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DEMOCRACIES
IN LATIN AMERICA

MAY 2022

Colombia

Presidential elections Pre-election report



Executive Summary

On May 29, presidential elections will be held in Colombia against a background of rumbling discontent and polarized voter intentions. Six candidates are vying to govern until 2026 – selected as part of the country’s legislative elections in March this year: Gustavo Petro of the Pacto Histórico coalition, Federico "Fico" Gutiérrez (Equipo por Colombia), Rodolfo Hernández (Liga de Gobernantes Anticorrupción), Sergio Fajardo (Centro Esperanza), Enrique Gómez (Movimiento de Salvación Nacional), and John Milton Rodríguez (Colombia Justa Libres).

In March, legislative elections were held in the country, together with the internal consultations of the main parties and alliances, which defined the pre-candidates that will run this Sunday for the presidency. **Winning the first round outright requires at least 50% of the vote.** Anything less and the two most voted for candidates pass to a **second round runoff, scheduled for June 19.**

Among the issues foremost on voters’ minds are the **tensions and unrest gripping** the country in recent years, the **(poor) implementation of the peace accord with the FARC-EP**, and alleged **corruption**. For its part, the outgoing government is now severely weakened, so much so that the candidate it had backed earlier this year chose to drop out following a disastrous run in the March elections.

The **center-left candidate Gustavo Petro**, pitching himself as a progressive alternative to the government, leads in polls with 40% support. In second place is **Fico Gutiérrez** (center right) followed by businessman **Rodolfo Hernández** (right), whose popularity has soared in recent weeks.

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General considerations

What is at stake?

The President and Vice President of the Republic for the 2022-2026 term.

How is the vote cast?

The President and Vice President are elected for a term of four years by direct popular vote.

When are the elections?

Next Sunday, May 29th. These are national presidential elections with - unlike in several other countries of the region - non-mandatory voting.

Will there be a second round?

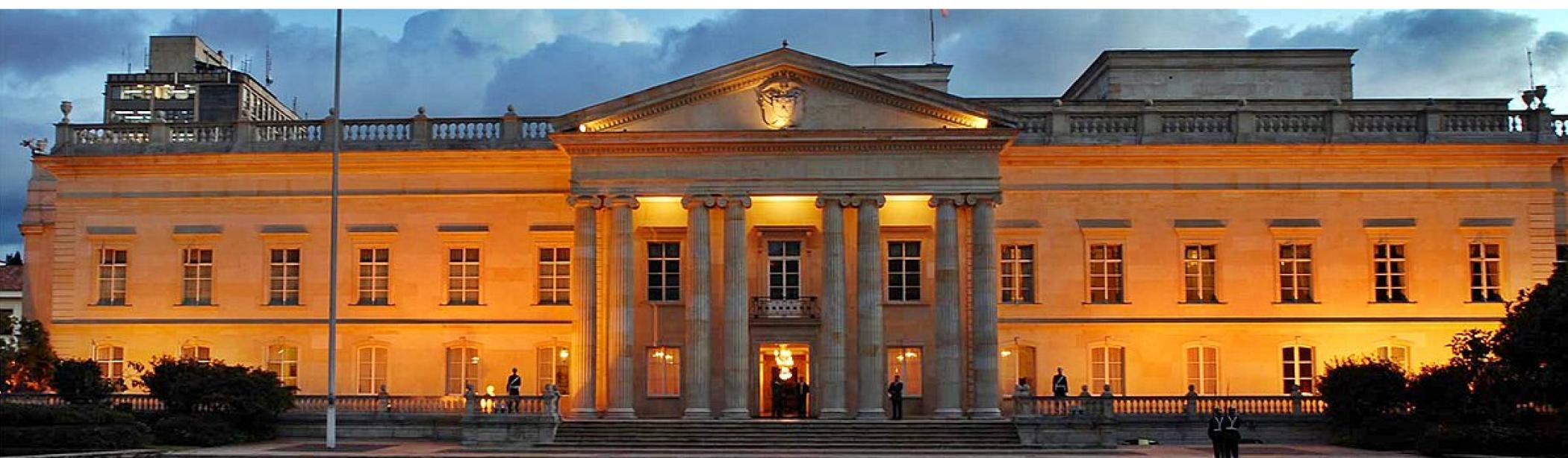
If no ticket receives over 50% of the valid votes cast, then a run-off will be held on June 19 between the two most voted for candidates.

How many presidential candidates are there?

Colombians will choose from six candidates: Gustavo Petro (Pacto Histórico), Federico Gutiérrez (Equipo por Colombia), Rodolfo Hernández (Liga de Gobernantes Anticorrupción), Sergio Fajardo (Centro Esperanza), Enrique Gómez (Movimiento Nacional de Salvación) and John Milton Rodríguez (Colombia Justa Libres). In line with the country's constitution, the sitting president, Iván Duque, cannot be re-elected.

When will the next government take office?

On August 7, 2022 - until August 7, 2026.



The election in numbers

39

MILLIONS OF COLOMBIANS WILL BE ABLE TO VOTE

PRESIDENTIAL FORMULAS WILL RUN FOR THE ELECTIONS

6

54%

OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL PARTICIPATED IN THE 2018 ELECTIONS.

IS THE VOTING INTENTION THAT POLLS ATTRIBUTE TO GUSTAVO PETRO.

39%

Aug
7

IS THE DATE ON WHICH THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL TAKE OFFICE

IS THE PERCENTAGE OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL THAT HAS NOT YET DECIDED
FOR WHICH PARTY OR ALLIANCE IT WILL VOTE

6,2%

Political context

Social Discontent and Economic Situation

The last three years in Colombia have been marked by **unrest and protests against President Duque and his government, a mood that has been aggravated by the economic, social and health** fallout of the pandemic. Nationwide demonstrations erupting on 21st November 2019 under the hashtag #21N drew wide-ranging social movements, unions and political opposition forces. Much was behind this, from dismay at the economy and impatience with the president's peace accord implementation, to corruption scandals and the continued killing of community leaders and activists.

The **president's economic policies, the handling of the Peace Accords with the FARC-EP, accusations of corruption cases and the assassination of social leaders** triggered a series of **demonstrations throughout the national territory** summoned by social movements, trade unions and opposition parties called "National Strike #21N", which have extended -with a lesser impact- to date.

The unrest reignited in 2021 following an unpopular government tax reform proposal - quickly aborted and prompting the resignation of the finance minister, Alberto Carrasquilla - though protests have since calmed.

The pandemic hit Colombia's already **fragile economy** hard, deepening poverty and inequality. It led to a large **devaluation** of the Colombian peso and drove record-high **inflation**. A year on from the introduction of Covid restrictions, poverty had climbed 7% and was affecting over 40% of the population.

Rising annual inflation - measured at 8% in March this year - has curbed purchasing power and **pushed up food prices**. Amid this, the various presidential candidates have partly framed their campaigns around the need for tackling rising costs and creating jobs.

Armed conflict

In 2016, the **Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrilla group signed a Peace Accord** signaling their shared intent to end a conflict dating back to 1960. This covered not just preventing further armed uprisings but also other matters such as establishing a 'global rural development policy'. Since Duque assumed the presidency, however, **the security situation has worsened**. Critics link this to his poor enforcement of the peace agreement and to his government's failure to protect demobilized factions as had been agreed.

Colombian elections have historically seen a rise in civilian directed violence – and this time is no different. In fact, with the emergence of new armed groups and the reappearance of old ones, the vote is turning into one of the bloodiest in recent times. According to the Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz (Indepaz), this year has so far seen **39 massacres during Duque’s administration, with attacks on journalists also rising.**

In response to this, leftist Gustavo Petro has said he will seek to guarantee peace through comprehensive rural reform and by promoting dialogue and negotiation with the National Liberation Army (ELN). For his part, Federico ‘Fico’ Gutiérrez is committing to ‘fully implement’ the Peace Agreement and to triple spending on the country's ailing highways. In the run-up to the elections, public security, already central to the campaigns of the various parties, appears to have taken on even greater importance, **with both Gutiérrez and Petro claiming to have been personally threatened by paramilitary groups.**

Political polarization

Petro’s strong showing in polls for over a year coupled with his promise to restore ties to Venezuela, led to elements of the ruling party and of the center right generally to seize on the latter in branding him as "populist", "chavist" and "communist". Voters’ mood has been spiked further of late by a series of hot-topic debates on **legalizing drugs, euthanasia and abortion.**



Who is running for president?

Six candidates will compete in the election: Gustavo Petro (Pacto Histórico), Federico Gutiérrez (Equipo por Colombia), Rodolfo Hernández (Liga de Gobernantes Anticorrupción), Sergio Fajardo (Centro Esperanza), Enrique Gómez (Movimiento Nacional de Salvación) and John Milton Rodríguez (Colombia Justa Libres).

Federico "Fico" Gutiérrez

Vicepresident: Rodrigo Lara Sánchez

Federico Andrés Gutiérrez Zuluaga (Medellín, 1974) studied civil engineering and completed a specialization in Senior Management at the University of Medellín and another in Political Science at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. **From 2004 to 2012 he served as councilman of Medellín and was mayor of that city from 2016 to 2020 for the Movimiento Creemos Colombia.**



Despite not having an extensive political career, Gutiérrez emerged as the winner in the internal

elections of the Equipo por Colombia, consolidating himself as the **favorite of the conservative sectors and the Colombian center-right**. In that instance, he beat the conservative senator, David Barguil; the former mayor of Bogotá, Enrique Peñalosa; the former mayor of Barranquilla, Alex Char, and the candidate of the Christian party MIRA, Aydeé Lizarazo.

At the end of March, Fico chose Rodrigo Lara Sánchez, former Mayor of Neiva with a political career in the Alianza Verde party (center-left), as his vice-president in a message of dialogue and openness.



EquipoPor
Colombia

It is an electoral coalition formed at the end of 2021 by **parties and social movements of the right and center right**. Among the main parties of the alliance are the Partido MIRA, Partido de la U, Creemos Colombia and the traditional Partido Conservador. It is also **backed by President Iván Duque and former President Álvaro Uribe** as the main contender for the presidency in 2022.

Gustavo Petro

Vicepresident: Francia Márquez



Born in 1960 in Ciénaga de Oro, department of Córdoba, Gustavo Petro is the **main candidate with chances of winning the 2022 presidential elections**. He is also the main opposition senator for Pacto Histórico. He was a member of the Movimiento 19 de abril (M-19), a socialist guerrilla group that took the Palace of Justice by force in 1985. After the demobilization of that group, Petro achieved a seat in the House of Representatives for the Alianza Democrática M-19 in 1991, a party of which he was a co-founder.

Between 2012 and 2015 he served as Mayor of Bogota, until he was removed from office due to a disciplinary investigation related to the garbage collection system in the city. Thus, the present elections will be his **third attempt to reach the presidency**: in the 2010 presidential elections he achieved 9.1% of the votes and in 2018 25%, disputing the second round against the current president of Colombia, Iván Duque.

Since 2018, due to the Statute of the Opposition (law passed in the same year, which establishes that the second most voted candidate gets access to a Senate seat), he occupied a seat in Congress, from which he organized the **Pacto Histórico** alliance. From the left-wing position, Petro declares that he has the challenge of leaving behind the image of his opponents of being a "leader of radical ideas and attitudes" to establish a broad progressive alliance.

After surpassing 80% of the votes in the intra-party elections for Pacto Histórico, Petro emerged as the coalition's candidate. At the same time, he included **Francia Márquez** as the vice-presidential candidate, who achieved in March the third highest vote of all the consultations at national level. Márquez, endorsed by the Polo Democrático Alternativo party (center left), is an Afro-Colombian **social leader, environmental activist, human rights defender and feminist**. As such, she presents an attractive profile among the youth and the black and Afro-descendant communities.

It is a **leftist political coalition** launched in February 2021, composed of 18 political parties and social movements of **socialist, communist, progressive and social democratic ideology**. It consolidated itself as a government alternative built on social bases centered on social justice and peace. In addition, political parties which are members of the coalition have emerged from fragmentation, generating an alliance formed by the Colombia Humana, Polo Democrático Alternativo, Partido Comunista and the Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social, among others. Last March, in legislative elections, it achieved 20 seats in the Senate and 28 in the Chamber of Deputies, thus becoming one of the main forces in Congress.



Rodolfo Hernández

Vicepresident: Marelen Castillo

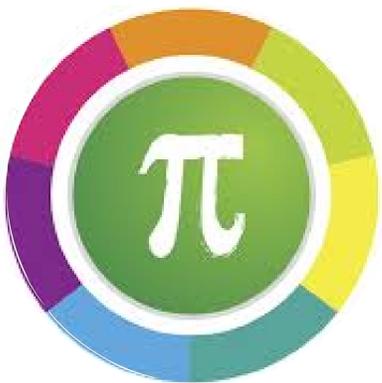


Rodolfo Hernández Suárez (1945) is a Colombian **businessman** and civil engineer. In June 2021 he announced his candidacy for the presidency as an **independent, financing his campaign with his own assets**. The contender presents himself to the election as an **"outsider"**, a politician located outside the traditional political space far from the traditional Colombian parties.

In the 1990s he began his career as a construction businessman. In 2004, after the kidnapping and

murder of his daughter by the National Liberation Army (ELN in Spanish), he turned to politics as he became Mayor of Bucaramanga in 2016. However, in the middle of his term, the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation suspended him from office for three months after he assaulted a councilman. Due to this, Hernández resigned from office in 2019. **He is currently going through disciplinary investigations with the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation.**

In March, he announced Marelen Castillo Torres as vice-presidential candidate, a graduate in biology and chemistry, as well as in industrial engineering, from Cali. Currently, Rodolfo is fighting to reach the second presidential round according to polls, consolidating his anti-establishment and anti-corruption discourse.



LIGA DE GOBERNANTES ANTICORRUPCIÓN

It is a political movement **created by presidential candidate Rodolfo Hernandez** while serving as Mayor of Bucaramanga in 2019. According to its political platform, the movement has the **basic principles of "fair play, transparency, impartiality, morality and gender equity"**. From the discursive point of view, it uses phrases such as "Do not steal, do not lie, do not betray" and "Zero impunity".

Sergio Fajardo

CENTRO ESPERANZA

Sergio Fajardo Valderrama (1956) is a teacher, academic, mathematician and center-left politician. He served as **Mayor of Medellín from 2004 to 2008 and as Governor of Antioquia from 2012 to 2016**. He was Antanas Mockus' vice-presidential candidate in 2010 and presidential candidate in the 2018 elections, reaching a third place. He consolidated as the presidential candidate of the **Centro Esperanza Coalition** in the March intra-party elections. His proposals are based on a moderate change, which protects liberties and is "pragmatic, rigorous and recognizes -and respects- differences". Fajardo chose former Minister of Environment, Luis Gilberto Murillo, as vice-president in his formula.



Enrique Gómez

MOVIMIENTO DE SALVACIÓN NACIONAL

Born in 1968, he is a lawyer from Universidad Sergio Arboleda in Bogotá and has more than 30 years of experience in litigation and corporate counseling. Previously, he was **media director and executive and financial director** of the media "24 horas". Among his main proposals is the elimination of the subsidy policy. Carlos Cuartas Quiceno, business administrator, will be his vice-presidential candidate.

John Milton Rodríguez

COLOMBIA JUSTA LIBRES

The candidate is an industrial engineer and evangelical preacher. He participated as a **representative of the ecclesiastical sector** in the negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC. Since 2018 he has been a senator of the Republic for Colombia Justa Libres, a party of which he is one of the founders. In March, he appointed Sandra de las Lajas Torres as his vice-presidential running mate.



Pacto Histórico Gustavo Petro - Francia Márquez



- Restore economic relations with Venezuela.
- Prohibit the exploitation of unconventional oilfields and stop fracking projects.
- Promote the development of biodegradable materials and ban single-use plastics. In addition, implement measures to guarantee healthy food environments, front warning labeling on products.
- Strengthen second floor public banks as financial intermediaries and sponsors of business models to favor micro, small and medium enterprises, and the popular, urban and rural economy. Guarantee credit access programs with low interest rates.
- Review Free Trade Agreements and intellectual property rights policy.
- Regulate work from home.
- Support artists in the creation of content for digital platforms, boosting strategic sectors such as the national film industry and promoting cultural employment.
- Guarantee access to essential medicines with timeliness, quality and relevance, strengthening price regulation and promoting the reindustrialization of the national pharmaceutical sector.

To access the complete government plan click [here](#).

Equipo por Colombia Federico Gutiérrez - Rodrigo Lara



- Deepen financial inclusion, promote access to credit channels hand in hand with the private sector, make usury rates more flexible and encourage competition within the sector.
- Strengthen the Fintech ecosystem and adopt an open architecture financial system (Open Finance).
- Guarantee universal access to connectivity and provide broadband throughout the country. Conduct the spectrum auction for the adoption of 5G technology in 2023 and accelerate the massification of connectivity and the reduction of the digital divide.
- Consolidate Colombia as a hub for audiovisual production in South America and promote the financing and further growth of artistic, cultural and creative activities.
- Consolidate a national pharmaceutical industry. Develop a public platform - Colombia Compra Eficiente en Salud - for the purchase of 80% of medicines and supplies and establish performance parameters to protect the use of health sector resources.
- Responsible mining, promoting labor formality and combating illegal mineral extraction.

To access the complete government plan click [here](#).

Liga de Gobernantes Anticorrupción Rodolfo Hernandez - Marelen Castillo



- Stimulate the financing and execution of works of the 5G Program and guarantee the continuity and completion of the 4G.
- To deepen the national policy of price control to the pharmaceutical industry.
- Promote more sustainable and healthy patterns of food production and consumption.
- Expand access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises and intervene in the high tax burdens that impede competitiveness.
- Consolidate a connectivity platform to promote economic and social development, and the transition towards the strengthening of the digital economy.

To access the full government plan click [here](#).

Coalición Centro Esperanza Sergio Fajardo - Gilberto Murrilo



- Create programs to support business innovation, with main emphasis on stimulating innovations with breakthrough potential and market creation for high-potential technologies.
- Promote a General Law of Cultures and restructure the Ministry of Culture.
- Promote a progressive tax reform and increase Colombia's tax collection.
- Create a ten-year plan to prevent unhealthy eating in schools and promote healthy lifestyles. Regulate prices of medicines and technologies.
- Propose that Colombia becomes the great world hub for teleworking, adjusting current regulations so that foreign companies can easily hire Colombians.

To access the complete government plan click [here](#).



PETRO
PACTO HISTÓRICO

39,4%



FICO
EQUIPO POR COLOMBIA

26,2%



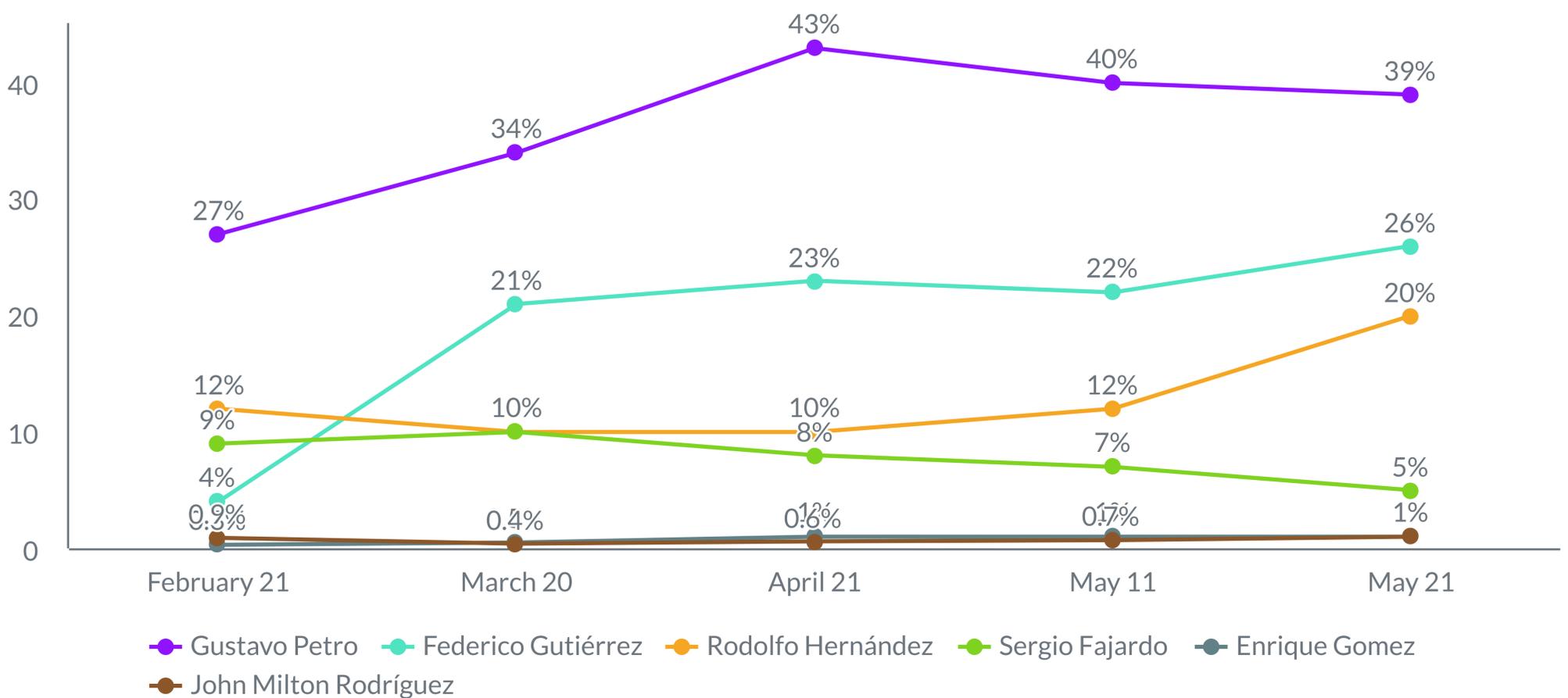
RODOLFO
LIGA DE GOBERNANTES ANTICORRUPCIÓN

20,3%

Undecided 6,2%
Blank or null 7,6%

Polls reveal a **wide preference for Gustavo Petro**, who in the last months has maintained a voting intention of around 40%. **Federico Gutiérrez**, on the other hand, has sought to consolidate alliances with the government and traditional parties in order to reach the second round, where he hopes to **attract the electorate that rejects Petro** and exceed 50%. At the same time, the latest polls revealed an **abrupt growth in the intention to vote for Rodolfo Hernández**.

Evolution of voting intention

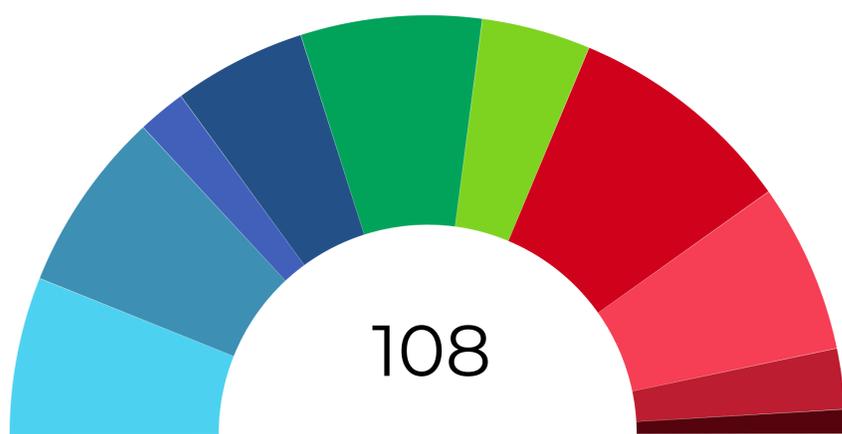


Source: Own elaboration based on the same private surveys carried out on the dates mentioned above.

What Congress awaits the next president?

After the legislative elections of March 13, no party can reach the necessary majorities to guarantee the approval of bills without the need to make agreements with other forces. In the Senate, **Federico Gutiérrez**, in case of winning, would have around 52 seats of the right-wing parties, among them the Partido Conservador and Centro Democrático, **only three to reach a majority** that would allow him to pass bills of interest. **Petro**, on the other hand, **would have to gather practically all the undecided or independent parties** to reach a majority. In the House of Representatives there are a large number of seats and independent parties, and the Partido Liberal could give the support of its 33 seats to the winning coalition, thus contributing to the consolidation of majority blocs for any of the candidates.

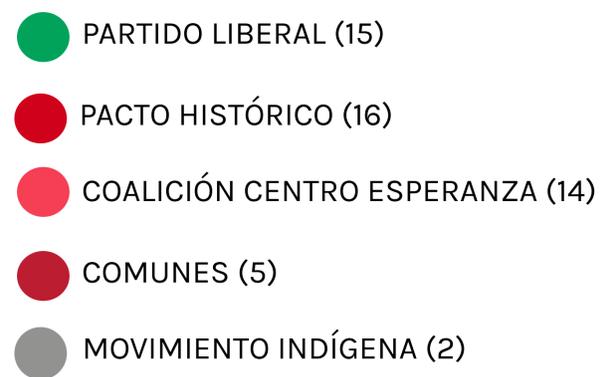
SENATE 2022-2026



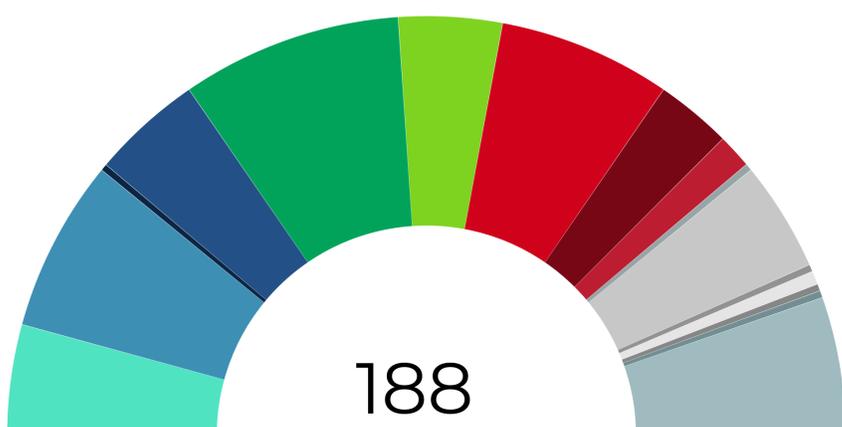
Government and Allies



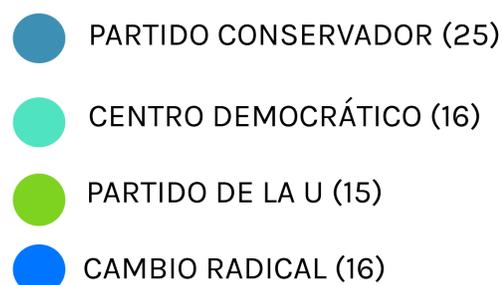
Opposition and independent



REPRESENTATIVES 2022-2026



Government and Allies



Opposition and independent



The next president of Colombia will receive a **fragmented Congress**. Should the alliances remain as they are, the Senate will have a left-wing bloc representing 36% of the Congress and the right-wing will lose its majority, reaching 49%. Whichever party wins the election, it will **require the ability to negotiate with other parties in order to reach agreements between the Executive and the Legislative**.

Conclusions

Colombia heads into the elections with a **high degree of voter polarization and discontent**. **Gustavo Petro** of the Pacto Histórico coalition has continued to lead in polls and is **favorite to become the country's first ever left-wing president**. However, polls also suggest he is struggling to appeal beyond his current 40% base of support. This means he may, in turn, struggle to collect the 50% of votes needed to win the first round outright and that, come a second round, he will need to demonstrate an ability to woo other (including undecided) voters.

Meanwhile the task of his main rival, **Fico Gutiérrez** (Equipo por Colombia) is made harder by a **conservative voter block disenchanted by the current right-of-center government**. Still, he appears to be successfully appealing to this segment of the electorate, even its most conservative voters, this despite doing his best to dissociate himself from Duque throughout his campaign. Should there be a second round, his chances rest on how well he can capture the supporters of **Rodolfo Hernandez** (Liga de Gobernantes Anticorrupción) - emerging as **the election's surprise package** with a popularity that has doubled in recent weeks to 20% .

The behavior of the 6.2% of the electorate that are still undecided could be key, both in terms of, potentially, enabling Petro to win the first round outright, or allowing Rodolfo Hernandez to steal ahead of Fico for a runoff in June.

Whoever wins must grapple with a **fragmented Congress**, whose alliances will begin to take shape as soon as the results are known. Fico would have an easier time reaching majorities for bills in both chambers, with **Petro on the other hand reliant on sowing and seizing divisions among the traditional parties** to attract enough backer in parliament. Rodolfo Hernández would face the most daunting challenge of all, his party holding only two deputy seats without a single senator.



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