

COLOMBIA

Date of Elections: April 21, 1974

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament upon the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Colombia, the Congress, comprises a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate is composed of 2 Senators for each of the country's 22 Departments and one more for each 200,000 inhabitants or for each fraction of more than 100,000 inhabitants that the Department has above the first 200,000.

The House of Representatives is composed of 2 Representatives for each Department and one more for each 100,000 inhabitants or for each fraction of more than 50,000 inhabitants that the Department has above the first 100,000.

The April 1974 elections were for 112 Senators and 199 Representatives, all to be elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

All citizens, of either sex, at least 21 years of age, who are registered as electors in their municipality and have not been deprived of their civil or political rights have the right to vote. Members of the armed forces on active duty and of the police force are debarred from participating in the poll.

Voting is not compulsory.

All electors who are at least 25 years of age and have never been condemned for a non-political offence involving corporal punishment are eligible for the House of Representatives.

To run for the Senate, a candidate must, in addition to the last condition mentioned above, be at least 30 years of age, Colombian by birth and have held certain high offices (President or Vice-President of the Republic, member of Congress, Cabinet Minister, head of a diplomatic mission, Governor of a Department, judge of a higher court, Councillor of State, Attorney General of the nation, Comptroller General of the Republic, university professor for

at least 5 years) or have undertaken a liberal profession with a university degree.

Representatives and Senators are elected in each constituency on the basis of a closed-list proportional representation system. A total of 22 constituencies consist of a single Department; other less-densely populated regions are grouped together to form 4 more constituencies. Voting for both Chambers takes place on the same day as the election for the President of the Republic.

A substitute is elected with each Deputy or Senator to replace either of the latter in the event of their resignation or death between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The Congressional elections were held simultaneously with the first open presidential elections in more than 25 years. In the latter, three opposition parties of socialist leaning challenged the two traditional Conservative and Liberal parties. For the previous 16 years, Conservatives and Liberals had ruled alternately pursuant to a National Front coalition pact.

Among the 5 presidential candidates, the winner of the race, left-wing Liberal Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, had campaigned on a platform promising to combat inflation (25 % in 1973) and unemployment, the latter by having employers reinvest a portion of their dividends, thus creating new jobs. His main rival, Conservative Alvaro Gomez Hurtado, favoured full freedom for foreign investors. Senora Maria Eugenia Rojas de Moreno Diaz of the *Alianza Nacional Popular* (ANAPO), the first woman to run for the presidency, advocated "Colombian-style socialism" and nationalization of certain key sectors of the economy. Agrarian reform was also a primary issue for all parties concerned. Personalities were nevertheless not an unimportant factor; all three above-mentioned candidates had Presidents of the Republic as fathers.

Following scattered violence during the campaign, election day abstentions were numerous.

While Lopez Michelsen thus succeeded Conservative President Misael Pastrana, the two leading parties still decided to share the main executive positions (including Cabinet posts) for another 4 years.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections

Number of registered voters	9,300,000 (approx.)
Voters	4,800,000 (approx.)