



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL
of Philadelphia

Colombia

Republic of Colombia



Key Facts



World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall): Ranked 129 (42.23)

Head of State / Head of Government: President Ivan DUQUE Marquez (since 7 August 2018); Vice President Marta Lucia RAMIREZ Blanco (since 7 August 2018)

Capital city: Bogota

Population: 48,168,996 (July 2018 est.)

Official Language(s): Spanish

Ethnic Groups: mestizo and white 84.2%, Afro-Colombian (includes mulatto, Raizal, and Palenquero) 10.4%, Amerindian 3.4%, Romani (2005 est.)

Currency: Colombian peso

Gross domestic product (PPP): 309.2 billion USD (2017)

Internet penetration: 63.2 %

Most trusted medium of information: N/A

Legal System: civil law system influenced by the Spanish and French civil codes

Political system: presidential republic

Media Environment: There is a combination of state-owned and privately-owned broadcast media provider services; there are more than 500 radio stations and many national, regional, and local TV stations as of 2019. Media plays a fundamental role in the daily life of the average citizen of Colombia. At the beginning of the last century the typical consumption was of national and regional traditional printed newspapers; as of today, the consumption of electronic media (television and radio) in digital form either from mobile phones, computers or tablets has become the norm. Currently, television is the most consumed media with a saturation rate of 91 percent, used by 85 percent of all Colombian citizens.

Nevertheless, radio continues being important with a 79 percent consumption level, followed by the press. Third comes the Internet, which has been gaining ground and thanks to the convergence of other media, it is common to observe today that the main newspapers, television and radio are consumed online.

Media Issues: The signing of historic peace accords between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in September 2016 dispelled a great deal of tension. The end of the conflict with these Marxist rebels was repeatedly the source of censorship and violence against the media. Colombia continues to be one of the Western Hemisphere's most dangerous countries for journalists, who are still the frequent targets of death threats, attacks and murder. Coverage of such subjects as the environment, public order, armed conflicts, corruption or collusion between politicians and illegal armed groups systematically elicits harassment, intimidation and violence. Journalists also continue to be permanently threatened by "bacrim," gangs of former rebels now involved in drug trafficking. Death threats, physical attacks and abduction are common, and rebel armed groups such as the ELN react violently to attempts by alternative or community media to cover their activities, leading to the creation of information "black holes" in rural areas. The media's close links to Colombia's business empires and political class undermines their editorial independence and reinforces self-censorship. The new conservative president, Ivan Duque, who was elected in August 2018, has not given any signs that promise well for an improvement in press freedom. In a recent national survey with active journalists carried out by the Antonio Nariño project, 62 percent said they knew journalists who changed their journalistic position in exchange for publicity or political favors. In addition, 40 percent of national journalists said that there has been an improper governmental journalistic control in the public media at local level, and 38 percent at national media level during 2017.

Popular Forms of Media Consumption

Print: Nowadays, many of the print media belong to large economic companies, which are also owners of well-known national corporations. According to the Cultural Consumption Survey lead biannually by the National Department of Statistics (DANE in Spanish), the population group that mostly reads newspapers is that of people between 26 and 40 years of age at 61.3 percent. Regarding the frequency of reading newspapers, 27.4 percent did it once a week, 37.7 percent did it several times a week and 21.5 percent did it daily. Around 17.7 percent said to read the newspaper in digital format.

Radio: Radio has been one of the most popular media in Colombia. According to the Ministry of Technology of Information and Communication, radio is the media with the highest reach, with 48.3 million of Colombians or 79.94 percent of the national population that use it, the second most consumed media after television. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), 76.94 percent of people over 12 years old listen to radio, and in terms of audience by sex, the data shows a slightly higher participation of women compared to men in its respective share. In addition, 62.29 percent of the same sample has always listened to radio, 17.90 percent did it almost every day of the week and 14.84 percent several times a week. However, the highest percentage of daily listening is for the age group between 41 and 64 years old with 24.56 percent. Regionally, radio ranks second in all consumer trends after television. This entity also found that 69.9 percent of Colombians listen to digital radio.

Television: With an average consumption of 240 minutes per day, television is the favorite media channel for Colombians. In terms of diffusion, 91 percent of families have at least one TV and the public signal reaches 92 percent of the Colombian territory.

Digital Media: Internet participation is growing steadily. The study on cultural consumption made by DANE in 2017 reveals that Internet users have grown from 52.5 percent of Colombians in 2012 to 60.6 percent in 2014 and then to 62.3 percent in 2017. In the same year, 81.5 percent of the population that was 5 years old or older used the Internet to: Read messages and chat (67.7 percent), search information (63.2 percent), read, watch or listen to media (23.8 percent). Up to 69.4 percent of the people who used the Internet in Colombia did it every day of the week. According to the General Media Study in Colombia, besides Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, Colombians most used digital services are Google, YouTube, Gmail, Outlook, Wikipedia, Yahoo and Skype. This is consistent with the idea that the Internet is used mainly to search for information.

Social Networks: As well as offering entertainment, in Colombia social networks are recently being used by political activists to reach as many people as possible. In this way, Twitter has quickly become a permanent source of political information. Leaders of different political parties and tendencies use Twitter to list topics of national interest, frequently affecting the thematic news agenda. Armed groups are also increasingly using social media.