

COUNTRY FACT SHEET 2021



Colombia



AREA

1.141.748 km² ¹.



POPULATION

(LAST OFFICIAL CENSUS 2018)

48,258,494

Population in 2020: 50,882,900².



COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION

(ACCORDING TO THE 2018 OFFICIAL CENSUS)

51.2% women / 48.8% men³. 87.58% whites and mestizos, 9.34% Afro-Colombians (blacks, mulattos, palenqueras/os and raizales), 4.4% indigenous and 0.006% Rom (gypsies).



ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION

(2020)

24,802,460⁴.



GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) 2020

In 2020, the national GDP was 271,438 million dollars at current prices⁵. The GDP presented a drop of 6.8 compared to 2019.



GDP 2021 (TREND)

In the second quarter of 2021, the Gross Domestic Product in its original series grew 17.6% compared to the same period of the previous year.

¹ The statistics presented here have been obtained from the latest data provided by the National Department of Statistics (DANE).

² Source: *CPAL - Naciones Unidas*

³ Source: *CPAL - Naciones Unidas*

⁴ Source: *Banco Mundial*

⁵ Source: *CPAL - Naciones Unidas*

Overview of the socio-economic situation

¹ The statistics provided here are part of the report on labor informality presented by the National Department of Statistics (DANE) based on the Integrated Household Survey (GEIH), for the months of June to August 2021.

² Source: *La República*

EMPLOYMENT / UNEMPLOYMENT

In August 2021, the unemployment rate was 12.3%, which represented a reduction of 4.5 percentage points compared to the same month in 2020 (16.8%). Within this national total, among men the unemployment rate for August 2021 was 9.4%, for women it was 16.4%. At the national level, the unemployed population in August 2021 fell by 914 thousand people compared to the same month in 2020, which reflects a variation of -23.0% and amounts to 3.1 million unemployed people.

The global participation rate was 61.2%, which meant an increase of 1.9 percentage points compared to the same period in 2020 (59.3%). Finally, the employment rate was 53.7%, which represented an increase of 4.4 percentage points compared to August 2020 (49.3%).

In August 2021, the employed population of the country was 21.7 million people, compared to 19.7 million in the same month of 2020, which represents an increase of 10.1%. The 13 main cities and metropolitan areas contributed 5.4 percentage points to the national variation. In these territories there was an employed population of 10.3 million people, 1.1 million more compared to August 2020. Considering sex and age ranges, the increase in the employed population in the country for this period centered on women aged 25 to 54 years (809 thousand).

ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE POPULATION

In August 2021 the unemployed population of the country was 15.7 million people. This is a variation of -3.6% (-580 thousand unemployed) with respect to what was informed in August of the previous year. According to age and sex ranges, the unemployed population of men decreased 2.7% and that of women decreased 4.0%. Of the 580 thousand people who came out of unemployment in August 2021, 902 thousand were dedicated to housework (733 thousand women and 169 thousand men).

INFORMALITY¹

The proportion of informally employed workers in the 13 cities and metropolitan areas was 46.4% for June - August 2021.

In the period between June and August 2021, in the 13 cities and metropolitan areas the proportion of informally employed men was 45.4%, while this proportion for women was 47.6%. In the same period of the previous year, the proportion of informal workers for men and women was 46.0% and 46.8%, respectively.

POVERTY

The poverty figures in Colombia are dramatic and encompass almost half of the population. In 2020, monetary poverty was 42.5% and extreme monetary poverty was 15.1% of the national total.

Thus, one year after the global health crisis broke out, and as a result of the restrictions on mobility due to the declaration of the state of exception produced by neoliberalism, monetary poverty increased in Colombia by 6.8 percentage points compared to 2019, when it was 35.7%.

More than 21 million people currently live in poverty in Colombia, and they live on less than \$ 331,688 Colombian pesos (COP) per month, a figure that the National Department of Statistics places as the measure of poverty in Colombia.

Disaggregated by sex, 46.7% of women in Colombia live in poverty, compared to 40.1% of men. After the pandemic, the gap of 6.6 percentage points (pp) is in line with what has been evidenced in the labor market figures, since women have been the most affected sector in terms of unemployment and inactivity². The situation becomes more dramatic considering that 7.47 million people in Colombia live in conditions of extreme poverty, with less than half of the figure determining the poverty line, and that their income does not allow them to eat the daily calories needed to stay healthy.

Highlights of the 2021 situation

¹In Forero, Lyda, Urrea, Danilo. Levantamientos populares en Colombia: antecedentes, sujetos políticos y perspectivas. 2021. Published at www.tni.org.

²Cited from: *Escuela Nacional Sindical*

The social uprising that began in Colombia in 2019 still continues, with differences in intensity but with periodic mobilizations. Duque's government tried to lay blame on the pandemic for the social crisis, but the organized social movement, with an important participation of trade unionism, has shown that the crisis started earlier and that it worsened as a result of the mismanagement of the pandemic on the part of the government, which has privileged repression and which has interrupted democratic dialogue and negotiation.

The government's policy during the pandemic has supported a strong repression that resulted in murders, forced disappearances and in a reactivation of massacres throughout the country. Likewise, human rights attacks and violations are all too common, and center especially on political and social leaders.

Duque has rejected the 41 recommendations made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the handling of the crisis and the social outbreak that led to the national strike which, from April 28, 2021, when it began, only up to May 25 of the same year, resulted in "955 victims of physical violence, 43 murders allegedly committed by members of the Public Force, 1,388 arbitrary arrests against protesters, 595 violent interventions in the framework of peaceful protests, 46 victims of eye injuries, 165 cases of firearm shots and 22 victims of sexual violence by the public force"¹.

In light of these serious situations and of the government's refusal to comply with the recommendations of international organizations, the union movement will organize an international mission to seek support and to demand that the government comply with the recommendations of the IACHR. By the same token, ILO support has been requested to analyze the violations of workers' rights which ensued from the decrees and of the legal framework issued by Duque under the state of exception.

Colombian unionism remains one of the referents to maintain unity in the National Unemployment Committee, a Committee that took an active role in the 2021 uprisings and which continued negotiations with the national government.

TRADE UNIONISTS WHO WERE FATAL VICTIMS OF REPRESSION

According to the eighth edition of the Global Rights Index, 22 trade unionists were assassinated in Colombia between April 2020 and March 2021, making Colombia the most insecure country for union leaders in the world. "Most of the crimes remain unsolved, as the Government still does not assign the necessary means to carry out a timely investigation and prosecute those responsible for these crimes. By not granting them adequate protection, the lives of trade unionists and their families are still under threat"².

Actions and complaints from (national and international) trade unions and from other social sectors

Much emphasis has been placed on reporting the appropriation of resources by the national government through the Ministry of Technologies and Communications (MINTIC) in one of the most notorious cases of corruption in recent years, this time with contracts for Internet access infrastructure in offline areas, many of them rural, which resulted in the resignation of the minister of that portfolio, Karen Abudinen, who recently fled to the United States to avoid the investigation process initiated by the Supreme Court of Justice. This was a new asylum application case to avoid the action of the Colombian justice system.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Despite the consequences of the pandemic and the violation of workers' rights it has caused, progress has been made in the signing of collective agreements with some conglomerate companies, such as Ahoover.

UNION PROPOSALS AND INITIATIVES

The three national confederations have worked in the Department of Bolívar towards the construction of a trade union movement in the northern sub-region of Colombia. Given the government's refusal to engage in social and political dialogue, work is being done throughout the country to forge a unity process within unions coupled with the reactivation of unions' political action.

In the construction sector, a high level of social dialogue and labor agreements stands out, which has taken place without the workers having to renounce their class vision, and resulted in the achievement of an important collective agreement. Work is being done on the design of a political training project for new union cadres.

The inclusion of young people has gained ground in the trade union struggle in Colombia. In spaces such as SINTRACOLOMBINA, the defense and reconstruction of union activities has continued, precisely through the inclusion of young people, who have also been protagonists of popular uprisings. As a result of protest actions and of the vindication of the social and political struggle in the country, new collective contracts were negotiated.

Technological changes pose new challenges to trade unions, considering the replacement of the workforce by automated processes, and the youth are not immune to the difficulties that this trend entails. For this reason, to favor the inclusion of young people and to face the challenges posed by the use of new technologies and by platform economies, trade unionism proposes tripartite dialogues in order to reach agreements, and in this regard, TUCA's support will allow for greater pressure to be exerted against companies and undemocratic practices. Youth participation depends on supporting education and communication processes where they learn about and value the history of union struggle.



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