

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Colombia: Requirements and procedures to obtain a national ID card [citizenship card] (cédula de ciudadanía, cédula); content, appearance, and security features; stolen cards and whether an individual with the stolen card has access to other personal information, including identity documents, banking, and medical records (2020–January 2022) [COL200901.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a National ID Card

1.1 Application for an Initial Card

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia (Cancillería de Colombia), the national ID card is the identification document used by Colombian citizens who are over 18 years of age; the National Civil Registry (Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil) is the authority responsible for issuing and delivering national ID cards (Colombia n.d.a). The same source notes that Colombian citizens [translation] "by birth or adoption" who have never been issued the national ID card may apply at no cost (Colombia n.d.a). The National Civil Registry website indicates that applicants must apply in person at [translation] "any" Registry office or Consulate (Colombia n.d.b). The same source states that some offices require appointments in advance (Colombia n.d.b). Government sources note that applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Be over eighteen years old (Colombia n.d.b).
- For Colombians by birth: Submit a civil registry of birth (*registro civil de nacimiento*) and identity card (if they have one) (Colombia n.d.a) or either a copy of the civil registry of birth "with space for notes" or an original biometric identity card (Colombia n.d.b). Individuals born before 15 June 1938 can use their baptism certificate [translation] "with attestation of competence" as proof (Colombia n.d.b).
- Children born in Colombia to foreigners: Submit a copy of the civil registry of birth; if that document does not include a marginal note reading "'Valido para demostrar nacionalidad'" (Valid as proof of nationality), other proof must be provided, such as the mother or father's home address in Colombia at the time of [the applicant's] birth (Colombia n.d.b).
- For Colombians by adoption: Submit the letter of naturalization or registration resolution (Colombia n.d.a) or a copy of one of the aforementioned documents (Colombia n.d.b).
- Identify the blood type and [rhesus (Rh)] status [which indicates whether the blood type is positive or negative (Red Cross 2 Feb. 2021)] (Colombia n.d.b).

The National Civil Registry website indicates that while some registries require photographs, others do not as [translation] "some offices" have a digital registration system and do not accept "physical photographs"; however, an individual "must always" provide photographs if making an application at a Colombian consulate (Colombia n.d.b). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides the following instructions regarding photographs: submit three 4x5-cm colour photographs with the subject wearing dark clothes and looking straight at the camera on a plain white background (or a blue

with "latest holograms." The applicant may claim their replacement card at their chosen National Civil Registry office where a "replica" of their previous card will be issued to them.

2. In person through the National Civil Registry website with in-office assistance.

An individual who was issued the yellow card with holograms and has "original proof of payment" can apply for a replacement card "in capital cities and zoned municipalities." A replica of the previous document will be issued.

3. In person with "data collection."

This process involves "complete" data collection and is meant for citizens who need a replacement card to apply for a passport, for updating the photograph, or for applying at a consulate. If an individual requires a replacement ID card for one of these reasons, they must inform the National Civil Registry official before arriving at the office, so that their application can be appropriately processed.

If an individual's previous yellow ID card with holograms was issued before 2011, it [translation] "may be impossible" to generate a replica of it; in that case, the application should be made with the data collection method (Colombia n.d.c).

1.2.1 Application for a Replacement Card from Abroad

The information in this section was provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia:

Colombian citizens by birth or adoption who reside abroad and whose ID card is lost or stolen [translation] "must" apply in person for a replacement at a Colombian consulate and provide the following:

- National ID card number
- Document "identifying them as Colombian"
- Three 4x5-cm colour photographs with the subject wearing dark clothes and looking straight at the camera on a white background (or a blue background for those with white or very pale hair)
- Blood type and Rh factor
- Payment for the replacement fee

The cost to apply for a replacement national ID card from a Colombian consulate is US\$34.80 and is the same at consulates worldwide (Colombia n.d.a).

1.3 Amendment Application

The National Civil Registry website notes that an individual who wishes to amend [translation] "any biographical, biometric or morphological information" on their national ID card can visit [translation] "any" Registry or Consulate (Colombia n.d.b). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicates that the amendment application must be made in person (Colombia n.d.a). Government sources indicate the following requirements to make the amendment:

- Original national ID card (Colombia n.d.a) or original and current national ID card (if possible (Colombia n.d.b)
- Three 4x5-cm colour photographs with the subject wearing dark clothes and looking straight at the camera on a white background (or a blue background for individuals who are bald or have very pale hair) (Colombia n.d.a)
- Blood type and Rh factor (Colombia n.d.a)
- Payment for the amendment fee (Colombia n.d.a) or [translation] "'original proof of payment'" (Colombia n.d.b)
- Colombians by birth: a recent copy of the civil registry of birth "with space for notes," that shows the change to biographical information with which the national ID card will be updated. For individuals born before 15 June 1938, a baptism certificate "with attestation of competence" may be used instead.

1.4 Content and Appearance

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia:

[translation] "[W]ith the digital transformation process" underway, there are two valid national ID card formats: the "personalized physical security card in polycarbonate and digital citizenship card" and the "yellow card with holograms." Those who still have an old format of card (brown or white laminated) "must" replace it with a yellow card with holograms, because previous formats are "no longer valid" (Colombia n.d.d).

1.4.1 Personalized Physical Security Card in Polycarbonate and Digital National ID Card

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia:

As of December 2020, the Government of Colombia has begun issuing personalized polycarbonate security cards and digital citizenship cards, which individuals can store in their smartphones if they download the "CEDULA DIGITAL COLOMBIA" application. This document relies on Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) technology, which makes it possible to [translation] "automatic[ally]" verify a person's identity using "facial morphology." The card has two components. First, the physical card is issued and delivered to an individual. With the physical card in hand, the person can generate the digital card, which will be "activated with facial biometrics" in the individual's smartphone and "will be displayed in the same way as the physical version." Therefore, a Colombian citizen must first have the physical card before they can apply for the digital version. The latter is "functionally equivalent" to its physical counterpart (Colombia n.d.d).

Samples of the polycarbonate and digital national ID cards, provided on the National Civil Registry website, are attached to this Response (Attachments 1 and 2).

1.4.2 Yellow Card with Holograms

According to Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the yellow ID card with holograms has been issued since May 2000 and uses Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) technology, which [translation] "automatic[ally]" verifies an individual's identity using fingerprints. The same source indicates that AFIS prevents the issuance of multiple ID cards with different identities to a single individual (Colombia n.d.d). A sample of the yellow card with holograms, provided on the National Civil Registry website, is attached to this Response (Attachment 3).

El Tiempo, a national Spanish-language newspaper in Colombia, reports that while the digital national ID card has an expiry date, the yellow card with holograms does not and adds that the yellow card will continue to be valid and will not need to be renewed [translation] "at any time" (*El Tiempo* 30 Nov. 2020).

1.5 Security Features

1.5.1 Personalized Physical Security Card in Polycarbonate and Digital National ID Card

Information on the security features of the polycarbonate and digital cards was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A representative of the National Civil Registry provided the following information in correspondence with the Research Directorate:

[translation] Colombia has "made progress in implementing" tenprint fingerprint and facial biometric identification, making it possible to compare faces as well as fingerprints. The physical or digital version of the digital national ID card provides "[g]reater security" [than previous versions] and is "[i]mpossible to forge or falsify." The card incorporates "[b]iometric identification and authentication." The digital national ID card also makes it possible to remotely identify an individual during procedures online. The physical card is made of polycarbonate, the "most secure material" for ID documents (Colombia 4 Feb. 2022).

- the individual's signature
- the individual's right index fingerprint (Colombia n.d.d).

The information in the remainder of this section was provided by Infolaft, a system created by Lozano Vila & Asociados Consultores Ltda. (Lozano Consultores Ltda.) [1] to gather and synthesize information on money-laundering, terrorist financing, fraud and corruption (Lozano Consultores Ltda. n.d.), in an article featuring a picture of the yellow ID card with holograms:

The national ID card has [translation] "elements that can be verified with the naked eye," including "holograms, security iridescence, anti-photographic backgrounds and colour gradation." There are also elements that can be verified with "magnifying glasses, lenses, or special lights," such as "microtexts" below the cardholder's signature and the index [fingerprint]. Security features that can be verified with machines include metallic and ultraviolet-reactive inks, as well as the two-dimensional barcode, which is "perhaps the most secure component" of the ID card. The code stores biographical information of the cardholder, such as the individual's "unique personal identification number" [número único de identificación personal, NUIP], first and last name, and date of birth, as well as the card's place and date of issue and the "encoded digital signature of the National Civil Registry's document production facility." The ID card also contains a fingerprint from each hand, which is "usually" that of the index finger.

The following techniques can be used to verify the legitimacy of an ID card:

- Use a magnifying glass to check the micro-text printed below the citizen's signature or below the fingerprint.
- Use a magnifying glass to verify if the document contains the pixels that are produced when [a document] is printed with conventional equipment.
- Use ultraviolet light to verify the features of the ID card (similar to checking banknotes).
- Check if the iridescence and anti-photographic backgrounds change shape or position, which occurs when they are scanned.
- Determine whether the holograms change colour when they are photocopied. (Infolaft n.d.)

2. Whether an Individual with a Stolen Card has Access to Other Personal Information

Caracol Radio, a national broadcaster in Colombia, states that the national ID card cannot be deactivated if lost or stolen (Caracol Radio 26 Aug. 2021). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The representative of the National Civil Registry noted that there are webpages where, by entering an individual's national ID number and some biographical information, a person can gain access to [translation] "certain" public information from Colombian government websites, including the following:

- information on the person's membership in the social security system
- vaccination certificate
- certificate of good standing (*certificado de vigencia*) of the national ID card
- criminal record
- "disciplinary record" (Colombia 4 Feb. 2022).

El País, a newspaper in Colombia, indicates that some Colombians have reported losing their national ID card during the pandemic and experiencing identity theft, with the thieves incurring [translation] "financial debts in their name" (*El País* 12 Feb. 2021). *El País* provides the example of one individual whose lost card was used to purchase a television, for which the individual was then charged (*El País* 12 Feb. 2021). According to the Director of the cybersecurity company Bittin, cited in the same article, the national identity card [translation] "allows criminals to find more data to

cases of people losing their identity card and subsequently discovering that a third party has, for example, signed up for telephone plans online or taken out bank loans "in their name" (Alerta Tolima 5 Sept. 2021).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Note

[1] Lozano Vila & Asociados Consultores Ltda. (Lozano Consultores Ltda.) is a Colombian consultancy firm that provides [translation] "technical solutions" to help organizations protect against money-laundering, terrorist financing, fraud and corruption (Lozano Consultores Ltda. n.d.).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Colombia – Cancillería de Colombia, Consulate of Colombia in Calgary, Consulate of Colombia in Montreal, Consulate of Colombia in Toronto, Embassy of the Republic of Colombia in Ottawa, Policía Nacional de Colombia, Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio; International Crisis Group.

Internet sites, including: BBC; Bogotá – Alcaldía de Bogotá; Colombia – Consulate of Colombia in Calgary, Consulate of Colombia in Montreal, Consulate of Colombia in Toronto, Ministerio de Hacienda, Policía Nacional de Colombia, Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio; Colombian; *El Espectador*; *El Heraldo*; EU – Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel Documents Online;

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