



Colombia

Country Fact Sheet 2023

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For further information on voluntary return and reintegration, please visit the information portal www.ReturningfromGermany.de, or contact your local return and reintegration office.

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1 Health Care

General information on health care

The Colombian health system is made up of two types of insurance schemes: contributory and subsidised, which can be accessed according to a person's payment capacity and employment status. There are also private insurances outside the social security system. Under the contributory scheme, all nationals or foreigners resident in Colombia who have a formal employment contract, public officials, and retirees or self-employed workers whose salary or income is equal to or higher than the current legal minimum wage must be affiliated as contributors. Persons affiliated under this regime must make the mandatory monthly contributions to the system and bear the cost of sliding scale fees and co-payments (these are payments made for the provision of health services and the cost corresponds to ranges established in accordance with the salary earned by the contributor). Once the payment has been made, the person has the right to be treated at hospitals, clinics, and health services (the latter are known as Health Service Providers -IPS-) and receive all the services of the Health Benefits Plan, which include health promotion, disease prevention and health recovery, access to medication and highly complex treatments. They can affiliate as beneficiaries the basic family group (affiliate's spouse or permanent partner, whether they are a same-sex couple, sons, or daughters under 25 years old provided they economically depend on the affiliate), as well as the affiliate's parents, provided they are not retirees and economically depend on the contributor, with an additional payment. Contributors can also obtain financial benefits due to

sick leave due to an illness or accident not related to their work and maternity and/or paternity leave. The subsidised regime seeks to cover the access to health care for people who do not have the economic capacity to pay for private health insurance or who do not earn a minimum wage and are poor or vulnerable, included in these groups:

1. People classified as SISBEN A1 to C18.
2. Displaced persons.
3. Boys, girls, and adolescents under the protection of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF).
4. Boys, girls, and adolescents demobilized from the armed conflict.
5. Indigenous communities.
6. Foreign population with regular migration status without payment capacity.

Under the subsidised regime, the cost of monthly contributions, as well as the sliding scale fees, are borne by the State provided the services are included in the Health Benefits Plan. Only those who are in the Sisbén Level II category and under certain exceptions bear the cost of the co-payments (economic contributions made by the contributor when second and third level surgical procedures, consultations for non-medical and non-dentistry specialties, diagnostic imaging and second and third level clinical tests, second and third level hospitalisation and rehabilitation are required). Those who are affiliated through this scheme are entitled to receive the same health services as those affiliated to the contributory scheme, including emergency care, general and specialised medical

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consultations, dental consultations, the medication provision, and hospitalisation, among others. If the person does not have sufficient income to be insured under the contributory scheme and does not meet the targeting requirements to be affiliated to the subsidised scheme, the Territorial Entity is responsible for ensuring access to care through the public resources provided for in the General System of Contributions, which are earmarked for service subsidies. The ordinary affiliation procedures are carried out through the Health Promotion Entity (EPS) that operates as an administrative intermediary. Find the list of EPSs at the following link <https://www.minsalud.gov.co/sites/rid/1/ADMINISTRADORAS%20DE%20SALUD.pdf>

For more information on the affiliation schemes, please visit the following link: <https://www.minsalud.gov.co/proteccion-social/Regimensubsubsidado/Paginas/aseguramiento-al-sistema-general-salud.aspx>

Availability of medical facilities and doctors

Health Service Providers (IPS) including hospitals, clinics, and medical centres can be found in all major and intermediate cities. These are equipped to offer emergency services, routine visits, clinical and more complex tests, transplant procedures, and other treatments. They are also staffed with health professionals



Photo: ICM/ 2019

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trained in different medical specialties. There are public hospitals in rural areas; although, in certain regions there still are significant gaps in access and supply of medical services, especially in dispersed rural areas. The method of contact depends on the Health Promotion Entity (EPS) to which an individual is affiliated. The first contact may be the health secretariat of the municipality in which the individual is located. For more information: <https://www.datos.gov.co/Salud-y-Proteccion-Social/Listado-de-Instituciones-de-Salud/fgk8-hnys>

Admission to medical facilities

Contacting and obtaining information from the EPS to which the person is affiliated is recommended to learn about the network of services and the medical institutions or IPS to which an individual has access and from which they can choose, so that the contributor and their family can request medical consultations and other needed procedures. In the case of emergency care, no administrative authorisation is required between the IPS and EPS, and all health institutions (public or private) are bound to provide initial emergency care to any person who requires it, regardless of their socio-economic capacity.

Availability and costs of medication

Essential medications are included in the Health Benefits Plan to which people affiliated and beneficiaries of the health system have access regardless of the type of scheme to which they belong. This plan ensures free access to antiretroviral

treatment and comprehensive care for people living with HIV. However, the costs of the medication are different for each type of scheme; people in the subsidised scheme have access to medications free of charge, while for people in the contributory scheme the cost depends on the value assigned to their sliding scale fees according to their income. In the case of medications that are not included in the Health Benefits Plan and are required by medical staff to treat their patients, the request is submitted to the EPS's scientific committee. However, an electronic system has recently been implemented whereby the doctor prescribes directly through the MIPRE platform, thus avoiding administrative procedures.

Access for returnees

Eligibility and requirements: All persons who are nationals or have a valid residence permit are eligible. In the case of Colombian returnees, or those who have voluntarily returned to the country, or who have been deported or removed from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and their family nucleus qualify to be affiliated to the subsidised scheme (under Decree 2228/2017). Under different circumstances and as previously mentioned, affiliation to each type of scheme depends on economic capacity or vulnerability. The contributor's family nucleus can be a beneficiary. In addition, if the family nucleus has not yet completed the SISBEN survey, the Health Service Provider (IPS) can carry out the affiliation registration in the Transactional Affiliation System provided the family nucleus is registered to receive the survey.

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Registration procedure: To join the system, the person must identify the affiliation scheme (contributory or subsidised), choose the health promotion entities (EPS) they want to affiliate to and that is present in their city of residence. Fill in the affiliation document and attach the supporting documentation depending on each scheme. Once affiliated, the health promotion entity will notify the individual the list of offices and services that the individual has access to. Initial or primary access to health services is through a general medical or dental consultation once an appointment has been made with the Health Service Provider (IPS). In the case of medical emergencies, the individual can go to any hospital, clinic, or health centre in the country that has said service.

Required documents: Colombian ID card (cédula de ciudadanía) is required. In the case of affiliation through the subsidised scheme, certificates will also be requested to verify their vulnerability status for each case (for example, certificate from the National Planning Department (DNP) of the SISBEN level, or SISBEN certificate issued by the mayor's office or certificate of special population in cases where applicable, or documents proving their residence in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the case of Colombian returnees, repatriated, removed or deported from that country).

2 Labour Market

General information on the labour market

Recently, DANE presented its report on the Colombian labour market for October 2023. It reported that the unemployment rate in the country was 9.2% . A percentage that decreased compared to what was registered in 2022. In Latin America, Colombia is set to be one of the fastest growing economies in the region in 2023 . The country's economy grew by 7.5% in 2022, according to World Bank estimates, which was adjusted downward against a previous forecast of 8% for last year. However, the multilateral organization downgraded the forecast for 2023 to 1.5% from 1.7% and expects the Colombian economy to grow 1.3% in 2023.

The Colombian labour market per gender, in October 2023 had a 46.8% employed women rate and 70.4% employed men rate. According to age range, the largest increases in the national total were recorded for women aged 25 to 54 (282 thousand) and for men in the same age range (219 thousand). From the perspective of the branches of economic activity, in the national total, accommodation and food services had the largest increase in the number of employed persons in October 2023 (+268 thousand) with respect to October 2023, thus contributing 7.7% to the national growth rate. In contrast, in the trade sector, the number of employed persons decreased by 135 thousand, thus contributing -0.6% to the national growth rate.

The data presented by DANE showed that the proportion of workers earning less than the minimum wage is about

2.24 million of workers, equivalent to 9.8% of workers,. The minimum wage in Colombia for 2023 is 1,160.000 pesos.

Finding employment

The Public Employment Service Unit is an entity attached to the Ministry of Labour responsible for bringing Colombians closer to formal job opportunities in a democratic, equitable, and transparent manner, and providing employers with suitable personnel for their organisations. SENA offers free training to millions of Colombians who benefit from technical, technological, and complementary programmes that, focused on the economic, scientific, and social development of the country, strengthen the productive activities of companies and industry, to achieve more competitiveness and greater results in different markets. SENA has the following portal through which job offers can be identified nationwide: <https://www.sena.edu.co/es-co/trabajo/Paginas/busqueEmpleo.aspx> The Public Employment Service Unit has the following portals to identify job offers and opportunities: <https://www.serviciodeempleo.gov.co/busca-empleo> <https://www.serviciodeempleo.gov.co/empleador-y-gremios/prestadores-publicos>

Other well-known job boards are:

<https://www.elempelo.com/co/ofertas-empleo/trabajo-empresas-privadas>

- <https://www.computrabajo.com.co/>

There are private recruiters like:

- <https://www.hays.com.co/>

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- <https://www.experis.co/wps/portal/experis/co/inicio>

Unemployment assistance

Unemployment benefits (cesantías) are a social benefit that Colombian employers must pay to their workers in addition to their regular salary. The amount of this benefit is equivalent to one month's salary for each year worked by the employee. Cesantías in Colombia become a financial aid in case the employee becomes unemployed or to facilitate payments for housing or education. Organisations that manage cesantías in Colombia are:

1. Protección - <https://www.proteccion.com/wps/portal/proteccion/web/cesantias/personas>
2. Porvenir - <https://www.porvenir.com.co/web/personas/inicio>
3. Skandia – Old Mutual - <https://www.skandia.com.co/quienes-somos/skandia-en-colombia/skandia-pensiones-y-cesantias-sa/fondo-de-cesantias/Paginas/Cesantias.aspx>
4. Colfondos - <https://www.colfondos.com.co/dxp/web/guest>

On the other hand, employees or self-employed workers who are unemployed and

while affiliated to the Family Compensation Funds and classified under category A and B, may apply for the subsidy of the Unemployment Protection Mechanism established by the National Government. It also covers those persons who do not receive an old-age, disability, or survivors' pension and who made contributions to a Family Compensation Fund for one continuous or discontinuous year during the last three years, as stipulated in Law 1636 of 2023 issued by the Ministry of Labour. It is important to note that unemployed persons who apply to receive the aforementioned benefit will have access to contributions to the General System of Social Security in Health and Pensions, calculated based on 1 legal monthly minimum wage in force. In addition, they will receive the cash transfer of the family subsidy for children, siblings who are disabled, or dependent parents, under the same terms and values with which they have been distributed and under the conditions established in the law in force applicable to the Family Subsidy System.

A cash transfer for expenses will also be covered, in accordance with the needs and consumption priorities of each beneficiary, for a value of two 2 legal monthly

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minimum wages in force, which will be divided into 3 equal monthly instalments.

Further education and training

SENA (National Training Service) offers the best technical and technological training in Colombia. Through different careers and complementary courses, people interested in these courses will be able to perform trades and jobs required by Colombia's productive sectors. SENA also has a virtual platform called SOFIAPlus, which allows anyone to access a complementary training programme. In this portal people can find a virtual search tool, with which they can visualise the available courses offered in different fields. <http://oferta.senasofiaplus.edu.co/sofia-oferta/> All training processes offered by SENA are free of charge and ensure the appropriate tools for people to enter the labour market.

Access for returnees

Eligibility and requirements: All Colombians without restriction have the possibility to access SENA services free of charge. Those who are interested in these services must register through the SOFIAPlus portal.

Registration procedure: Each programme establishes the minimum requirements that applicants must meet to be eligible, which can be viewed by clicking on each programme offered.

There it is possible to see the academic requirements, day or night shift, length, schedule, modality, place of training, the schedule of the admission process, the degree that will be awarded on completion, and the modules that comprise them. The applicant must ensure that their contact details, such as type, ID number, and email are correct, as this is how SENA will inform them of the progress of the admission process. If the applicant aspires to a technician level, without exception, they must already have the SNP ICFES registration. If the person does not have the summons slip, they can search their SNP code on the web page www.icfes.gov.co. Those interested in these services can obtain detailed information on the courses, schedules, and technical areas available through the following link: Preguntas Frecuentes - Portal SOFIA Plus - SENA (senasofiaplus.edu.co)

Required documents: Aimed at natural persons of Colombian origin and foreigners legally residing in Colombia (duly legalized with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose term is greater than the length of the program. Temporary foreigner's or student ID cards are not allowed).

Valid ID documents for enrolment in degree programmes are: Identity Card, Colombian ID Card, Foreign ID Card.

Verify the admission requirements of the training programme: Verify academic status and must have passed the last year of schooling. Must have a personal email address.

3 Housing

General information on housing

The evolution of rental prices in the pre-, during, and post-pandemic sector has not been as wide as one might think, due to the increase in demand. According to a report by a renowned real estate company in Colombia, the average cost of monthly rent between 2022 and 2023 was increased by 13.12%. Forecasts for the new housing market show that the purchase and sale in 2023 will decrease to 183,000 units, with local authority housing contributing 70%. To provide context, during the last 70 years, the country's population has grown significantly from 11.3 million in 1950 to 50.2 million inhabitants in 2020, with 12 million, approximately a quarter of these inhabitants are rural population (DANE, 2020). This is also associated with the transition of the population from rural to urban areas; although, the average annual growth of the rural population was 1.1% between 2005 and 2018, rural areas went from 61% to 24% of the population in the same period (DANE, 2020).

Finding accommodation

In general, Colombian returnees return to their communities of origin, so housing options are most easily identified through their family and friends networks.

These are the main portals to find housing in Colombia:
<https://www.ciencuadras.com>
<https://www.metrocuadrado.com/>
<https://fincaraiz.com.co/>
<https://www.mercadolibre.com.co/c/inmuebles>

Social grants for housing

Mi Casa Ya is a National Government programme that facilitates the purchase of a new home in an urban area of any municipality in the country through a family housing subsidy and/or interest rate coverage. It is aimed at households with a total income of less than \$4,000,000 (4 SMMLV). The programme is demand-driven, until the available spots are filled, by means of a loan that the person who is interested in this programme acquires through different lending institutions in the country. Colombian households wishing to purchase a new urban home with Mi Casa Ya must meet the following conditions:

Households with incomes of 0 to 4 SMMLV (0 - \$4,000,000):

- Are not homeowners in the national territory.
- Are not beneficiaries of interest rate coverage for any reason whatsoever.
- Are not beneficiaries of a family housing subsidy granted by a Family Compensation Fund.
- Are not beneficiaries of a subsidy granted by the National Government that has been effectively applied.

** Have an approved credit for the purchase of a housing solution.

** Or have a letter of approval of a housing leasing issued by a credit institution or the National Savings Fund.

3 Housing



Photo: Unsplash/ Kobay Mende 2019

3 Housing

Access for returnees

Eligibility and requirements: In general, Colombian returnees return to their communities of origin, so housing options are most easily identified through their family and friends. networks Although there are no shelters strictly assigned for returnees, the Mayor's Office of Bogotá has different customer service channels to protect women who have been victims of violence. One of the most effective alternatives are the Shelter Houses which, since 2016 to date, have assisted 2,800 people who resort to them seeking help to get out of a situation of violence in their homes.

The district currently has four houses for women victims of violence within the family and one for women victims of violence in the context of the armed conflict. These protection sites also receive their families, hosting them for up to four months.

Registration procedure: Currently, there are no arrival centres or shelters exclusively for Colombian returnees.

Required documents: Currently, there are no arrival centres or shelters exclusively for Colombian returnees.

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General information on housing

The Comprehensive Social Security System in force in Colombia was established by Law 100/1993 and brings together in a coordinated manner a set of entities, rules, and procedures to which individuals and the community may access with the main purpose of ensuring a quality of life that is in accordance with human dignity, which is part of the Social Protection System together with policies, rules, and procedures for labour protection and social assistance.

Social security is a set of measures that society provides to its members with the purpose of avoiding economic and social imbalances that, if not resolved, would mean the reduction or loss of income due to contingencies such as illness, accidents, maternity, or unemployment, among others. Under Law 100/1993, the Social Security System in Colombia is divided into four components:

- General Pension System.
- General System of Social Security in Health
- General System of Occupational Risks.
- Complementary Social Services (Colombia mayor).

In general, the person must make 4% contributions for health and pension, respectively, which are deducted monthly from the salary earned.

Access for returnees

Eligibility and requirements: SISBEN is the channel through which the State can ascertain the needs and capacities of households, and based on it, the social programmes determine whether a person is eligible for a given benefit. Those who determine the conditions of eligibility, permanence, or exit from a social programme are the entities that manage the programmes and not SISBEN.

The requirements to join Sisbén are:

- Be over 18 years of age.
- Be a resident of the family that will request the survey.
- Have a valid ID document.

Registration procedure:

The person must register through the following page: <https://sisbengov.com/afiliarse-al-sisben/>

Required documents: Only a valid ID document is required.

Pension system

The purpose of the General Pension System is to ensure the population is safeguarded against the contingencies arising from old-age, disability, and death, by acknowledging pensions and benefits determined by the law in force, as well as to promote the progressive extension of coverage to the population segments not covered by a pension system.

There are currently two pension systems:

a) Average Premium Solidarity Scheme

4 Social Welfare

with Defined Benefit managed by COLPENSIONES, through which affiliates or their beneficiaries obtain an old-age, disability, or survivors' pension, or an indemnity, previously defined, in accordance with the provisions of the Law.

b) Individual Savings with Solidarity Scheme (RAIS) is managed by the Pension Fund Management Companies (AFP), which is based on savings from contributions and their respective financial returns, solidarity through minimum pension guarantees and contributions to the solidarity fund.

Conditions for retirement are:

1. Meet the age of retirement: Men: have reached 62 years of age, Women: have reached 57 years of age.
2. Fulfil a number of weeks of contributions to the pension system chosen by the person (1300 – Colpensiones, 1100 – Individual Savings with Solidarity Scheme - AFP)

Access for returnees

Eligibility and requirements: By freely and voluntarily choosing a pension manager and filling in the form for joining or updating the General Pension System. If you are an employee, said form must also be signed by your employer.

Registration procedure:

COLPENSIONES - access through the following link: <https://www.colpensiones.gov.co/educacion/publicaciones/3535/afiliacion-electronica/>

AFP de Colombia – Individual Savings Through the following link: <https://www.rankia.co/blog/pensiones-iss-cesantias/4097486-cuales-son-afp-colombia#:~:text=En%20Colombia%2C%20existen%204%20AFP,Colfondos%20Pensiones%20y%20Cesant%C3%ADas>

Required documents: Affiliation documents can be viewed through the portals indicated in the previous point.



Photo: Unsplash 2021/ Fernando Trivino

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Vulnerable Groups

According to the Ministry of Health, the Ten-Year Public Health Plan addresses populations acknowledging their socio-cultural, economic differences, where they are at in their life journey and specific conditions or situations so that policies, programmes, and projects related to their health consider said differences in the search for equity in health. This includes addressing the population grouped thus:

- Based on life journey: boys, girls, adolescents, youth, adults, and older persons.
- Populations in specific conditions or situations: Ethnic groups, populations with disabilities, and victims of the armed conflict.

From the point of view of inclusion and job opportunities, SENA informs that vulnerable populations are subjects of special protection by the State and are comprised of those persons who, due to their physical, psychological, social, cultural, political, or economic condition, deserve a positive State action to achieve real and effective equality.

Vulnerable populations characterised in SENA's institutional applications include Victims of Violence (Includes those Displaced by Violence), Persons with Disabilities, Indigenous People, Vulnerable Youth, Adolescent in conflict with Criminal Law, Women Head of Household, Blacks, Afro-Colombians, Raizales, Palenqueros, Persons undergoing the Reincorporation and Reintegration process, Adolescents demobilized from Organised armed illegal groups, Older Persons, Adolescent

workers, Rrom People. On the other hand, the National Planning Department, through its Vulnerability Assessment, presents this topic from two perspectives:

1. Vulnerable populations due to special conditions of "defencelessness."
2. The proposal of models for estimating vulnerability associated with risk in three dimensions: health, education, and livelihoods. The purpose is to be able to establish the population that should be subject to public policy and the possible indicators to be used.

La Office of the Presidential Advisor on Equity for Women, refers in its website to the following institutions and organizations that provide support to women:

Ruta Pacífica 2229145 / 2229146
coornacional@rutapacific.org.co
rutapacific@rutapacific.org.co
Cra. 35 No. 53a-86 Bogotá

Sisma Mujer 2859319 direccion@
sismamujer.org
Cra. 13 No. 33 - 74, Oficina 304
Bogotá

Corporación Casa de la Mujer
2218785 / 2229176 coordinacion@
casmujer.com
Cra. 35 No. 53a - 86 Nicolás de
Federmán Bogotá

Red Nacional de Mujeres / CIASE 8 05
12 46 presideejecutiva@ciase.org
comunicaciones@ciase.org
Dg. 40A No. 14-75 Bogotá

Corporación Humanas / Centro Regional
de DDHH y Justicia de Género

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2880364 adrianabenjumea@
yahoo.com abenjumea@humanas.org.
co Cra 7 No. 33 - 49 Oficina 201
Bogotá

Iniciativa Mujeres Colombianas por la
Paz - IMP 2485453 - 2485608
logistica@mujeresporlapaz.org
Cra 20A No. 72 - 09 Piso 3 Bogotá

Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres
de Latinoamérica y el Caribe REPEM LAC
2874720 repem@repem.org
Dg. 43 Bis No. 15 - 71 Piso 3
Bogotá
Casa de la Mujer Trabajadora
7513994 casa.mujer.trabajadora@gmail.
com
Cll. 41 No. 20-09 Bogotá

Católicas por el derecho a decidir
3272465 eliana.rvivas@gmail.com
Dg. 43bis No. 15-71 p 3 Bogotá
Corporación Centro de Apoyo Popular -
CENTRAP 2455437 centrap47@
gmail.com
Cll. 47 No 6-11 Of 201 Bogotá

Red Nacional de Mujeres 4 6 5 1 2 1 2
beatrizquintero@cable.net.co beat-
rizquinterog@etb.net.co
Cll. 54 No. 10-81 Piso 5 Bogotá

ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL
HEROÍNAS DE LA FUERZA PÚBLICA -
HEROÍNAS 3505954966 2692964
national.miners@gmail.com
Cra. 47 No. 94 - 44 Bogotá

UN WOMEN also promotes gender
equality and women's empowerment. As
a global champion for women and girls,

UN Women was established to accelerate progress towards improving the lives of women and to respond to the needs they face around the world, it supports UN Member States in setting international standards to achieve gender equality and works with governments and civil society to create laws, policies, programmes, and services needed to ensure that standards are implemented effectively and inure to the benefit of women and girls around the world. It also works globally to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and promotes women's equal participation in all spheres of life and it coordinates and promotes the work of the UN system for gender equality and in all discussions and agreements related to the 2030 Agenda.

Regarding ethnic minorities, the National Business Association of Colombia (ANDI) in its document THE INCLUSION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES: A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR COMPANIES IN COLOMBIA, presents a very interesting analysis on the advantages of the inclusion of these populations in different companies in the country and the benefits of working with ethnic communities, encouraging to incorporate shared value in their business strategies.

Access for returnees

Eligibility and requirements: This information can be viewed at the links of the institutions referred to in the previous point.

5 Education

General information on education

The Colombian education system is comprised of: early education, preschool education, basic education (five grades of primary and four grades of secondary), secondary education (two grades, culminating in a high school diploma), and higher education. In Colombia, education is defined as a process of lifelong, personal, cultural, and social training based on a comprehensive conception of a human being, their dignity, rights, and duties. Article 67 of the 1991 Constitution, stipulates that “education shall be mandatory between the ages of five and fifteen and shall include at least one year of preschool. In 2022, total enrolment in the formal sector was 7,874,927 and in the non-formal sector 1,855,041, with a share of 80.9% and 19.1%, respectively. Of the total number of students enrolled in the formal sector, 96.8% attended public schools and 3.2% attended private schools. It is important to mention that, of the total enrolment in 2022, 7,382,035 (75.9%) were attended in educational institutions located in urban areas and 2,347,933 (24.1%) in educational institutions in rural areas.

In 2022, 53,185 schools were surveyed, of which 82.3% (43,754) were in the formal sector and 17.7% (9,431) in the non-formal sector. In terms of location, 32.4% (17,241) of the total number of schools surveyed were in urban areas and 67.6% (35,944) were in rural areas.

The Government of Colombia, through ICBF (Colombian Family Welfare Institute) offers an institutional care service that seeks to ensure the initial education, care, and nutrition of boys and girls under five years of age, which is developed with

pedagogical, qualified care, and nutrition actions, as well as steps to promote the rights of health, protection, and participation that allow the comprehensive development of beneficiary boys and girls. Care is provided five (5) days a week for eight (8) hours a day.

Cost, loans, and stipends

Public education in Colombia is free, covering preschool, primary, and secondary education up to the age of 18, as well as 11th grade. It refers to a right of an individual, a public service that has a social function and it is the responsibility of the State to regulate it, as well as to exercise supreme oversight and supervision of the educational service to ensure its quality, the fulfilment of its objectives, and the best possible moral, intellectual, and physical education of students. It is also stipulated that adequate coverage of the service must be ensured and ensure for minors the necessary conditions for their access to and permanence in the education system. Regarding loans and scholarships for studies, ICETEX is the state entity that promotes Higher Education by granting student loans and their collection, with its own resources or those of third parties, to the population with lower economic possibilities and good academic performance. It also facilitates access to educational opportunities offered by the international community to improve the quality of life of Colombians and thus contribute to the economic and social development of the country.

The general requirements to be a beneficiary of ICETEX programme is to be Colombian and have been admitted to

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a professional technical, technological, or university programme duly registered with the Ministry of National Education in an institution that has a cooperation agreement with ICETEX.

Approval and verification of foreign diplomas:

For diplomas and certificates obtained abroad, in Colombia there is a process of validation of degrees. This is the recognition process that the Ministry of National Education carries out on a higher education degree awarded by a legally authorised institution in the country of origin. This recognition allows acquiring the same academic and legal effects in Colombia as the degrees awarded by Colombian higher education institutions. The validation of undergraduate degrees awarded abroad takes six months. This time may vary depending on the characteristics of the academic programme to be validated and the validation criteria applied. More information can be obtained through the following links: <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Preescolar-Basica-y-Media/356933:Convalidaciones-de-Educacion-Preescolar-basica-y-media>

Access for returnees

Registration procedure: ICETEX is the state entity that promotes higher education through the granting of student loans and their collection, with its own resources or those of third parties, to the population with lower economic possibilities and good academic performance. It also facilitates access to educational opportunities offered by the international community to improve the quality of life of Colombians and thus contribute to the economic and social development of the country.

The requirements can be found on the following website: <https://web.icetex.gov.co/pregrado.html> There are other institutions such as COLFUTURO and FULBRIGHT COLOMBIA, which offer scholarships for Colombians in different fields. More information can be accessed through the following links: <https://www.colfuturo.org/> <https://fulbright.edu.co/>

6 children

General information on children and infants

According to UNICEF, Colombia has made significant progress in improving the opportunities and quality of life of its citizens. Since 1990, the Human Development Index has grown by 20 percent and the country's economy is widely recognized as stable upper middle-income, with an advanced legal and policy framework that supports a growing supply of basic social and security services. UNICEF explains that Colombia is on track to meet many of its Millennium Development Goals; however, national averages hide persistent inequities within and between regions. For example, the under-one mortality rate is more than double the national average (17.47) in Pacific departments (Chocó, 41.92) and the Amazon region (38.44). In the Department of La Guajira, this indicator reaches a critical value of 31.61. According to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (2012), the highest maternal mortality rates occurred in three of the five regions with the highest rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendant populations: The Caribbean, the Pacific and Orinoco. In Chocó, the maternal mortality rate is 224 per 100,000 live births, more than three times the national average (65.89). UNICEF adds that the country's poorest regions, where most rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities live, also face an increased presence of non-state armed groups and illegal economic activities. Consequently, violence further impedes the full guarantee of children's rights. Official figures reflect both the high impact of the internal armed conflict on boys and girls, as well as the cross-cutting effects of other forms of violence. Children are

particularly affected by anti-personnel mines (APL), unexploded ordnance (UXO), and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), recruitment and use by armed groups, conflict-related sexual violence, internal displacement, and lockdown/lack of humanitarian assistance. Although it is impossible to know with certainty how many boys, girls, and adolescents are currently associated with armed groups, between 1999 and 2013 the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) assisted 5,417 boys, girls, and adolescents demobilized from illegal armed groups, (28 percent girls and 72 percent boys).

Gender-based violence, especially sexual violence against boys and girls, continues to constitute a critical threat, even though its incidence is underreported. Such violence persists both in the context of armed conflict and in society at large. Official information comes from forensic examinations associated with the reporting of sexual crimes. In 2013, 86 percent of these forensic medical procedures were performed on boys, girls, and adolescents, of whom 84 percent were girls and 16 percent were boys.

Inequity, protection, and peacebuilding are key factors defining children's rights and their well-being, specifically considering the historic moment Colombia is experiencing. As peace negotiations progress, there is an urgent need to ensure that children's rights are at the top of the agenda, avoiding losing ground on hard-won victories for children. Quality education remains an aspect that contributes more than any other to equity, peacebuilding, and reconciliation.

6 children

The country's education system is still working to provide quality education for the inclusion and retention of boys, girls, and adolescents in schools, especially for indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Of 100 students enrolled in school in urban areas, 82 percent complete their education, while in rural areas, only 48 percent do so. While the national illiteracy rate is 7.4 percent, among Afro-descendants and indigenous people it is 11.2 percent and 28.6 percent, respectively.

UNICEF carries out activities in several municipalities in the country and provides the possibility of answering questions and enquiries through the following contact channels:

For general enquiries:

Offices: (+57) (601) 312 0090 In Bogotá
Address: Calle 72 #10-71 Piso 11. Bogotá D.C., Colombia, col-consultas@unicef.org

Access for returnees

Registration procedure: Most of the processes only require the direct intervention of the parents, or of the persons who have parental authority over the minor. In specific situations, involving the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) is suggested to receive precise information on the steps to be taken with the different State institutions and to ensure the protection of the minor.

Registration procedure: The Ministry of National Education and to ensure that students reach the expected basic standards, defined in Colombia a minimum number of working hours per year with students of 800 hours per year in pre-school, 1,000 in primary, and 1,200 in basic secondary and middle school, a provision contained for private schools in Resolution 1730/2004. According to the distribution of these hours, two types of school calendars are defined in the country: calendar "A", which starts in February and ends in November, and calendar "B", which starts in September and ends in June. Currently, all formal establishments carry out their activities under calendar "A." Previously, the departments of Valle del Cauca, Nariño, and Cauca used calendar "B", but have now moved to calendar "A." The calendar includes a break during the first half of the year, which corresponds to Easter, and a five-day break in the week preceding the public holiday of the Commemoration of the Discovery of America, as stipulated in Decree 1373/2007. Click here <https://www.min-educacion.gov.co/1621/article-125008.html> for frequently asked questions on the topic.

Private schools have autonomy over the school calendar, provided they comply with the annual hourly course load stipulated in Resolution 1730/2004. This calendar must be defined by the principal at the beginning of the school year and must run for 40 weeks. If more than 30 effective hours per week are organised, each additional 30 cumulative hours will be counted as one additional teaching week according to Ministerial Directive No. 15/2009

7 Contacts

Migración Colombia

Autoridad migratoria de Colombia
Calle 26 # 59-51 Edificio Argos, Bogotá
(57) 1 6055454
<https://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/>

ACNUR

Agencia de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados
Calle 71 # 12-25, Bogotá (57) 1 5463666
<https://www.acnur.org/>

Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja

Asistencia humanitaria
Calle 96 # 11B-37, Bogotá (57) 1 3138630
<https://www.icrc.org/es/where-we-work/americas/colombia>

Grupo Mundial sobre Migración ACNUDH

Departamento de las Américas
Calle 113 # 7-45, Torre B, Oficina 1101, Edificio Teleport Business Park, Bogotá
(57) 1 6583300 <https://www.ohchr.org/es/countries/>

Plataforma de Coordinación

Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela
<https://www.r4v.info/es/colombia>

Defensoría del Pueblo

Promoción, ejercicio y difusión de los derechos humanos
Carrera 9 # 16-21, Bogotá
01-8000-914-814
(57) 1 3144000
www.defensoria.gov.co

La Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil

Avenida Calle 26 51-50 - CAN, Bogotá 01-8000-910-112 01-8000-910-600
(57) 1 5159111
<https://www.registraduria.gov.co/>

Policía Nacional de Colombia

Seguridad nacional
Carrera 59 # 26-21, Bogotá 123 <https://www.policia.gov.co/>

ICBF

Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar
Carrera 50 # 26-51 Barrio La Esmeralda, Bogotá
(57) 1 4377630
<https://www.icbf.gov.co/>

SENA

Servicio de Formación Nacional
Calle 57 # 8-69 Bogotá
(57) 1 3430111
01-8000-910-270
<https://www.sena.edu.co/es-co/Paginas/default.aspx>

DIAN

Dirección Nacional de Impuestos y Aduanas
Carrera 8 # 6C-38 Edificio San Agustín, Bogotá
(57) 1 3078064
(57) 1 3078065
<https://www.dian.gov.co/>

Guía y línea de atención para el Coronavirus

Apoyo a la prevención y el tratamiento de COVID-19
(57) 1 3305041
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<https://coronaviruscolombia.gov.co/Covid19/lineas-de-atencion.html>

Transporte en Bogotá Transporte

Terminal Diagonal 23 # 69-60, Bogotá
(57) 1 4233630
<https://www.terminaldetransporte.gov.co/>

Ambulance Dispatch Centre - Mayor's Office of Bogotá

Servicio de ambulancia
Cra 8 # 10-65, Bogotá 123 <https://bogota.gov.co/mi-ciudad/salud/servicio-de-ambulancias-en-bogota>

Fundación Scalabrin

Organización no gubernamental de apoyo a los inmigrantes
Calle 56bis # 35-47, Bogotá
(57) 1 3157471
<https://scalabrinianoscolombia.org/>

8 At a glance

Measures to be undertaken before return

- **Health:** Bring with you any documents that can verify specific health situations. Be aware that access to health services does not include immediate access to specialists, and this can lead to significant delays for important medical treatments.
- **Education:** It is important to keep in mind that, although basic education in Colombia is free, available school places are granted as people go through the registration process. If you would like your children to have the opportunity to attend classes in a nearby school, consider their school opening calendars and the administrative processes involved for the corresponding enrolment.
- **Documentation:** Many ID documents can be renewed before the National Civil Registry or, as with other documents, through public notaries. It is advisable for people to keep scanned copies of their documents, so that they can be reissued more easily if they are lost or damaged.
- **Access to employment:** It is advisable to seek advice from SENA and the channels made available by the government for job search and possible job placement. The guidance services offered by SENA are free of charge. Avoid companies or job placement companies that ask for money, promising to achieve results that may not be fulfilled.

Measures to be undertaken immediately upon arrival

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia shares through the document NEW PROVISIONS FOR THE ARRIVAL OF TRAVELLERS FROM ABROAD, relevant information for people arriving in Colombia, from the point of view of the pandemic and documentation. Among others, and even though some health measures are constantly under review, and some may eventually be removed, consider the following:
- Check with your airline on the status of your flight.
- Remember to abide by the provisions and protocols implemented by the aviation authorities and the airlines on the ground, during the flight and upon arrival in Colombia. The verbal statements will be stored in Migración Colombia's system.