


SPECIAL REPORT



THE FUTURE OF COLOMBIA'S STATE MEDIA SYSTEM

AUGUST 2025

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Research and Writing:

Catalina Bobadilla - Paola Morales

General Edition:

Sergio Guzmán - Daniel Poveda

Design:

Angelica Castillo

Promotion:

Valeria Piña

* This document was originally written in Spanish and translated into English.
If you find any inaccuracies, please refer to the original Spanish version.

TAKEAWAYS



The precedents set in the use of public media are like stretched clothing: once stretched, they never return to their original shape.

The use of RTVC and other regional public media systems as instruments for political propaganda or for confrontation with the opposition sets precedents that future governments will most likely replicate and deepen. This dynamic erodes the informal rules that uphold democratic integrity and normalizes the partisan use of state resources.



RTVC's position within the executive branch, combined with the absence of effective checks and balances, facilitates the alignment of its editorial agenda with the administration in power.

During President Petro's administration, the public media system's news agenda has prioritized showcasing government management over cultural and educational content. Editorialization, coupled with the personalization of RTVC, has transformed what should be a pluralistic system into a vehicle for political communication.



The Colombian public media system faces structural vulnerabilities that threaten its democratic legitimacy.

Economic dependence and subordination to the executive branch compromise both financial and editorial autonomy, reinforcing editorialization while shrinking the space for cultural content. The polarization and stigmatization of journalists further undermine credibility and sustainability, especially in the current pre-election context.



In the 2026 elections, RTVC will be an active player in the narrative dispute.

RTVC's programming will likely reflect alignment with President Petro's political project, while private media are expected to maintain more critical stances. We do not rule out that the next government will favor funding cuts or even propose to eliminate the system, especially if it is elected on a mandate to reduce the size of the state. The potential disappearance of RTVC is likely to jeopardize the plurality of information, historical archives, and cultural content that public media have provided to regions traditionally underserved by private media.

Colombia is experiencing a highly polarized pre-electoral period, where the media ecosystem has become a stage for narrative disputes, the strategic circulation of information, and political confrontation. In this context, public media face a structural tension between their democratic promise of pluralism and their vulnerability to political instrumentalization. This tension is likely to intensify as the 2026 presidential elections approach, amid increasing disinformation, deepening polarization, and the absence of clear rules to ensure transparency and fairness in political communication.

Although this phenomenon is observed across the country, this report focuses on the national level, with a particular focus on the public media system RTVC (Radio Televisión Nacional de Colombia). RTVC is a state-owned entity under the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), subject to [political, fiscal, disciplinary, and social oversight](#). Despite these mechanisms, its dependence on the Executive branch and the lack of adequate institutional checks and balances make it vulnerable to political interference with each presidential transition. This vulnerability is not exclusive to the national level; the pattern is replicated in regional systems such as Telemedellín and Telecaribe. Programs like *El alcalde de la gente* (*The People's Mayor*) in Medellín, which continues [the strategies of previous mayors](#), or the consolidated communication model of the Char family in Barranquilla, exemplify this trend. [Backed](#) by their economic, political, and social power, this influence has been exercised both through advertising spending and a direct relationship between power and the public and private media. **The combination of financial resources and control over media access constrains journalistic oversight, reduces the plurality of voices, and strengthens an information ecosystem aligned with the interests of a single political current.**

The insights of this report show that precedents have been established that facilitate the capture of the public media system, specifically RTVC. These include the use of the news broadcast as the central axis of programming, the displacement of its cultural and educational mission, the personalization of the brand at the expense of content, and the increasing editorialization that fuels confrontation with private media. This last factor reinforces a climate of [stigmatization](#) of journalists and exacerbates security risks in rural areas and protest contexts.

The legitimacy crisis of the system has deepened. Reports such as that of the IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression have [warned](#) about allegations regarding the use of public media to broadcast only the Government's official version of events, restricting access to critical content and undermining the citizens' right to receive complete and impartial information. In an increasingly binary media ecosystem, where public media are perceived as pro-government and private media as opposition, there is a risk that RTVC will be seen more as a political actor than as a guarantor of plurality and impartial information.

The strength of the public media system is a [key indicator](#) of the state of democracy. When its mission becomes blurred, so does its ability to guarantee pluralistic access to information and to represent the country's territorial and cultural diversity. This discussion involves the very nature of public media and what transcends government cycles. For example, *Señal Colombia* has stood out with award-winning productions such as [Así somos](#) (2016-2018), which traveled through 22 departments and 125 municipalities in 310 micro-documentaries on national identity, receiving awards in 2018

for [social inclusion, photography, and musical direction](#). Other productions, such as [Tejiendo la paz](#) (2012) and [Las niñas de la guerra](#) (2016), portray regional realities and foster dialogue on memory and reconciliation. Likewise, *Radiónica*, with the documentary series [Músicas indígenas, diversidad de diálogos](#) (Indigenous Music, [Diversity of Dialogues](#), 2021), explored how indigenous expressions interact with contemporary sound forms, such as metal in the Valle del Cauca or rap in Medellín. These examples show the irreplaceable role of the public system in cultural and educational production, an area often neglected by private media due to commercial interests.

Through this report, Colombia Risk Analysis considers it a priority to expand and bring into the area of political risk the discussion on the role of the public media system, particularly RTVC, in democracy. The current transformation of the system poses risks to its independence and future sustainability.

This is the third installment of our series on the future of democracy in Colombia. The first report analyzed the [tensions among the branches of public power](#), and the second explored the [relationship between civil and military powers](#). We invite decision-makers, political actors, and members of civil society to read this analysis with a critical and strategic perspective, mindful that democratic strengthening also depends on preserving plural and transparent public institutions.

METHODOLOGY

For the preparation of this report, we interviewed 19 sources, including journalists, academics, researchers, press freedom advocates, and former and current officials from the public media system. In addition, we sent formal information requests to the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications and the National Radio and Television of Colombia, analyzed secondary sources, and drew on the extensive knowledge accumulated by Colombia Risk Analysis.

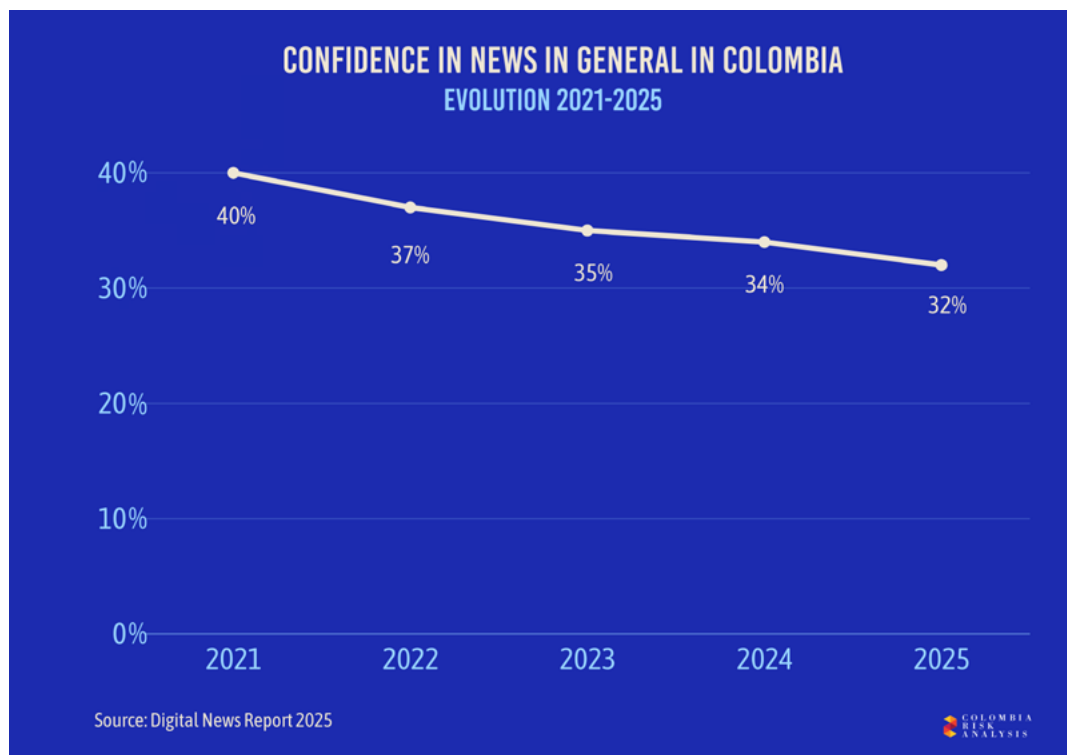
We also held a roundtable discussion with 10 experts, including journalists, television critics, academics, civil society organizations, and press freedom advocates, to identify points of consensus and divergence, and prioritize key issues that enriched the report.

We thank all interviewees for their time and contributions, which were incorporated into this report under the principle of non-attribution.

THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM IN COLOMBIA

Colombia presents a highly concentrated media ecosystem. According to the [Digital News Report 2025](#), a few economic conglomerates control a large share of the country's mainstream media while also owning companies in key sectors such as finance, agribusiness, and beverages, broadening their economic and media influence. This landscape is being challenged by the rise of streaming platforms and the widespread adoption of artificial intelligence tools, which are forcing media outlets to innovate in formats and reduce costs to remain relevant.

The digital transformation has also reshaped consumption habits. According to the [Digital News Report 2025](#), 27% of Colombians get their news primarily through Facebook, followed by WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram, while TikTok has seen the fastest growth, increasing by five percentage points in the last year. However, this trend unfolds amid deep distrust: only 32% of Colombians trust the news, the lowest level since the country began participating in the [Digital News Report](#) in 2021, and six out of ten citizens identify politicians and content creators as the main drivers of disinformation. This decline in trust aligns with a broader trend. According to the [2023 Americas Barometer](#), Colombians' support for democracy has declined "drastically," falling from 74% in 2004 to 51% in 2023, while data from [the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer](#) places Colombia among the countries with the lowest trust level in institutions at 49%, compared to a global average of 56%.



The politicization of the media system is intensifying as the 2026 presidential elections approach. One of the main conclusions of our expert roundtable discussion, was that, **far from being neutral, the media outlets reinforce the audience's beliefs and operate within information bubbles that validate their own viewpoints.** This segmentation, driven by a mix of ideological affinity, commercial interests, and audience loyalty strategies, creates incentives for the premature positioning of political figures, with pre-campaigns and “presidential hopefuls” emerging earlier in the race.

The European Union Election Observation Mission in 2022 highlighted an example of this phenomenon, pointing to informational imbalances in media coverage of candidates during that election cycle. Private media outlets displayed a predominantly negative tone toward the “[Historic Pact and Gustavo Petro](#).” In contrast, the public media outlets analyzed by the Mission (*Señal Colombia* and *Radio Nacional*) maintained a neutral tone but provided limited coverage, which affected reach and visibility.

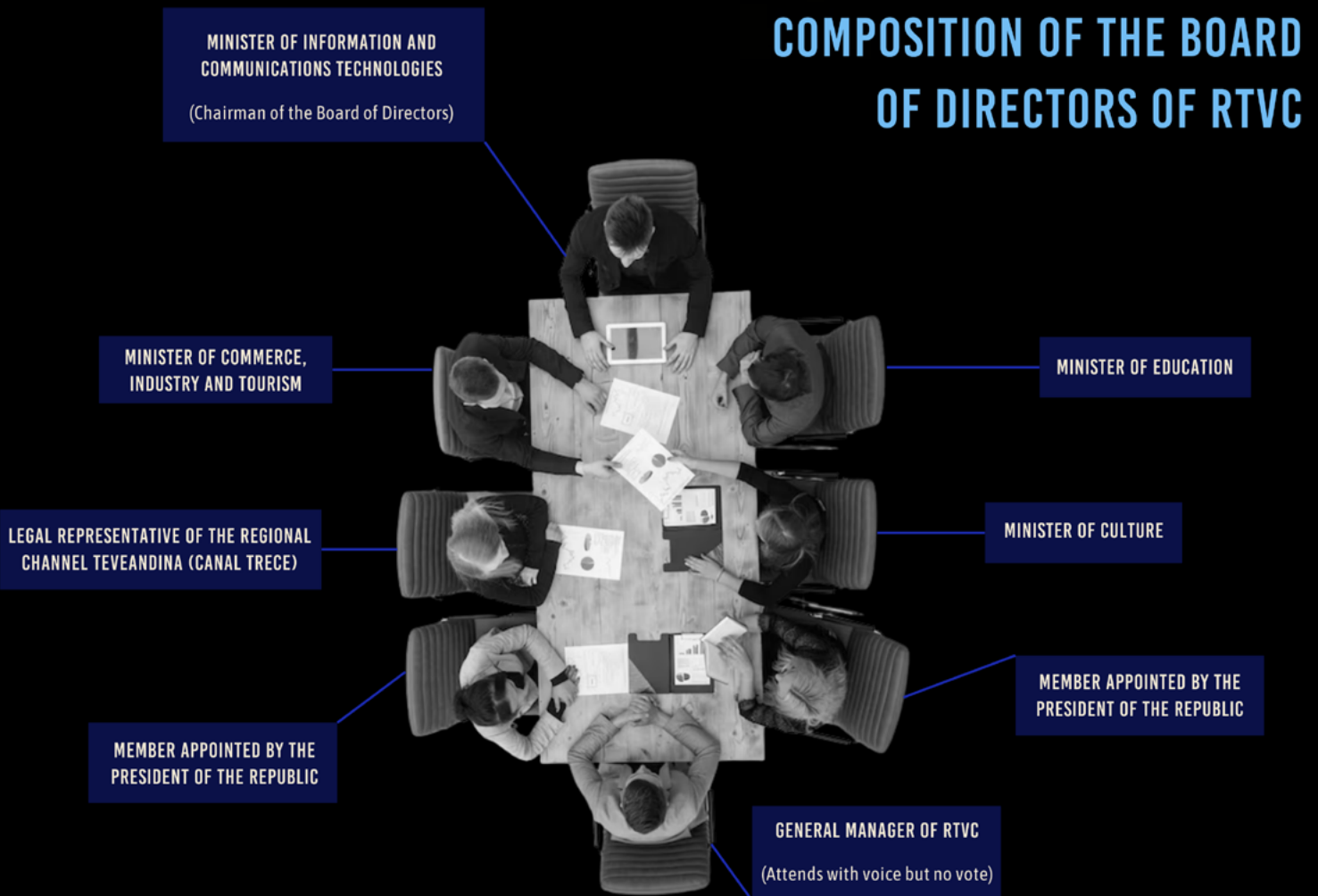
This scenario reflects an ecosystem in which both private and public media face tensions between their informational role and the political or commercial interests that shape their agendas. In private media, dependence on advertising revenue creates structural biases. In the public media, financial and political dependence on the executive branch, as well as changes in government, make it vulnerable to instrumentalization. Therefore, although this report focuses on RTVC, it recognizes that its dynamics are closely linked to those of the broader media ecosystem. Understanding its role is key to assessing the quality of the democratic debate that will take place in 2026.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE PUBLIC MEDIA SYSTEM

[RTVC](#) is Colombia's public media system. It manages a national radio network, with two public television channels with national coverage (*Señal Colombia* and *Canal Institucional*), eight regional channels, and one privately operated channel (*Canal Uno*). In addition, it manages digital platforms (RTVC Play), operates the transmitter network that provides coverage for regional channels, and hosts the [Emisoras de Paz](#) (Peace Radio Stations), created as part of the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP. By 2024, [the commitment had been fully met](#), with 20 stations operating in prioritized territories.

In terms of governance, RTVC is structured across three levels:

- **General Assembly of Shareholders**
Defines statutory reforms, approves financial statements, and decides on capital and participation in other companies.
- **Board of Directors**
With significant representation from the executive branch, it formulates policies, approves plans, projects, and budgets, sets rates, and oversees the entity's operations.
- **General Director**
Appointed directly by the President of the Republic and with the authority of free appointment and removal of personnel. This position concentrates key functions such as defining editorial policy, contracting content, managing the budget, and appointing assistant directors.



Source: Bylaws of Radio Televisión Nacional de Colombia RTVC S.A.S.

In recent years, RTVC has sought to adapt to the digital transformation through content convergence with original podcast production, strengthening RTVC Play, and modernizing *Señal Memoria*. However, Colombian audiences are [increasingly getting their news](#) from social media and international outlets, forcing public press to compete in a broader and more fragmented ecosystem, where the boundaries between the national and the global are increasingly blurred.

RECONFIGURATION OF THE PUBLIC MEDIA SYSTEM

During the interviews conducted for this report, we identified the enactment of [Law 1978](#) of the Information and Communications Technology Sector (ICT Law) as the most crucial precedent in the transformation of the public media system. This law, sanctioned on July 25, 2019, by then-President Iván Duque, extended spectrum usage permits from 10 to 20 years, to encourage private investment and facilitate future auctions. The law also introduced the “obligations to do” model, allowing the industry to pay for spectrum use by deploying infrastructure or services instead of monetary transfers. Its purpose was to stimulate investment and prioritize connectivity in the most remote regions to close the digital divide.

The reform centralized key functions in the Ministry of ICT following the [elimination of the National Television Authority \(ANTV\)](#). As a result, oversight, control, regulation, spectrum allocation, and the administration of resources for television and technologies were concentrated in the executive branch. Consequently, it reduced the autonomy of the regulatory body and increased the risk of political interference in license granting and content definition.

The law also created a single regulator, the [Communications Regulatory Commission](#) (CRC), responsible for overseeing the entire communications sector. Its functions include resolving disputes between providers, monitoring and sanctioning practices that affect pluralism, and regulating commercial public television. The liquidation of the ANTV resulted in the redistribution of functions between the CRC and the Ministry of ICT.

However, the autonomy of the CRC has been called into question due to the [selection mechanism](#) for its members, which grants significant influence to the executive branch. The entity operates through [two commissions](#): the [Audiovisual Content Commission](#), composed of three commissioners, two of whom are selected through a public competition. However, the Ministry of Education is responsible for selecting the university that carries out this process. The [Communications Commission](#) is composed of five commissioners, two of whom are appointed directly by the executive (the minister of ICT and one designated by the president). Given that this commission regulates the media through which information of public interest circulates, its proximity to the government raises concerns about safeguarding pluralism. For this reason, organizations such as the [OECD](#) recommend that it operate as a genuinely independent regulator.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY COMMISSION CRC

COMMUNICATION COMMISSION



The ICT Minister.



Appointed by the President of the Republic.



Elected through a public competition organized by the Administrative Department of Public Service.

AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT

Fixed 4-year terms, non-renewable. All with voice and vote.

The President chooses the university that will carry out the competition for two of the three members.



Elected by regional public television operators through their own process: application, requirements verification, interviews, and voting.



Commissioner from civil society, elected through a public competition conducted by a public or private university, selected by the Ministry of Education.



Commissioner from the audiovisual sector, also elected through a public competition conducted by a public or private university, selected by the Ministry of Education.

Source: Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones CRC



The reform also [left](#) community networks and alternative media lagging. The lack of clear measures to ensure their access to spectrum and financing has limited pluralism and diversity of voices within the media ecosystem, deepening information concentration.

The result has been greater vulnerability of public media to changes in government and a tendency to subordinate their editorial line to the official agenda. Since the ICT Law came into effect, journalists and civil society organizations, including the [Foundation for Press Freedom](#) (FLIP), have filed [lawsuits](#) challenging its constitutionality, citing both procedural and substantive issues.

AUTONOMY OF THE PUBLIC MEDIA SYSTEM

The autonomy of the public media system in Colombia faces structural tensions that combine financial and political factors. **Decisions on its budget, governance, and the appointment of its directors depend largely on the executive branch, making them particularly vulnerable to changes in government and short-term priorities.** These factors, combined with regulatory and administrative precedents in recent years, have created an environment in which editorial independence and financial sustainability are not always guaranteed.

BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL AUTONOMY

The financing of the public media system in Colombia is regulated by Law 1507 of 2012 and Law 1978 of 2019 (ICT Law), which established the [Single Fund for Information and Communication Technologies](#) (FUTIC) as the central mechanism for resource allocation. This fund, the result of the merger of the Fund for the Development of Television and Content (FonTV) and the Fund for Information and Communications Technologies (Fontic), has three [objectives](#): financing public television and radio, ensuring annual increases in the sector's budget, and promoting the production of multiplatform content through open calls for proposals. Law 1978 assigned the CRC and the [National Spectrum Agency](#) the task of assessing coverage and guaranteeing access to public radio nationwide. FUTIC's [direct control](#) by the Ministry of ICT has raised concerns about risks to editorial autonomy, as it concentrates resource management within the executive. Together with the power to allocate them to the ministry's own administrative expenses, it opens the door to decisions that have the potential to respond to political interests rather than technical or public service criteria.

Under this scheme, RTVC's General Management is responsible for preparing and presenting revenue, expenditure, investment, and budget modification projects to its Board of Directors, in compliance with current regulations. However, given that the Board of Directors has six members who act as representatives of the executive branch, decisions regarding resource allocation and execution lack effective checks and balances.

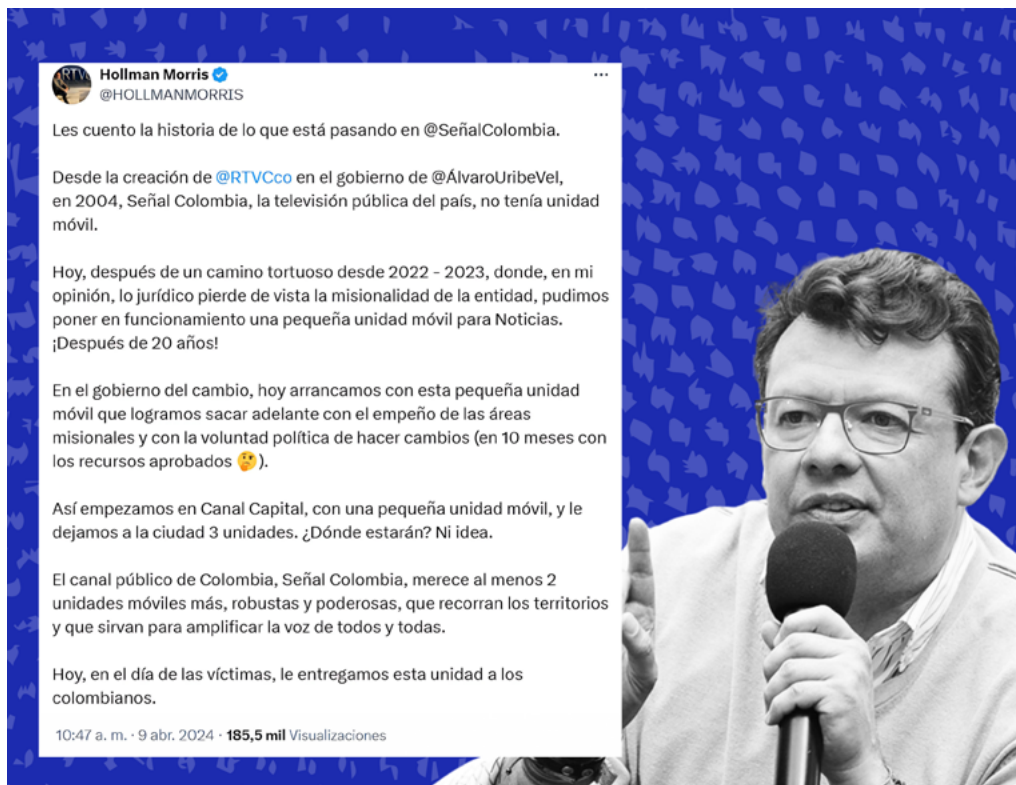
The way in which RTVC's budget is approved and distributed is only part of the debate on its autonomy. Equally important is how those resources are used and who leads the entity, since administrative decisions and project management have a direct impact on the continuity of programming, technical operations, and audience trust.

EXECUTION AND CONTROL OF RESOURCES

Over the past three years, RTVC has experienced significant administrative instability, with prolonged interim periods and abrupt leadership changes. Following the [resignation](#) of Álvaro García in August 2022, Adriana Vásquez, then Deputy Director of Television, took over as interim director for nine months. This interim period coincided with the first one hundred days of the Petro administration, when [several institutions were facing similar delays](#) in permanent appointments. Although the official narrative emphasized continuity in policies and projects, the absence of a director with full powers limited responsiveness and slowed strategic decision-making, according to sources interviewed for this report.

In May 2023, [Nórida Rodríguez](#) took office as the first director of RTVC appointed by the current administration, but in April 2024, she was [replaced by Hollman Morris](#), who remains in office at the time of this report's publication. Frequent turnover has hampered long-term planning, increased job uncertainty, and delayed strategic projects. These shifts reinforce the risk that RTVC's institutional agenda is likely to become subordinated to political circumstances and internal disputes.

The transition between Rodríguez and Morris was marked by public confrontations. A first [point of friction](#) emerged during the inauguration of the public media system's mobile unit on Victims' Day in 2024. The contracting process went through an open invitation, which was later declared void due to a lack of bidders, and was then awarded directly to the firm Prointel. Morris publicly presented the project as his own achievement, prompting [criticism](#) from Rodríguez. The dispute illustrated a pattern of personalizing institutional achievements, which fragments accountability and, in terms of financial autonomy, shows how technical investment decisions can be subordinated to internal political narratives.



The results for the first quarter of 2024, released two months after the change in leadership, revealed [significant delays in strategic projects](#). The production *Aventuras asombrosas* (Amazing Adventures) reached an execution rate of only 7.24%, equivalent to USD 39.4 thousand (COP 159 million) of the projected USD 546.3 thousand (COP 2.2 billion). Morris attributed this to the previous administration's lack of leadership, while Rodríguez countered that key personnel had already been hired by the time of her departure, and that delays were attributable to the new leadership. [In contrast](#), peace broadcasters achieved 88.11% coverage, the information system exceeded its target at 289%, the Institutional Channel reached 100%, and special presidential broadcasts attained 95% of the monthly target, with 114 transmissions and a budget execution of 150.71% of the planned amount. This disparity suggests a disproportionate prioritization of activities aligned with the Executive's political agenda.

In March 2024, the [Public Prosecutor's Office opened a disciplinary investigation](#) against Rodríguez and her deputy director, Jorge Luis Arzuaga, regarding an inter-administrative contract with the National Digital Agency for Peace Broadcasters, even though the latter had no technical experience in the area; a contract with the National Land Agency, and the direct hiring of individuals with conflicts of interest. At the same time, in July 2024, [the Comptroller's Office](#) also identified a portfolio at risk of non-collection of more than USD 2.6 million (COP 10.7 billion), an uncommitted budget of USD 2.9 million (COP 12 billion), and deficiencies of USD 1.4 million (COP 5.9 billion) in the [contract with the National Land Agency](#) for promoting government programs. These findings reflect weaknesses in contractual planning and internal controls, undermining RTVC's capacity to execute long-term projects and damaging its reputation as an efficient administrator of public funds.

In June 2025, [Cambio magazine](#) reported that Morris had decided to terminate the outsourcing contract for the administration, operation, and maintenance (AOM) of infrastructure, transferring operations directly to RTVC despite having admitted to the Comptroller a year earlier that the organization lacked sufficient personnel to manage the stations. This transition generated uncertainty about the actual state of the network, led to the loss of key technical staff, and sparked complaints of improvisation. Finally, the system returned to the outsourcing model, awarding the contract to the OM-2025 Consortium under reinforced supervision. The interruption and subsequent reversal of the AOM module illustrate how administrative decisions taken without robust feasibility studies have the potential to jeopardize operational continuity, generate cost overruns, and compromise the financial and technical sustainability of the system.

ADVERTISING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Official advertising constitutes a significant revenue source for media outlets, particularly in the current global context of the [global funding crisis](#). This dependence creates risks for editorial independence, as agendas often reflect the interests of financiers rather than journalistic or public service criteria. According to FLIP, official advertising has been "[after violence, the second most decisive factor in censorship and self-censorship in Colombian journalism](#)." Although, given its nature, public media should be shielded from this type of interference, budgetary constraints make them equally vulnerable, threatening their long-term sustainability and diverting their mission toward political objectives.

Colombia's regulatory framework for official advertising remains limited. [Article 10 of Law 1474 of 2011](#) prohibits the use of public resources for the self-promotion of public officials, political parties, or candidates. Yet the law fails

to establish [objective criteria or uniform procedures](#) for contracting and allocating advertising. This legal gap grants entities broad discretion to decide which media outlets to fund and under what criteria, opening the door to the political use of resources.

Decisions on national advertising set trends and precedents that are often replicated at regional and local levels. FLIP [reported](#) that the Duque administration (2018-2022) spent USD 11.4 million (COP 46.1 billion) on official advertising, while major local and departmental administrations between 2020 and 2023 spent more than USD 161.4 million (COP 650 billion). Most of these resources went to private national media, frequently benefiting outlets close to political power.

For its part, the Petro administration has changed the destination of these resources. According to data from [La Silla Vacía](#), during the first half of the Duque government, 69% of spending went to private media and only 18% to RTVC. Over the same period under Petro, 0% went to private media and 84% to RTVC. In practice, however, [RTVC concentrated the funds and](#) redistributed them to private outlets, mirroring practices observed in regional systems. Meanwhile, some state institutions continue [to contract](#) with private media and broadcast institutional messages authorized by [Resolution 7423 of 2024 of the CRC](#); the budgetary emphasis has shifted substantially.

This shift is likely to be explained by two factors. First, the strained relationship between President Petro and the private media. Second, the government's commitment to strengthening the public media system as its primary channel of official communication. Whereas administrations such as those of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018) and Iván Duque maintained [close relations](#) with private media and related economic interests, interviewees for this report consistently perceive current private media coverage of the government as negative and unbalanced. The government's effort to "balance the narrative" has prompted a redistribution toward community, alternative, and digital media. An example is the [directive](#) issued in September 2024, known as the "Thirds Law," which establishes that 33.3% of institutional advertising must be allocated to these media outlets, thereby acknowledging their role in the plurality of information. However, on August 21, 2025, the Council of State [suspended](#) this directive for "violating free competition and the principle of equality because it established a privileged status for certain media such as community radio, community television, and alternative media." President Petro rejected the decision on his [X account](#). The Court's decision is likely to further strain relations between the Executive and the Council of State, as we noted in our first report in this series: "[What is the future of democracy in Colombia? Analysis of the tensions between the branches of power.](#)"

This strategy has been complemented by programs such as [Medios en red](#), implemented by Telecafé with [FONTIC resources totaling USD 2.7 million \(COP 10.9 billion\)](#). This program seeks to consolidate a network of digital and community media, addressing their [main challenges](#), according to 2024 data from the ICT Ministry, such as financial sustainability, closing the digital divide, and strengthening the technical capacities of these media. One of its most significant and controversial components is the creation of a centralized web platform for communicators to access content produced by the government. This platform will consist of material previously edited and approved by the communications offices of each entity, which has the potential to limit the editorial independence of media outlets that depend on these resources. While these measures aim to diversify the media ecosystem, there is a risk of political capture if clear regulatory safeguards and independent oversight mechanisms are not established.

POLITICAL AND EDITORIAL AUTONOMY

By institutional design, the public media system has limited political and editorial autonomy. The boards of public media are dominated by representatives of the executive branch. At the regional level, governors and mayors sit on the boards and, in some cases, chair them. Examples include [TeleAntioquia](#) and [Telepacífico](#), chaired by the governor or a member designated by Antioquia and Valle de Cauca, respectively. This design concentrates decision-making power over budget priorities and projects in the hands of political authorities, leaving public media vulnerable to interference in their agenda and editorial lines.

[ICT Law](#) reinforced this design and [deepened](#) the public media's dependence on the Executive. During Iván Duque's administration, several episodes illustrated this vulnerability. In 2018, RTVC's then-director, Juan Pablo Bieri, ordered the removal of the program *Los Puros Criollos* from the air after its presenter, Santiago Rivas, [criticized](#) the ICT Law, in a documented case of [censorship](#). That same year, journalists [Andrea Olano and Carlos Chica](#) were removed at the last minute from a scheduled interview with President Duque on Radio Nacional's *La señal de la mañana* program by executive order. Both incidents highlighted how the direct appointment of RTVC's director and the absence of effective checks and balances led to editorial pressure and politically motivated decisions.

In the current administration, President Gustavo Petro has maintained a conflictive relationship with private media, which [he accuses](#) of operating with a systematic bias against him and of [serving](#) economic interests contrary to his political project. In response, he has favored the public media system as a central channel of communication and narrative counterweight. **Although some interviewed sources acknowledge that [media coverage of this government has not always been balanced](#), the editorial alignment of public media with the official agenda poses significant risks to their independence and sets a negative precedent for the future.**

On August 15, 2025, as part of the governmental strategy to “balance the narrative,” President Petro [instructed](#) ICT Minister Julián Molina during a cabinet meeting to initiate the bidding process for Canal Uno, a public channel operated by a private concessionaire since 2017. President Petro justified the instruction on the need for a “new way of managing television,” reiterating his claim that his administration's progress and achievements are not adequately covered by the private media. The president's decision sparked controversy and prompted a response from the channel, which asserts that the concession is valid until 2037, making a new bidding process legally unfeasible.

The background is more complex. [Concession contract 001 of 2017](#) was [awarded](#) by the then-[ANTV](#) to Plural Comunicaciones S.A.S., but in 2022, the shareholding structure changed, and control was transferred to [Phoenix Media S.A.S.](#) through HMTV Uno S.A.S. This move was monitored by the Superintendency of Companies, which in July 2025 imposed a [fine](#) for inconsistencies in the disclosure of control status. Although the Superintendency clarified that its authorization was not required for the share transfer, the process fueled perceptions of politically motivated administrative oversight. These suspicions were reinforced by [simultaneous reviews](#) conducted by the Ministry of Labor and the Superintendency in November 2024, following the cancellation of the CM& news program and President Petro's [public reaction](#) pointing to alleged irregularities. As Colombia Risk Analysis warned in its *Colombia Risk Monthly - November 2023*, this pattern turns the superintendencies into indirect tools of political pressure, bypassing congressional checks and balances.

GENERAL DIRECTOR OF RTVC 2004–2025

Gilberto Ramírez

2004

Previous Position:

Manager of Invisión;
previously Coordinator of
the Communications Fund

Appointing President:

Álvaro Uribe Vélez



January 2005

Eduardo Osorio Lozano

February 2005

Previous Position:

Advisor at the Ministry of ICT

Appointing President:

Álvaro Uribe Vélez



Katy Osorio Guachetá

March 2007

Previous Position:

-

Appointing President:

Álvaro Uribe Vélez



Douglas Velásquez Jácome

2010

Previous Position:

Lawyer and regulatory affairs
consultant in ICT. Former
General Coordinator of the
Telecommunications
Regulatory Commission

Appointing President:

Álvaro Uribe Vélez



October 2010

Francisco Ortiz Rebolledo

December 2010

Previous Position:

Communications Advisor, U
Party for the 2010 elections

Appointing President:

Juan Manuel Santos



July 2012

Adding to this scenario is a legal gap inherited from the 2019 ICT Law, promoted by the Duque administration. Although the law extended the validity of television concessions to 20 years, it left unclear whether extensions are automatic or contingent on new conditions. This ambiguity enables the current dispute: while Canal Uno argues that its concession remains valid until 2037, the government claims that the contract expires in 2027 and that any extension requires a public bidding process and additional payments. The ICT Ministry had already hired the National University in 2024 to assess a possible contract extension, but the study was canceled due to technical issues. In May 2025, an external legal opinion was again [sought](#) to settle the dispute.

The relevance of this case lies not only in the legal debate but also in its political context. The announcement comes during the final stretch of the current administration, when pressure to show results and cement its legacy coincides with a strategy to strengthen the role of public media as a counterweight to [biased coverage](#) by private media. The risk, however, is that this strategy will lead to a deterioration of the editorial independence principle and open the door to the perception that future renewal or continuation of contracts depends on outlets' editorial stance or campaign coverage, undermining press freedom.

This tension between the president and the media remains controversial, considering that in September 2024, the president signed a [directive](#) requiring all members of the government, including himself, to respect the press. Yet, [according to La Silla Vacía](#), this directive was immediately disregarded by the head of state, who, in his speech, lashed out at the private media.

Darío Montenegro

July 2012

Previous Position:Deputy Director of Television
at RTVC**Appointing President:**

Juan Manuel Santos

**Diana Celis Mora**

March 2013

Previous Position:

Chief of Staff, Ministry of ICT

Appointing President:

Juan Manuel Santos



November 2014

Lucy Osorno Sánchez

January 2015

Previous Position:Consul General of
Colombia in Madrid**Appointing President:**

Juan Manuel Santos



March 2015

Juana Amalia González*

April 2015

Previous Position:Deputy Director of
Corporate Support at RTVC**Appointing President:**

Acting Manager*



April 2015

Jhon Jairo Ocampo

May 2015

Previous Position:Press Secretary, Casa de
Nariño (Presidential Palace)**Appointing President:**

Juan Manuel Santos



July 2018

Juan Pablo Bieri

August 2018

Previous Position:Communications Director for the
"Iván Duque Presidente" campaign**Appointing President:**

Iván Duque



January 2019

"To say that there is an imbalance in information, that they do not have the opportunity to defend themselves, and that the narrative needs to be recalibrated, is a narrative in itself."

Former contributor to Señal Colombia and Canal Capital.

The arrival of Nórída Rodríguez as director of RTVC in May 2023 came after [nine months without a permanent head](#), a period in which, according to interviewed sources, hiring was largely paralyzed and much of the staff worked on month-to-month temporary contracts, as it was frowned upon for the responsible deputy director to make long-term decisions. During Rodríguez's tenure, [allegations](#) of an editorial shift in favor of the government emerged, leading to self-censorship and tensions with long-standing executives such as [Dora Brausin](#), deputy radio director [since 2016](#) at RTVC. Brausin later [stated](#) that her departure stemmed from her disagreement with the editorial direction taken by the public media, which was increasingly oriented toward a government narrative. In May 2024, President Petro [asked](#) Rodríguez to resign after she was accused of alleged irregularities in RTVC's hiring and internal management processes, accusations she [denied](#).

In April 2024, President Petro appointed Hollman Morris, then deputy television director, as the new head of RTVC. Morris had already worked with the president during his term as mayor of Bogotá (2012-2016), when he [directed](#) Canal Capital. Over time, Morris's journalistic career gradually [gave way](#) to a more political role, becoming an outspoken defender of Petro's project, a communications operator for his causes, and also his [personal friend](#). As shown in the infographic of RTVC directors, there is a pattern in the appointments, with several having served as advisors or having links to the campaigns of the ruling government. In Morris's case, his [resignation](#) from Canal Capital in 2014, followed by his [candidacy](#) for

Juan Ramón Samper Samper

March 2019

Previous Position:

Advisor at the Ministry of ICT

**Appointing President:**

Iván Duque

January 2020

Álvaro García Jiménez

February 2020

Previous Position:High Presidential Advisor
for Communications, Iván
Duque administration**Appointing President:**

Iván Duque

Vacancy

August 2022

Previous Position:Adriana Vásquez Sánchez was
appointed interim director.
She was the deputy director of
television at RTVC.**Appointing President:**

None appointed

Nórida Rodríguez

May 2023

Previous Position:Director of the Barichara
Green Film Festival**Appointing President:**

Gustavo Petro

Hollman Morris

April 2024

Previous Position:Deputy Director of Television
at RTVC**Appointing President:**

Gustavo Petro

Present

mayor of Bogotá under the Bogotá Humana banner, reinforces the perception that RTVC has increasingly become a platform for personal and governmental political projection.

Since his arrival, there have been reports of an increased editorialization of content. For example, [La Silla Vacía noted that](#) the airtime devoted to news and opinion grew by 690% compared to the previous management and that, in nine of the fifteen broadcasts analyzed, the lead story focused on President Petro. RTVC workers [have pointed](#) to the political use of the network, with cultural and educational programming on both radio and television displaced in favor of narratives aligned with the government's discourse.

Morris's arrival has also fostered an atmosphere of mistrust and self-censorship, documented by dozens of journalists, and led to the departure of staff who tried to oppose the new editorial line. Silvana Orlandelli, former director of Señal Colombia, [resigned](#) in August 2024, [alleging](#) harassment and workplace bullying. Since April 2024, FLIP has [documented](#) more than thirty cases of public media workers reporting censorship and editorial pressure within the system.

This outlook runs counter to the principles that should govern public television broadcasting, such as impartiality, which requires non-discrimination on political or ideological grounds, and plurality, which guarantees access to diverse sources and opinions. However, journalists report that, in practice, interviews with opposition voices or their occasional participation in analysis programs have been restricted, undermining both principles.

PREPONDERANCE OF NEWS

In 2021, under the leadership of Álvaro García, RTVC [launched](#) its news program on Señal Colombia. Its creation, in the middle of an election year, drew [criticism](#) from observers who warned that institutional communication risked turning into propaganda at the service of the government in power. *RTVC Noticias* marked a structural shift in the public media system, setting a precedent that opened the door to new editorial approaches in an ecosystem that, until then, had maintained a more educational and cultural profile.

During the expert roundtable convened by Colombia Risk Analysis, some participants questioned whether it was appropriate for public media to develop news programs. “When news comes in, politicians come in,” summarized one of the attendees. The inclusion of news content inevitably led to greater exposure to the political agenda and increased tensions around editorial independence. Still, there are public media outlets whose news programming is perceived as independent, such as the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), part of the U.S Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), though it now faces an uncertain future amid funding [cuts](#) by the Trump administration.

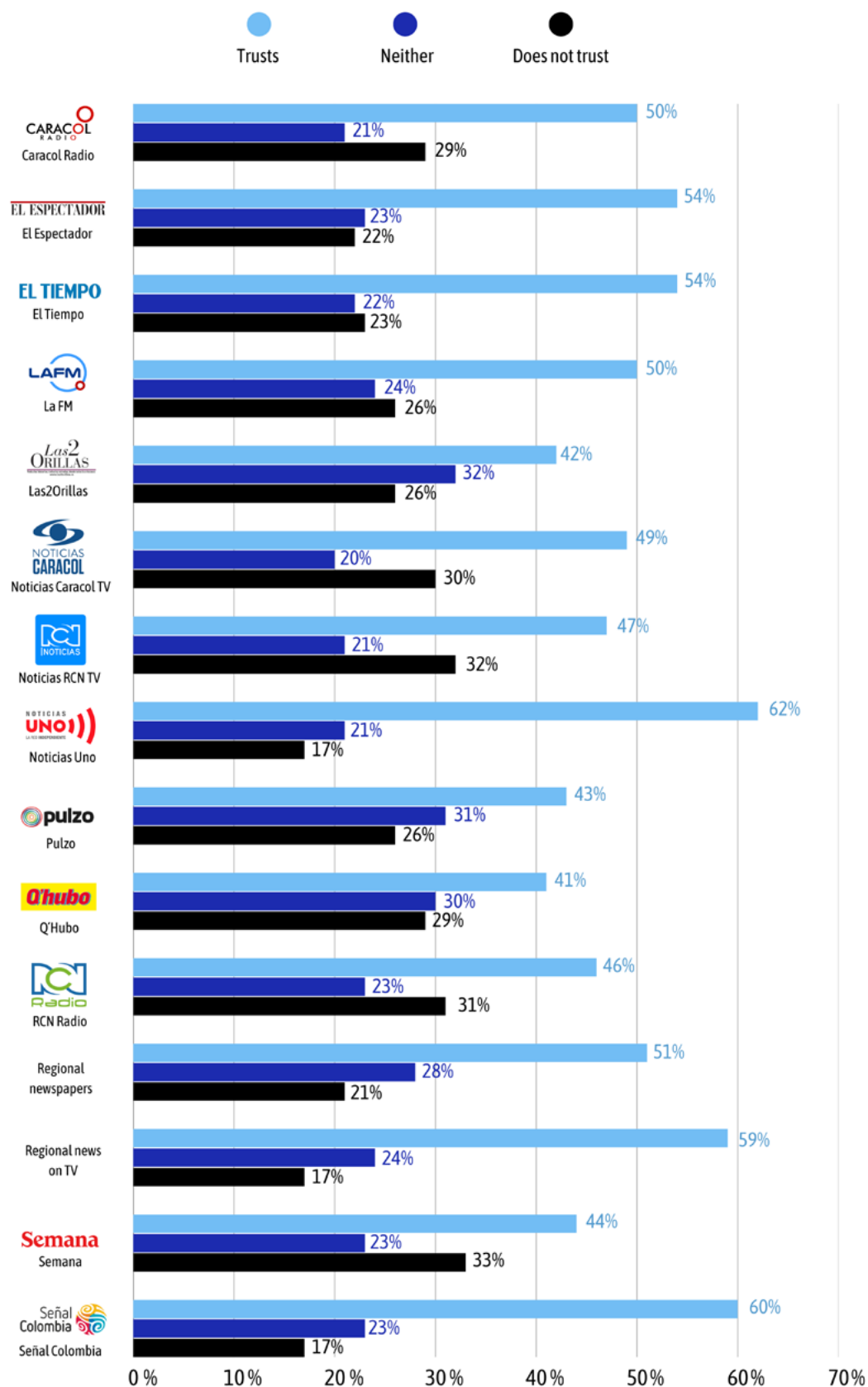
According to sources consulted for this report, the news program became RTVC’s operational core, concentrating a significant share of the entity’s resources both during the Iván Duque administration and in the early years of President Petro’s term. This centrality reshaped the system’s mission and its budget allocation, prioritizing daily coverage and news operations that require substantial logistics. News programming requires continuous operation, territorial presence, specialized technical equipment, and complex contracting structures, which entail elevated and sustained costs. Furthermore, by their nature, they are short-lived products for immediate consumption, which limits their reuse and long-term impact.

Despite criticism, Señal Colombia’s news program ranks among the most trusted outlets, according to the [Digital News Report 2025](#), reinforcing its legitimacy with audiences. While prioritizing news strengthens the system’s ability to compete with private media in the news arena, it reduces its traditional offerings in culture, education, and long-form content.

**“People treat RTVC as a news program, not as an ecosystem.
That is the greatest triumph one can grant Hollman.”**

Contributor to Señal Colombia

TRUST SCORE OF EACH MEDIA OUTLET IN COLOMBIA



Source: Digital News Report 2025



RADIÓNICA PALES UNDER THE NEWS SYSTEM

Hollman Morris's arrival as RTVC director and his deputy radio director's decisions marked a turning point for Radiónica, one of the most emblematic stations in the public media system for its historic support of independent music and youth culture in Colombia. In less than a year, key staff at the station [resigned](#), [allegations](#) of censorship emerged, and the editorial line shifted, affecting journalistic [independence](#) and creating an internal climate of tension. The reduction of its territorial coverage due to the [loss of FM frequencies in Cali and Medellín](#), transferred to Radio Nacional, has weakened its territorial reach and visibility at a time when competition with private stations and digital platforms demands greater presence and differentiation.

Radiónica's reconfiguration in the final year of the Petro administration illustrates how RTVC's information system absorbs cultural spaces and subordinates them to its management's political priorities. Decisions such as transferring key frequencies to Radio Nacional, scaling back its presence at strategic venues such as [Rock al Parque](#), and altering its editorial direction have weakened its identity as an independent cultural station.

This change sets a precedent for the replacement of cultural and educational content with news agendas aligned with the incumbent government, a shift that not only weakens programming diversity but also undermines public trust and diminishes the strategic value of these media as guarantors of pluralism. Radiónica, a symbol of RTVC's cultural mission, thus becomes an example of how political instrumentalization has the potential to overshadow and displace the missions that give meaning to public media.

RTVC: DIRECT COMMUNICATION BY GOVERNMENTS

Both the Iván Duque and Gustavo Petro administrations have used public media as platforms to broadcast their messages, without journalistic mediation. In 2020, in the context of the pandemic, the program *Prevención y acción* (Prevention and Action) was [created](#) and broadcast through public channels, official social media accounts, and, initially, private media outlets. This program aimed to provide information about the pandemic and communicate the president's decisions regarding its management. However, in practice, it replaced traditional presidential addresses and became the [president's primary tool](#) to showcase his achievements, drawing [criticism](#) for its propagandistic nature and extensive use of public signal. According to the firm Guarumo, Duque's approval rating rose [from 23% to 52%](#) in just two months, between February and April 2020. *Prevención y acción* was consolidated as a government-controlled platform that guaranteed the president airtime in a [controlled](#) environment.

President Petro has adopted a strategy different in form but similar in substance to that of other leaders in the region, prioritizing direct, unmediated communication through his X account and [live broadcasts](#) of cabinet meetings. According to the [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#), this intensive use of social media reflects a regional trend among presidents seeking to bypass traditional media mediation.

Presidential addresses are protected under [Law 182 of 1995](#), which empowers the president to address the nation at any time and without restriction. However, the use of this tool has been questioned. The [Opposition Statute](#) grants opposition parties the right to request up to three annual replies to presidential speeches, which already occurred in 2023 when the [Democratic Center](#) (February 28 and June 4) and [Radical Change](#) (June 14) exhausted their quota. In 2025, both [parties](#) exercised this right again (February). While President Petro is legally entitled to continue these interventions, communication experts warn that their repetition erodes their effectiveness.

In this context, the broadcasts of the cabinet meetings, initially presented as presidential addresses, prompted a [legal action](#) before the Council of State, arguing that simultaneous transmission across all channels violated the right to information. The Court ruled in favor of the claimant and ordered that broadcasts be limited to the national public channels, *Señal Colombia* and *Canal Institucional*, excluding private, regional, and local channels. The judges noted that this right is affected when the only available source is the official version of the government, which is disseminated simultaneously and without the possibility of contrast. Since then, the government has complied with the decision, although the presidential addresses reduce significantly television audiences. According to [La Silla Vacía](#), Caracol, RCN, and Canal 1 together reach an average prime-time rating of 12%; during presidential broadcasts, this figure drops to around 7%. President Petro's strategy suggests a mechanism to present his speeches in prime time while simultaneously displacing newscasts that are openly critical of his administration. However, in practice, this strategy is diluted as it reduces the urgency of the intended message to be presented in his addresses, since private media filter the content of the speeches, thereby frustrating the goal of direct communication.

President Petro has [repeatedly referred](#) to the Duque administration's broadcasts and programs, using these precedents to justify his own practice. Paradoxically, Iván Duque himself has also [spoken](#) out on this situation, questioning President Petro's practices. While some argue that these practices promote transparency or the dissemination of official information, in practice they reduce spaces for contrasting views, displace independent content, and strengthen governmental control over the media agenda.

AGREEMENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS: PLURALISM AND GEOPOLITICS

Content-sharing agreements allow media outlets to [distribute](#) and reuse material collaboratively. In the case of Colombia's public media system, *Canal Institucional* has maintained agreements with the German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) since 2016 and with the Russian [state-owned](#) Russia Today (RT) since 2014. According to RTVC, in response to a right of petition, these agreements prioritize audience interest and content relevance, and they involve no costs, as the material is provided directly by those states. Their purpose is to enrich programming, diversify perspectives, and guarantee informational pluralism. The institutional arguments for maintaining these agreements are based on broadening the public's international outlook, ensuring credibility and quality of information, diversifying programming with multiple perspectives, and optimizing resources by accessing high-quality content without compromising financial sustainability.

Since these contracts are carried out free of charge, experts consulted warn that such agreements also function as instruments of *soft power*, projecting the cultural and political influence of foreign powers. Furthermore, these agreements have the potential to operate as vehicles of propaganda, shaping audiences' international perceptions. The debate deepens when considering that the decision to retain or withdraw such content is not neutral but carries geopolitical implications.

In this context, the question arises: Who determines what content reflects democratic values, and under what criteria? The case of RT illustrates this controversy. Although it was [banned in Europe, the United States, and Canada](#) in 2022 for its role in the invasion of Ukraine, the agreement remains in place. Public scrutiny, however, only [began in](#) 2023, when its presence was associated with the current government. The inclusion or exclusion of international content thus depends on the political interpretation of the moment.

In this scenario, the [inclusion](#) of the program [La Base](#) in *Señal Colombia's* programming schedule has sparked debate due to its high level of editorialization. Unlike other international content-sharing agreements, sources indicate that RTVC pays for its broadcast, raising further questions about selection criteria. *La Base* is hosted by [Pablo Iglesias](#), former vice president of the Spanish government, and features [Inna Afinogenova](#), previously Deputy Director of RT. Beyond its particular orientation, the central discussion is whether its incorporation responds to an interest in expanding international offerings or, on the contrary, introduces external agendas that have the potential to blur the pluralistic and public service mission.

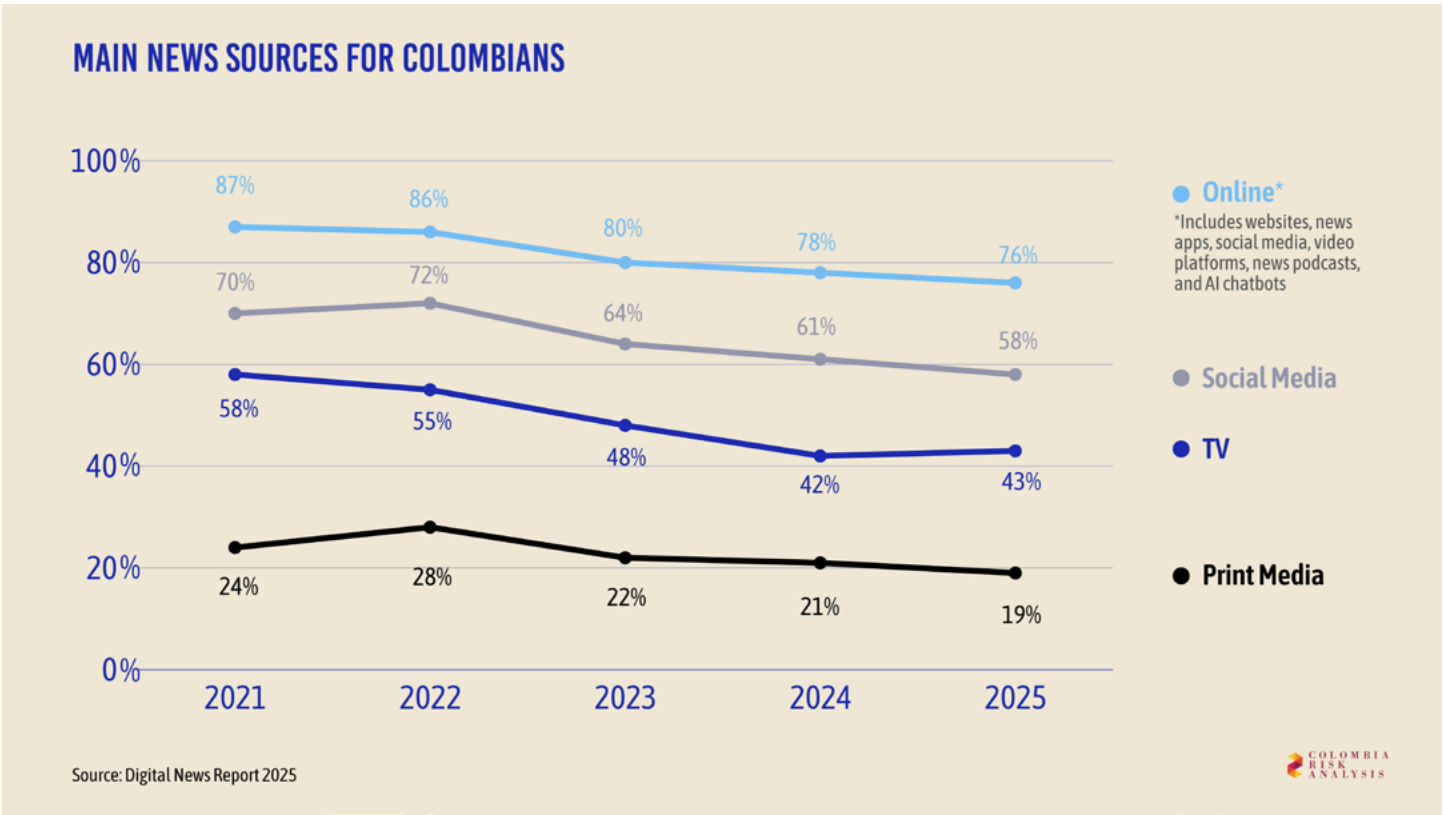
In a country with limited international news coverage and persistent “informational parochialism,” in the words of a participant in our expert roundtable, this type of content broadens the information spectrum and opens a necessary debate. The challenge lies in defining clear and transparent rules to guide the inclusion of international programming in a way that strengthens plurality and does not lead to perceptions of political alignment. Rather than questioning the relevance of such content, what is needed is to establish criteria that allow its incorporation to contribute to the public service mission and to public trust in state media.



SOCIAL MEDIA

The transition of the Colombian information ecosystem toward digital platforms has profoundly reshaped the role of the media. For decades, traditional media outlets served as *gatekeepers*, filtering, controlling, and ranking the information that reached the public. Access to information is increasingly broad and equitable, and any citizen can exercise their right to seek, produce, and disseminate information.

Social media platforms have consolidated themselves as a central channel for information consumption, displacing the traditional editor with algorithms that prioritize content that generates the most interaction, without necessarily considering its journalistic value. This dynamic has contributed to a [segmented ecosystem](#), where opinion tends to be more visible than news. In this context, both public and private media have integrated content creators. All of it is part of a global phenomenon tied to the financial crisis of media outlets and their struggle to survive in digital environments. While here to stay, it raises questions about independence and relationships with political power.



In the case of the public media system, the Petro administration has incorporated content creators into opinion and analysis informational spaces, which has sparked [debate](#). Sources consulted by Colombia Risk Analysis agree that the problem is not the presence of content creators but rather the lack of transparency. Hiring a content creator is not irregular and is not the first time this has happened in a government, whether national or regional, and this will likely become a trend in government political communication. The risk arises when these ties are concealed, eroding trust and accountability.

The question lies in whether the public should always be fully aware of who is financing those who provide information. Transparency not only allows the audience to assess the independence or political bias of content but also prevents the instrumentalization of public media as tools of propaganda. In an environment where the boundaries between journalism, activism, and digital influence are blurred, knowing the source of funding is key to enabling citizens to form a critical judgment.

This debate unfolds amid a surge in disinformation. Meta has [ended](#) its fact-checking programs in the region, replacing them with mechanisms such as “community notes,” which rely on voluntary user intervention and therefore lack the coverage and speed necessary to stop the massive spread of falsehoods. This approach was first [adopted](#) by platform X (formerly Twitter) in 2022, and [has not](#) proven very effective in political contexts because there is no consensus among users of different ideological backgrounds.

In this context, the demand for transparency in political advertising is not only a matter of good practice, but a minimum tool for democratic defense. In Colombia, the law requires media outlets that receive political advertising during campaigns to disclose it explicitly. It is therefore relevant to extend this principle to content creators who operate in a diffuse regulatory environment that allows them to disseminate political messages without informing their audience about their origin or funding. This asymmetry [erodes fair competition](#) in the information market and makes it easier for [political actors](#) to use digital creators as opaque channels for propaganda, shifting part of the public debate into less scrutinized spaces. This phenomenon was highlighted in July 2025, when presidential candidate Gustavo Bolívar [denounced](#) a campaign against him promoted by influencers who had previously supported him. He suggested that influencers receiving financial compensation for political endorsements should [disclose it](#) by tagging their posts with “#PPP”. His complaint illustrates the structural risk of hiring influencers without clear transparency rules. This practice has the potential to distort public debate by shifting it to scenarios where citizen and media oversight is limited.

In the public media system, the absence of clear rules for these new actors poses a risk to editorial autonomy, especially if state resources are used to finance content that lacks clear identification as political advertising. Aligning transparency obligations between traditional media and influencers as much as possible would not eliminate the phenomenon. Still, it has the potential to allow for more informed and balanced public scrutiny, strengthening citizen trust and making it more difficult for disinformation to masquerade as legitimate information.

RISKS AND PRECEDENTS

PRECEDENTS

Once a precedent is established in the management of public information, it is no't easy to reverse. These practices accumulate in layers, expanding the margins of what is considered acceptable and, over time, eroding the autonomy and pluralistic mission of public media. Each new administration inherits not only the infrastructure and resources of the system, but also the practices and customs normalized by its predecessors. Thus, precedents in the management of Colombia's public media system are not isolated episodes but patterns that become consolidated and part of its institutional DNA.

- **Use of public media as a tool for propaganda and political confrontation**

We have identified that the national and regional governments have used public media to promote official agendas, promote political propaganda, and exclude critical or opposition voices. These practices aim to vilify critics, which threatens democratic debate. By establishing direct communication channels with audiences without scrutiny or counter-questions, public media are turned into instruments of narrative control at both the national and regional levels.

In this context, the justification of using the public system to “balance narratives” transforms the institution into a counterweight to journalism. As experts consulted for this report noted, governments that perceive themselves as “excluded” often present their own outlets as bearers of the “true version” of events, replacing the public service role of media with political legitimization.

- **RTVC's shift to news content displaces its cultural and educational vocation**

The expansion of news and opinion programs, at the expense of cultural and educational content, has transformed the nature of RTVC. Political coverage has become the system's central focus, relegating longstanding programs dedicated to culture, education, and public entertainment. As this decision responds to editorial decisions, it further conditions the allocation of resources. Once public media are conceived primarily as political communication channels, reversing this trend becomes increasingly difficult, weakening their pluralistic function.

- **Personalization of RTVC**

Under current management, the visibility of Hollman Morris has grown, turning him into a recurring protagonist in coverage, both on RTVC's social media and news programming. This strategy, which Morris had already [employed](#) at Canal Capital, prioritizes the promotion of his personal image over content associated with institutional

identity. While executive visibility is not new, in this case, there is a greater focus on the figure of the director and a [narrative](#) of achievements that are directly attributed to his leadership, diluting the identity of the public media system.

- **Governance and institutional design without effective checks and balances**

The current governance model concentrates decision-making power in the executive branch, both nationally and regionally, without effective independent oversight mechanisms. Boards of directors dominated by government representatives and the direct presidential appointment of directors reinforce the system's political dependence. This precedent conveys that editorial and strategic orientation respond to the will of the Executive branch rather than to an institutional public service mandate.

- **Integration of content creators without transparency safeguards**

The incorporation of digital content creators without a clear policy on the disclosure of contracts or affiliations risks turning their perceived independence into a propaganda tool. This practice was already part of a trend and will continue to be replicated by future governments, which will find in these voices an effective channel to amplify their narrative. The problem does not lie in the hiring itself but in the lack of transparency that prevents citizens from assessing whether the messages meet journalistic criteria of public interest or serve a political agenda.

RISKS

The risks facing Colombia's public media system arise from trends observed in recent years and from practices that, if consolidated, have the potential to irreversibly undermine its autonomy, credibility, and democratic function. Many of these risks are structural in nature, which requires a preventive approach, as once established, they are difficult to reverse and their effects outlast the governments that initiate them.

- **Editorialization and loss of pluralism**

Government transitions often bring editorial realignments consistent with the political agenda of the incoming administration, which affects the continuity and pluralistic mission of public media. This pattern, which has already been observed in several transitions, turns editorial policy into political spoils rather than a long-term institutional framework. The danger lies in programming that privileges the Executive's narrative while excluding critical or alternative voices, and reducing public debate to an official narrative, thereby weakening independence as a key principle of the system.

- **Polarization and stigmatization of journalists**

Political polarization has reinforced a reductionist and binary perception in which public media are seen as government mouthpieces and private media as defenders of corporate or opposition interests. This narrative, present in both official discourse and that of the opposition, has fueled a climate of mistrust and hostility toward journalism across editorial lines, directly affecting the safety and work of journalists.

This phenomenon has manifested itself in [verbal](#) and [physical attacks](#) against RTVC reporters covering protests, as well as in [digital campaigns](#) to discredit their work. The use of public outlets to attack private media, for example, by promoting hashtags such as [#CaracolMiente](#), erodes media coexistence and homogenizes private media as political adversaries, ignoring the diversity of editorial lines and approaches within this sector. This confrontational environment blurs the line between legitimate criticism and personal attack, raising the risk of reprisals.

In rural areas, the risks are heightened. Between 2018 and October 2023, FLIP [recorded](#) a total of 68 attacks on journalists in ten of the sixteen municipalities where peace radio stations operate. These stations, designed to foster reconciliation and expand access to information in conflict-affected regions, have been targeted by [opposition sectors](#) that accuse them of being “[mouthpieces for the FARC](#)” or of using public funds to spread “terrorist” propaganda. Such [accusations](#) delegitimize their mission and expose journalists to increased threats, particularly in areas with persistent armed group activity.

The persistence of these dynamics has the potential to consolidate a vicious circle in which media stigmatization legitimizes aggression, and aggression reinforces self-censorship and fragmentation of the information ecosystem.

- **Dependence on official advertising**

In a context of financial crisis across the media sector, state advertising remains a crucial revenue stream of private media. This dependence creates incentives for the allocation of advertising resources for political purposes, conditioning coverage, and generating self-censorship. In practice, official guidelines have the potential to become a tool for narrative control, rewarding friendly media while punishing critics, which erodes editorial independence and consolidates the political instrumentalization of the system.

- **Credibility crisis and reputational damage**

The use of the public media system as a political stronghold has the potential to undermine its credibility. The public perception that these media outlets function as propaganda tools undermines their legitimacy and hinders their ability to fulfill their public service mission. The centralization of content on social media under direct management control accentuated this perception, as occurred during the Nórída Rodríguez administration, according to a source interviewed for the report. In this case, the digital strategy was handled by an operator seen as personally aligned with management, which fueled accusations of personal co-optation of institutional platforms. Although social media is not the primary medium, it is a critical space for reputation-building and citizen engagement. Its instrumentalization for both personal and political purposes increases reputational risk, undermines public trust, and generates long-term damage that is difficult to reverse.

WHAT WILL BE THE ROLE OF RTVC DURING THE 2026 ELECTIONS?

The 2026 election cycle will place RTVC at the center of a highly polarized information ecosystem, where the narrative dispute between the government and the private media will become more intense. Public media, which for years played a marginal role due to its limited reach, will now occupy a strategic place in the political competition. This position will make it a decisive channel for understanding how the government communicates its project and how it seeks to influence the electoral contest.

In this context, RTVC will act as an amplifier for the political project of President Gustavo Petro and the presidential and legislative candidates aligned with his agenda. Most presidential contenders will be featured in its programming, although the treatment will vary according to their proximity to the Executive. This will reinforce the perception that public and private media function as opposing trenches in a narrative war. Although the audience will recognize this dynamic, both RTVC and the private outlets will insist on a narrative of impartiality to sustain their legitimacy.

The intensive use of public media as a government megaphone will pose a significant reputational risk for RTVC. In a highly media-exposed environment, as one participant in the expert roundtable stated, “attention is a white-hot spotlight. It can tan you or it can melt you.” The precedent set by other political leaders shows that controlling the communication apparatus does not guarantee electoral victories but does leave lasting scars on public trust in the public media system.

The 2026 campaign will also likely be marked by an intensification of disinformation and propaganda on social media. The absence of specific regulations for digital political advertising, combined with the limited capacity of the National Electoral Council (CNE) to verify account ownership and content origin, will open the door to opaque and difficult-to-trace influence campaigns. This vulnerability is amplified by [Law 2494](#), which prohibits the publication of polls until October 31, 2025. While the measure was designed to ensure equal access to electoral information, it will likely end up benefiting candidates with high pre-existing national recognition and resources, while pushing others to rely on unofficial polls lacking methodological rigor, weakening the availability of reliable data, and widening the margin for disinformation.

Recent trends suggest that the public media system will continue to prioritize the government’s political agenda, but the elections will test its ability to provide pluralistic and rigorous coverage amid media confrontation and the constant flow of false or manipulated information. Its role during election coverage will determine the future legitimacy and democratic function of Colombia’s public media system.

WHAT WILL BE THE ROLE OF RTVC IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT?

The future of RTVC after the 2026 elections will depend largely on the political climate and the ideological profile of the next administration. **The intensity with which the public media system has been used in recent years as a political tool has set precedents that will condition the way any new government relates to it.** This legacy creates a scenario where the continuity, scope, and even survival of the system will be up for debate.

It is likely that during the first year of a new administration, particularly if it is from the opposition, there will be a mass exodus of journalists and executives from RTVC. RTVC's current strategy, which mirrors the ideologically driven audience model of some private media outlets, will leave its audience fatigued and weaken RTVC's ability to reach broader and more diverse publics.

In the report "[Fragmentation and Polarization One Year Ahead of the Next Presidency](#)," published in August 2025 by Colombia Risk Analysis, we present our scenarios and outlook regarding the electoral contest and the actions of each political sector in its first 100 days. In a scenario where a government with an agenda to reduce the size of the state, or one critical of the role of public media, comes to power, drastic budget cuts or even the elimination of the system are likely to be proposed. Such a decision would overlook the high territorial penetration of public media, surpassed in Colombia only by the communication channels of the Armed Forces. This reach makes RTVC one of the few platforms with access to regions underserved by private media and reinforces its strategic value in sustaining the plurality of information.

The international precedent set by NPR and PBS in the United States is illustrative. There, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) [faces a substantial reduction](#) in operations following the signing of a law promoted by President Donald Trump that reverses more than \$1 billion in public funding. The decision was made on the premise that these systems were [biased](#) against the political interests of the administration, showing how easily the viability of public media can be threatened.

Although a total shutdown of RTVC is not the most likely scenario in Colombia, it cannot be ruled out entirely. The persistence of narratives that portray it as a political stronghold or an unnecessary expense is likely to fuel proposals for its dismantling or partial privatization. Even if it does not disappear, the system is likely to continue to be used as a vehicle for the political positioning of the government in power, perpetuating the cycle of co-optation and weakening its credibility in the medium term.

The roundtable of experts convened for this report agreed that, despite its shortcomings, it is essential to maintain an ecosystem with public media that contribute to the diversity of voices, cultural content, and coverage of stories about the country's regions. A system dominated by a single type of actor will likely limit plurality and impoverish democratic debate. The capacity for reinvention that comes with each change of government is a strength, provided that RTVC is guaranteed to function as a state media outlet and not as a government media outlet.

CONCLUSIONS

The public media system in Colombia is caught between its service-oriented mission and its instrumentalization by those in power. Each government, both at the national and regional levels, views it as a strategic resource to project its narrative, reinforcing its political position, and neutralizing critical voices. This tension, identified repeatedly throughout the report, translates into precedents that accumulate as layers that are difficult to reverse, from editorialization and personalization of management to the displacement of its cultural and educational vocation by a politically driven news agenda.

Democracies rarely collapse due to the breakdown of formal rules, but rather because of the informal ones, through the unwritten gaps that uphold the integrity of institutions. In the case of the public media system, these gaps allow each administration to gradually stretch the limits of what is acceptable, widening the margin for future leaders to deepen practices of political control, censorship, or propaganda. Without practical consequences for those who cross these lines, the likelihood of recurrence grows with each government cycle, as evidenced by the persistence of patterns ranging from the use of official advertising as a tool of influence to the hiring of content creators without transparency regarding their ties.

Our research shows that this dynamic is not exclusive to the current government. Under different administrations, public media outlets have been used to counterbalance narratives against private outlets perceived as adversarial, which has reinforced polarization and the stigmatization of journalists. This dynamic undermines institutional credibility and, in contexts such as the peace radio stations or a political environment of social mobilization, increases real risks to the safety of those working within the system, particularly in areas with the presence of armed actors.

In this scenario, citizen oversight and organized civil society action are more crucial than ever. The reduction in international cooperation, such as the withdrawal of USAID from some fronts, combined with a lack of donations and sustained support for independent media and verification bodies, has weakened the capacity to monitor democracy and its institutions. Without continuous vigilance, the system remains vulnerable to silent capture, which, when normalized, erodes both its autonomy and its legitimacy.

The public vocation of Colombia's public media system, a principle intended to guarantee plurality, independence, and universal access, has the potential to become a significant void. In its name, different sectors can justify either dismantling the system or converting it into a vehicle for political agendas. **If the notion of the public sphere is distorted, the defense of public media becomes fragmented, and its long-term continuity becomes uncertain.**

Despite its shortcomings, the existence of public media remains a cornerstone for safeguarding informational diversity in Colombia. Their disappearance will likely leave the field open to even greater concentration of media power, further narrowing the spectrum of voices and perspectives available to citizens. The findings of this report suggest that the system's survival depends not only on strengthening its formal structures but also on closing loopholes that allow political capture, establishing effective counterweights, and ensuring transparency at every level. Only then will the promise of public media be an effective guarantee of pluralism, independence, and service to democracy.