



Territorial Dialogues



▶ Newsletter for humanitarian organizations

Third edition | 11/05/2022

Main themes of this publication:

- National Elections and COVID-19
- Sport and side effects of COVID-19 vaccines



This is Rooted in Trust 2.0

[Internews' Rooted in Trust 2.0](#), is responsible for identifying, collecting, analyzing and responding to rumors in 10 countries around the world, with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). We focus on providing journalists and humanitarian communicators with the necessary tools, in their preferred languages, to respond to rumors and misinformation in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

For more information about the project or access to our content repository, please visit our website at internews.org

If you would like to give us your feedback on this newsletter and/or the "Rooted in Trust 2.0" project, please feel free to write to us at jsandovalvasco@internews.org. We would very much like to know your opinion in order to adjust future content pieces.

[Help us by answering this questionnaire](#)

Key words

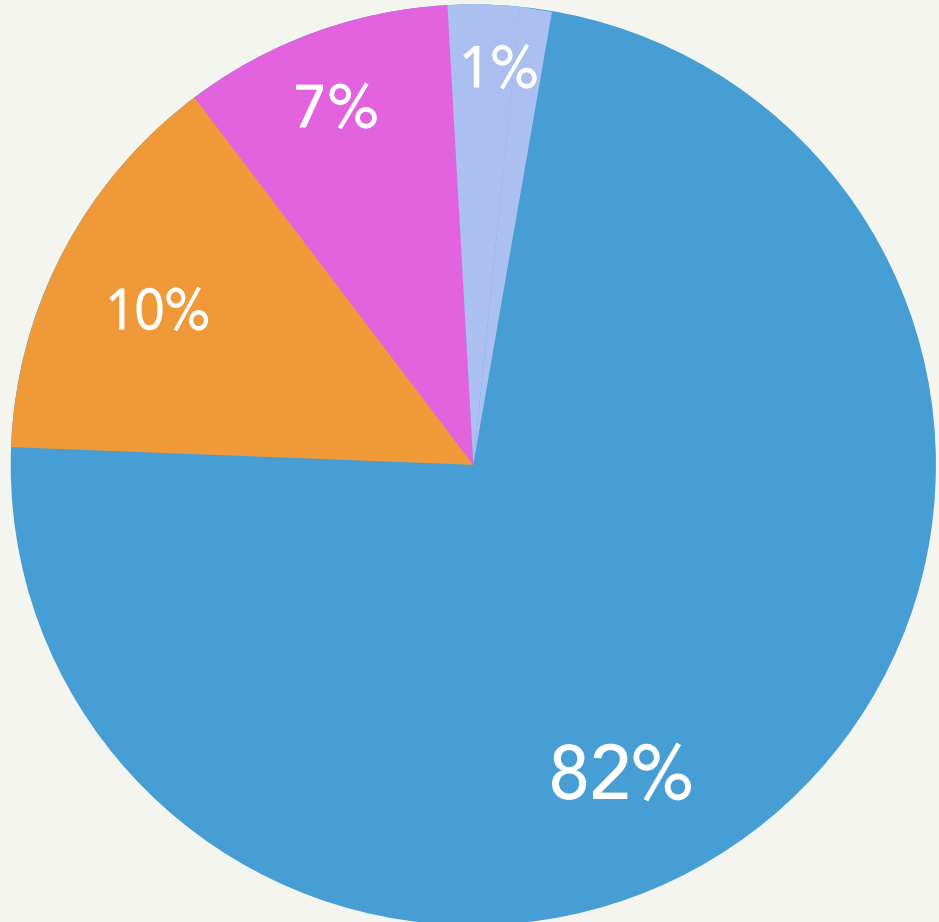
- Vaccine
- COVID
- Death
- Colombia
- Vaccinated
- Russia
- Effects
- Pandemic

114
Total Rumors

Information collected between:
March 20, 2022 to April 4, 2022

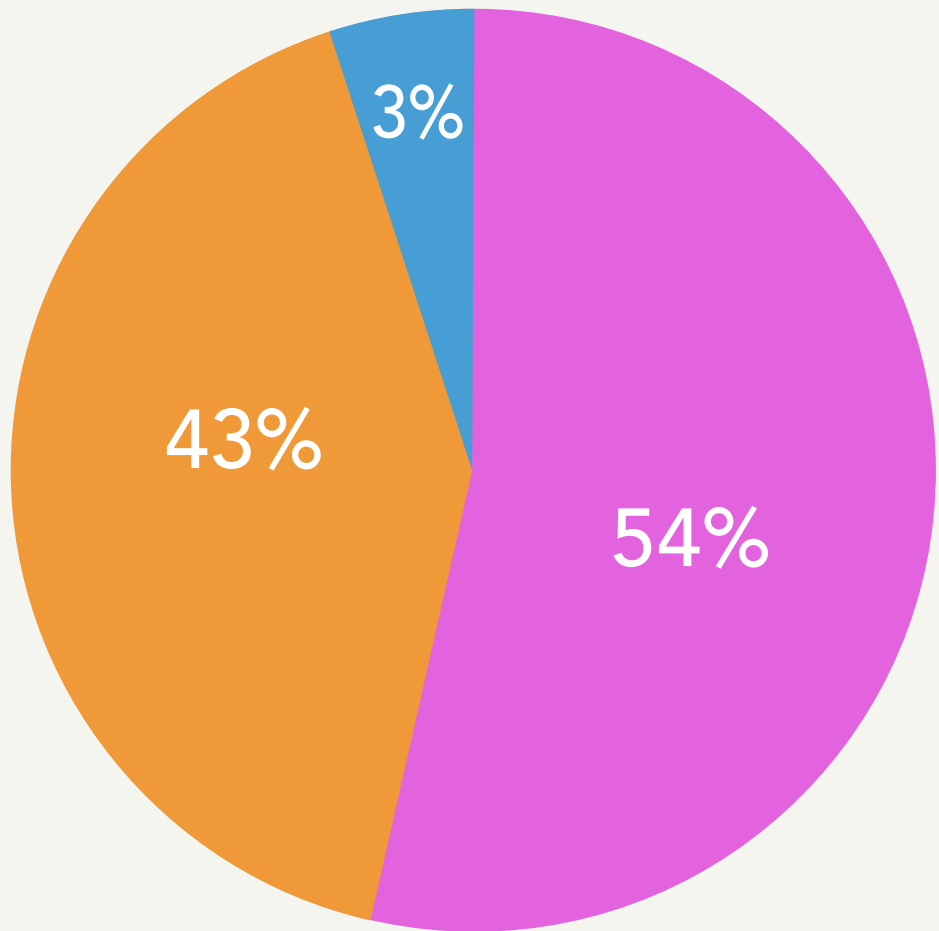
Post divided by Social Media channel

- Twitter
- Telegram
- Facebook
- YouTube

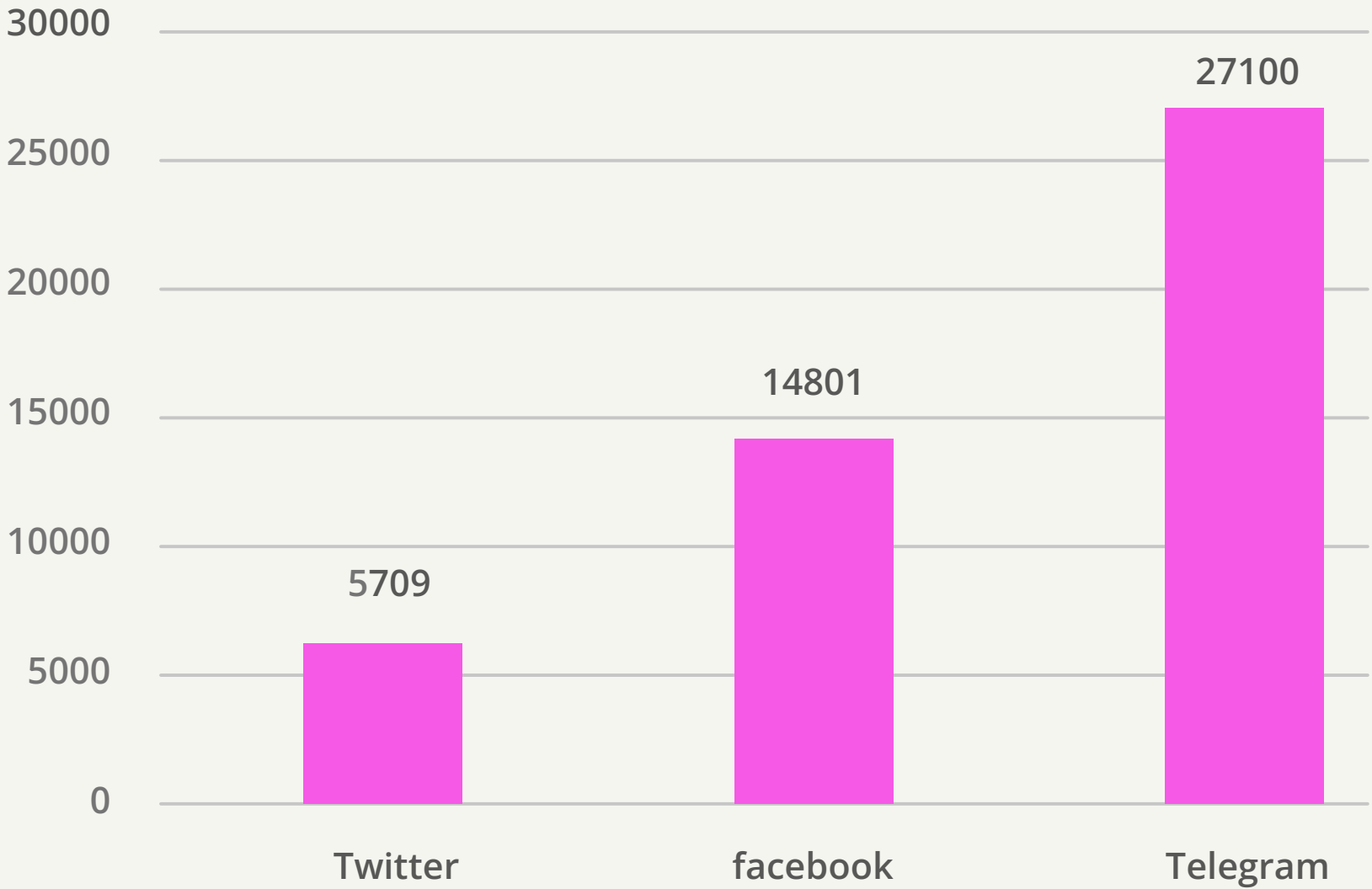


Risk level

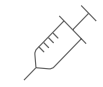
- High risk
- Medium risk
- Low risk



Average of followers/members according to social media



COVID-19 Data



An average of 1,332,996 doses delivered in Colombia in the last 14 days (between March 29 and April 12).



35,095,084 people with the complete vaccination schedule in Colombia (as of April 12).

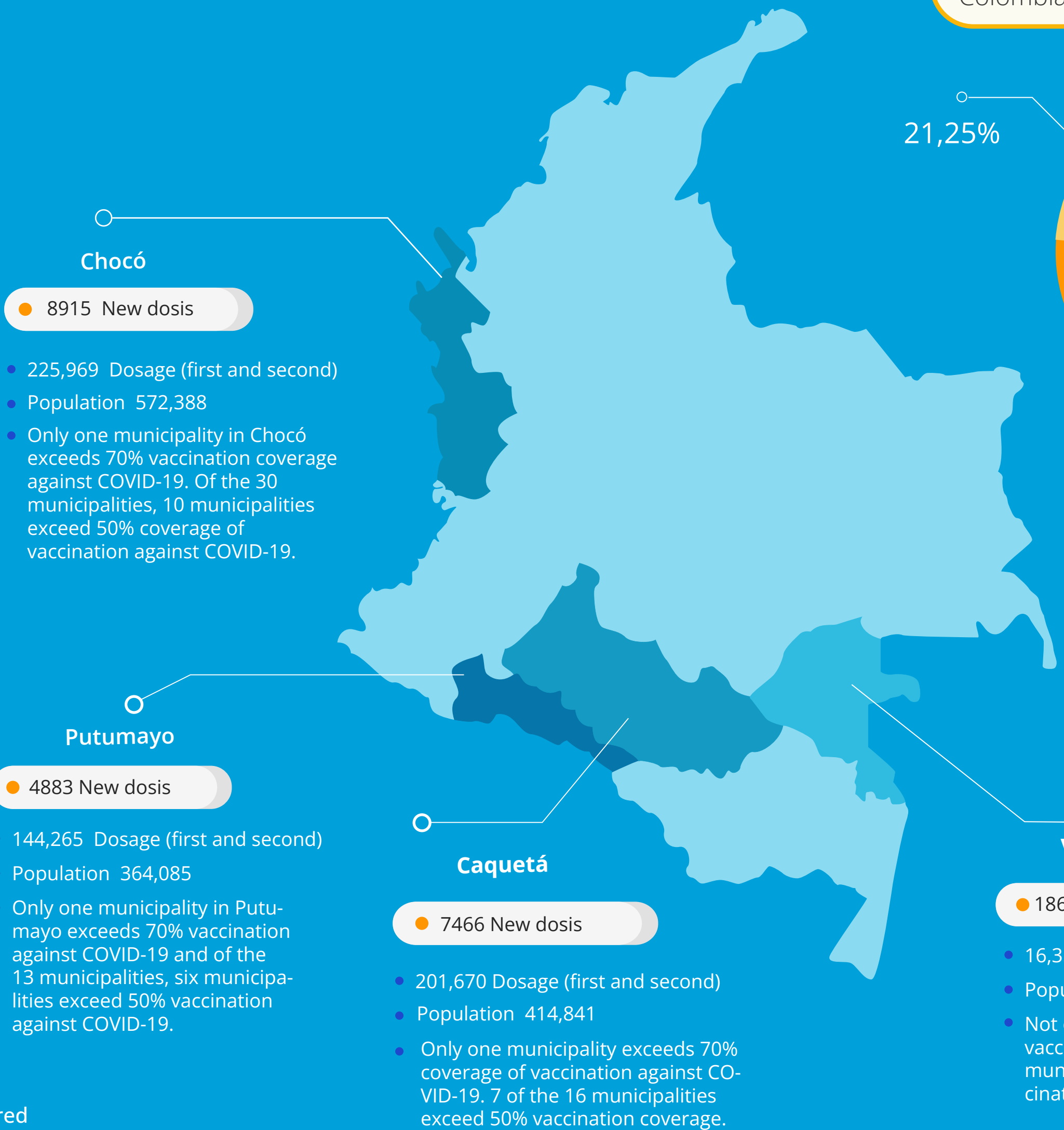
- In Colombia, 525 of the country's 1,122 municipalities have reached the goal of vaccinating 70% or more of their population with the full vaccination schedule. **The rest of the municipalities, equivalent to 60% of the country, are still on the 'waiting list'**; and although many are very close to achieving the goal, there are other territories that are of concern due to their very low vaccination coverage against COVID-19.
- Pacoa, located in the municipality of Vaupés, is one location of concern. According to the Ministry of Health database, **only 5.3% of its 4,649 inhabitants have received at least one vaccination.** There are several municipalities in the departments of Chocó and Vaupés with the worst vaccination percentage in Colombia (reaching a coverage of 10%).
- Several of the municipalities with less than 20% are in the departments of Chocó, Putumayo, and Vaupés. These regions have greater presence of indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations than in other regions.

Vaccination in the country's total population

Colombia has 51,049,498 inhabitants.



According to the National Institute of Health, during the last reported week, Colombia had an average of 95,441 doses administered each day. At this rate, **it will take another 106 days to administer enough doses for another 10% of the population.** According to updated weekly monitoring by the National Institute of Health, Omicron continues to be the predominant circulating variant.



Data on new doses administered, deaths due to COVID-19 and new cases registered (as of March 29) provided by the Colombian Ministry of Health.

Events that impact information ecosystems



The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights requested the [Attorney General's Office](#) to conduct an **exhaustive and independent investigation into the questionable military operation of March 28 in the Alto Remanso village, Puerto Leguízamo, Putumayo**, which left 11 dead and five wounded.



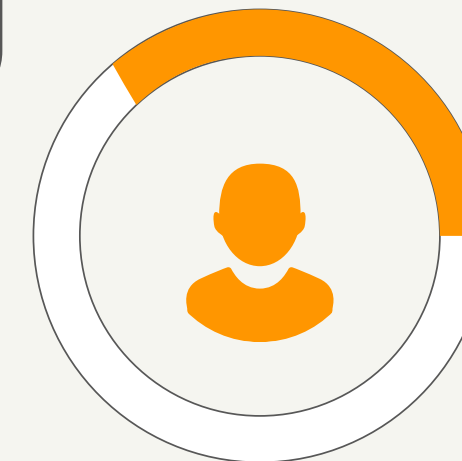
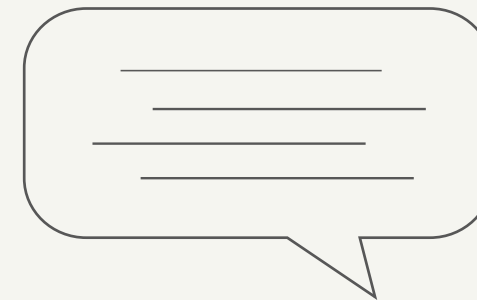
The National Government has stated that these people were armed FARC dissidents, killed in combat during an operation to capture alias "Bruno", an alleged member of FARC dissidents.



However, a [joint investigation](#) by [Colombian media](#) has unveiled evidence that at least four of the dead were unarmed. The victims were identified as the President of the Junta de Acción Comunal and his wife, a 24-year-old pregnant woman, as well as the [leader of an indigenous reservation](#) and a [16-year-old minor](#), who, according to testimonies of the inhabitants, were killed by the military forces, who then proceeded to alter and manipulate the evidence at the site of the alleged clashes.

Tendencies

"Political agenda, COVID-19 y vaccine side effects"



Data verification

- All the presidential candidates for the 2022-2026 period have affirmed to be in favor of vaccines, with the exception of the candidate Gustavo Petro who caused controversy over a [tweet](#), in July 2021, which was later withdrawn by the platform as misleading. As a reaction to the tweet, Opposition [candidate Federico Gutiérrez](#) referred indicating that "the Petro variant is more contagious than the Delta variant". Although the candidate never retracted what he said, days later he wrote a new [tweet](#) in which he affirmed that vaccines were effective to prevent hospitalization and death.

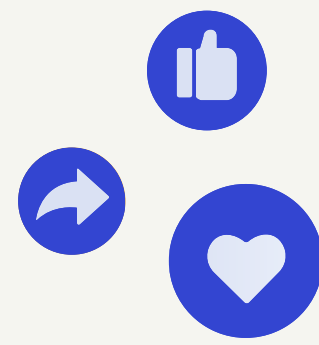
Rumor

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"I don't want to directly influence politics, but I do suggest not voting for any politician who is in favor of vaccines. It's obviously not for health that advocates them, which you can prove by looking at the number of deaths they cause."

- Beyond "who said what", this rumor implicitly tells us about the use of COVID-19 and [vaccines as an ideological tool](#) to influence the voting intention of the general public, an aspect that has not been evidenced during the presidential candidacies but was visible in the political campaigns of candidates of the Conservative party and Colombia Justa-Libres for the Senate elections last March 13.
- Putting the figures in perspective, the data available in the country show that the adverse effects are less than the benefits of immunization against the virus.

Why did this rumor go viral?



01.

Argument of authority

the rumor was published (according to the information in his profile) by a [Colombian doctor](#), a specialist in ultrasound with more than 40 years of experience. Therefore, users interacting with his content assume a degree of expertise and authority in the statements, regardless of the factual validity of his arguments. However, this doctor has published dozens of uninformed tweets and rumors that have already been disapproved.

02.

Political ideology

for decades, this physician has been a strong critic of the Secretariat and the Ministry of Health and, recently, of the National Vaccination Plan. In this sense, his positions on COVID-19 could also be mediated by a particular ideology and political agenda that echoes the voices of anti-vaccine movements.

03.

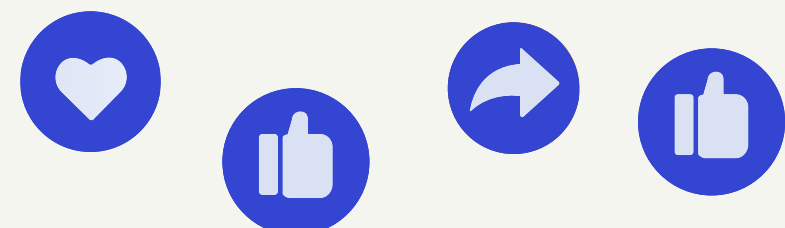
Social networks

the content has been published through the Twitter account of this doctor, whose last video alone had more than three thousand reproductions. He is also followed by 270,000 users on YouTube.

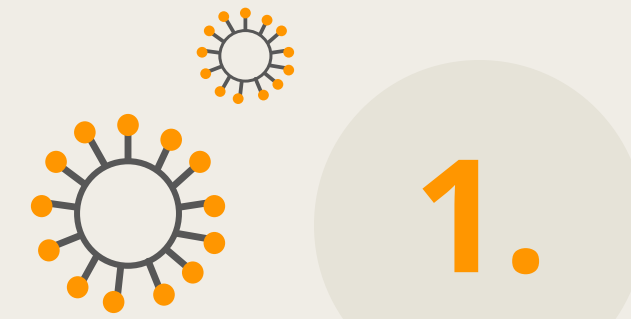
04.

Distrust

These publications feed the perceptions of nonconformity due to the gaps in access and quality of health services in Colombia. This has historically generated a perception of distrust towards the entities providing these services, as well as towards the National Government and its institutions. In this context, the narratives about the harmful effects of the vaccine reinforce the belief that the public supply should not be trusted while fuelling nonconformity towards these entities.



Why is this rumor relevant?



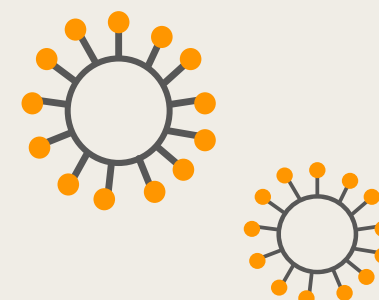
This rumor feeds on the general public's dissatisfaction and distrust of the healthcare system, while instrumentalizing COVID-19 vaccines as a political tool.



Moreover, it is important because it indirectly highlights the lack of clear and accessible mechanisms for citizens to report secondary symptoms suffered after vaccination or to denounce irregularities in treatment, hospitalization and other medical procedures in the context of the pandemic. This not only reinforces skepticism in state institutions, but also increases distrust in vaccines due to the lack of transparency in communicating their real side effects to the general public.



Regarding the [side effects](#) of COVID-19 vaccines, this rumor could imply a widespread distrust of COVID-19 vaccines by a group of health care professionals. However, there is already a [national](#) and international [medical consensus](#) on the benefits of the vaccines, supported by multiple [recent studies](#) indicating that the adverse effects are minimal compared to the benefits of avoiding potential spikes in hospitalization and deaths.



What implications and/or consequences could this rumor have?

1.

These rumors have the potential to create distrust within the communities and audiences that follow this and other professionals (or supposed members) of the health sector, as they position themselves from an authoritative standpoint to justify their position and feed on the generalized nonconformity with the Colombian health system.

2.

As was seen in the Senate elections, misinformation reinforces the feelings and fears of the general public and can serve as guidelines for the voting intention of the voters.

3.

Even though the Attorney General's Office, the Invima and the National Health Institute, among other competent entities, have stated that the adverse effects of vaccines have been minimal [in Colombia](#), the lack of clear routes for citizens to report and denounce side effects and irregular medical procedures that may occur increases the already existing distrust in state institutions and the national vaccination plan.

Tendencies

"Sports and COVID-19 vaccines"



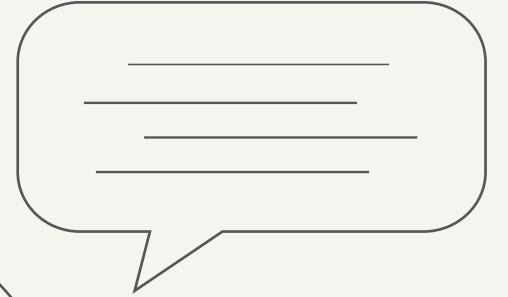
Data verification

- Several rumors suggest a link between COVID-19 vaccines and fortuitous events in sports. However, both the alleged [false listings of dead soccer players](#), such as the cardiac arrhythmia that caused the retirement of soccer player Sergio "El Kun" Agüero, and the case of Christian Eriksen, a soccer player who collapsed during a game due to cardiac arrest, have been [denied](#).
- Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been associated with an increased risk of pericarditis and myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, especially in adolescents and young males. However, [studies](#) have shown that only [0.0008% of those vaccinated](#) have this condition and that the complications are not serious and can be controlled with medical care and currently available drugs. Therefore, health authorities in several countries consider that, even with this rare effect of messenger RNA vaccines, the benefits of immunization outweigh the minimal risks in a pandemic context such as the current one.

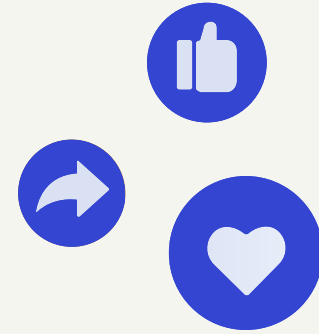
Rumor

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"I never thought to pay so much attention to soccer. Soccer is a very dangerous sport, if you're vaccinated against Covitt 19."



Why has this rumor gone viral?



01.

False causality

There have been unfortunate events in the international sports scene related to coronary heart failure. These have been falsely associated with the vaccines, because cases of myocarditis have indeed been reported. However, there is no real causality between COVID-19 vaccines and these events.

02.

Sports and identity

Soccer -and sports in general- are part of our identity and have the capacity to permeate and mold the [ideational and identity aspects](#) of people. In fact, 3 out of 5 adults play soccer with their sons and daughters and 94% of the Colombian population considers soccer an important aspect in their lives. These emotional aspects definitely play a crucial role in potentiating the scope and harmful effect of this type of rumors.



Why is this rumor important?

These rumors have the capacity to discourage physical activity, which has a major deleterious effect on society, precisely because sport is one of the main ways to treat or mitigate the risks of many of the medical conditions in the population most at risk for COVID-19, including hypertension, diabetes, renal failure, COPD, obesity, [schizophrenia](#), and [bipolar disorder](#), among others.

Precisely, in Colombia there has been a [large increase in cases](#) of depression and a considerable deterioration in [mental health](#) and [social capital](#), especially as a result of the long periods of quarantine that at the time particularly affected children, young people and the elderly. Moreover, [38% of Venezuelan](#) migrant families in Colombia reported having some symptoms of depression or anxiety due not only to the pandemic but also to the great risks, uncertainty and unmet basic needs they have been facing.

Regarding this last point, [450 Venezuelan families](#) use baseball as a mechanism for social integration in Quibdó. In Putumayo, the [Community Social Sports program](#) allows hundreds of citizens -including indigenous, Afro, peasant and rural populations, and people with disabilities- to access recreational spaces for social integration.

What implications and/or consequences could this rumor have? ?

1.

By associating deaths and fortuitous events in sports with COVID-19 vaccines, negative perceptions and mistrust of these vaccines are reinforced, discouraging their use.

2.

At the same time, these pieces of misinformation discourage the participation of those who have already been vaccinated in sports practices, which could have harmful effects due to the fact that sports are fundamental for social inclusion, mental health, recreation and societal reactivation in this new stage of pandemic.



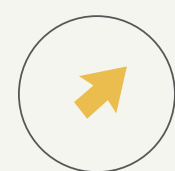
Recommendations

- 01. Provide clear and easy to understand data and routes:** it is advisable to approach the [Committee of Experts](#), Unified Command Posts, Safety Councils and other instances of evaluation and territorial monitoring of adverse events, in order to jointly develop communication strategies that allow citizens to know clearly where to go in case of doubts, how to report or denounce, what adverse symptoms have been recorded and how they are equated to the benefits of vaccines.
- 02. Promote social cohesion initiatives through community sports:** it is necessary to continue supporting and informing about peace-building and social inclusion projects such as [Golombiao](#), an example of community-level exercise that contributes to the reduction of risk factors in mental health and social well-being.
- 03. Use cultural references from the world of sports to accompany your information:** Athletes from different disciplines, sports medical professionals, physical conditioning, physiotherapy and other disciplines can be great allies when clearing doubts and questions regarding the practice of sports after COVID-19 and the application of vaccines.



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