

## Venezuela: political parties

The political party system established in Venezuela in 1958 by the Punto Fijo Pact, and dominated by the Democratic Alliance and COPEI parties, collapsed in 1998 with the victory of Hugo Chavez in the presidential elections. Since then, and after the 1999 Constitutional reform, Chavismo has dominated Venezuelan politics, though the opposition parties have united as the MUD coalition.

### Background

Venezuelan [19th Century](#) liberal and conservative political movements disappeared with the [Juan Vicente Gómez](#) dictatorship (1908-1935). The centre-left [Democratic Action](#) (AD, 1941) and the centre-right Christian Democrats ([COPEI](#), 1946) have their roots in the democratisation process that followed, and were the main parties until 1993, with AD being predominant from 1945 to 1948. With the end of the [Pérez Jiménez](#) dictatorship in 1958, a governability pact (*Punto Fijo*) was signed by AD, COPEI and [URD](#) representatives: it included a national unity government, with ministers appointed from each party, and a common minimum programme. It was first applied under the Presidency of [Rómulo Betancourt](#) (AD) that same year, starting a period of [moderate pluralism](#). In 1968, a handover of power was achieved with the election of [Rafael Caldera](#) (COPEI). [From 1973 to 1988](#), Venezuela enjoyed an attenuated, institutionalised two-party system, with AD and COPEI alternating in power and [MAS](#) as a third force.

The 1983 economic crisis – triggered by the fall of oil prices – and the 1989 [Caracazo](#) riots (heavily repressed by the government of [Carlos Andrés Pérez](#)) contributed to [de-legitimising](#) the system. After a failed coup led by Colonel [Hugo Chávez](#) in 1992, the two-party system was replaced by a limited and unstable multi-party system. The 1993 elections were won by [Rafael Caldera](#) – who broke off with COPEI to create the National Convergence Party – supported by a heterogeneous coalition. In the December 1998 presidential elections, the system collapsed when voters abandoned traditional party loyalties to support Chavez and his [Patriotic Pole](#). Just before the elections, AD and COPEI withdrew support for their own candidates and instead backed [Henrique Salas Römer](#), the [Venezuela Project](#) (PV) candidate. That year, legislative and presidential elections were held on different dates for the first time (in November and December, respectively). While AD, COPEI and PV obtained a 53.5% majority in the Chamber of Deputies, Chavez and his Patriotic Pole won the presidential elections by 56.2%. In April 1999, President Chavez called for a consultative referendum to establish a Constitutional National Assembly, and another referendum to approve the new Constitution. Presidential and legislative elections were held again in 2000, under the new Constitution, and both were won by Chavez and his Fifth Republic Movement ([MVR](#)). The period after 1993 has been described as one of polarised and [de-institutionalised pluralism](#), with a rising personalisation of politics around national and regional leaders. Chavez was re-elected in 2006 and 2012, shortly before his death in 2013, when new elections were called for and won by his successor, [Nicolás Maduro](#).

### Political and electoral system

Venezuela is a presidential republic. The [President](#) is elected for a six-year term, and can be [re-elected](#) indefinitely. He or she must obtain a majority of the votes cast. In the case of 'absolute' absence, new elections take place if the first four years of the mandate have not been completed, or, if this happens during the last two years of the term, the Vice-President replaces the President until the end of the term. The most recent presidential elections took place in 2013.

Legislative power resides in a unicameral [National Assembly](#) with [165 members](#) elected every five years. Three seats are reserved for the indigenous community; of the remaining 162 members, 110 are elected by a majority system in 87 constituencies, and 52 are elected in 24 constituencies – corresponding to the states and the Federal District – under the proportional representation system, from closed party lists. Vacancies

between general elections are filled by the 'next in line' candidate on the same party list. There are currently [28 women \(16.97%\)](#) in the National Assembly. The last legislative elections took place on 26 September 2010, and were the first to be held under the new 2009 [electoral law](#) (Ley Orgánica de Procesos Electorales). The next elections are scheduled for September 2015.

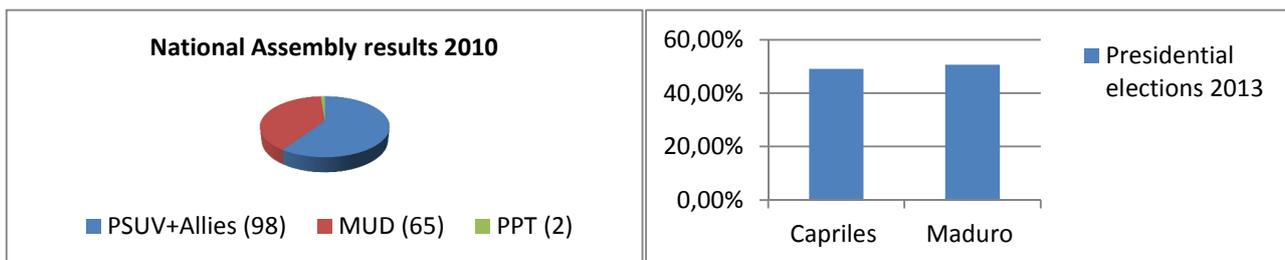
### Current political parties

[United Socialist Party of Venezuela](#) (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV). Leader: Nicolás Maduro Moros (current President of Venezuela). PSUV started as the Fifth Republic Movement ([MVR](#)), founded in 1997 by retired military officers (led by Hugo Chávez), trade unionists and dissidents from other parties, with the aim of competing with AD and COPEI. Its ideology was inspired by the ideals of prominent Venezuelan statesman [Simon Bolivar](#). The party questioned traditional political parties and their representatives, and promoted a direct link between the leader and his followers (social participative democracy), following what some authors describe as a populist pattern. In early 1998, the MVR and Patria para Todos (PPT) established the Patriotic Pole alliance, later joined by other parties. The PSUV as such was founded in 2008 to unify all Bolivarian movements, organisations and political sectors and overcome ideological and organisational shortcomings. It obtained 95 seats in the National Assembly in the 2010 elections. In the 2013 presidential elections, Nicolás Maduro obtained 50.61% of the votes.

The Communist Party of Venezuela ([PCV](#)) and the Indian National Council of Venezuela ([CONIVE](#)) are political allies of the PSUV. They obtained one seat each in the National Assembly.

[National Unity Roundtable](#) (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, MUD) Leader: [Henrique Capriles](#) ([Justice First](#), 2012 primary elections). Launched in 2009, this is a heterogeneous coalition of parties from across the political spectrum (from pro-business to moderate left-wing), intended to build a common platform and unite the opposition vote. In 2010 it obtained 65 representatives in the National Assembly. The following coalition members obtained [majority seats](#) in the 2010 parliamentary elections: [A New Era](#), ten; [Justice First](#), ten; [Democratic Action](#) (AD), eight; [Social Christian Party](#) (COPEI), five; [Clear Accounts](#), one; [Radical Cause](#), one; Zulia State Autonomous Indigenous Movement, one. The Movement for Social Democracy (PODEMOS), which won two seats, abandoned MUD after 2010. It also includes [Brave People Alliance](#), founded by imprisoned Caracas Mayor, Antonio Ledezma, and [Popular Will](#), the party of political prisoners, Leopoldo López and Daniel Ceballos. In the 2013 presidential elections, MUD candidate Henrique Capriles obtained 49.12% of the votes.

[Fatherland for all](#) (Patria para Todos, PPT). Leader: Ilenia Medina. A left-wing party founded in 1997 by members of the Radical Cause party, it obtained two representatives in 2010 and supports Nicolás Maduro.



Source: [IPU Parline](#)

Source: [Cidob](#)

### Venezuela and the EU

There is no bilateral [legal framework](#) for relations between the EU and Venezuela. As a member of Mercosur since 2012, Venezuela joined the negotiations for an Association Agreement between the EU and [Mercosur](#). At regional level, relations are conducted in the framework of [CELAC](#). The 2007-13 [Country Strategy Paper](#) outlined the main axes of financial bilateral cooperation. The EU also provides support to Venezuela in fields such as human rights and engagement with non-state actors, with projects funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights ([EIDHR](#)).

On 12 March 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the [situation in Venezuela](#), calling for the release of [Antonio Ledezma](#), [Leopoldo López](#), [Daniel Ceballos](#) and other political prisoners, and an end to political persecution and repression of the democratic opposition. It had already adopted, in 2014, a resolution on the [persecution of the democratic opposition](#) in Venezuela (18 December), and another [on the situation in Venezuela](#) (27 February) condemning the violence and loss of lives during the peaceful demonstrations of February 2014.