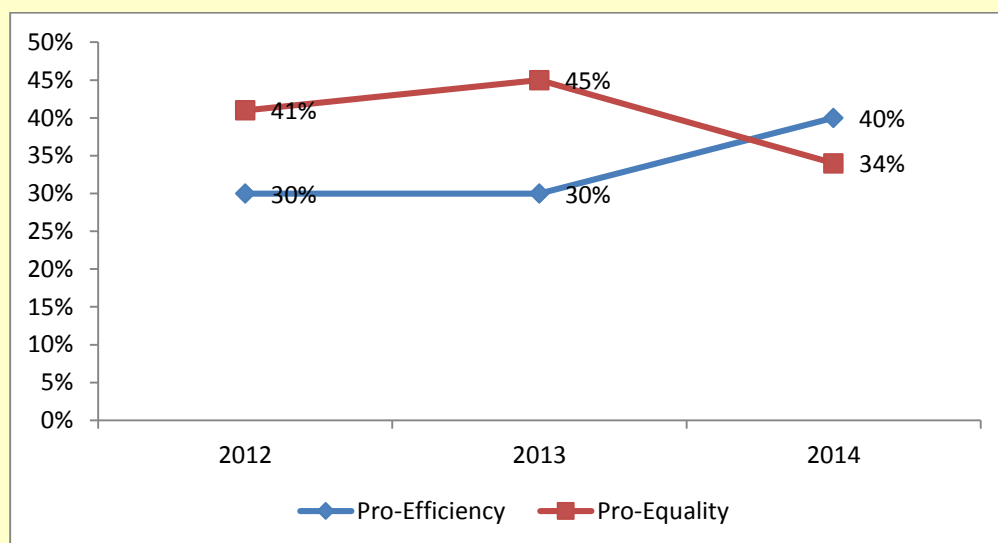


Source: Prepared by L&D based on the CEP Survey, November 2014.

Therefore, the notion that progress in life lies mainly on the individual and not on the State is a value that the egalitarian tendency has not been able to eradicate from the collective feeling. Consistently with previous data, the viewpoint that progress in life depends on variables such as entrepreneurship, effort, work and training, shows an increase of 10 percentage points in relation to 2013, while the pro-equality approach, which emphasizes that they are conditions exogenous to the person under the modality of State guarantees, shows a regression of 11 percentage points in relation to the previous measurement (Chart 3).

PROGRESS DEPENDS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EFFORT, WORK AND TRAINING

Chart 3: Progress in life marked by pro-efficiency or pro-equality concepts.



Source: Prepared by L&D based on Adimark-UC Bicentennial Survey 2014.

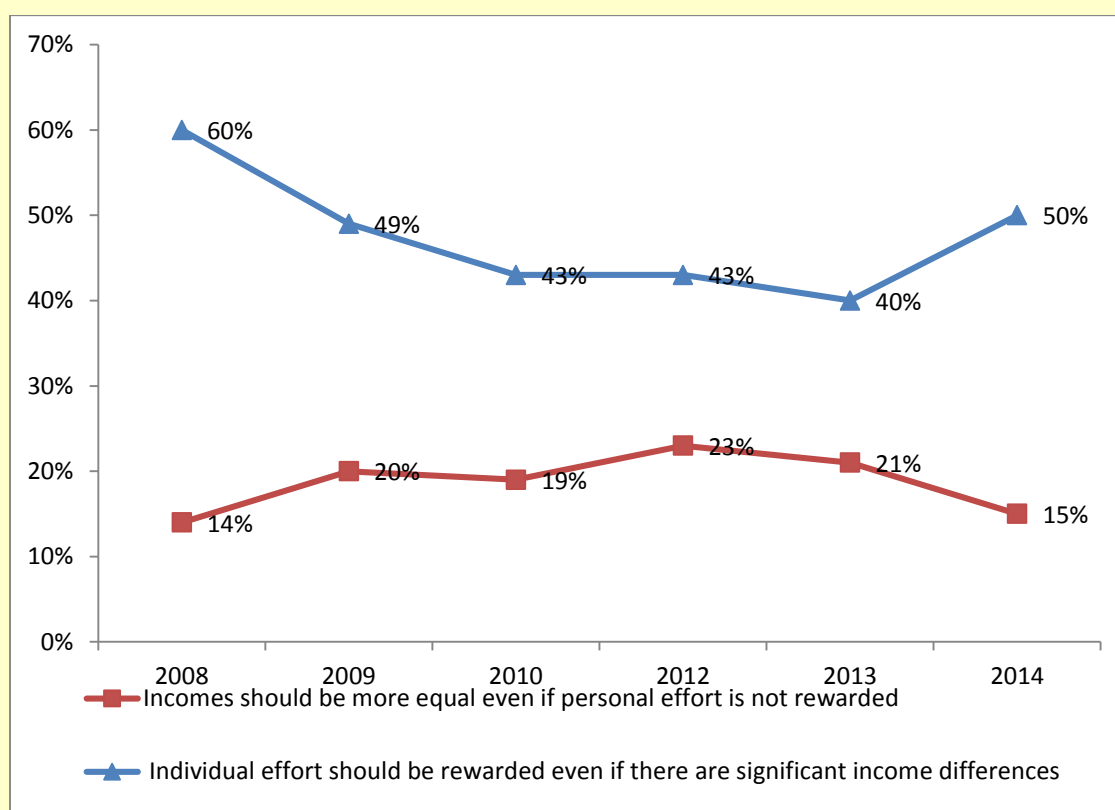
The above perception is also consistent with the notion of the specific role that the State should play when supporting people in poverty conditions. In the CEP survey, 90% of the respondents believes that poor people should be supported through programs that improve their capacities (training) and only 7% believes that this should be done through money transfers (bonus). It seems important to stress that this figure drops by 20 percentage points in relation to the same question in 2009.

INEQUALITY

A way of subjecting the ethics of effort and merit to a tolerance test is by introducing the inequality variable in the analysis. Up to what point are inequalities admitted if they are the result of personal effort? An egalitarian perspective would consider that the principle of equality is put on top of merit; therefore, it is interesting to observe the tolerance level of the society to the income differences when they are produced by personal effort (Chart 4). As we can see, 50% of the respondents indicates that effort should be rewarded even if there are important income differences. This item shows a statistically significant increase of 10 percentage points in relation to the previous measurement. On the contrary, the egalitarian perspective shows a drop of 6 percentage points, representing only 15% of the preferences. However, when the wording of the question does not

incorporate elements referring to personal effort or merit, 57% of the respondents indicate that high income inequalities cannot be accepted under any circumstances.

EFFORT SHOULD BE REWARDED
Chart 4: Income, equality and personal effort



Source: Prepared by L&D based on the CEP Survey, November 2014.

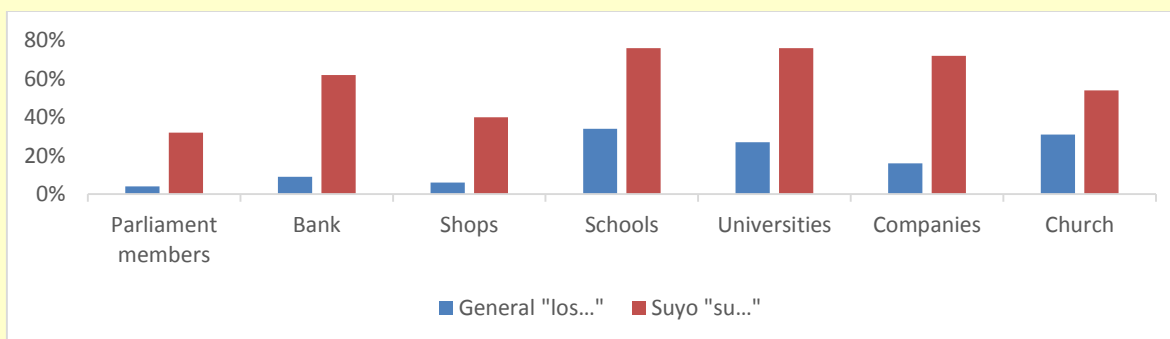
THE ORIGIN OF THE UNEASINESS AND THE OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE "MODEL"

For some time now, a series of opinion polls have evidenced a clear and notorious dissociation between the citizens' individual perception, and their general viewpoints regarding the society. A manifest optimism in relation to their own objective living conditions coexists with a critical and negative view of the group. This phenomenon, technically denominated egotropic optimism and sociotropic pessimism is sharply reflected in the following chart of the Adimark Bicentennial Survey

of 2013 (Chart 5). This dynamics is also projected in the last series of the survey of the Center of Public Studies (CEP), when consulting the interviewees about their life satisfaction levels. While 52% of the respondents declares to be satisfied/totally satisfied with their lives, only 13% considers that the rest of the citizens are satisfied. In relation to their dissatisfaction with life, the opposite occurs; while 13% of the respondents declares to be dissatisfied/totally dissatisfied, the same interviewees believe that 31% of the rest of the citizens are dissatisfied with their lives (Chart 6).

DISSOCIATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS AND GENERAL VIEWPOINTS

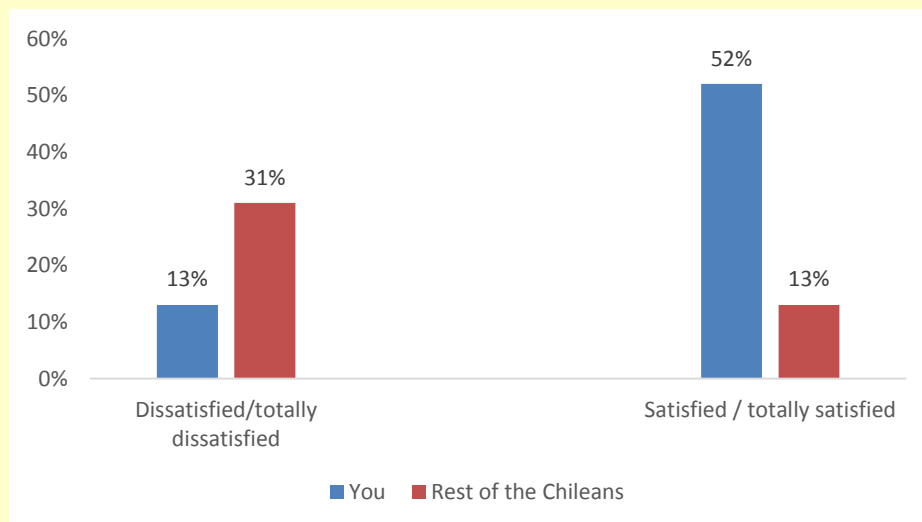
Chart 5: Trust in the institutions in relation to personal and general experience



Source: Prepared by L&D based on Adimark-UC Bicentennial Survey 2013.

EGOTROPIC OPTIMISM AND SOCIOTROPIC PESIMISM

Chart 6: Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with life: personal and global viewpoint



Source: Prepared by L&D based on the CEP Survey, November 2014.

On the other hand, contrary to the critical views concerning the result of the public policies promoted during the last 25 years, interviewees consider that they have better objective living conditions than their parents. In this respect, 49% of the respondents mentions that they have a better social position than their parents, 54% perceive that their labor situation is better than that of their parents, and 58% thinks that his household income level is also higher than theirs. In the same line, and in a prospective scenario, 71% of the interviewees believes that the social position of their children will be better than theirs, 72% considers that their children will have access to better health conditions, 75% perceives that future generations will have a better labor situation and, finally, 76% thinks that the income level of their children will be better than theirs.

CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to what maximalist and revisionist viewpoints have expressed about the badly called “model”, the opinion of Chileans is clear when it comes to weigh the principles that constitute the core of a free society. The citizenship consistently shows that the responsibility for the development and individual wellbeing does not fall on the State, but rather on personal effort and on actions such as entrepreneurship and training, which are typical of the pro-efficiency notion, as considered in the Adimark-UC Bicentennial Survey. On the other hand, we observe that the social effervescence of 2011, which triggered a boom of egalitarian concepts, where the “regime of the public” seemed to gain more sense among the citizens, has gradually vanished. Currently, the predominating viewpoint appreciates the progress of ideas expressed in the public policies of the last 25 years and, at the level of concepts and values instilled in the society, the notion of free society seems more valid than ever.

ⁱ Atria, F. et.al. (2013). *El otro modelo. Del orden neoliberal al régimen de lo público*. Editorial Debate.