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Elections in Colombia

2018 Presidential Election

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 Colombia’s election authorities as of May 14, 2018, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Colombians will cast their ballots on Sunday, May 27, 2018. Polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If no candidate receives most of the votes during this first round, a run-off between the top two candidates will take place on June 17, 2018.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

In the upcoming elections, Colombians will head to the polls to elect their president and vice president for a four-year term. The vice president is chosen with the president in a single ticket.

When will the newly elected government take office?

The new president and vice president will take office on August 7, 2018, and their mandate ends on August 7, 2022. Reelections are no longer allowed, according to a decision by the Constitutional Court in 2015.

Who is eligible to vote?

All Colombian citizens who are 18 years of age or older and who have registered their national identification document may vote in this election. The exceptions are active members of the military and the police, and individuals who have been convicted of felonies. Voting in Colombia is not mandatory, and the average voter turnout is of 43.83 percent.

How many candidates are registered for the May 27 elections?

Eight months before Election Day, around 30 individuals had declared their intention to run for the presidency, including Rodrigo Londoño (also known as Timochenko), for the newly created [Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común](#) party, formerly *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*. The presidential seat is being sought by five men, since the two last female candidates, Piedad Córdoba and Viviane Morales, dropped out of the race within the past two months. For the position of vice president, four candidates are women and one is a man.

Who are the candidates?

- **Coalición Petro Presidente**
 - [Gustavo Petro](#) (president)
 - Ángela María Robledo (vice president)

Petro is an economist and served in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate before becoming the mayor of Bogota in the 2011 elections. He is the founder of the *Movimiento Progresistas*, a left-wing movement initiated in 2011.

- **Centro Democrático**
 - [Iván Duque](#) (president)
 - Marta Lucía Ramírez (vice president)

Duque is a lawyer and served in the Senate from 2014 to 2018. He represents the *Centro Democrático*, a right-wing party founded in 2014 and headed by the former president of Colombia Álvaro Uribe.

- **Coalición Partido Liberal y ASI**
 - [Humberto De la Calle](#) (president)
 - Clara López (vice president)

De la Calle is a lawyer and served as minister, vice president, and, more recently, as head of the team that negotiated with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) from 2012 to 2016. He is the candidate of the centrist *Partido Liberal Colombiano*, the oldest party in Colombia.

- **Alianza Verde**
 - [Sergio Fajardo](#) (president)
 - Claudia López Hernández (vice president)

Fajardo is a mathematician and served as mayor of Medellín and governor of Antioquia. He is the candidate of the center-left *Alianza Verde*, founded in 2005, and is also supported by the *Compromiso Ciudadano* and the *Polo Democrático Alternativo*.

- **Mejor Vargas Lleras**
 - [Germán Vargas Lleras](#) (president)
 - Juan Carlos Pinzón (vice president)

Vargas Lleras is a lawyer and served as councilman, senator, minister, and vice president. He is a member of the *Cambio Radical*, a center-right party founded in 1998.

How many registered voters are there?

As of January 2018, there were 36,025,318 registered voters in Colombia: 17,419,011 men and 18,606,307 women. The voter registry does not include citizens who have been sentenced (those awaiting trial can still vote), Colombians who have rejected their Colombian citizenship, or active members of the security forces.¹

What is the structure of the government?

Colombia is a unitary, constitutional republic. The government is divided into three branches: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. The president is the head of state, followed by the vice president and the Council of Ministers. The president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term. At the provincial level, executive power is exercised by departmental governors, municipal mayors, and local administrators of smaller administrative districts.

¹ Censo Electoral. Retrieved from: <https://www.registraduria.gov.co/-Censo-Electoral,3661-.html>

Are there any quotas in place?

Yes. Although there are no specific quotas for presidential candidates, according to Article 28 of Law 1475 of 2011, all parties, political movements, and citizen groups who register lists of candidates to the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the Andean Parliament should include at least 30 percent of women candidates. With the results of the last legislative elections, however, the number of women in Congress will only reach 21.7 percent of the total of seats.

Two out of the 102 seats in the Senate are also allocated to representatives of indigenous populations. In order to be eligible to these positions, candidates must have held a traditional authority role in their community or have been the leader of an indigenous organization.

The House of Representatives has three special constituencies besides the territorial constituencies and an international constituency. The special ones are the following: Indigenous communities (one representative), Afro-Colombian communities (two representatives), and Colombian citizens residing abroad (one representative).

As part of the peace agreement with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, the country is allocating 10 seats in Congress (five senators and five representatives) to candidates of its new political party, *Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común*.

What is the election management body in Colombia? Which powers does it have?

The [National Electoral Council](#) (CNE) is responsible for the general oversight and conduct of elections. The CNE is comprised of nine members, elected for a four-year term. Members are nominated by each of the political parties and elected by the National Congress, representing the different political forces in a proportional manner. The CNE is composed of the National Tribunal and the Sectional Tribunals that contribute to guaranteeing the due execution of the electoral process.

The [National Civil Registry](#) is responsible for organizing the electoral process and updating the voter roll, in order to adequately plan, implement and manage the process and the mechanisms of citizen participation.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

The National Civil Registry will set up 103,343 polling stations in 11,231 polling centers throughout the country.

Who are poll jurors and how are they selected?

Poll jurors are Colombian citizens between the ages of 18 and 60 who represent civil society and help administer the vote. [633,175 poll jurors](#) will be electronically and randomly selected by national identification numbers by the National Civil Registry. Jurors can be citizens from public or private companies, educational institutions, political parties or political movements. According to Article 105 of the Electoral Code, serving as a poll juror is compulsory.

How will votes be counted?

Vote counting and tabulation take place in each polling station by poll jurors. There are three systems of information dissemination for the election results, which will be conducted simultaneously. The first is the quick count conducted by the poll jurors at the closing of the polls. The poll jurors deliver preliminary results to the media and the public. The quick count does not have legal value.

The second system is counting by the Scrutinizing Commissions, made up of judges, public notaries and registrars. These commissions must be present at the polls by 3:30 p.m. on Election Day and begin their work as soon as they receive electoral tally sheets at the polling station.

The third information system is the digitization of E-14 forms. These forms are signed by poll jurors and published on the registry website so all candidates, members of campaign teams and citizens can be immediately informed during the counting process and track the results at each polling station.

When will official results be announced?

According to the provisions of the Electoral Code, official results are announced after the Scrutinizing Commissions and the National Electoral Council complete the vote counting process.

Can Colombians who reside abroad vote in the elections?

Yes. Colombian citizens residing abroad who have obtained or registered their Colombian national identification document can vote in the Colombian consulates where they are registered from May 21 to 26. On May 27, all citizens who still desire to vote must go to the polling center designated by the [National Registry](#).

As of March 2018, there were 720,259 Colombians eligible to vote abroad. They will be able to exercise their right from 69 countries, where 234 polling centers and 1,175 polling stations will be available.²

Is electoral observation allowed?

Yes. Political parties and movements may designate “election witnesses” to monitor the electoral process on their behalf. There will also be election observers who represent electoral organizations from other countries or independent national organizations.

The Electoral Observation Mission of Colombia (*Misión de Observación Electoral*) is responsible for observing the elections in the country and analyzing the quality of the processes using measuring tools built with technical assistance from the Interamerican Institute for Human Rights ([Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos](#)). Observers are volunteers from national civil society organizations who receive training on how to assess the different aspects of the electoral process.

² “Lo que debe saber si va a votar en el exterior” (March 5, 2018). *El Tiempo*. Retrieved from: <http://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-colombia-2018/jurados-y-votantes/puestos-de-votacion-de-elecciones-de-colombia-en-estados-unidos-y-espana-189922>

Other interesting facts about the 2018 Colombian elections

Two blank options – This year’s ballots in Colombia will have two options for “Blank Vote.” This is happening because one of the parties, the *Partido de Reivindicación Étnica* (PRE), registered to appear on the ballot promoting the protest vote. As a registered party, the PRE has the same rights of other parties that presented candidacies, such as receiving public campaign funding and participating in debates on television. Their intention is to express their dissatisfaction with the current candidates.³

First post-peace agreement elections – The May 27 elections will also be the first presidential elections to take place after the signature of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), which brought an end to a 52-year-old war in the country.

Fighting fake news – The National Registry placed an [online tool](#) on its website for voters to be able to identify “fake news” that is circulating about the 2018 elections. The tool shows the false news articles, their sources, and the facts related to the topics.

³ “Promotores del voto en blanco ponen en marcha su campaña” (April 17, 2018). *MSN Noticias*. Retrieved from: <https://www.msn.com/es-co/noticias/elecciones/promotores-del-voto-en-blanco-pone-en-marcha-su-campaña/ar-AAvWWk1>

Resources

- [Elecciones Colombia](#) (Spanish)
- [Consejo Nacional Electoral](#) (Spanish)
- [IFES ElectionGuide – Republic of Colombia](#)
- [Constitution of Colombia](#) (Spanish)
- [Americas Society/Council of the Americas – Colombia’s 2018 Elections](#)
- [Misión de Observación Electoral](#) (Spanish)
- [National Registry of Colombia](#) (Spanish)
- [Donde Votar Colombia](#) (Spanish)