

Colombia 2026: Race to the Presidency

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The next presidential election in Colombia is scheduled for 31 May 2026, with a runoff likely a few weeks later if no candidate wins a majority in the first round. The latest poll, commissioned by *Noticias Caracol* and *Blu Radio* and conducted by Invamer, published on 1 December 2025, positions Iván Cepeda as the frontrunner.

Cepeda leads with 31.9%, followed by Abelardo de la Espriella at 18.2%, and Sergio Fajardo at 8.5%. Other candidates include Miguel Uribe Londoño (4.2%), Claudia López (4.1%), Vicky Dávila (3.7%), and Germán Vargas Lleras (2.1%). Meanwhile, 11-12% of voters remain undecided, leaving a significant portion of the electorate still in play.

The survey, conducted between 15-27 November 2025, sampled 3,800 respondents across 148 municipalities, covering both urban and rural areas. With a $\pm 1.81\%$ margin of error at a 95% confidence level.

Petro's possible Chosen

Iván Cepeda, polling at 31.9%, is a long-time Colombian politician with roughly 15 years in Congress—first in the Chamber of Representatives and then as a Senator. A member of the Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA), he is for now the 2026 presidential candidate for the far-left Petro's Pacto Histórico coalition.

His campaign has received full political and financial support from Petro's government and the network behind the "Total Peace" initiative, which includes illegal armed groups and organized crime across Colombia, Venezuela, and beyond. He has also benefited from Venezuelan bot activity and Petro-aligned communication operations.

Cepeda has consistently backed Petro and Maduro governments, calling both democratic. While Petro's aides have made

over 900 trips to Cuba and Venezuela, Cepeda has not disclosed his own travel records or whether he received funds from Total Peace actors or Maduro's regime in exchange for his loyalty.

Given these conditions, Cepeda's 31.9% is modest, but the alliance behind him wields extraordinary financial power, political influence, and territorial control. His numbers are further reinforced by the 4.1% of Claudia López, another far-left candidate closely tied to Petro's inner circle. López and her wife, Senator Angélica Lozano, have both operated within Petro's Pacto Histórico coalition, and López's term as Mayor of Bogotá was carried out with the backing of Petro's political machinery.

The Conservative Outsider

Abelardo de la Espriella, polling at 18.2%, is a lawyer, entrepreneur, and media figure. He founded De la Espriella Lawyers and is known for handling high-profile cases, including proceedings related to gender-based violence, vulnerable communities, and litigation with major public impact. He has also built a public image marked by his confrontational style, media presence, and business projects in fashion and real estate.

In 2025, he entered politics by launching his movement *Defensores de la Patria* with presidential aspirations for 2026, positioning himself as a conservative "outsider" with a tough stance on insecurity. His rhetoric and growing prominence have made him an influential and controversial figure, generating fervent support and strong criticism.

On December 4, De la Espriella registered his presidential candidacy backed by a remarkable 4'870,000 signatures—over seven times the number required.

The Centrist Alternative

Sergio Fajardo, polling at 8.5%, is a centrist political figure known for major transformations in Medellín and Antioquia. As Mayor of Medellín, he emphasized education, social urbanism, transparency, and violence reduction. As Governor of Antioquia, he advanced *Antioquia la más Educada*, focusing on schools, inequality, and institutional strengthening.

Founder of the civic movement Compromiso Ciudadano–now Dignidad y Compromiso–he has run for president in 2018, 2022, and 2026 as a moderate, anti-corruption, pro-education candidate.

Yet Fajardo's moderation, long promoted as his signature strength, is increasingly a central weakness. Centrism is no longer resonating strongly in polls or voter behavior, limiting his chances of significant upward momentum in the race.

The Veteran Politician

German Vargas Lleras, polling at 2.1%, is a seasoned Colombian politician with decades of public service. He began his political career at just 19 as a councilman in Bojacá, later serving in Bogotá.

After serving in the Senate–where he became Senate President–and holding ministerial posts, he was elected Vice President of Colombia in 2014. He remained in office until 2017, when he resigned to run for President.

Remarkably, Vargas Lleras currently polls at 2.1% without running an active campaign, reflecting his enduring recognition and influence among Colombian voters.

Key Conclusions

Iván Cepeda leads, but his advantage is not secure.

- 31.9% support.

- Strength tied to Petro's political and territorial networks, including party warehouses, and Total Peace allies.
- Documented reports of voter pressure, intimidation, and digital influence, including Maduro's 'bot army,' show forces shaping the race beyond traditional voter preference.

Abelardo de la Espriella emerges as the main right-wing contender.

- 18.2% support.
- With his current support, he can run alone or form alliances.
- Strong outsider profile signals significant potential for growth as the campaign progresses.

Centrist forces remain weak.

- Sergio Fajardo at 8.5%, with a strong governance record.
- Moderate positioning struggles in an increasingly polarized environment.

Veteran figures retain influence.

- Germán Vargas Lleras at 2.1% without campaigning underscores the enduring weight of established political brands.

Right-wing consolidation could reshape the race.

- Likely eventual unification behind a single candidate.
- Could force Fajardo to choose between continuing despite limited paths to victory or stepping aside based on final polls.

Political surprises to watch:

- De la Espriella and Vargas demonstrating unexpected momentum relative to expectations.
- The evolving alliances, structural support, and rising outsider appeal indicate a highly fluid electoral landscape, despite Cepeda's current lead.