

COLOMBIA

FLAG



FACTS AND STATISTICS

Location: Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Panama and Venezuela, and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Ecuador and Panama

Capital: Bogota

Population: 49 million (2019 est.)

Ethnic Groups: mestizo 58%, white 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, mixed black-Amerindian 3%, Amerindian 1%

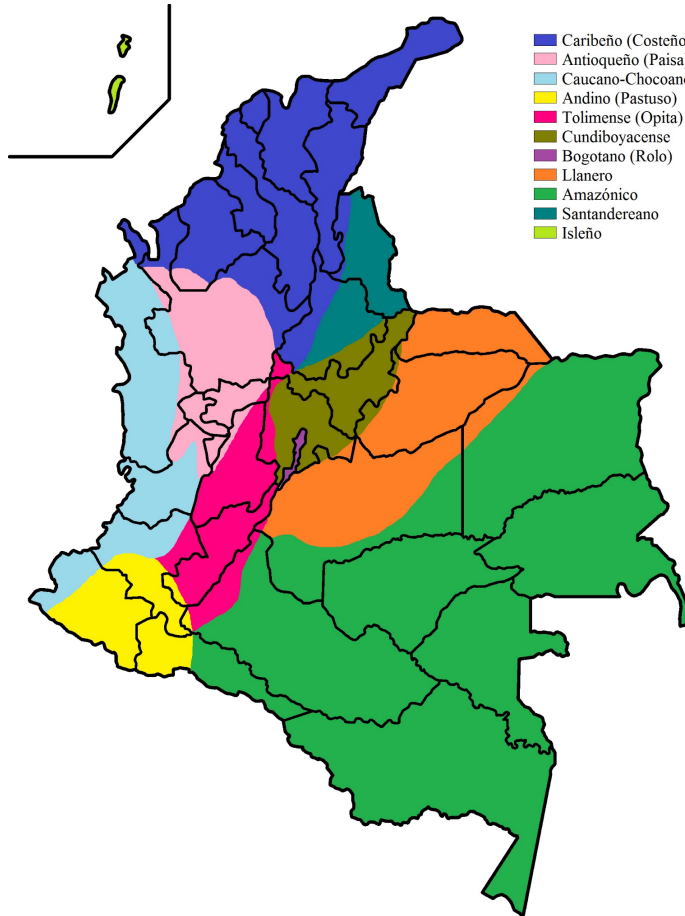
Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%



LANGUAGE IN COLOMBIA

The official language of Colombia is Spanish and spoken by around 43 million people.

- In addition there are approximately 500,000 speakers of American Indian languages.
- Map shows the different dialects



COLOMBIAN PEOPLE, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Catholicism

- Most Colombians would consider themselves to be Roman Catholics.
- The Church has historically been a very important influence over personal affairs such as marriage and family life.

- The parish church is often seen as the centre of a community, with the local priest representing divine authority and leadership.
- The church also has some influence in areas such as education, social welfare and union organization.

The Role of the Family

- The family takes centre stage in the social structure.
- It acts as a source of support and advice and therefore great loyalty is shown to families. Although extended families rarely live under one roof, apart from in rural areas, many still live very close and frequent one another's houses often.
- It is still common for children remain at home until they marry.
- The elderly are generally revered for their age and experience.

Hierarchies

- Colombia can be termed a hierarchical society.
- People earn respect due to age and position.
- Older people are naturally perceived as being wise and as a result are afforded great respect. You will always see the oldest person in a group served their food and drinks first.
- With this position also comes responsibility - Colombians expect the most senior person, whether at home or at work, to make decisions.

ETIQUETTE AND MANNERS IN COLOMBIA

Meeting and Greeting

- Men shake hands with direct eye contact.
- While shaking hands, use the appropriate greeting for the time of day: "buenos dias" (good day), "buenas tardes" (good afternoon), or "buenas noches" (good evening/night).
- Women often grasp forearms rather than shaking hands.
- Once a friendship has developed, greetings become warmer and a lot more hands on - men will embrace and pat each other on the shoulder (known as an "abrazo") and women kiss once on the right cheek.
- Most Colombians have both a maternal and paternal surname and will use both.
- The father's surname is listed first and is the one used in conversation.
- Always refer to people by the appropriate honorific title and their surname.

Gift Giving Etiquette

Gifts are given for birthdays and Christmas or the Epiphany (January 6th). In Colombia a girl's 15th birthday is considered an important milestone.

If you plan to give gifts in Colombia, here are some handy tips

- When going to a Colombian's home, bring fruit, a potted plant, or quality chocolates for the hostess.
- Flowers should be sent in advance.
- Do not give lilies or marigolds as they are used at funerals. Roses are liked.
- If you are going to a girl's 15th birthday, gold is the usual gift.
- Imported alcohol (especially spirits) are very expensive and make excellent gifts.
- Wrapped gifts are not opened when received.

Dining Etiquette

Dining etiquette is quite formal in Colombia as they tend to give importance to decorum and presentation.

Below are some basic tips - if you are ever unsure the general rule is "observe and follow":

- Wait to be seated by the host.
- Hands should be kept visible when eating.
- Do not rest elbows on the table.
- The host will say "buen provecho" (enjoy or have a good meal) as an invitation to start eating.
- It is polite to try everything you are given.
- Unusually all food is eaten with utensils - even fruit is cut into pieces with a knife and fork.
- It is considered polite to leave a small amount of food on your plate when you have finished eating.
- Do not use a toothpick at the table.