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Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFAT COUNTRY INFORMATION REPORT COLOMBIA

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ACRONYMS

ACSN	Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra Nevada ('Conquering Self-Defense Forces of the Sierra Nevada')
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia ('United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia')
CNEB	Coordinadora Nacional Ejército Bolivariano ('National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Army')
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional ('National Liberation Army')
EMBF	Estado Mayor de Bloques y Frente ('General Staff of the Blocks and Front')
EMC	Estado Mayor Central ('Central General Staff')
EPS	Entidad Promotora de Salud ('Health Promoting Entity')
ETCR	Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación ('Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces')
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo ('Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army')
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FLIP	Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa ('Foundation for Press Freedom')
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
JEP	Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz ('Special Jurisdiction for Peace')
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and/or Asexual
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NUIP	Número Único de Identificación Personal ('Unique Personal Identification Number')
NUNC	Número Único de Noticia Criminal ('Unique Criminal Notice Number')
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSAC	Overseas Security Advisory Council
PNC	Policía Nacional de Colombia ('National Police of Colombia')
RUV	Registro Único de Víctimas ('Single Registry of Victims')
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNP	Unidad Nacional de Protección ('National Protection Unit')

GLOSSARY

<i>Cédula de Ciudadanía</i>	‘Citizenship Card’. Official identity document for Colombian citizens aged 18+
<i>Cédula de Extranjería</i>	‘Foreigner’s Identity Card’. Official identity document for foreign nationals over the age of seven legally residing in Colombia
Community Action Board	Civic corporation of local residents
<i>Contraseña</i>	Official proof of application for a national identity document; literally, ‘password’
Department	Primary administrative sub-division, equivalent to a state or province; led by a directly elected governor and comprising a directly elected assembly
Femicide	Homicide of a woman for the condition of being a woman
<i>Gota-a-Gota</i>	Loan sharking
<i>Sicario</i>	Hired killer
<i>Tarjeta de Identidad</i>	‘Identity Card’. Official identity document for Colombian citizens aged seven to 18

Terms used in this report

Almost certain	This treatment is expected to occur in nearly all circumstances.
Likely	This treatment is expected to occur in most circumstances.
Possibly	This treatment may occur in some circumstances.
Unlikely	This treatment is not expected to occur in most circumstances.
Rare	This treatment is only expected to occur in exceptional circumstances.

Official discrimination

1. legal or regulatory measures applying to a particular group that impede access to state protection or services that are available to other sections of the population (examples might include but are not limited to difficulties in obtaining personal registrations or identity papers, difficulties in having papers recognised, arbitrary arrest and detention)
2. behaviour by state employees towards a particular group that impedes access to state protection or services otherwise available, including by failure to implement legislative or administrative measures.

Societal discrimination

1. behaviour by members of society (including family members, employers or service providers) that impedes access by a particular group to goods or services normally available to other sections of society (examples could include but are not limited to refusal to let property, refusal to sell goods or services, or employment discrimination)
2. ostracism or exclusion by members of society (including family, acquaintances, employers, colleagues or service providers).

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 This report was prepared for protection status decision makers by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It provides a factual overview distinct from Australian Government policy and does not contain policy guidance for decision makers.

1.2 According to Ministerial Direction 84 of 24 June 2019, issued under the *Migration Act 1958*:

Where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has prepared [a] country information assessment expressly for protection status determination processes, and that assessment is available to the decision maker, the decision maker must take into account that assessment, where relevant, in making their decision. The decision maker is not precluded from considering other relevant information about the country.

1.3 The report was prepared with regard to the current protection visa caseload without reference to individual applications. It provides DFAT's best assessment at the time of writing.

1.4 The report draws on in-country knowledge and discussions. It takes into account reporting from a range of credible sources including: other governments, United Nations agencies, human rights and civil society organisations, local and international media and academia. Source details may be omitted to protect sources.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

2.1 Colombia is an upper-middle income country with highly unequal wealth distribution. Much of Colombia's modern history has involved armed conflict between the state, Marxist-Leninist guerilla groups, right-wing paramilitaries and apolitical drug cartels. The largest guerilla group, the [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army \(Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP\)](#), demobilised following a [2016 peace agreement](#), for which then-president Juan Manuel Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

2.2 Insecurity persists, particularly in rural areas, where non-state armed groups control territory and lucrative criminal economies based on the production and trafficking of cocaine and illegal mining. [FARC dissident groups](#) remain active. The [National Liberation Army \(Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN\)](#) maintains a separate insurgency, launched in 1964. The most prominent right-wing paramilitary, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC), disbanded in 2006 but successor groups emerged. One of these, the [Gulf Clan \(Clan del Golfo\)](#), is the most powerful criminal organisation in Colombia today.

2.3 One in five Colombians are [direct victims of armed conflict](#). A Truth Commission found 450,000 people (80 per cent of them civilians) died and 121,000 were forcibly disappeared between 1985 and 2018. Eight million people were displaced between 1982 and 2020.

2.4 Gustavo Petro was elected President in 2022, the first left-wing president in Colombia's history. A former member of the M-19 (a guerilla movement active in the 1970s and 1980s), Petro committed to end Colombia's conflicts through '[Total Peace](#)' with still-active non-state armed groups. Petro's peace agenda was incomplete at the time of writing, with [security conditions](#) deteriorating during his rule. Petro's term ends in August 2026.

2.5 Colombia is a longstanding democracy, with strong institutions, a diverse political scene and vibrant civil society. Freedom of religion is respected. Colombia has achieved a high degree of gender equality, although [gender-based violence](#) is prevalent. Laws in relation to [LGBTQIA+](#) rights are progressive but implementation is often lacking. Murder rates for LGBTQIA+ people are high.

2.6 State authority does not extend to the entire country, with the most serious human rights abuses occurring in rural areas controlled by non-state armed groups. People who resist the authority of these groups, or are perceived by them as enemies, are commonly targeted. [Indigenous](#) and [Afro-Colombians](#) are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and experience higher levels of poverty. [Child recruitment](#) is on the rise.

DEMOGRAPHY

2.7 Colombia has a population of 53 million. Over 80 per cent live in urban areas. Bogotá, the capital, is Colombia's largest city, with a population of 8 million. Other major cities include Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla and Cartagena. The median age is 32.7 years. Life expectancy is 78 (81 for women, 75 for men).

2.8 Over 80 per cent of the population is Christian, mostly Roman Catholic. Around 15 per cent of Colombians belong to no religion. There are small Muslim, Jewish and Baha'i communities.

2.9 For ethnic demography, see [Race/Nationality](#).

SECURITY SITUATION

2.10 Non-state armed groups operate across Colombia. Some are ideological, with political objectives, others purely criminal, although the distinction is blurred. Non-state armed groups operate mostly in remote rural areas with limited state presence but have [networks](#) in population centres. In-country sources reported a fragmentation of non-state groups since 2020, rendering conflict dynamics more unpredictable. Groups were less vertical, often lacking defined leadership structures. This made negotiating with them difficult and eroded respect for humanitarian principles. Alliances between groups exist but are fluid.

2.11 In-country sources estimated up to 60 per cent of Colombia's territory was outside effective state control, including border regions with Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador. The same sources said Colombia's complex



geography, from the Andes and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains to La Guajira desert and Amazon rainforest, led to governance challenges, giving advantage to malign actors.

2.12 Regardless of motivation, non-state armed groups are deeply involved in criminal activity. They derive most of their income from the trafficking of cocaine (Colombia is the world's top producer) but also engage in illegal mining (particularly of gold), illegal logging, arms trafficking, people smuggling, kidnapping for ransom and extortion. Extortion typically takes the form of protection fees or taxes. According to UNHCR, businessowners, merchants, landowners, farmers, transport workers, physicians, street vendors and sex workers were most likely to be extorted. In addition to paying taxes for operating in areas under their control, in-country sources said trucking companies were expected to assist non-state armed groups transport drugs and other illicit goods.

2016 Peace Agreement

2.13 The FARC, the largest non-state armed group in Colombia at the time, signed a peace agreement with the government in November 2016, ending a 52-year-old conflict in which 260,000 people died. The FARC formally disbanded in June 2017 and entered the political process, with five seats guaranteed in each chamber of Congress until 2026. Most of its fighters [disarmed](#) but some rejected the agreement and formed [offshoots](#). These have since grown. The 2016 peace agreement includes provisions for [transitional justice](#), rural development and social reintegration of [former FARC members](#). Implementation was ongoing but lagging according to in-country sources.

Total Peace

2.14 A key election commitment of President Petro was comprehensive peace, as enacted in *Law 2272*, adopted in November 2022. This 'Total Peace' policy establishes a framework for negotiations with the [ELN](#), [FARC dissidents](#) and major non-political criminal organisations like the [Gulf Clan](#) with a view to their demobilisation. At the time of writing, progress was stalled and most ceasefires involving the government had collapsed. A proposed Submission Law providing reduced sentences to members of apolitical groups in exchange for these groups' dismantlement was still to be adopted.


Current Security Dynamics

2.15 At the time of writing, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recognised eight active non-international armed conflicts in Colombia: three between state forces and non-state groups (the [ELN](#), [FARC dissidents](#) and the [Gulf Clan](#) respectively) and five between non-state actors. The latter includes conflicts between: the ELN and the Gulf Clan, between FARC dissidents and the ELN, between FARC dissidents and the Gulf Clan, and between FARC dissidents. According to in-country sources, given the fragmentation of non-state armed groups, the real number was likely higher.

2.16 In-country sources reported security conditions had improved following the [2016 peace agreement](#) but Colombia had since become more violent and insecure. Failure by successive governments to retake territory previously held by the FARC created a vacuum for other groups to fill. These groups had exploited President Petro's [Total Peace](#) agenda and a less militarised approach to coca eradication to strengthen and expand.

2.17 In July 2025, the Colombian Government reported membership in non-state armed groups had grown 45 per cent since mid-2022. According to in-country sources, coca cultivation and cocaine production had reached record levels, driving clashes between non-state actors and, with it, displacement, [confinement](#) and other human rights abuses against civilians. Fighting in January 2025 between the ELN and FARC dissidents in the Catatumbo region, a cocaine hub bordering Venezuela, displaced 65,000 in what the UN described as 'the gravest escalation of violence ... since the 2016 peace agreement'. At least 80 people were killed, including [social leaders](#) and [former FARC members](#).

2.18 In parallel, non-state armed groups have increased attacks on state forces and installations, including in urban areas. In November 2025, a truck filled with improvised explosive devices detonated near a military barracks in Tunja, a city in Boyacá Department. The [ELN](#) claimed responsibility. In August 2025, [FARC dissidents](#) orchestrated a truck bombing outside an air force base in Cali (six civilians were killed), downed a police helicopter conducting coca eradication operations in Antioquia Department, killing 13 officers, and killed three soldiers at a security checkpoint near Buenaventura using a drone. In June 2025, FARC dissidents attacked police posts and municipal buildings in Cauca and Valle del Cauca departments, killing five civilians and two police officers, separately taking



57 soldiers hostage. In April 2025, FARC dissidents killed seven soldiers in an ambush in Guaviare. The [Gulf Clan](#) killed 27 soldiers and police officers, some of them off duty, between 15 and 28 April 2025, in response to the police killing of a senior leader.

Major Non-State Armed Groups

2.19 According to the Colombian Government, major non-state armed groups had a collective strength of 22,000 in July 2025. Where available, estimates are provided on the size of individual groups. Not all members are armed. Estimates may not include collaborators not formally part of these groups. Collaborators may include [corrupt officials](#) and people who gather intelligence. This section covers active major non-state armed groups, including their areas of operation and activities. Smaller groups, including [urban gangs](#), operate but are beyond the remit of this report.

2.20 OCHA estimated 9.3 million people were living under the presence, influence and/or control of non-state armed groups in Colombia in January 2025. The Organization of American States reports civilian populations are particularly vulnerable to non-state armed group activity in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, Guaviare, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca.

2.21 Non-state actors are highly capable, with international connections and access to advanced technology, including weaponised drones. They can strike targets in urban areas. Cali, for example, was the subject of multiple deadly attacks in June and August 2025. Should they choose to do so, non-state armed groups have the means to track persons of interest who have [relocated](#) to other parts of Colombia. Some have [infiltrated](#) state institutions.

2.22 In-country sources said non-state armed groups exerted social control over local communities through intimidation, violence and [movement restrictions](#). They imposed rules and norms (e.g. prohibiting drug use and prostitution), provided municipal services, administered [justice](#), levied taxes and extorted business activity. They did not tolerate rival authority in areas under their control, targeting anybody who refused to cooperate or was deemed an obstacle to their operations. [Social leaders](#), people perceived to belong to, or be collaborating with, rival groups and [FARC signatories to the 2016 peace agreement](#) were particularly vulnerable. Family members of perceived opponents were also targeted. Threats were typically conveyed by pamphlet or through telephone.

ELN

2.23 The ELN, Colombia's largest remaining guerilla group, is active in at least 19 of Colombia's 32 departments. Arauca, Chocó and Norte de Santander are strongholds. The ELN is also present in Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Vichada. In-country sources said the ELN was particularly strong along the Venezuela border and was present in Venezuela itself. The ELN is involved in drug trafficking, illegal mining, extortion, kidnapping for ransom and attacks on oil infrastructure. It has around 6,200 members according to the Colombian Government.

2.24 In-country sources said the ELN was highly decentralised. ELN fronts operated with a great degree of autonomy from central command. Local-level commanders were focused more on profit than political goals. While the ELN had Marxist-Leninist roots, ideology was now largely a façade for its criminal activities.


2.25 *Comuneros del Sur*, an ELN splinter group operating near the Ecuadorian border in Nariño, began disarming and demobilising in April 2025, the first group to do so under the [Total Peace](#) framework. According to media reporting, *Comuneros del Sur* had approximately 200 members.

FARC Dissidents

2.26 Over 30 dissident groups emerged following the dissolution of the FARC. Some did not participate in the peace process, others joined but later reneged and rearmed. FARC dissidents are not monolithic, comprising different factions and shifting alliances. Some have splintered ('dissidents of dissidents'). Some participate in peace talks with the Petro Government, others do not. Clashes between them occur.

2.27 Collectively, at the time of writing, FARC dissidents' collective strength was estimated at between 4,000 and 8,000 members. Their main criminal activities are cocaine production and trafficking, illegal mining and extortion. They are responsible for most [child recruitment](#).

2.28 In-country sources said the largest FARC dissident group was the Central General Staff (*Estado Mayor Central*, EMC), led by Néstor Gregorio Vera Fernández (alias Iván Mordisco). The EMC comprises multiple blocs loyal to Mordisco. It is present in Amazonas, Arauca, Caquetá, Casanare, Cauca, Guainía, Guaviare, Huila, Meta, Nariño,



Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Tolima, Valle del Cauca, Vaupés and Vichada. The EMC was responsible for [deadly attacks](#) on state targets in Cauca and Valle del Cauca in 2025, including in September, August (Cali, Buenaventura) and June (Cali).

2.29 The General Staff of the Blocks and Front (*Estado Mayor de Bloques y Frente*, EMBF) splintered from the EMC in 2024. It comprises three major factions: the Commander Raúl Reyes Front, the Magdalena Medio Bloc and the Jorge Suárez Briceño Bloc. The leader of the latter, Alexander Díaz (alias Calarcá Córdoba), has overall command of the EMBF. The EMBF is present in Amazonas, Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Caquetá, Guaviare, Huila, Meta, Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Tolima. According to Human Rights Watch, the EMBF's 33rd Front, based in Catatumbo, runs 're-socialisation camps', including forced labour, for people judged to have broken its rules (e.g. for using drugs or supporting state forces). The EMBF was behind [attacks on state forces](#) in Antioquia (August 2025) and Guaviare (April 2025), killing 20 personnel. It clashes with the EMC in some places, including Amazonas, Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta and Putumayo.

2.30 Unlike the EMC and EMBF, *Segunda Marquetalia* signed the [2016 peace agreement](#) but withdrew in 2019. *Segunda Marquetalia* fractured in November 2024. Its rump continues to use the name *Segunda Marquetalia* but is also known as the New Bolivarian Army. Its leader, Luciano Marín (alias Iván Márquez), was the FARC's second-in-command at the time of its demobilisation. *Segunda Marquetalia* is active in Caquetá, Guainía, Huila, Meta, Santander, Valle del Cauca and Vichada. It is in active conflict with the EMC.

2.31 *Segunda Marquetalia's* splinter, the National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Army (*Coordinadora Nacional Ejército Bolivariano*, CNEB) is present in Cauca, Nariño, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca. It comprises two main factions: the Border Command (*Comandos de la Frontera*, previously known as 'La Mafia') and the Pacific Guerrilla Coordinating Committee (*Coordinadora Guerrillera del Pacífico*).

Gulf Clan

2.32 The Gulf Clan (*Clan del Golfo*), also known as the Gaitanista Army of Colombia (*Ejército Gaitanista de Colombia*, EGC), the Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia*, AGC) and *Los Urabeños*, is the most powerful criminal organisation in Colombia. The Gulf Clan emerged from the AUC, an umbrella organisation of state-linked right-wing paramilitaries formed to combat left-wing guerillas. At the time of its demobilisation in 2006, the AUC had a collective strength of more than 35,000 members.

2.33 The Gulf Clan's operations are concentrated along coastal areas. According to in-country sources, the Gulf Clan was present in at least 20 of Colombia's 32 departments and one-third of its municipalities. The Gulf Clan was particularly influential in Antioquia, Chocó and Córdoba, including urban areas like Medellín. It was active in Bolívar, La Guajira, Magdalena, Santander and Valle del Cauca and was trying to build a presence in Norte de Santander, an area where rival groups were well established. The Gulf Clan had deep, longstanding social and familial networks in areas it controlled. It imposed strict moral codes. It did not tolerate homelessness, drug use or prostitution and was known to target [LGBTQIA+ people](#).

2.34 The Gulf Clan's main interests are cocaine production and trafficking and people smuggling. It is also involved in illegal gold mining, extortion and loan sharking (*gota-a-gota*). According to in-country sources, the Gulf Clan controlled the people smuggling trade in Colombia, including through the Darién Gap connecting Colombia to Panama. Its tactics were more extreme than other groups.

2.35 The Colombian Government reported in July 2025 the Gulf Clan had over 7,500 members, making it the single largest non-state armed group in Colombia. According to in-country sources, the Gulf Clan operated a franchise model, allowing local urban gangs to affiliate and use its name in exchange for a share of revenues, including in Barranquilla, Bogotá, Medellín and Santa Marta. This gave the Gulf Clan greater countrywide reach and amplified its size and influence (see also [Internal Relocation](#)). The Gulf Clan, organisationally, was the most cohesive of the major non-state armed groups operating in Colombia.

Others

2.36 Multiple groups in addition to the [Gulf Clan](#) emerged from the AUC, including the Conquering Self-Defense Forces of the Sierra Nevada (*Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra Nevada*, ACSN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Nariño (*Autodefensas Unidas de Nariño*, AUN). These groups are small and localised.

2.37 The ACSN, also known as *Los Pachencas*, operates in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region on the Caribbean Coast, mostly around Santa Marta in Magdalena Department. It is also present in Cesar and La Guajira. In-country sources said the ACSN had up to 400 members. The ACSN competes with the Gulf Clan for control of criminal economies in these areas. The AUN operates in Nariño Department, mainly in the regions of Abades, Cordillera and Guambuyaco.

2.38 Other post-paramilitary groups include *La Cordillera*, *Los Caparros*, *Los Contadores*, *Los Pachelly*, *Los Puntilleros* and *Los Rastrojos*. The extent to which these groups are active is unclear. Some emerged from the Gulf Clan, others may have since been absorbed by it. If they exist, their membership and territorial control is limited.

2.39 The existence of *Águilas Negras* ('Black Eagles'), a death squad linked to the AUC, is disputed. InSight Crime, an international NGO, reported in May 2021 *Águilas Negras* was defunct. According to the International Crisis Group, writing in March 2024, *Águilas Negras* is a 'blanket name used by a variety of criminal interests'. Other groups reportedly use *Águilas Negras*' name to leverage its historical notoriety and instil fear in opponents, typically through threatening pamphlets to politicians, [social leaders](#), lawyers and [journalists](#). In-country sources could not verify *Águilas Negras*' existence as an organised entity. If it was operational, *Águilas Negras* was small, non-cohesive and inconsequential.

2.40 *Tren de Aragua*, a transnational criminal group originating in Venezuela, is present in Colombia. *Tren de Aragua* has expanded through migratory outflows from Venezuela (Colombia hosts nearly 3 million displaced Venezuelans). According to in-country sources, *Tren de Aragua* was involved in drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, sexual exploitation and extortion, including in Bogotá. It was entirely financially motivated and very violent.

2.41 *Tren de Aragua* is reportedly allied with the [ELN](#) but clashes with the [Gulf Clan](#). Some in-country sources downplayed *Tren de Aragua's* organisation and strength in Colombia. While it was not a classically hierarchical criminal organisation, other in-country sources said *Tren de Aragua* had a growing presence and actively cultivated relationships with local criminal groups. Its co-founder, Larry Amaury Álvarez Núñez (alias Larry Changa), was arrested in Colombia (Quindío Department) in July 2024. At the time of writing, Changa remained imprisoned in Colombia pending extradition to Chile.


2.42 DFAT assesses those who resist the authority of non-state armed groups in areas under their control (e.g. by refusing to pay taxes or protection fees) are almost certain to face intimidation and violence, possibly resulting in death. The more prominent and outspoken the individual, the greater the likelihood of intimidation and violence. [State protection](#) is likely to be inadequate for people in conflict-affected areas. [Internal relocation](#), should it occur, may lessen but not eliminate the risk.

Security in Urban Areas

2.43 Non-state armed groups operate predominantly in rural areas but have urban reach (see, for example, [Internal Relocation](#)). Bogotá and other major cities are safer in comparison and pose a lower security risk, although [FARC dissidents](#) struck Cali multiple times in 2025.

2.44 Urban crime is widespread, including in Bogotá, particularly in outer, socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Crime rates in wealthy urban areas are lower. In-country sources reported common criminals and urban gangs committed homicide, armed robbery, extortion and kidnapping for ransom. While much urban crime was opportunistic, people with perceived wealth and/or in obvious possession of valuable items were particular targets. Foreign, non-Spanish speakers were actively targeted, including for theft, 'express kidnapping' and drink and food spiking. According to in-country sources, 2,500 cases of extortion were reported in Bogotá in 2024, an increase of 60 per cent from 2023. Homicides in Bogotá increased 11 per cent in the same period (over 1,200 cases). Guns and hitmen (*sicarios*) were readily available. Kidnappings could be arranged cheaply.

2.45 Armed gangs are present in cities such as Barranquilla, Bogotá, Buenaventura, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, Medellín, Quibdó and Tumaco. They operate mostly in urban peripheries. Gangs engage in drug trafficking, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, contract killings and loan sharking, among other activities. Some control neighbourhoods. Urban gangs are localised and generally operate independently. Some have [links](#) to larger non-state armed groups. Urban homicides are usually gang related or higher-level criminal figures. Authorities regularly target urban gangs as part of law-and-order operations.



2.46 Known urban gangs include: the *Chiquillos* (Buenaventura), *Los Shottas* (Buenaventura), *Los Espartanos* (Buenaventura), *Los Mexicanos* (Quibdó), *Locos Yam* (Quibdó), *Los Z* (Quibdó), *Revolución Cabi* (Quibdó), *RPS* (Quibdó), *La Oficina de Envigado* (Medellín), *Los Peludos* (Medellín), *El Mesa* (Medellín and Bogotá), *El Clan Azul* (Bogotá), *Los Venecos* (Bogotá) and *Los Costeños* (Bogotá). This list is not exhaustive.

2.47 In-country sources said Bogotá was safer than Medellín and Cali. Bogotá had a stronger security presence but it was a sprawling city and criminal groups were active. Insecurity increased away from central, wealthier areas. Buenaventura and Tumaco, port cities on the Pacific Ocean strategic to the export of cocaine, were hotbeds of criminality. Buenaventura was notoriously violent, with high murder rates. Many criminal groups operated there. *Los Shottas* and *Los Espartanos* were particularly powerful and formed part of the [Total Peace](#) agenda.

3. REFUGEE CONVENTION CLAIMS RACE/NATIONALITY

3.1 The 1991 Constitution recognises Colombia's ethnic and cultural diversity and mandates measures in favour of discriminated or marginalised groups. It guarantees equal rights, freedoms, opportunities and protections for all Colombians regardless of race or national origin. It is a crime under the *Penal Code 2000* to discriminate on the basis of race or nationality (prison sentences of up to three years and financial penalties apply). Communal lands of ethnic groups are 'inalienable and indefeasible' under the 1991 Constitution. Members of ethnic groups have the right to [education](#) that respects and develops their cultural identity.

3.2 Approximately 85 per cent of the population is of European or mixed (*mestizo*) ancestry, 10 per cent of [African descent](#) ('Afro-Colombians') and 5 per cent [indigenous](#). The official language is Spanish. The 1991 Constitution provides ethnic groups with distinct linguistic traditions the right to use their languages and dialects in territories where they reside, including for official purposes.

Indigenous People

3.3 Colombia has over 100 indigenous groups, some comprising less than 200 people. The largest are the Wayuu, Paez, Pastos, Zenu and Emberá. At the time of the 2018 census (the most recent), 2 million Colombians identified as indigenous. Indigenous Colombians live countrywide, including in rural reservations known as indigenous territorial entities. Some indigenous people in Bogotá and other cities were displaced from their ancestral lands by armed conflict or extractive industries. There are sizeable indigenous communities in the departments of La Guajira, Cesar, Magdalena, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Córdoba and Chocó. Around 30 indigenous groups reside in the remote, sparsely populated Vaupés Department in the Amazon region bordering Brazil. Eighty-two per cent of Vaupés' population is indigenous, more than any other Colombian department.

3.4 The 1991 Constitution recognises [indigenous jurisdiction](#). *Presidential Decree 488*, issued in May 2025, formalised the self-governing authority of indigenous territorial entities (as provided by the Constitution), including the right to access public funds and veto development projects deemed to threaten their territorial, cultural or spiritual rights. Indigenous Colombians are represented in Congress (some seats are reserved).

3.5 According to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, nearly 60 per cent of indigenous Colombians were living in poverty in 2023. Many live in remote, underdeveloped areas, far from government services (Vaupés Department, for example, is covered entirely by jungle, accessible only by air or river). Indigenous Colombians have lower life expectancy, are more likely to be food insecure and, by dint of poverty and geography, less likely to have access to health and education.

3.6 Indigenous Colombians are disproportionately affected by armed conflict, including targeted killings of [community leaders](#), forced displacement, [mass confinement](#) and [child recruitment](#). In-country sources reported half of all minors recruited by non-state armed groups were indigenous. Of the 331 killings of [social leaders](#) documented by Indepaz, a local NGO, between January 2024 and October 2025, 48 were indigenous, including Carmelina Yule Paví, killed in March 2024 for trying to stop child recruitment in Cauca Department.

3.7 Areas where indigenous Colombians live are fertile for coca cultivation, rich in natural resources and situated along trafficking routes. This is a major source of vulnerability. According to in-country sources, indigenous Colombians with legal claims over land sought by non-state armed groups and social leaders whose advocacy impinged on these groups' interests were most likely to be targeted.

3.8 In May 2025, OHCHR reported the Kogui, Wiwa, Kankuamo, Arhuaco and Ette Naka indigenous groups (total population 55,000) were at risk of 'physical and cultural extinction' due to armed conflict on their territory, displacement and lack of [state protection](#). The groups live in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains.

3.9 As Colombian citizens, indigenous people have full legal rights and protections, including the right to [relocate](#). Exercising these rights can be difficult, particularly for indigenous people living in remote areas and/or areas controlled by non-state actors with minimal or no state presence. In-country sources said indigenous Colombians frequently experienced societal discrimination in urban settings, including denial of housing and employment. People with darker skin were at the bottom of the social ranking.

3.10 DFAT assesses indigenous Colombians in conflict-affected areas are likely to face threats to their liberty and personal security and restrictions in their ability to access state protection and internal relocation. Indigenous Colombians perceived to oppose and obstruct the interests of [non-state armed groups](#) are almost certain to face intimidation and violence. DFAT assesses it is rare for indigenous Colombians to face official discrimination when seeking government services, although geography and armed conflict can be barriers to access. Societal discrimination is possible, particularly for indigenous Colombians in urban areas.

Afro-Colombians

3.11 Afro-Colombians are descendants of enslaved Africans brought to Colombia by Spanish colonists in the 16th century. Afro-Colombians are concentrated along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, in the departments of Chocó (where they comprise over 80 per cent of the population), Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, Antioquia, Atlántico, Bolívar, Magdalena and Sucre. Afro-Colombians reside in all major cities, with sizeable numbers in Bogotá, Cali, Buenaventura, Cartagena, Barranquilla and Tumaco.

3.12 *Law 70/1993* grants Afro-Colombians collective ownership of traditional lands along the Pacific Coast ('collective reserves'), allowing for self-governance of land use and natural resources. Afro-Colombians are represented in Congress, including through guaranteed seats in the Chamber of Representatives. The current directly elected Vice President, Francia Márquez, is Afro-Colombian.

3.13 Afro-Colombians have full legal rights and protections but barriers exist to their exercise, particularly in areas with limited state presence. Like [indigenous people](#), Afro-Colombians have lower development indicators and are less likely to have access to health and education. They are overrepresented in areas where non-state armed groups operate (the Pacific Coast, in particular, is a key drug trafficking corridor), curtailing their ability to obtain [state protection](#) and [relocate](#). This geography exposes Afro-Colombians to forced displacement, [mass confinement](#), [child recruitment](#) and [sexual violence](#). Of the 1,000 cases of conflict-related sexual violence recorded by the [Victim's Unit](#) in 2024, Afro-Colombians were victims in more than 30 per cent of cases. Afro-Colombian collective reserves are often located in resource-rich and conflict-affected areas, posing risks to [community leaders](#) and environmental activists. Mercury contamination of waterways from illegal gold mining exposes Afro-Colombian communities to public health risks.

3.14 Afro-Colombians experience societal discrimination, including in the form of racial stereotypes and access to employment and housing. According to in-country sources, the darker one's skin, the more likely they were to experience discrimination of this nature.


3.15 DFAT assesses Afro-Colombians in conflict-affected areas are likely to face threats to their liberty and personal security and restrictions in their ability to access state protection and internal relocation. Afro-Colombians perceived to oppose and obstruct the interests of [non-state armed groups](#) are almost certain to face intimidation and violence. DFAT assesses it is rare for Afro-Colombians to face official discrimination when seeking government services, although geography and armed conflict can be barriers to access. Societal discrimination is possible, particularly in areas where Afro-Colombians do not constitute a majority.

POLITICAL OPINION (ACTUAL OR IMPUTED)

3.16 The 1991 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of political or philosophical opinion and enshrines the right to freedom of conscience, association and peaceful demonstration. Every Colombian citizen has the constitutional right to participate in the political process, including the right to establish, organise, develop and join political parties or movements.

3.17 Elections are held regularly, based on universal adult suffrage. Elections are free and fair, reflecting voters' will. Colombia's political landscape is broad, with diverse views represented in Congress. Freedoms of expression and association, enshrined in the 1991 Constitution, are respected. Freedom House, an NGO, classifies Colombia as 'free' with respect to political rights and civil liberties. There were no political prisoners in Colombia at the time of writing.

3.18 In June 2025, Miguel Uribe, an opposition Senator and 2026 presidential aspirant, was shot by a minor at an unofficial campaign event in Bogotá. Uribe succumbed to his injuries in August 2025. Uribe was under [UNP](#) protection at the time of his assassination (his lawyer filed a criminal complaint against the UNP's Director for failing to act on multiple requests to increase Uribe's security detail). This event notwithstanding, political violence at the national



level, a feature in earlier periods of Colombia's history, is now relatively uncommon. Where it occurs, political violence is most likely at the local level, in rural areas where non-state armed groups are present (see [Security Situation](#)).

Anti-Government and/or Supporters of Opposition Political Parties

3.19 Criticism of government is normal. Opposition political parties are highly active, organised and operate freely. Protests occur regularly. See also [Political Opinion](#).

3.20 DFAT assesses it is rare for people who oppose the government to face official or societal discrimination. Physical harm on the basis of one's political opinion is unlikely.

Social Leaders

3.21 The term 'social leader' is broadly defined in the Colombian context. It includes human rights defenders, peacebuilders, land and environmental activists, representatives of vulnerable groups and community leaders, including members of Community Action Boards. In rural contexts, according to in-country sources, any person of prominence and authority was considered a social leader. Community Action Boards (*Juntas de Acción Comunal*) are non-profit, civic corporations of elected local residents who promote the interests of their communities. Community Action Boards are legal entities and may receive public and private funding. In-country sources said Community Action Boards were the most basic form of organisation at the rural level and functioned like local councils. They approved projects and had access to state resources for public works.

3.22 Targeted killings of social leaders in rural, conflict-affected areas are common. Indepaz, a local NGO, documented 331 killings between January 2024 and October 2025. Most (66) occurred in Cauca Department, followed by Antioquia (50), Valle del Cauca (32), Arauca (23), Norte de Santander (19), Bolívar (17), Chocó (12), Putumayo (11), Guaviare (10) and Nariño (10). In July 2025, authorities recovered the bodies of eight social leaders from a mass grave in Guaviare Department. They attributed the killings to a [FARC offshoot](#) active in the area. The leaders, missing since April 2025, had reportedly been summoned by the group for questioning about the alleged formation of a local cell by the [ELN](#), a rival, before their disappearance. They had been active on land and environmental protection issues and women's rights.

3.23 In-country sources reported non-state armed groups actively sought to control and coopt Community Action Boards given their capacity to act as rival sources of authority. Non-state armed groups intimidated communities to vote for their favoured candidates and removed insubordinate members. Where they refused to cooperate, members were subjected to intimidation, harassment and targeted killing. OHCHR verified 43 killings of Community Action Board members in 2024, 12 of them in Arauca Department.

3.24 Land and environmental activists who advocate for land rights and speak out against coca cultivation, illegal mining and logging are frequent targets for non-state armed groups. Global Witness, an international NGO, recorded 79 targeted killings in 2023 (40 per cent of the global total) and 461 killings between 2012 and 2023. OHCHR verified 25 killings of environmental activists in 2024 (it recorded 119 cases of threats and attacks during the same period). Land and environmental activists of this profile are most likely to be [indigenous](#).

3.25 In-country sources said social leaders in conflict-affected areas perceived to resist and represent an obstacle to the operations of non-state armed groups were most likely to be targeted. Social leaders who advocated for the rights of vulnerable communities, supported coca substitution programs, resisted illegal mining and deforestation, tried to stop [child recruitment](#) and participated in truth and justice processes were particularly vulnerable. Vulnerability increased the more outspoken one was.

3.26 [State protection](#) is available but not always accessible or effective, particularly in conflict-affected areas with limited state control. In December 2023, the Constitutional Court found violations against human rights defenders to be 'persistent, grave and widespread', declaring them an 'unconstitutional state of affairs'. It ordered the government to strengthen protection measures and hold perpetrators to account. In-country sources reported widespread impunity for killings of social leaders. [Internal relocation](#) may not be feasible.

3.27 DFAT assesses social leaders perceived to oppose the activities of non-state armed groups in areas where these groups operate are almost certain to face intimidation and, where social leaders resist, are likely to be at risk of targeted killing. Official or societal discrimination against social leaders is unlikely.

Trade Unionists

3.28 The 1991 Constitution provides the right to form trade unions or associations without intervention. It guarantees the right to strike except in essential public services. Trade unions are active.

3.29 Trade unions in Colombia are associated with left-wing politics and were historically perceived as sympathetic to guerilla movements, making them targets for the state and right-wing paramilitaries. Between 1971 and 2023, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) recorded over 3,300 killings of Colombian trade unionists. Corporations have been implicated in historical cases of intimidation and violence against trade unionists.

3.30 The risk of targeted killing has declined over time, although trade unionists continue to face intimidation and physical attack. The ITUC recorded 11 targeted killings between 2023 and 2024. Trade unionists are most likely to be targeted in rural areas under the control of non-state armed groups where coca cultivation and illegal mining occur (e.g. in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Caquetá, Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo). The risk profile is greatest for trade unionists who challenge the interests of non-state armed groups through their advocacy for labour and environmental protections and/or are perceived to be affiliated with a rival group.

3.31 The Constitutional Court ruled in August 2019 trade unionists needed ‘special constitutional protection’ because of risks to their safety. [State protection](#) is available but may not be accessible or effective, particularly in conflict-affected areas with limited state control. In March 2025, Jaime Gallego, a leader of informal miners in Segovia, was killed while under [UNP](#) protection, reportedly by the [Gulf Clan](#).

3.32 In March 2023, the Petro Government formally recognised the trade union movement as a collective victim of Colombia’s internal armed conflicts, allowing for reparations through the [Single Registry of Victims](#).

3.33 DFAT assesses trade unionists perceived to challenge the interests of non-state armed groups in rural areas with limited state control are almost certain to face intimidation and violence. The risk is most acute for trade unionists in leadership positions. DFAT assesses trade unionists not perceived to challenge the interests of non-state armed groups are unlikely to face intimidation or violence. Official or societal discrimination against trade unionists is unlikely.

Former Members of the FARC-EP

3.34 Around 13,000 FARC members demobilised and transitioned to civilian life following the [2016 peace agreement](#). As part of this process, FARC members and their families were resettled in protected territories known as Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (*Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación*, ETCRs). Some ETCRs have since evolved into permanent settlements. At the time of writing, most peace signatories lived outside ETCRs. The government administers a Comprehensive Reintegration Programme with individual reintegration plans, including financial support and access to land, livelihoods, housing and [psychosocial care](#). According to the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, over 11,000 people previously belonging to the FARC were active in the reintegration process in September 2025.

3.35 Peace signatories are targeted by non-state armed groups and, according to in-country sources, the family members of their victims. As of September 2025, the UN Verification Mission had verified 481 killings, 164 attempted murders and 57 disappearances of former FARC members since 2017. Indepaz, a local NGO, documented 31 killings in 2024 and 34 between January and October 2025. Most killings in 2024 and 2025 occurred in Cauca Department (16), followed by Norte de Santander (7), Antioquia (6), Caquetá (5), Huila (5), Arauca (4), Putumayo (4) and Valle del Cauca (4). Of the 481 killings verified by the UN Verification Mission, 63 of the victims were [indigenous](#) and 58 [Afro-Colombian](#). Security in ETCRs or the permanent settlements arising from them is not guaranteed, with examples of former FARC members being killed in or displaced from these spaces. According to in-country sources, following [events in Catatumbo in January 2025](#), former FARC members and their families were placed in a separate shelter for internally displaced persons to the general population for security reasons.

3.36 In-country sources said the risk for peace signatories was uniform, regardless of their seniority. The UN Verification Mission reported in June 2025 peace signatories who play [community leadership roles](#), refuse to retake arms and participate in truth and justice processes were most likely to be targeted. According to in-country sources, participation in local economic projects that undercut the interests of non-state armed groups was another risk factor. The UN Verification Mission reported in September 2025 former combatants faced ‘heightened threats in

areas where fluid conflict dynamics have led to multiple armed actors moving into and disputing areas where they have settled’.

3.37 In-country sources said former FARC members were stigmatised as terrorists and experienced societal discrimination. They were resented for benefiting from state support and evading justice. Communities rejected them. Employers were reluctant to hire them. Former FARC members had made a commitment to peace but received minimal dividend. Some had retaken arms because they judged it was safer and more lucrative than civilian life.

3.38 In June 2025, the government issued a decree establishing a Comprehensive Protection Programme for former combatants, as stipulated in the 2016 peace agreement. Other [state protection](#) mechanisms are available but not always accessible or effective. Some former combatants have been relocated for their safety.

3.39 DFAT assesses former FARC members who signed the 2016 peace agreement are likely to face intimidation, violence and, possibly, targeted killing in areas where [non-state armed groups](#) operate and state control is limited. DFAT assesses former FARC members are unlikely to face official discrimination when seeking government services. Former FARC members are likely to face social stigma and discrimination, including in employment.

Media and Journalists

3.40 The 1991 Constitution provides for freedom of expression, thought and opinion, the right to establish mass communication media and access public information. It guarantees journalism’s freedom and independence and prohibits media censorship.

3.41 Colombia has a diverse media landscape. Social media use is widespread and not typically monitored. Media are free to air different views. At the time of writing, there were no journalists or media workers in prison because of their work.


3.42 Journalists report intimidation and violence, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Reporters Without Borders ranked Colombia 115th out of 180 countries in its 2025 *World Press Freedom Index*. The Foundation for Press Freedom (*Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa*, FLIP), a local NGO, recorded 349 ‘attacks’ (broadly defined) against 222 journalists between January and September 2025, including 145 threats (the most common form of attack, typically through social media), 42 cases of stigmatisation, 25 cases of harassment, 14 cases of forced displacement and one murder (in Quindío Department). FLIP recorded 530 attacks against 330 journalists in 2024, including 215 threats, three murders (two in Norte de Santander, one in Sucre) and two kidnappings. Most attacks occurred in Bogotá, Norte de Santander and Antioquia. Journalists covering public governance, security, armed conflict and corruption were most likely to be targeted. Perpetrators included private individuals, public officials and [non-state armed groups](#) (most perpetrators were unknown). In-country sources said underreporting meant the true numbers were likely higher.

3.43 Journalists operating in major cities may be subjected to threats, including online, but are relatively safe from physical harm and can generally report freely. Violence is more likely where non-state armed groups are active and state control limited. According to in-country sources, non-state armed groups used journalists to convey their narratives. Those who refused to publish or broadcast information on a group’s behalf, were perceived to be allied with a rival group and/or reported on their activities were most likely to experience threats and violence.

3.44 The government does not censor the media. Defamation is a crime under the *Penal Code 2000*, attracting prison terms of between 16 and 54 months (financial sanctions also apply). In-country sources said politicians and powerful business interests used defamation, or the threat of it, to stop critical reporting. This encouraged some journalists to self-censor. Further, hostile rhetoric against journalists by public officials, including at the highest levels, encouraged harassment of journalists and impeded their work. President Petro has occasionally used derogatory language against critical journalists. In December 2024, a local NGO filed a lawsuit against Petro for violating freedom of expression by making ‘dangerous accusations and generalisations’ against Colombia’s media.

3.45 Journalists and social commentators are a specific population category eligible for protection through the [UNP](#). According to FLIP, two of the three journalists killed in 2024 had active protective measures from the UNP at the time of their murders.

3.46 DFAT assesses it is possible for journalists to face intimidation and harassment because of their work. Journalists in areas with limited state control who resist the demands of non-state armed groups and/or whose



reporting is perceived to infringe on these groups' interests are almost certain to face intimidation, harassment and, possibly, violence. [State protection](#) and [internal relocation](#) for journalists of this profile may not be effective. DFAT assesses journalists based in major cities are unlikely to face physical harm. Official or societal discrimination against journalists is unlikely.

GROUPS OF INTEREST

Women

3.47 The 1991 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, grants women equal rights and opportunities to men and guarantees them equality before the law. *Law 1496/2011* mandates equal pay for work of equal value. Women are entitled to 18 weeks of maternity leave with full pay. There are legal protections against dismissal for pregnancy. Discrimination based on sex is a criminal offence under the *Penal Code 2000*. Reproductive health services, including [abortion](#), are available.

3.48 Women are highly active in civil society, business and politics. In August 2025, women comprised 47 per cent of the Cabinet (including the vice president) and 30 per cent of legislators. Women occupy leadership positions in the private sector, with high rates of representation on corporate boards by regional standards. Women's labour force participation rate in 2024 was 52 per cent, compared with 76 per cent for men. Many women work in the informal sector (more than half of Colombia's economic activity is informal). The World Economic Forum, in its most recent *Global Gender Gap Index* (June 2025), ranked Colombia 41st out of 148 countries for gender parity, including equal first for educational attainment, 24th for health and survival and 39th for political empowerment.

3.49 At the time of the 2018 census (the most recent), nearly 41 per cent of households were headed by women. Women-headed households are more likely to experience poverty than households headed by men. According to in-country sources, there was a burgeoning 'care economy' for single mothers and women in Bogotá, including access to childcare and professional training opportunities.

3.50 DFAT assesses it is rare for women to face official discrimination when seeking government services. Societal discrimination against women is unlikely, including with respect to employment and reproductive health. Intersectional risks may apply to certain women, including [indigenous](#) and [Afro-Colombian](#) women, [social leaders](#), [former members of the FARC](#) and women of [diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions](#). See [Gender-Based Violence](#) for risks faced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas.

Gender-Based Violence

3.51 Gender-based violence is most likely to occur in a domestic setting, perpetrated by a male intimate partner. According to the World Bank, 30 per cent of Colombian women between the ages of 15 and 49 have experienced intimate partner violence with 11.4 per cent experiencing some form of sexual violence. In 2024, *Defensoría del Pueblo*, Colombia's [national human rights institution](#), recorded nearly 1,000 femicides, most committed by intimate partners. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection reported over 42,000 cases of sexual violence in 2023, 85.5 per cent of them against women. According to in-country sources, violence against women was underreported because of social stigma, shame and fear of reprisal.

3.52 Women in conflict-affected areas face elevated risks of violence, particularly sexual violence. The [Victim's Unit](#) recorded over 1,000 cases of conflict-related sexual violence against women in 2024 and 605 cases in 2023. Most occurred in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño and Valle del Cauca. The UN Secretary General's 2025 report on conflict-related sexual violence identified the [ELN](#), [FARC dissidents](#) and the [Gulf Clan](#) as the main perpetrators. According to in-country sources, women and [girls](#) who joined non-state armed groups were sexually exploited and, in some cases, coerced into abortions. Absent other opportunities, some joined voluntarily, lured by money and as a form of protection. Some women in Norte de Santander were reportedly pressured by security forces to act as informants against non-state armed groups.

3.53 Women [social leaders](#), like their male counterparts, perceived to resist the authority and obstruct the interests of non-state armed groups risk intimidation and violence. This includes women who advocate against [child recruitment](#) and/or participate in the recovery of victims of child recruitment. Some women have been targeted for suspected romantic involvement with members of the security forces, rival groups and [peace signatories](#). Of the

481 former FARC members killed since 2017, 11 were women. As with other conflict aspects, [indigenous](#) and [Afro-Colombian](#) women and girls are disproportionately affected.

3.54 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) occurs in some indigenous communities, particularly the Emberá. In August 2025, Congress' Chamber of Representatives approved a bill aimed at preventing and eradicating FGM. The bill was with the Senate at the time of writing.

3.55 *Law 294/1996* criminalises domestic violence and provides for protection orders. *Law 1257/2008* enshrines women's right to be free from all forms of violence. It recognises physical, sexual, psychological, economic and patrimonial abuse as forms of domestic violence. *Law 1761/2015* creates the criminal offence of femicide. *Law 2215/2022* implements and regulates the operation of shelters as a protection measure for victim-survivors of gender-based violence and their dependents.

3.56 There are helplines to report gender-based violence and access legal advice and psychosocial care, including a 24/7 helpline managed by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, a government agency. Family Commissioners (*Comisariás de Familia*) receive complaints of domestic violence, issue protection orders and coordinate support. They are located countrywide. Protection orders can be temporary or permanent. Specialised police units handle cases of gender-based violence, including dedicated female units dealing with sexual violence. Some cities, including Bogotá and Medellín, have mobile police units, known as 'purple patrols' (*patrulla púrpura*), to respond rapidly to reports of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence and raise community awareness.

3.57 While [state protection](#) exists, in-country sources said budget constraints meant enforcement was uneven. Family Commissioners were stretched. The state had limited to no presence in parts of the country, severely limiting accessibility to protection for victim-survivors in these areas. Police protocols relating to sexual violence were less likely to be followed in rural areas, due to resourcing challenges and lack of training. Protection orders were not always effective and it was not uncommon for victim-survivors to withdraw complaints and return to abusive partners. Impunity for gender-based violence was widespread. A small percentage of cases reached the [courts](#). Of those that did, 5 per cent yielded a conviction. Victim-survivors of domestic violence frequently suffered from negative stereotypes. Victim-blaming was common. Victim-survivors were often encouraged to reconcile with the perpetrator, leading to revictimisation.


3.58 The government and NGOs provide support services to victim-survivors of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence, including legal assistance, psychosocial counselling, livelihood and financial literacy training. [Defensoría del Pueblo](#) provides access to lawyers and psychologists. NGOs offer safe spaces for women to gather, build community and develop entrepreneurial skills. Shelters (*Casas de Refugio*) provide temporary accommodation but are concentrated in urban areas. In-country sources said functioning shelters were scarce, inadequately funded and at capacity. Where places were unavailable, victim-survivors and their children may be provided alternative accommodation (e.g. a hotel). Cuts to foreign assistance from the United States, historically Colombia's largest development cooperation partner, placed the operations of NGOs assisting women in jeopardy. Some had closed. Support services were more accessible in urban areas. Stigma and lack of awareness could limit uptake.

3.59 Women are free to relocate internally, although [practical considerations](#) apply. For women in conflict-affected areas, in particular, internal relocation of a voluntary nature may not be feasible. According to in-country sources, economic dependence on male partners could prevent women leaving abusive relationships. Colombia was a religious society and victim-survivors of domestic violence may be pressured by family members from seeking divorce, particularly where children were involved.

3.60 DFAT assesses it is possible for women and girls to experience gender-based violence, particularly in domestic settings. The likelihood of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, is higher in conflict-affected areas. [State protection](#) and [internal relocation](#) may not be accessible or feasible in conflict-affected areas, although this is not unique to women. State protection for women, like anybody else, is more effective in urban settings.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

3.61 The *Penal Code 2000* prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (imprisonment and fines apply). Same-sex marriage was legalised in 2016. Same-sex couples can adopt children. Changes in legal gender are permitted. People who transition to a different gender can request a change of sex on their birth certificate and update government-issued identification documents. Gender-affirming medical care is available, including through



the public [health system](#), although in-country sources said approvals were difficult to obtain. At the time of writing, draft laws aimed at strengthening protections for transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people and prohibiting conversion therapy were before Congress.

3.62 While it may occur, official discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people is not systematic. NGOs promoting LGBTQIA+ interests are active. Pride parades are held annually. The current Congress includes multiple members who identify as LGBTQIA+. Claudia López, an openly gay woman, was Mayor of Bogotá from 2020 to 2023.

3.63 In-country sources said there was greater social acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people in major cities, particularly in wealthier areas. Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla and Cartagena had established LGBTQIA+ communities. People there could be relatively open about their sexuality. Bogotá was the safest and most progressive. The district of Chapinero (central Bogotá) is an official gay neighbourhood with bars, clubs and other establishments catering specifically for the community, including Theatron, the largest LGBTQIA+ club in Latin America.

3.64 In-country sources reported stigmatisation was more likely in rural areas, where social values were more conservative. There was also homophobia in urban settings, however, especially poorer areas. While major cities were more tolerant, they were not necessarily safer, particularly outside wealthier pockets (12 LGBTQIA+ people were murdered in Medellín between January and August 2025). Threats and online hate speech were common. Transphobia was pronounced. Societal discrimination and bullying occurred, particularly in educational settings. Conversion therapy services were available.

3.65 According to in-country sources, violence against LGBTQIA+ people was common, particularly in rural areas. *Caribe Afirmativo*, a local NGO, recorded 164 murders on the basis of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression in 2024 and 50 murders between January and July 2025. Gay men and trans women are most likely to be targeted. Of the murders documented by *Caribe Afirmativo* in 2024, the highest concentrations were in the departments of Valle del Cauca and Antioquia. *Caribe Afirmativo* reported a significant increase in murders in Chocó, Córdoba and La Guajira but declines in Atlántico and Bogotá in this period.

3.66 In-country sources reported transgender people were most vulnerable to violence, insofar as they were most visible. Bisexual and lesbian women were most likely to experience [domestic violence](#). LGBTQIA+ people were targeted for blackmail and robbery through online dating apps.

3.67 In-country sources said the lived experience of LGBTQIA+ people varied according to social class. Colombian society was highly stratified. Views on LGBTQIA+ and other social issues broadly aligned with one's social strata. The more upper class a person was, the more progressive they likely were. LGBTQIA+ people who moved in wealthy urban circles could exercise their rights fully, be open and enjoy comfortable lives. They were far less likely to experience discrimination. Family pressure and domestic violence were also less likely.

3.68 LGBTQIA+ people face heightened risk in conflict-affected areas. OHCHR documented 16 killings of LGBTQIA+ [social leaders](#) between 2016 and 2024. According to in-country sources, the risk in such situations generally stemmed from one's status as a social leader, not their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Nevertheless, non-state armed groups enforced conservative social norms in territories they controlled and targeted openly LGBTQIA+ people on the basis of their identity, including through the distribution of threatening pamphlets. The Global Protection Cluster, an alliance of NGOs, international organisations and UN agencies, reported in April 2025 non-state armed groups operating in the Catatumbo region had identified the expulsion of LGBTQIA+ communities from their territories as 'military objectives'.

3.69 Like other Colombians, LGBTQIA+ people have recourse to [state protection](#). This may not always be accessible or effective, particularly in conflict-affected areas with limited state presence. In-country sources reported fewer barriers to LGBTQIA+ people accessing state protection in urban settings, although they generally lacked confidence in state institutions and were reluctant to seek their protection. Police harassment occurred, particularly of gay and bisexual men and trans women engaged in sex work. Only a small proportion of cases involving hate crimes against LGBTQIA+ people progressed beyond the preliminary investigation stage. In May 2025, the Supreme Court ordered the military to publicly apologise for mocking and turning away a man and his partner (a trans woman) while trying to obtain a military service card. The court ruled the behaviour was a violation of the right to live with dignity.

3.70 The government, [Defensoría del Pueblo](#) and NGOs provide support services to LGBTQIA+ people, including legal assistance and [psychosocial care](#). The UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity reported in May 2025 the existence of five shelters in Bogotá offering temporary housing, food assistance and psychosocial care to LGBTQIA+ people. Support services catering specifically to the LGBTQIA+ community in rural and conflict-affected areas are limited.

3.71 Internal relocation is possible. In-country sources said it was common for LGBTQIA+ people to move to major cities, which were more liberal and had established support networks. As for anybody else, [limitations to internal relocation](#) may apply, particularly for LGBTQIA+ people in conflict-affected areas.

3.72 DFAT assesses LGBTQIA+ people are unlikely to face official discrimination when seeking government services. Societal discrimination, in the form of stigmatisation, threats, harassment and violence, is possible, including in major cities. The likelihood of such treatment may increase or decrease depending on one's social class. DFAT assesses LGBTQIA+ people in areas with limited state control perceived to oppose and obstruct the interests of non-state armed groups are almost certain to face intimidation and violence, although this is not unique to them. It is possible for openly LGBTQIA+ people to be targeted on the basis of their sexual orientation by [non-state armed groups](#) in areas under these groups' control. As for all Colombians, state protection and internal relocation may not be accessible or feasible in conflict-affected areas.

Children

3.73 The 1991 Constitution recognises children's right to education, health and physical integrity and provides protection against abandonment, physical or moral violence, sale, sexual abuse, economic exploitation and hazardous work. Education is mandatory between the ages of five and 15. Education in state institutions at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels is free. The minimum age for work is 15. The minimum age of marriage is 18. The age of criminal responsibility is 14.


3.74 Corporal punishment of children is prohibited in all settings, including the home. *Law 2089/2021* defines corporal punishment as any action taken in the context of parenting or the provision of guidance or education intended to cause physical pain, humiliation and stigmatisation. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute operates a national, toll-free hotline for reporting violence against children and obtaining legal and psychosocial support.

3.75 According to UNICEF, one in five Colombian adolescents is married or lives in marriage-like conditions, mostly in rural areas. In November 2024, Congress adopted legislation prohibiting marriage before the age of 18 under any circumstances (previously, children over 14 could marry with parental consent).

3.76 The UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict verified 646 grave violations against 513 children in 2024, a significant increase from a year earlier (432 grave violations against 329 children). The most common violation was recruitment by non-state armed groups. Other violations included abduction and sexual violence. A Truth Commission found over 30,000 children were recruited by non-state actors between 1985 and 2018, mostly by the [FARC](#).

3.77 In-country sources said child recruitment had grown exponentially since 2022. Some children were recruited forcibly, others enlisted voluntarily. Social media campaigns promising wealth and glory were powerful recruiting tools. A growing proportion of recruits were girls. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, a common strategy for the recruitment of girls was to deceive them into relationships with male members of non-state armed groups. Recruitment occurred in [schools](#). Poverty and lack of opportunity made enlistment an attractive proposition. The average age of child recruits was between 14 and 16 years. Some were as young as 11.

3.78 The UN Secretary-General recorded 450 cases of child recruitment in 2024 (279 boys, 166 girls, five sex unknown). The UN Secretary-General verified 262 cases in 2023, 130 cases in 2022. In-country sources said real figures were significantly higher because of underreporting, including due to fear of reprisals and [lack of trust](#) in state institutions. According to the UN Secretary-General, child recruitment was most prevalent in Cauca Department (40 per cent of verified cases), a former FARC stronghold where [FARC dissidents](#) operate, followed by Chocó, Arauca, Huila, Putumayo and Nariño. In-country sources reported an increase in child recruitment in the Amazon region. [Indigenous](#) and [Afro-Colombian](#) children were overrepresented.



3.79 FARC offshoots, particularly the [EMC](#), are the most prolific recruiters of children, followed by the [ELN](#). The UN Secretary-General also implicates the [Gulf Clan](#), although in-country sources said it was least likely to recruit children of the major non-state armed groups. Children performed combat and non-combat functions, including as informants, messengers, cooks and sexual servants. Girls, in particular, risked sexual exploitation. Some undertook forced labour or were used to traffic drugs or perform targeted killings. Child recruits who escape risk execution if caught. In-country sources reported mothers and [social leaders](#) being killed for advocating the release of children. Where feasible, families sought to [relocate](#) to mitigate the risk of child recruitment. The Colombian Government acknowledged at least 15 children recruited by non-state armed groups were killed during military operations in Amazonas, Arauca and Guaviare departments between August and November 2025.

3.80 According to in-country sources, former child soldiers faced societal discrimination and stigma. Reintegration into civilian life was difficult. Former child soldiers lacked employable skills and suffered [mental health](#) issues. The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples reported in September 2024 some former child soldiers were rejected by their communities.

3.81 Armed conflict and [mass confinement](#) can disrupt education for children in conflict-affected areas. More than 700 schools were closed during unrest in the Catatumbo region in January and February 2025, impacting nearly 50,000 children. The UN Secretary-General recorded 27 attacks on schools in 2024, of which the highest number (17) were reportedly committed by [FARC dissidents](#). Over 40 schools were used for military purposes by non-state armed groups in the same period. OHCHR reported in January 2025 armed clashes and deployment of anti-personnel mines near schools.

3.82 The government provides rehabilitation and reintegration support to demobilised children, including through the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. The latter operates a specialised care program for victims of illicit recruitment and provides protection, prevention and psychosocial care services. In-country sources said attempts to rescue or rehabilitate child soldiers were limited. Government reintegration programs were under-resourced and often lacked nuance and cultural sensitivity, particularly for indigenous youth. *Benposta Nación de Muchachos*, an NGO, provides refuge, education and counselling to children displaced or targeted by non-state armed groups. It is present in Bogotá, Montería (Córdoba) and Villavicencio (Meta).

3.83 DFAT assesses it is rare for Colombian children to face official discrimination. Poverty, geography and armed conflict can limit children's ability to fully exercise their rights, for example, in their ability to access health and education services (see [Indigenous](#) and [Afro-Colombians](#)). Early marriage is possible, particularly for children in rural settings. DFAT assesses children in conflict-affected areas possibly face recruitment by non-state armed groups, although enlistment may be voluntary. The likelihood of recruitment is most acute for indigenous and Afro-Colombian children. Societal discrimination is generally unlikely but possible for indigenous and Afro-Colombian children and former child soldiers.

Teachers

3.84 Under Colombia's education system, teachers come from outside the communities in which they serve. Particularly in remote communities, they are considered authority figures.

3.85 In-country sources reported threats against teachers in conflict-affected areas. As outsiders, non-state armed groups viewed teachers with suspicion. They were often the extent of the state's presence in remote communities and, as state agents who may inform against them, were considered legitimate targets by non-state armed groups. Teachers may also experience threats because of objections to curricula or attempts to prevent [child recruitment](#). According to in-country sources, teachers were sometimes complicit in the recruitment of children. Non-state actors are known to use schools for [military operations](#).

3.86 *Decree 1782*, issued by the Ministry of National Education in August 2013, regulates the relocation of teachers for security reasons. Teachers are a specific population category eligible for protection through the [UNP](#).

3.87 DFAT assesses teachers who resist non-state armed groups or are perceived as enemies by them are almost certain to face intimidation, harassment and, possibly, violence. Official or societal discrimination against teachers is unlikely.

4. COMPLEMENTARY PROTECTION CLAIMS

HEALTH

4.1 The right to healthcare is enshrined in the 1991 Constitution, *Law 100/1993* and *Law 1715/2015*. Nearly all live births are attended by skilled personnel. Contraceptives are widely available. Abortion is legal up to 24 weeks of gestation. Specialist medical care is of high standard.

4.2 Healthcare coverage is near universal. The public system comprises a contributory scheme, for people who are formally employed and can afford to pay and a subsidised scheme for low-income, disadvantaged and unemployed people. All legal residents must belong to an *Entidad Promotora de Salud* (EPS, 'health promoting entity'), which organises medical appointments and pays associated bills. Co-payments apply for some services. In-country sources said these were generally affordable. Delays in obtaining EPS authorisation for appointments were not uncommon, particularly for complex procedures.

4.3 Disparities in the accessibility and quality of care between urban and rural areas are significant. Hospitals and clinics in major cities are highly regarded and attract medical tourists, including from Western countries. Facilities and services in rural areas are basic, with few healthcare workers. In some places, they may be entirely non-existent, requiring residents to travel for hours to access primary care. Active conflict and [mass confinement](#) can further limit access. The UN Secretary-General has documented attacks on healthcare facilities in the context of internal armed conflict. In-country sources said [non-state armed groups](#) forcibly recruited healthcare workers.

4.4 Private healthcare is well regarded but beyond the means of most. The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights reported in April 2025 Bogotá had some of the best private hospitals in Latin America.

4.5 Medications for common conditions are available and affordable. A wide variety can be purchased from pharmacies, including over the counter. Some medications can be obtained free with EPS approval.


4.6 DFAT assesses Colombians are almost certain to be able to access healthcare without discrimination. Quality and availability of services vary widely.

Mental Health

4.7 A large proportion of the population has first-hand exposure to violence and displacement. A National Mental Health Survey conducted in 2015 found 12 per cent of adolescents and nearly 10 per cent of adults were living with some form of mental illness. Prevalence rates were higher among people directly affected by conflict. Anxiety, depression and affective disorders were the most common forms of mental illness at the time of the 2015 survey. In-country sources reported high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in conflict-affected areas. [Indigenous](#)-majority Vaupés Department (Amazon region), among the least developed and most isolated parts of Colombia, has the highest suicide rate.

4.8 *Law 1616/2013* enshrines mental health as a fundamental right and guarantees the right to care. *Law 1448/2011* contains provisions for psychosocial support for [victims of Colombia's internal armed conflicts](#). A National Mental Health Policy was introduced in 1998, updated most recently in 2024. This emphasises prevention, comprehensive, inclusive and coordinated care and equitable access, particularly for [indigenous people](#), [Afro-Colombians](#), [LGBTQIA+ people](#) and people living in conflict-affected areas. In 2023, there were over 90,000 registered psychologists and over 1,600 psychiatrist specialists, most of them operating privately.

4.9 Mental healthcare services are unevenly distributed between urban and rural areas. There is greater accessibility in major cities, where mental healthcare professionals are concentrated. Care is available through the [public system](#), although wait times apply. Some public hospitals have psychiatric wards. According to the Special Registry of Health Service Providers, there were 208 national institutions providing dedicated mental health inpatient services for adults in 2024, encompassing over 8,200 beds. Of these, 75 per cent were in the private system, 68 per cent in departmental capitals, 34 per cent in Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla. Around 100 institutions provided dedicated inpatient services for minors, of which 86 per cent were in the private system. In-country sources said there was limited availability of mental healthcare services in rural, including conflict-affected, areas, where need was greatest.



4.10 DFAT assesses Colombians are almost certain to be able to access mental healthcare without discrimination. Quality and availability of services vary widely and may be inadequate, particularly in rural areas. Private care is unaffordable for the average Colombian. Those requiring care often reside in areas where services are less available.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

STATE PROTECTION

5.1 There are no laws or policies limiting access to state protection on the basis of [gender](#), [ethnicity](#), religion or [sexual orientation](#). While it is available, state protection may not always be accessible or effective, particularly in rural, conflict-affected areas with limited state presence and control. [Geography](#) and budgetary constraints can also limit access and effectiveness. According to in-country sources, people in rural areas were far less likely to have access to timely state protection than those in urban settings.

Police

5.2 The National Police of Colombia (*Policía Nacional de Colombia*, PNC) is responsible for domestic law enforcement. It is a civilian force, part of the Ministry of Defence. The PNC shares criminal investigation duties with the Technical Investigation Corps (*Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación*, also known as the Judicial Police) in the Office of the Attorney General (*Fiscalía General de la Nación*). In August 2025, the PNC had 180,000 uniformed personnel (76 per cent men, 24 per cent women). There are specialised police units for [women](#), [children](#) and counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, anti-kidnapping and anti-extortion operations.

5.3 The United States Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) describes the PNC as a 'professional organization'. In-country sources said the PNC was capable but often stretched. It was highly proficient in responding to kidnappings and extortion. There were variations in capability and effectiveness between urban and rural settings. The PNC had limited or no presence in rural areas controlled by non-state armed groups. Where it did, it was actively targeted.

5.4 According to in-country sources, police at lower levels were not well paid and career progression was limited, contributing to [corruption](#). Police corruption could take all forms, from bribes at the street level to sensitive information being shared with criminal groups, including by senior officers. Reports of police corruption were taken seriously, particularly in the context of counter-narcotics operations. Corrupt officers were arrested and prosecuted. Police misconduct can be reported to the PNC directly or through other [avenues](#).

5.5 In-country sources said police were responsive to criminal complaints in areas where they had a presence. Emergency hotlines are available, including for general emergencies and kidnappings. Immediate Reaction Units are contactable on a 24/7 basis. Response times can depend on location. See also [Gender-Based Violence](#).

Judiciary

5.6 The 1991 Constitution guarantees equality before the law and provides for due process, the presumption of innocence and the right to a defence, public trial without undue delay and appeal. The judiciary includes a Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Council of State (the highest administrative court) and lower courts organised by judicial district. Courts are generally independent but, according to in-country sources, underfunded and overburdened. There was a backlog in the courts. Criminal processes were cumbersome and delays common.

5.7 Colombia recognises special jurisdictions, including an [indigenous](#) jurisdiction for internal indigenous matters. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz*, JEP) adjudicates serious crimes committed during the [armed conflict](#) between state forces and the FARC, with a focus on restorative justice. Suspects who cooperate with the JEP and accept their guilt generally avoid prison. Instead, they undertake projects and engage in symbolic acts of reparation with their victims (temporary restrictions on their rights and freedoms may apply). The JEP issued its first sentences in September 2025. Sentences may be appealed by all parties involved, including victims.

5.8 Legal aid is available through [Defensoría del Pueblo](#) for defendants who cannot afford or otherwise obtain legal representation. Every person has the right to invoke *habeas corpus* and file a writ of protection (*tutela*) where they perceive their constitutional rights have been violated. A *tutela* action can be filed with any court and take any form (written, oral, formal or informal). Houses of Justice and Mobile Justice Brigades provide information, referrals and conflict resolution services in marginalised areas.

5.9 Non-state armed groups administer justice in areas they control. They are known to punish alleged thieves and drug dealers, with punishments ranging from public humiliation to death. They also resolve disputes.

Unidad Nacional de Protección (National Protection Unit)

5.10 The National Protection Unit (*Unidad Nacional de Protección*, UNP), established in 2011 by *Presidential Decree 4065*, provides protection services to people deemed by the government to be at extraordinary or extreme risk to their life, integrity, liberty and personal security because of their political, public, social or humanitarian activities. As outlined in *Presidential Decree 1066/2015*, among those eligible for protection are [opposition politicians](#), [social leaders](#), [trade union leaders](#), leaders of ethnic groups, witnesses of violations of international humanitarian law, [journalists](#) and social commentators, displaced persons, [teachers](#) and judges and prosecutors involved in the [JEP](#). The UNP can provide protection to individuals, groups or communities. Applications for protection can be submitted in person or online. Third parties may refer cases to the UNP for consideration. Processing times, theoretically, are three months. A 24/7 helpline is available for emergencies.

5.11 In-country sources said individual protection measures were contingent on the level of risk but typically involved the provision of bodyguards, bulletproof vests, vehicles (including armoured vehicles) and/or communication equipment. [Internal relocation](#) was another option. With security conditions deteriorating, demand for protection services had increased significantly, placing pressure on the UNP's resources and effectiveness (in January 2025, the UNP was providing protection to 15,000 individuals, up from 8,000 in August 2023). The burden of proof was high, responses were not always timely or appropriately tailored. The system was not foolproof. Beneficiaries had been killed or wounded (see, for example, [Journalists](#), [Trade Unionists](#) and [Political Opinion](#)). [Corruption](#) and politicisation were reported. Some, particularly in urban areas, had been granted protection when they did not need it, tying up resources. In November 2025, local media reported UNP personnel had escorted a convoy of [FARC dissidents](#) belonging to the EMBF, including the EMBF's leader (Calarcá).

5.12 The UNP makes an annual risk reassessment for all protection cases, adjusting measures as needed. If a risk is assessed to have diminished, protection is withdrawn. Where a new threat subsequently arises, a new request for protection may be submitted.

5.13 As with other forms of state protection, UNP protection is more likely to be effective in urban rather than rural settings.

Witness Protection

5.14 The Office of the Attorney General manages a protection program for people participating in criminal proceedings on the side of the state. The program is open to victims, witnesses and other participants (e.g. prosecutors and people providing expert testimony) deemed to be at extraordinary or extreme risk because of their participation. As part of the program, beneficiaries and their families are [relocated](#) and helped to establish new lives. They can apply for protection independently or be referred by state entities. Participation is voluntary. Beneficiaries may elect to exit witness protection.

5.15 According to in-country sources, witness protection measures were comprehensive but always involved an element of risk. Defendants typically belonged to powerful and highly capable criminal structures. The challenge was in the provision of ongoing protection. There were resourcing constraints. In some instances, in-country sources said protection abroad may be more prudent (e.g. in cases involving particularly high-profile defendants).

National Human Rights Institution

5.16 Colombia's national human rights institution, *Defensoría del Pueblo* (Ombudsman's Office), issues early warning alerts of likely human rights violations against civilians to state institutions for preventive action. *Defensoría del Pueblo* is mandated to receive, investigate and address complaints of human rights violations. Complaints can be submitted online, via telephone or in-person. *Defensoría del Pueblo's* powers and functions are enshrined in the 1991 Constitution.

5.17 *Defensoría del Pueblo* manages the Public Defender's Office. This provides [free legal services](#) to people who cannot obtain legal representation. *Defensoría del Pueblo* cannot initiate criminal proceedings but may request competent agencies do so. It can file legal actions, including class actions, [tutela](#) actions and *habeas corpus*.

5.18 At the time of writing, *Defensoría del Pueblo* held 'A' status from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, denoting full compliance with the Paris Principles relating to the independence, pluralism, powers and resourcing of national human rights institutions.

Corruption

5.19 Transparency International ranked Colombia 92nd out of 180 countries in its 2024 *Corruption Perceptions Index* (where one is perceived least corrupt and 180 most corrupt). Freedom House, an NGO, reports corruption occurs at multiple levels of public administration. OSAC notes regular reports of government corruption at the local level. In-country sources said officials outside major cities earned less and were more likely to solicit bribes to supplement their incomes.

5.20 According to in-country sources, organised crime had a corrupting effect on state institutions, real or perceived, eroding public trust. Fears of infiltration by criminal elements and associated reprisals could discourage people from seeking state protection, particularly in rural areas. More broadly, state forces were distrusted in parts of the country because of historical links to right-wing paramilitaries and conflict-related violations against civilians. Crime was underreported. Corruption at multiple levels, including among state forces, facilitated drug trafficking. Criminal groups were known to coerce transport and port workers into acting corruptly to move drugs, including by issuing death threats against family members. The United States Department of State, in its most recent investment climate statement for Colombia (2024), identified customs, taxation and public works contracts as areas where corruption occurred. See also [Police](#).

5.21 In November 2025, local media reported the EMBF, a [FARC offshoot](#), had penetrated senior levels of the military and intelligence services. Among other things, the EMBF reportedly used these connections to access classified information on troop movements. Officials denied the allegations. Investigations were ongoing at the time of writing.

5.22 Bribery of or by a public official is a criminal offence. OSAC reported in February 2025 the Colombian Government 'generally implemented these laws effectively'. Investigations can result in convictions, including of senior figures. In August 2025, former president Álvaro Uribe was sentenced to 12 years house arrest for witness tampering and procedural fraud, the first former Colombian president to be convicted of a crime (Uribe's conviction was overturned in October 2025). In January 2024, prosecutors charged Nicolás Petro, a local politician and son of President Petro, with money laundering and illicit enrichment linked to drug trafficking.


5.23 A national anti-corruption hotline operates 24/7. Suspected corruption may also be reported directly to *Defensoría del Pueblo*, the PNC or the Office of the Attorney General.

INTERNAL RELOCATION

5.24 The 1991 Constitution enshrines the right to freedom of movement. Internal relocation occurs, particularly from rural to urban areas, which offer better services and employment opportunities. Movement between major cities happens frequently (domestic air services and major highways are good). Some internal relocation is the result of [conflict-induced displacement](#). Remote geography, poverty and absence of support networks, accommodation and livelihood options can pose practical obstacles to relocation, particularly for [indigenous](#) and [Afro-Colombians](#).

5.25 The presence and actions of non-state armed groups can further restrict mobility. This includes active conflict between groups, the presence of illegal checkpoints, anti-personnel mines and other unexploded ordnance and direct orders to remain in place. In some instances, the presence and actions of non-state armed groups can result in mass confinement, where communities are unable to leave their homes or immediate vicinity for extended periods, disrupting access to food, healthcare, education and sources of income. Indigenous and Afro-Colombians are most affected. The ICRC reports 89,000 people were confined over the course of 2024, 41 per cent of them in Chocó Department (the remainder occurred in Antioquia, Arauca, Bolívar, Caquetá, Cauca, Córdoba, La Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño, Putumayo and Valle del Cauca). According to OCHA, nearly 100,000 people experienced mass confinement between January and June 2025.

5.26 Voluntary internal relocation may not be a feasible option for people living in active conflict zones and/or areas controlled by non-state armed groups. According to in-country sources, non-state actors controlled entry and exit points in territories under their control and operated illegal checkpoints, making it difficult for persons of interest to leave. Permission and security guarantees may be needed from multiple actors to move from one area to another. Requirements were fluid and could change rapidly. InSight Crime, an international NGO, reported in June 2024 [FARC](#)



[dissident groups](#) issued identification to people living in territories under their control as a means to control entry and exit. This was reported in Antioquia, Cauca, Huila, Meta, Nariño, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

5.27 Internal relocation from a conflict-affected area, should it occur, may relieve but not eliminate the risk of harm for persons of interest to non-state armed groups, unless under police protection. According to in-country sources, if they wanted, groups could locate targets who moved to other parts of Colombia, including major cities like Bogotá, Medellín and Cali. Non-state actors had connections to local criminal entities. The Gulf Clan, for example, had urban reach through its [franchise model](#). *Sicarios* were cheap, widely available and easy to hire. People were [corruptible](#). Targets could be tracked via social media. Threats were passed down generationally: persons of interest who relocated exposed family members remaining in place to reprisals. For many people, this reduced the incentive to relocate.

5.28 In-country sources said not all people who fled non-state armed groups would be targeted for retribution. People with detailed knowledge of a group's operations and ability to compromise their operations (e.g. by acting as state informants) were most likely to be targeted. The ability of individuals of this profile to evade detection through internal relocation was limited according to in-country sources.

5.29 DFAT assesses voluntary internal relocation from active conflict zones, including for persons of interest to non-state armed groups, is unlikely to be viable. Where it occurs, it is possible for internal relocation to provide safety, although this will depend on individual circumstances.

TREATMENT OF RETURNEES

Exit and Entry Procedures

5.30 The 1991 Constitution provides the right to enter and exit Colombia. Entry and exit is through authorised airports, seaports, land and river borders. Major international airports are located in Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla and Cartagena. Security, immigration and customs procedures at major airports are robust. Corruption is unlikely. In-country sources reported controls at airports were much stronger than at land and maritime borders. People travelling through El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá, Colombia's main airport, can be identified through iris scanning, facial features and fingerprints.

5.31 Most Colombian citizens can exit the country without restriction. Exceptions apply to criminal defendants and people subject of arrest warrants and court orders. Colombia has systems to identify and prevent persons of interest from leaving. In-country sources said these systems were strongest at airports, where the ability of persons of interest to leave undetected was limited. Exit using [fraudulent documents](#) was possible, although significantly less so at airports, which were better equipped to detect such documents. Colombia has long land borders with five countries, often characterised by rugged terrain. According to in-country sources, these borders were generally porous and provided opportunities for unauthorised movement. Bribery of officials at land borders was possible.

5.32 Seeking asylum abroad is not a criminal offence in Colombia. Authorities would generally not be aware a returnee has sought and failed to secure asylum in Australia. Individuals of this profile with valid travel documents would be processed like anybody else on return. It would be rare for them to experience undue official attention.

Conditions for Returnees

5.33 It is rare for returnees to attract adverse official attention or social stigma for failing to secure asylum abroad. As Colombian citizens, returnees can access government services provided they have a valid [national identity card](#). Ordinarily, returnees can utilise family and other social networks to aid their reintegration. Returned victims of Colombia's internal armed conflicts may be eligible for [reparations](#).

5.34 Returnees from Western countries are not specifically targeted for kidnapping or extortion. According to in-country sources, any Colombian with real or perceived wealth was a potential target for criminals. Colombians travelled abroad, including for work, regularly. The more ostentatious they were, the greater the risk. Such targeting was opportunistic, not systematic. Generally, returnees from Australia were not considered wealthy by Colombian standards. For broader security considerations, see [Security Situation](#).

5.35 The 1991 Constitution, *Penal Code 2000* and *Code of Criminal Procedure 2004* protect against double jeopardy. In-country sources said this included circumstances in which the same facts had been subjected to

proceedings in another country. They were not aware of double jeopardy occurring. Criminal returnees may experience official scrutiny, depending on their profile. Colombian officials would not necessarily know a returnee was convicted of a crime in Australia, particularly if the offence was low-level.

5.36 The death penalty is constitutionally prohibited. The last execution took place in the early 20th century.

DOCUMENTATION

National Identity Cards

5.37 Government-issued identity cards are mandatory and serve as the primary form of identification in Colombia. They take three forms: *Cédula de Ciudadanía* ('Citizenship Card') for Colombians 18 and above; *Tarjeta de Identidad* ('Identity Card') for minors from the age of seven; and *Cédula de Extranjería* ('Foreigner's Identity Card') for foreign citizens over the age of seven residing legally in Colombia. For children under seven, birth certificates are used for identity purposes.

5.38 A valid *Cédula de Ciudadanía* is required for official and commercial transactions. Among other things, it is needed to enter into formal employment, file a tax return, access [healthcare](#), enrol in higher education, vote, bank, obtain a [passport](#), purchase or lease property and enter into a contract. It may be used instead of a passport for travel to some regional countries, including Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Notaries require a *cédula* to process deeds and powers of attorney. According to in-country sources, a *cédula* number was fundamental for day-to-day transactions like grocery shopping, purchasing pharmaceuticals and paying bills. See also [Prevalence of Fraud](#).

5.39 *Cédulas* are available in physical and, for cards issued since December 2020, digital form. Digital cards are accessed through a secure smartphone application (*Cédula Digital Colombia*). *Cédulas* are yellow. Physical cards issued from December 2020 are polycarbonate, with 10-year validity. They contain, on the front, the bearer's photograph, name, nationality, height, sex, blood type and Rh factor, date and place of birth, date and place of issue, date of expiry, digital signature and unique personal identification number (*Número Único de Identificación Personal*, or NUIP). NUIPs appear in adult passports and double as tax identification numbers. The back contains a digital signature of the registrar, a machine-readable zone and QR code encrypted with biographic and biometric information, including fingerprints. A ghost image of the bearer appears on both sides. *Cédulas* issued before December 2020 have a laminated hologram and photo-resistant security background, with the bearer's fingerprint and barcode on the back. They contain similar information as cards issued after December 2020, albeit spread across the front and back. *Cédulas*, particularly those issued since December 2020, have sophisticated security features. In-country sources considered them highly secure.

5.40 *Tarjetas de Identidad* are blue. They contain the bearer's photograph, name and NUIP on the front, their date and place of birth, sex, blood type and Rh factor, fingerprint, date and place of issue, digital signature of the registrar and a barcode with biographic and biometric information on the back. *Tarjetas* are valid until the cardholder reaches 18, at which point they must transition to a *cédula*.

5.41 The National Registry of Civil Status (*Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil*) issues *cédulas* and *tarjetas*. Fees for initial issuance do not apply, only for replacing a lost, stolen or damaged card or having a card renewed or rectified (e.g. because of a legal change in name or [gender](#)). First-time issuance requires a Colombian birth certificate and knowledge of the applicant's blood type and Rh factor. Applicants must attend a civil registry office to have their photograph and fingerprints taken (appointments can be made online). Colombians abroad requiring a new, rectified or replacement identity card can apply through their nearest Colombian diplomatic mission. Processing and issuance can take several weeks (a proof of application, known as a *contraseña*, may be used in the interim). Once issued, cards must be collected in person from the office where the application was submitted (a fingerprint scan may be required as part of the verification process). The status of an identity document can be confirmed through the website of the [National Registry of Civil Status](#) (the cardholder's NUIP is required).

5.42 Foreign citizens over the age of seven residing legally in Colombia must hold a *Cédula de Extranjería*, issued by Migration Colombia (*Migración Colombia*). Applications are made online and must include copies of the applicant's passport data page and Colombian visa. Fees apply. Cards include the bearer's photograph, name, nationality, date of birth, sex, blood type and Rh factor, resident or migrant number, digital signature, fingerprint and date of issue and expiry. The validity period is determined by the validity of the cardholder's visa.

Passports

5.43 Colombia permits dual citizenship. Citizenship can be acquired through birth, descent, marriage or naturalisation. Renounced citizenship can be recovered. A person born abroad to a Colombian parent is a Colombian citizen by birth. To obtain a Colombian birth certificate, their birth must be registered at a Colombian diplomatic mission.

5.44 Ordinary Colombian passports have a burgundy cover and are valid for 10 years. Proof of Colombian citizenship and identity, including a valid [national identity card](#) or birth certificate, are required to obtain a passport. Passports are issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Applications and payments can be made online. The applicant must attend a passport office in Bogotá or, if located outside Bogotá, an authorised government office to finalise their application, including having their photograph taken and providing their signature and fingerprints. Appointments are made as part of the online application process. Colombians abroad can obtain passports through Colombian diplomatic missions. Passports must be collected in person.

5.45 Colombia introduced e-Passports with embedded biographic and biometric data in September 2015. The data page is made of polycarbonate. It contains the holder's photograph, digital signature and personal information, including, for citizens over 18, their [cédula](#) number. Colombian passports are highly secure.

Registro Único de Víctimas (Single Registry of Victims)

5.46 The Single Registry of Victims (*Registro Único de Víctimas*, RUV) is an official registry of people directly affected by internal armed conflict in Colombia since 1985. The Registry is maintained by the Victim's Unit (*Unidad para las Víctimas*), a government entity. At the time of writing, over 10 million people were registered, including deceased victims, victims of enforced disappearance and Colombians residing abroad.

5.47 *Law 1448/2011* defines a victim as anybody who, individually or collectively, has suffered serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights standards in the context of Colombia's internal armed conflicts on or after 1 January 1985. This includes close family members of victims of homicide or enforced disappearance, children conceived as a result of rape and people who suffered harm while intervening to render assistance or prevent the victimising event from occurring. The law recognises victimising events committed by state and non-state actors. People linked to non-state actors are not considered victims except for people forcibly recruited as children, provided they left the group before they turned 18. See the Victim's Unit's [Victimization Risk Index](#) for risk of victimisation by municipality.

5.48 At the time of writing, over 7.8 million people registered in the RUV were legally entitled to individual or collective reparations. These include financial compensation, land restitution, exemption from military service (otherwise compulsory for men from the age of 18) and humanitarian, educational, housing and medical support. [Psychosocial rehabilitation](#) is provided on request, including through virtual means (e.g. for victims residing abroad). The following victimising events are eligible for reparations: homicide, enforced disappearance, kidnapping, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, crimes against sexual freedom and integrity, injuries causing disability, forced displacement and the forced recruitment of [children](#). The quantum of financial compensation is determined by the crime to which the victim was subjected. The amount is paid in a lump sum. Funds can be transferred electronically. According to in-country sources, only a small proportion of victims had received financial compensation or land restitution as of July 2025. This was attributed to the large number of eligible persons and budgetary constraints.

5.49 Applicants within Colombia must outline their claim at a local Public Prosecutor's or Ombudsman's Office. The claim must include specific details of the victimising event/s. Documentary supporting evidence may be provided but is not mandatory. The information is recorded in a declaration form, signed by the applicant and the attending official, and sent to the Victim's Unit for assessment. The Unit has 60 working days to process the claim but may take longer in complex cases. The decision is communicated through a written document known as an Administrative Act. For approved claims, the document outlines the reparations to which the applicant is entitled. Refusals can be appealed. People residing abroad can make a claim at their nearest Colombian diplomatic mission. The application process is free.

5.50 At the time of writing, the Victim's Unit was accepting applications for inclusion in the RUV only for victimising events that occurred after 10 June 2011 (applicants had two years from the occurrence of the event to apply). It

stopped receiving applications for events occurring between 1 January 1985 and 10 June 2011 on 10 June 2015. *Law 1448/2011* and its associated provisions expire on 10 June 2031.

5.51 Registered victims can obtain an accreditation certificate, known as a ‘victim letter’, confirming their inclusion in the RUV and the victimising event/s they experienced. This can be obtained in-person, through Victim Assistance Centres located countrywide, online or via telephone. No fees apply. Colombians residing abroad recognised as victims can obtain the letter through a Colombian diplomatic mission. In-country sources were not aware of fraudulent victim letters. Fraud of any nature involving the RUV is a criminal offence. Suspected fraud can be reported directly to the RUV, including by telephone and email.

5.52 People victimised in the context of internal armed conflict before 1 January 1985 are not eligible for inclusion in the RUV and associated benefits. *Law 1448/2011* provides these people the right to truth, symbolic reparation measures and guarantees of non-repetition. Like anybody else, they may seek [judicial](#) recourse.

Documentation in relation to Criminal Complaints

5.53 Criminal complaints are typically reported to the Office of the Attorney General or [police](#). They can be made orally or in writing, in person, through virtual channels or via telephone.

5.54 People reporting criminal complaints to the Office of the Attorney General or police are issued a reference number. If a complaint is assessed to constitute a crime, the matter is assigned to a prosecutor for further action and the complainant provided a Unique Criminal Notice Number (*Número Único de Noticia Criminal*, NUNC). Updates on the status of a complaint can be sought in person, through virtual channels or via telephone, citing the relevant NUNC. A copy of a criminal complaint can be requested by the complainant or their legal representative.

Prevalence of Fraud

5.55 Falsifying, forging or obtaining a document under false pretences are criminal offences under the *Penal Code 2000*. Prison terms of between one and 10 years apply.

5.56 In-country sources said government-issued [identity documents](#) were difficult to forge given their security and biometric features. Documents issued by private entities were far likelier to be forged. Education histories, employment records and bank statements were frequently forged. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, citing local sources, reported in June 2024 police reports and documents issued by the Office of the Attorney General lacked strong security features and were susceptible to forgery.

5.57 Genuine identity documents can be obtained through fraudulent means. According to in-country sources, genuine [passports](#) had been issued by corrupt officials using the [cédula](#) numbers of people who no longer lived in Colombia, had never obtained a passport or were deceased. Passports had been issued in this way in areas along the Caribbean Coast to foreign nationals seeking asylum abroad (on the perceived basis Colombian nationals were more likely to be granted asylum given Colombia’s history of armed conflict). There were also historical examples of passports being obtained using genuine but fraudulently obtained birth certificates. Local media reported in 2019 and 2020 high-level criminals obtaining genuine *cédulas* with the collusion of registry officials.

5.58 Authorities have dismantled criminal networks, including immigration and civil registry officials, specialising in fraudulent birth certificates, *cédulas* and passports. These networks typically engage in people smuggling, catering to foreign nationals seeking onward travel to the United States or Europe. Networks of this nature were uncovered in May 2024 (Barranquilla), March 2024 (Bogotá) and October 2022 (Bolívar Department).

5.59 In-country sources said the ubiquity of *cédulas*, the biometric information they contained and high volume of [touchpoints](#) associated with them made it possible for officials to verify somebody’s identity. ‘Everything’, from bank accounts, medical documents, driver’s licenses, passports and criminal records or complaints, was linked back to one’s *cédula* and therefore traceable. Likewise, highly bureaucratic processes meant officials could determine if a document, government-issued or otherwise, was fraudulent.

5.60 See [RUV](#) for documentation relating to the Single Registry of Victims.