



Global Expertise. Local Solutions.
Sustainable Democracy.

Elections in Costa Rica:

2014 National Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Americas

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

1850 K Street, NW | Fifth Floor | Washington, D.C. 20006 | www.IFES.org

January 29, 2014

Frequently Asked Questions

When is Election Day?.....	1
Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?	1
Who can vote in the country?.....	1
Who are the presidential candidates?.....	1
How many registered voters are there?	1
What is the structure of the government?	2
What is the gender balance within the candidate list?	2
What is the election management body? What are its powers?	2
How many polling places are set up on Election Day?	2
Is out-of-country voting allowed?.....	2
How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?.....	3
Where are voting, counting and tabulation held?.....	3
When will official results be announced?	3
Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?	3
Resources	4

Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Costa Rican election authorities, to the best of our knowledge as of January 29, 2014. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Costa Rica will hold national elections on February 2.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens will be electing the President, two Vice Presidents and all 57 members of the Legislative Assembly, who will serve a four-year term. Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected through a closed-list proportional representation system.

If no presidential candidate receives 40 percent of the vote, a run-off will take place the first Sunday in April.

Who can vote in the country?

In Costa Rica, all citizens who are 18 years of age or older and have registered may vote. The voter must present valid national identification; however, an expired identification card may be presented only if the date of expiration does not exceed 12 months.

Who are the presidential candidates?

There are a total of 13 presidential candidates:

- Justo Orozco Álvarez, Costa Rican Renovation Party (PRC)
- Oscar Andrés López Arias, Accessibility without Exclusion Party (PASE)
- José Miguel Corrales Bolaños, New Patriotic Party (PPN)
- Carlos Luis Avendaño Calvo, National Restoration Party (PREN)
- Walter Muñoz Céspedes, National Integration Party (PIN)
- Sergio Mena Díaz, New Generation Party (PNG)
- José María Villalta Florez-Estrada, Frente Amplio Party (FA)
- Otto Guevara Guth, Libertarian Movement Party (PML)
- Héctor Monestel Herrera, Workers Party (PT)
- José Manuel Echandi Meza, National Progress Party (PAN)
- Johnny Araya Monge, National Liberation Party (PLN)
- Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, Citizen Action Party and Patriotic Alliance (PAC)
- Rodolfo Piza Rocafort, Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC)

How many registered voters are there?

There are 3,078,321 registered voters: 1,535,869 men and 1,542,452 women. The voter registry includes 12,654 Costa Ricans – 6,508 men and 6,146 women – who, for the first time, will be able to vote abroad.

For these elections, the voter registry increased by 7.5 percent in comparison to the 2010 national elections.

What is the structure of the government?

Costa Rica is a democratic republic, based on the division of three powers: executive, legislative (a unicameral Legislative Assembly) and judicial.

Executive responsibilities are vested in the President, who is the country's center of power. The President, two Vice Presidents and 57 Legislative Assembly deputies are elected to serve four-year terms.

What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

The electoral code was amended in 1996 to introduce a 40 percent quota for women. Article 2 states that the participation of men and women shall be governed by the principle of parity, which implies that all the delegations, party lists and other bodies will be split evenly between men and women. In instances where there is no parity, the difference between the total number of men and women must not be greater than one.

All party lists should alternate their candidates by sex so two same-sex candidates cannot be placed in the list consecutively. Any list of candidates that does not meet the parity and alternation principle will not be registered to participate in the election.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

According to Article 99 of the constitution, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) is the independent body in charge of the organization, administration and oversight of elections. The TSE is also in charge of the administration of the civil registry and organization of referendums and plebiscites, in accordance with Articles 105 and 168 of the constitution.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

There will be 6,515 polling places set up throughout Costa Rica on Election Day.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Yes. Out-of-country voting (OCV) will be implemented for the first time during the upcoming elections. There are 12,654 Costa Ricans – 6,508 men and 6,146 women – registered to vote abroad. For this election, Costa Rican voters abroad are registered in 42 countries, with the majority located in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Spain, Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela and France.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal planned to implement a pilot program for electronic OCV. However, given the lack of time to test the voting technology, electronic voting will be postponed until the 2016 elections. Therefore, Costa Ricans abroad will vote using paper ballots in Costa Rican consulates and embassies.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

Voters may be accompanied by a person of their choice, who can assist them in casting their ballot. Further, each polling station will be equipped with magnifiers, Braille ballot guides and ballot templates.

Persons with disabilities, senior citizens, women with children and pregnant women will be given priority at every polling station.

Where are voting, counting and tabulation held?

Voting, counting and tabulation will be conducted in the 6,515 polling stations within voting centers nationwide. Polls are open on Election Day between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

When will official results be announced?

Official results are announced after vote counting concludes. According to Article 198 of the electoral code, vote counting for President and Vice President should conclude within 30 days of the election. Vote counting for the Legislative Assembly should conclude within 60 days of the election.

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

Observation is allowed and regulated under the electoral code. Costa Rica has both international and national observers accredited by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

There are two categories of international observers. The first are classified as international official mission observers, which includes representatives of the Inter-American Union of Electoral Organisms (UNIORE) and representatives from the Tikal and Quito Protocols. The second category is classified as visitors, who are representatives of international organizations, officers of foreign electoral management bodies, foreign government officials, diplomatic missions and representatives from academic institutions.

Resources

- Constitution of Costa Rica ([English](#), [Spanish](#))
- Electoral Code ([Spanish](#))
- Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) Website ([Spanish](#))
- Georgetown University Political Database of the Americas Profile of Costa Rica ([English](#))
- The Electoral Knowledge Network ([English](#))
- Women's Political Participation in Costa Rica ([Spanish](#))