

## Colombia: political parties

The political party system in Colombia is relatively stable in comparison with other Latin American countries. Gradually evolving from the 19th century two-party system to the moderate multi-party system of today, it has never collapsed or been overthrown, despite having endured many years of violent confrontation.

### Background

The current political [party system](#) in Colombia can be traced back to the mid-19th century. The Liberal Party, mainly made up of traders and artisans, backed the separation of Church and State as well as the development of free trade and federalism. On the other hand, the Conservative Party represented big landowners, the clergy and traditional families. The Conservatives dominated from 1886 to 1930, until the 1928 [Bananera massacre](#) initiated a [switch to left-leaning politics](#), starting a period of Liberal Party rule, marked by violence generated by land conflict. In 1934, Liberal President [López Pumarejo](#) launched the *Revolución en Marcha* to modernise the state and agriculture. With the Conservatives again in power, the 1948 assassination of [Jorge Eliécer Gaitán](#), a left-wing leader of the Liberal Party and a presidential candidate, provoked the 'Bogotazo' riots, and as of 1949, the banning and persecution of leftist organisations. These events led to a period of confrontation known as *La Violencia*, which ended in 1958 with an arrangement between the Conservatives and Liberals, the *Frente Nacional*, under which they alternated in power and marginalised other movements and parties. Deprived of the right to political expression, the National Front's opponents turned to armed rebellion, thus starting the [conflict](#) that gave birth to guerrilla movements (in particular [FARC and ELN](#)) and claimed over 200 000 lives in 50 years. New political forces began to appear from the 1980s onwards, and [political fragmentation](#) was further encouraged by the 1991 [Constitution](#). That said, the Colombian party system was neither destroyed, nor did it collapse; it rather experienced a slow and gradual adjustment process leading to an attenuated two-party system with the admission of 'third forces', and later development into today's moderate multi-party system.

### Colombia's political and electoral system

Colombia has a bicameral [Congress](#), with a 102-member [Senate](#) and a [Chamber of Representatives](#) with 166 seats. Two seats in the Senate and four in the Chamber are reserved for the indigenous and Afro-Colombian minorities, and one seat in the Chamber for Colombians living abroad. Senators are elected at national level, and Representatives at provincial level. The last Congressional elections took place on 9 March 2014. There are currently 23 female Senators (22.55%) and 33 female Representatives (19.88%). The [President](#) (Constitution: Title VII, Chapter I) is also Head of State and Government, and can be elected for two consecutive terms. President Juan Manuel Santos was re-elected for his second mandate on 15 June 2014. The President is replaced by the [Vice-President](#) (Title VII, Chapter III) in case of illness, death or resignation. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every four years.

### Current political parties

*The Social Party of National Unity (or [U Party](#))* (President: [Roy Barreras](#)) This is a neoliberal, centre-right party, founded in 2005 under the leadership of [Juan Manuel Santos](#). It is currently the dominant party in Colombia, holding the country's presidency, with [21](#) Senators and [37](#) Representatives. Together with the Liberal Party of Colombia (PLC) and Radical Change (CR), it formed the [National Unity coalition](#) in 2006 to support the government of President Santos. The U Party is an observer of the [Liberal International](#).

*Liberal Party of Colombia (PLC)* (National Director: [Simón Gaviria](#) Muñoz) The Liberal Party defines itself as a pluralist democratic left-wing organisation. It is represented by 17 Senators and 39 Representatives, and has been a member of the [Socialist International](#) since 1998.

**Conservative Party (PC)** (President: [David Barguil Assis](#)) One of the two traditional parties, the Conservative Party represents the right wing, has 18 Senators and 27 Representatives and belongs to the Christian Democrat International (CDI).

**Democratic Centre Party (CD)** (President: [Álvaro Uribe](#), former Colombian President (2002-10)) Founded in 2013, the CD is a right-wing political party strongly opposed to the peace talks with guerrilla forces. It is represented by 20 Senators and 19 Representatives.

**Radical Change (CR)** (National Director: [Carlos Fernando Galán](#)) This right/centre-right party was created in 1998 by PLC dissidents; it currently has 9 Senators and 16 Representatives.

**Green Alliance Party** The Greens have four [co-presidents](#). They currently have five senators and six representatives, and are members of the [Green Party Federation](#) of the Americas and the [Global Greens](#).

**Citizen's Option** (former *National Integration Party (PIN)*) This right-wing populist party has five senators and six representatives, as well as a collegiate [presidency](#).

**Alternative Democratic Pole (PDA)** A left-wing party presided by [Clara López Obregón](#), it has five senators and three representatives, and is affiliated to the [Foro de São Paulo](#).

**Independent Absolute Renovation Movement (MIRA)** (President: [Carlos Alberto Baena López](#)) With three members of the House of Representatives, it represents a new human and political ideology ([Miraism](#)).

**100% for Colombia Movement (M100%C)** (Leader: [Yahir Acuña](#)) M100%C currently has three members of the House of Representatives and has just been deprived of legal personality by the [National Electoral Council](#).

**Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO)** A social and political movement of the indigenous peoples, with two members of the House of Representatives.

**Independent Social Alliance (ASI)** (President: [Alonso Tobón](#)) Centre-left party with a Senator and Representative.

Figure 1: Composition of the Senate, 2014

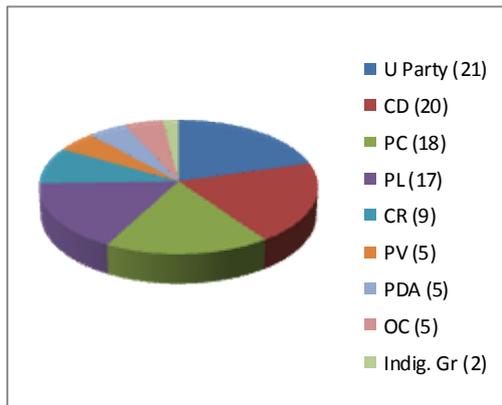
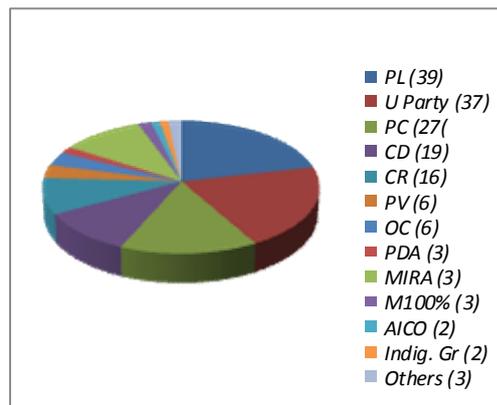
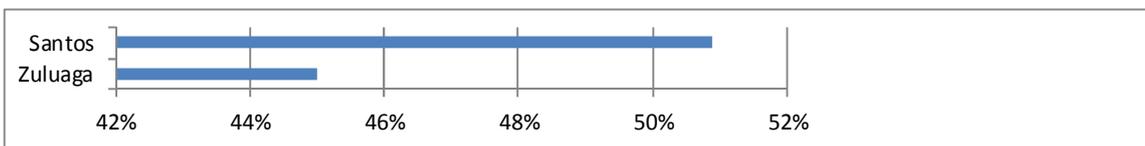


Figure 2: Composition of the House of Representatives, 2014



Source: [Europa World Plus](#)

Figure 3: Results of 2014 Presidential elections (2nd round)



Source: [CIDOB](#)

### Colombia and the EU

Political dialogue between the EU and Colombia is based on the 1996 [Rome Declaration](#) and a 2009 [Memorandum of Understanding](#). It will be strengthened and institutionalised through the 2003 [Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement](#) between the EU and the Andean Community (not yet ratified), and is complemented by a bilateral [human rights dialogue](#).

On 11 December 2012, the EP adopted a [Resolution](#) giving its consent to conclusion of the [Free Trade Agreement](#) with Colombia (and Peru). President Santos visited the EP in November 2014, and [Martin Schulz](#) expressed the EP's firm support for deepening EU-Colombia relations.