

Colombia



Introduction

Colombia has a population of approximately 33 Million with an ethnic composition of 58 percent mestizo, 20 percent European, 14 percent mulatto, and the remaining of African descent (living on the north coastal areas), and mixed African-Amerindian. Pure-blooded Amerindians now constitute only 1 percent of the population. The Republic of Colombia is a unitary, multiparty republic with two legislative houses: the 102-seat Senate and the 161-seat House of Representatives. The president is elected to a single four-year term and cannot succeed himself. The president is both chief of state and head of government.

Spanish is the official language, however, some Amerindians speak only their native languages. Many business people understand English. The vast majority of Colombians (95 percent) are Roman Catholic. The Colombia constitution guarantees freedom of religion.

Fun Fact

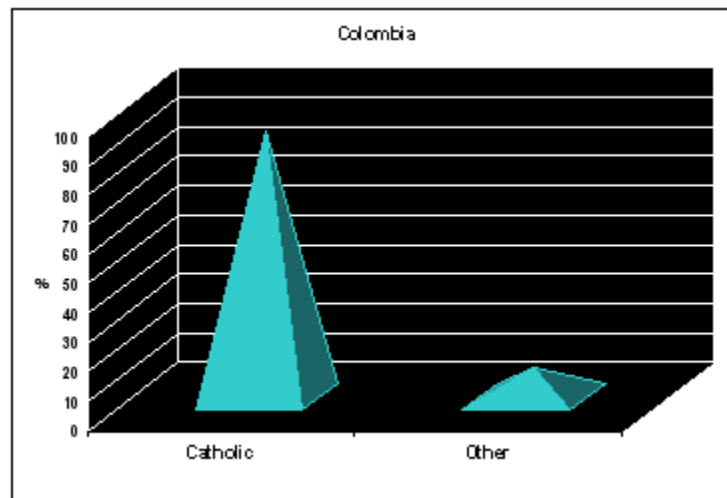
Colombian women are among the most politically active in Latin America, in spite of cultural restrictions on their social and work behavior. Colombia is divided by three mountain ranges, and this has led to the development of strong regional movements. When these movements fail to find common ground with the government in Bogota, guerrilla movements (usually left-wing) evolve.

Geert Hofstede Analysis Colombia

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The Geert Hofstede analysis for Colombia is similar to other Latin American countries where there is very strong uncertainty avoidance, large power distance, and low individualism. This is indicative of a society that has a high concern for rules, regulations, and controls, is slow to accept change, and is risk adverse. There is a high emphasis placed on close ties with individuals, or relationships, whereby everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. There are significant inequalities of power and wealth within the society. Colombia has one of the highest masculinity rankings in Latin America. This indicates that the country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation of roles. The male dominates a significant portion of the society and power structure. [More Details](#)

Religion in Colombia



* WORLD FACTBOOK 2002

Appearance

- For dress, formality increases as you move inland. It is important to adopt conservative business attire inland. Suits in dark colors are preferred. Women should dress conservatively and modestly: a suit or dress
- Colombians stand closer together when conversing than North Americans, however they engage in less physical contact during conversation than other South Americans

- It is impolite to yawn in public
- Colombian women will often substitute the gesture of holding forearms for a handshake
- Colombians indicate that someone is stingy by tapping their fingers on their elbow
- The "O.K." gesture (thumb and forefinger curled into a circle) when placed as a circle over one's nose indicates that someone is homosexual
- Two pointing fingers (as North Americans would use to indicate length) is an obscene gesture in Colombia
- Avoid putting your feet up on a table or other piece of furniture
- Women visitors should be especially sensitive about making any glance or gesture that might be considered flirtatious

Behavior

- Schedule business appointments in advance
- Punctuality is relaxed; although as a foreigner you are expected to be on time
- Have business cards printed in English on one side and the translation Spanish on the other. Present the card with the Spanish side facing your Colombian colleague
- Business people prefer relaxed conversation before business
- Lunch is the main meal of the day and a popular choice for a business meal
- Typically, the person who has initiated the invitation will pay for a meal in a restaurant, although you may have to fight for the check even though you have issued the invitation
- Let the host make a toast first, then you might wish to make one

Communications

- Handshaking the customary greeting in business; don't rush it. Colombians take a long time in greetings; they feel it conveys respect for the other person. Among friends, expect the *abrazo*, or embrace
- Titles are important and should be included on business cards. Address a person directly by

using his or her title only. A Ph.D. or a physician is called *Doctor*. Teachers prefer the title *Profesor*, engineers go by *Ingeniero*, architects are *Arquitecto*, and lawyers are *Abogado*. Persons who do not have professional titles should be addressed as Mr., Mrs., or Miss, plus their surnames. In Spanish these are

- Mr. = *Senor*
- Mrs. = *Senora*
- Miss = *Senorita*

• Most Hispanics have two surnames: one from their father, which is listed first, followed by one from their mother. Only the father's surname is used when addressing someone

• Bullfighting is popular; don't make negative comments

• Good conversation topics: history, culture, soccer, coffee, gold museum

• Bad conversation topics: drug traffic, politics, religion