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MEAC Findings Report 16

Public Perceptions of the Transitional Justice Components of the 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement: Implications for Peace

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MANAGING EXITS
FROM ARMED CONFLICT

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KEY FINDINGS

- Knowledge of the Truth Commission and Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) is mixed. 30 per cent of respondents reported hearing about the work of the Truth Commission, while 51 per cent reported hearing about the work of the SJP. In general, women were less likely than men to say they had heard of these entities.
- Lower levels of knowledge of the transitional justice system were associated with lower levels of trust in the entities that make up this system. More than half of respondents stated that they do not trust either of these two institutions.
- Initial support for the peace agreement at the time of the referendum, and positive current perceptions of implementation of the peace agreement and its impact, are associated with higher levels of trust in the Truth Commission and SJP.

This Findings Report, and the research that supported it, were undertaken as part of UNU-CPR's Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC) project. MEAC is a multi-donor, multi-partner initiative to develop a unified, rigorous approach to examining how and why individuals exit armed conflict and evaluating the efficacy of interventions meant to support their transitions. While the Findings Report benefited from feedback from MEAC's donors and institutional partners, it does not necessarily represent their official policies or positions.

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Background

About MEAC

How and why do individuals exit armed groups – and how do they do so sustainably, without falling back into conflict cycles? These questions are at the core of UNU-CPR’s Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC) initiative. MEAC is a multi-year, multi-partner collaboration that aims to develop a unified, rigorous approach to examining how and why individuals exit armed conflict and evaluating the efficacy of interventions meant to support their transition to civilian life. MEAC seeks to inform evidence-based programme design and implementation in real time to improve efficacy. At the strategic level, the cross-programme, cross-agency lessons that will emerge from the growing MEAC evidence base will support more effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The MEAC project and accompanying case studies are supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Switzerland’s Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA); the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs; the UN Development Programme (UNDP); and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and is being run in partnership with the Secretariat of the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience; UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO); UNICEF; and the World Bank.

About this Series

The MEAC findings report series seeks to put evidence about conflict prevention, conflict transitions, and related interventions into the hands of policymakers and practitioners in real time. The reports present short overviews of findings (or emerging findings) across a wide range of thematic areas and include analyses on their political or practical implications for the UN and its partners.

About this Report

This report is based on data collected as part of a phone survey of community members in 19 municipalities across Colombia, conducted in two waves from April to May 2021 and November to December 2021, as outlined in detail below.¹ It presents findings on citizens’ perceptions of implementation of transitional justice measures stemming from the peace agreement signed by the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP in 2016. This data may be useful to government, UN, and NGO partners working in Colombia to support implementation of the peace agreement, particularly the transitional justice system that the agreement created. The report ends with an examination of key policy and programmatic implications of findings.

¹ This research was conducted in partnership with [Fundación Conflict Responses](#).

Transitional Justice in Colombia

Overview

The United Nations defines transitional justice as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice, and achieve reconciliation. These may include both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement (or none at all) and individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or a combination thereof.”² This approach to justice developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Latin America and Eastern Europe, where multiple societies were transitioning away from periods of violence towards democracy and needed extraordinary justice measures to address their legacies.³

Transitional justice mechanisms were first applied in Colombia around this time. In peace processes in the 1990s, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) interventions were accompanied by general amnesties. In the early 2000s, the Colombian Government proposed the demobilization of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) but early efforts to establish a normative framework for this process were criticized for not fulfilling the victims’ rights to truth, justice, and reparation.⁴ The Government therefore sought more victim-centred transitional justice mechanisms, inspired by measures taken elsewhere in Latin America in the previous decade.⁵ For example, in 2006, Colombia’s Constitutional Court adopted what would be called the “Justice and Peace” law. This new law offered lesser sentences for paramilitary commanders who demobilized and contributed to truth and reparations for victims through mechanisms established for this purpose.⁶ As a next step, in 2011, Colombia passed its Victims’ and Land Restitution Law, which allowed victims of the conflict to register to receive reparations and recover stolen land.⁷ These efforts formed the backdrop to discussions on the topic of victims and their rights to truth, accountability, recognition of responsibility, and other aspects, that took place during the peace process with the FARC-EP from 2012 to 2016.

The resulting Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition (henceforth the Comprehensive System) created by the peace agreement, initiated operations in 2017 with the objectives of fulfilling the victims’ rights through judicial and non-judicial mechanisms and ensuring accountability and non-repetition of violations, through a gender-responsive and localized approach.

² United Nations Security Council, “The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies: report of the Secretary-General,” 23 August 2004, S/2004/616, para. 8.

³ International Center for Transitional Justice, [What is Transitional Justice?](#) (Bogotá: ICTJ, 2019).

⁴ Human Rights Watch, [“Intervención del doctor José Miguel Vivanco, Director de la División de las Américas de Human Rights Watch, ante la Comisión Primera del h. Senado de la República,”](#) 2 April 2004.

⁵ Lisa J. Laplante and Kimberly Theidon, “Transitional Justice in Times of Conflict: Colombia’s Ley de Justicia y Paz,” *Michigan Journal of International Law* 28, 1 (2006).

⁶ Colombian Constitutional Court, [Sentencia C-370/06](#) sobre la Ley 975 de 2005, 18 May 2006.

⁷ Colombian Congress, [Ley 1448 de 2011](#), 10 June 2011.

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The Comprehensive System is comprised of three entities: the Special Jurisdiction for Peace; the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition; and the Unit for the Search for Missing Persons. Despite institutional challenges over the last five years, these entities have yielded results.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP or JEP by its Spanish acronym) was placed in charge of trying and sentencing those ultimately responsible for crimes committed in the context of the conflict. Since then, the SJP has opened seven cases addressing major issues throughout the conflict, including kidnapping and child recruitment. The SJP is also on the verge of opening three additional cases to address crimes committed by members of the security forces in alliance with paramilitaries, crimes against ethnic populations, and crimes committed by the FARC-EP.⁸ Since 2017, the SJP has issued its first conclusions identifying those responsible for conflict-related crimes, as well as findings on the kidnapping case, and the case of the “false-positives” – executions of ‘campesinos’ (peasants) and youths that the security forces passed off as guerrillas killed in combat.

Alongside the SJP, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition, whose mandate is to lay out the causes and reasons for the perpetuation of the armed conflict in Colombia, delivered its final report in June 2022. The main contribution of the Commission’s report – in aiming to fulfil its goal of satisfying the victims’ right to truth – is to help explain and understand the various drivers that have facilitated the persistence of the conflict, and to make recommendations on how to address them.

The third entity in the Comprehensive System – the Unit for the Search for Missing Persons – was mandated to identify thousands of previously unidentified bodies buried across the country. The Unit for the Search for Missing Persons has clarified the whereabouts or fate of more than 9,000 missing persons, although there are still more than 90,000 of whom nothing is known.⁹

These three entities are central to the transitional justice measures laid out in the peace agreement. However, other measures that aim to resolve the conflict, fulfil victims’ rights, and create lasting peace in Colombia are also relevant. As stated in the UN Secretary-General’s report to the Security Council in April 2021: “Progress made in the reincorporation of ex-combatants, illicit crop substitution, transitional justice, and development opportunities in communities affected by the conflict will remain vulnerable unless firm and effective steps are taken to consolidate security throughout the country in the comprehensive manner envisaged in the Final Agreement.”¹⁰

Institutional reforms such as agrarian reform, the opening of the democratic architecture, or the adjustment of anti-drug policy are all examples of measures outlined in the peace agreement that have yet to be fully implemented. Furthermore, the reincorporation of approximately 13,000 former

⁸ Santiago Rodríguez Álvarez, “[La JEP abrirá nuevos macrocasos a partir de aprendizajes sobre sus limitaciones.](#)” *La Silla Vacía*, 21 April 2022.

⁹ El Tiempo, “[Un desaparecido nunca es un tema del pasado.](#)” 1 April 2021.

¹⁰ United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, “[Nota de prensa del Informe Trimestral del Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas ante el Consejo de Seguridad sobre la Misión de Verificación de la ONU en Colombia.](#)” 4 April 2022.

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FARC-EP members – the majority of whom may be eligible to receive legal benefits such as conditional amnesties and liberty, and many of whom are participating in transitional justice processes taking place within the Comprehensive System – is underway. Although these efforts and the Comprehensive System are institutionally separate, comprehensive implementation of all transitional justice elements of the peace agreement is considered key to fulfilling its overall objective of affecting stable and lasting peace. Indeed, the individual goals of each component – from transitional justice to anti-drug policies and reincorporation – are mutually reinforcing in progress towards this goal.¹¹

Despite some progress, implementation of the agreement's transitional justice measures continues to be met with great challenges, many of which are connected to broader issues affecting implementation of the entire peace agreement. A good example is found in the challenges faced by the Colombian Government's Unit for Comprehensive Assistance and Reparation to Victims (Victims' Unit) in fulfilling its mandate. To date, the Victims' Unit has registered 9,294,225 victims of the Colombian conflict, and almost 12 million victimizing acts from displacement to torture, sexual violence, and child recruitment. However, those victims who are alive are located across the Colombian territory in both rural and urban municipalities, making it difficult to administer interventions that aim to meaningfully engage them and fulfil their rights.¹² The sheer number of victims and their dispersion across the country are just two of the challenges facing both the Victims' Unit and the Comprehensive System created by the peace agreement. Another challenge, which MEAC identified through its community phone surveys, is the lack of public knowledge about the mechanisms that comprise the transitional justice system.

In order to craft public policies that effectively contribute to the implementation of the peace agreement in a way that is meaningful and relevant for all Colombians – especially those most impacted by the conflict – it is essential to first understand their knowledge of the relevant institutions and perceptions of current implementation efforts. Knowing about the peace agreement's implementation – of which the Comprehensive System is a part – is key for navigating opportunities to pursue accountability and support for those victimized, but also more broadly influences the public's estimation of the agreement and its contribution to peacebuilding in Colombia. As the Comprehensive System is a core part of overall implementation, this report aims to contribute to a strengthened understanding of what people think of the SJP and Truth Commission entities and how they form these perceptions.

¹¹ United Nations Security Council, "[United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Report of the Secretary-General](#)," United Nations, 1 July 2022, S/2022/513; United Nations Security Council, "[Security Council Press Statement on Colombia](#)," United Nations, 23 July 2019, SC/13896; UN News, "[Women the 'driving force' for peacebuilding in Colombia: Deputy UN chief](#)," 30 October 2020; United Nations Security Council, "[Security Council Press Statement on Colombia](#)," United Nations, 27 January 2022, SC/14781.

¹² Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, "[Reportes](#)," 30 June 2022.

Findings

This report is based on data collected in a 30-minute phone survey led by UNU-CPR and its Colombian research partner, Fundación Conflict Responses, conducted in two waves: one from April to May 2021 with a representative sample of 2,460 community members from 11 municipalities;¹³ and a second from November to December of 2021 with a sample of 1,859 community members in eight municipalities.¹⁴ Twelve of these 19 municipalities are “PDET” municipalities – conflict-affected, vulnerable, and socioeconomically marginalized communities that have been chosen for the implementation of “Planes de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial” or “Regionally-focused Development Plans” stemming from the 2016 peace agreement between the Government and the FARC-EP. Respondents were asked questions on a range of topics including socioeconomic status, experiences of conflict, perceptions of security, attitudes towards violence, COVID-19, and perceptions and knowledge of the entities that comprise the Comprehensive System.¹⁵

Findings on Community Knowledge and Perceptions of Transitional Justice Mechanisms

The peace agreement and the Comprehensive System that it created have developed over a ten-year period that began in 2012 with the announcement of the dialogues between the Government and the FARC-EP. At each juncture in the negotiations, the 2016 referendum, and the different phases of implementation since the adoption of the peace agreement, diverse factors – from national information and disinformation campaigns to community-level narratives about an end to the conflict – have aimed to influence citizens’ perceptions of the peacebuilding process. In order to understand how this trajectory affected perceptions among respondents, and how it continues to shape their attitudes towards the Comprehensive System entities today, the MEAC survey asked about initial support for the peace agreement, as this could affect their support for and interest in entities stemming from the accord. It also asked about the respondents’ knowledge of and trust in two specific entities within the Comprehensive System itself: the Truth Commission and the SJP. The following analysis examines the responses to these questions, some of which were only asked in eight of the 19 municipalities.¹⁶

It is possible that whether or not citizens felt represented by one side or the other during the Colombian peace process could affect their perceptions today of the resulting agreement and peace-related initiatives. The first in this series of questions, therefore, asked respondents in all 19 municipalities whether they felt represented by the Government in the 2016 peace process, and the second asked whether they felt represented by the parties that negotiated it (e.g., the Colombian

¹³ Mutatá, Antioquia; Caldon, Cauca; San José del Guaviare, Guaviare; Guapi, Cauca; La Uribe, Meta; Puerto Asís, Putumayo; Villavicencio, Meta; Bogotá, Cundinamarca; Cali, Valle del Cauca; San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá; and Apartadó, Antioquia.

¹⁴ Medellín, Antioquia; El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar; Santander de Quilichao, Cauca; Valledupar, César; Quibdó, Chocó; Cúcuta, Norte de Santander; Icononzo, Tolima; Arauquita, Arauca.

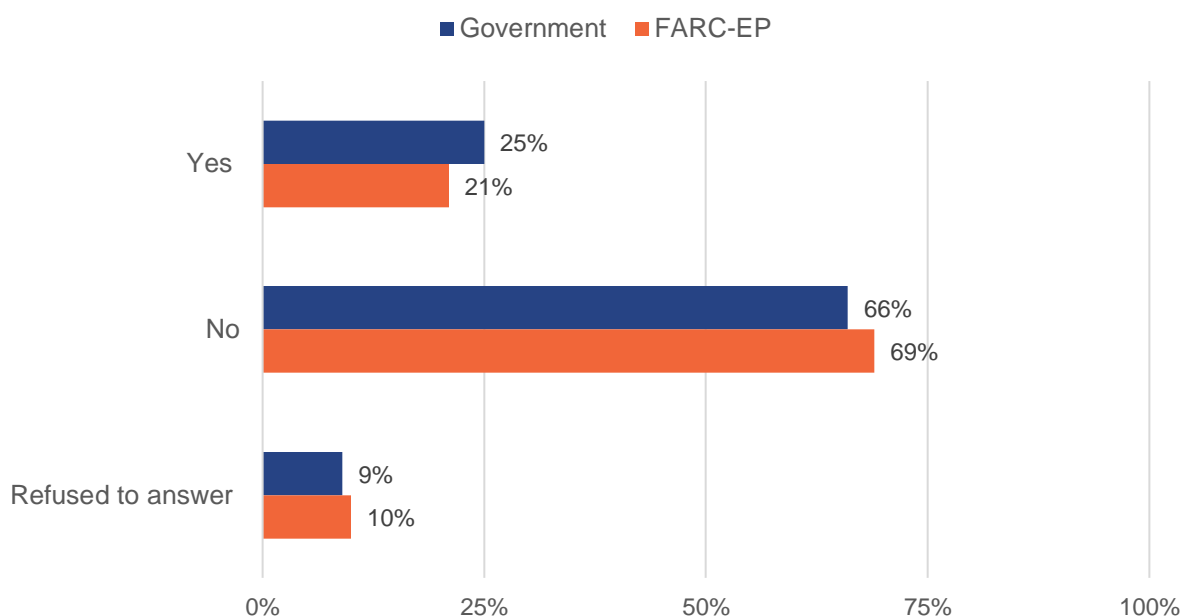
¹⁵ The first wave of the survey included a survey experiment, that was removed from the second wave in order to add some additional survey questions that built on the findings of the first wave of survey research. When a particular data point draws on the first, second, or both waves of the survey – and thus the number of respondents and municipalities surveyed varies - it is noted.

¹⁶ Some questions in the survey were only asked of respondents in the second sample of eight municipalities surveyed in November-December 2021.

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Government and FARC-EP). Figure 1 highlights that the majority did not feel represented by either party to the talks, although there were slightly more respondents (4 per cent) that felt represented by the Government than by the FARC-EP.

Figure 1 – “Did you feel that your interests were represented by the Government / FARC in the peace process?”



One possible explanation for why respondents largely felt unrepresented by the two parties to the negotiations was that although they may have felt represented by one side or another at the beginning of the process, by the end of it – and indeed, since the signature of the agreement and the initiation of its implementation – their enthusiasm for the entire initiative waned, affecting their recollection of how they felt at the time of the talks. Disappointment about the process, or nervousness about aligning with one side or the other five years after the agreement was signed may also explain why 9-10 per cent of the sample refused to answer these questions. Indeed, polling by several companies throughout the peace process showed mixed and rapidly changing levels of approval in the pre-signature phase, with peaks in June 2013, June 2014, December 2015, and July 2016, and low points in February 2013, October 2013, August 2014, and June 2015.¹⁷ This implies that support for a settlement has been responsive to the negotiations’ fitful trajectory. Likewise, respondents’ memories of their own perceptions of representation, and indeed of the entire agreement, were likely affected by their decline in optimism about implementation post-signature.

Equally important in terms of understanding attitudes towards the peace agreement, the next juncture along the trajectory of the peacebuilding process was the October 2016 referendum of the agreement itself, in which citizens were asked to vote for or against its adoption. In order to explore how one’s referendum vote impacted subsequent perspectives of the peace agreement and the Comprehensive System that it created, respondents in all 19 municipalities were asked whether they

¹⁷ Fundación Ideas para la Paz, “[El termómetro de la paz](#),” last accessed 14 September 2022.

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had supported the adoption of the peace agreement in that vote. The connection between perceptions of the peace agreement and knowledge and perceptions of the Comprehensive System is particularly important given the high levels of polarization around the peace agreement at the time, and the fraught campaigns that took place around the referendum. This could have affected not only perceptions of the peace agreement, but also attitudes towards any entities stemming from it.

Figure 2 – “When the parts reached an agreement and the referendum was held, did you want the ‘Yes’ to win?”

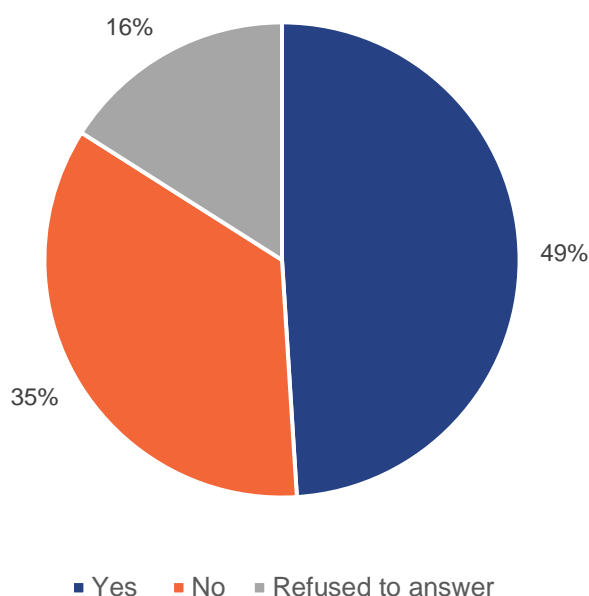


Figure 2 shows that the MEAC survey data largely reflects the outcome of the referendum vote. In the MEAC phone survey, 49 per cent of respondents indicated that they wanted the "Yes" to win. This is in line with the 49.8 per cent of the country who voted in favour of the peace agreement in 2016. However, in the MEAC survey slightly more than one third indicated that they wanted the "No" to win – compared to 50.2 per cent who voted “No” – against the peace agreement in 2016. This may be partially explained by the high proportion of respondents who refused to answer this survey question, possibly in many cases because they had voted “No” but did not want to admit this given the polarization and desire for anonymity around the vote. Indeed, the “No” and “Refused to answer” responses combined comprise 51 per cent of respondents. Furthermore, interestingly, women respondents in the MEAC study reported supporting the “Yes” vote less frequently than men (42 per cent of women respondents supported the “Yes” vote, compared to 56 per cent of men). This reflects existing research that found that women participants in 32 focus groups held across Colombia were generally more pessimistic about the peace agreement, despite being more in favour of a negotiated (rather than military) outcome to the conflict.¹⁸ The gender difference in support for the agreement was thought to be due in part to the perception among many women that the agreement would

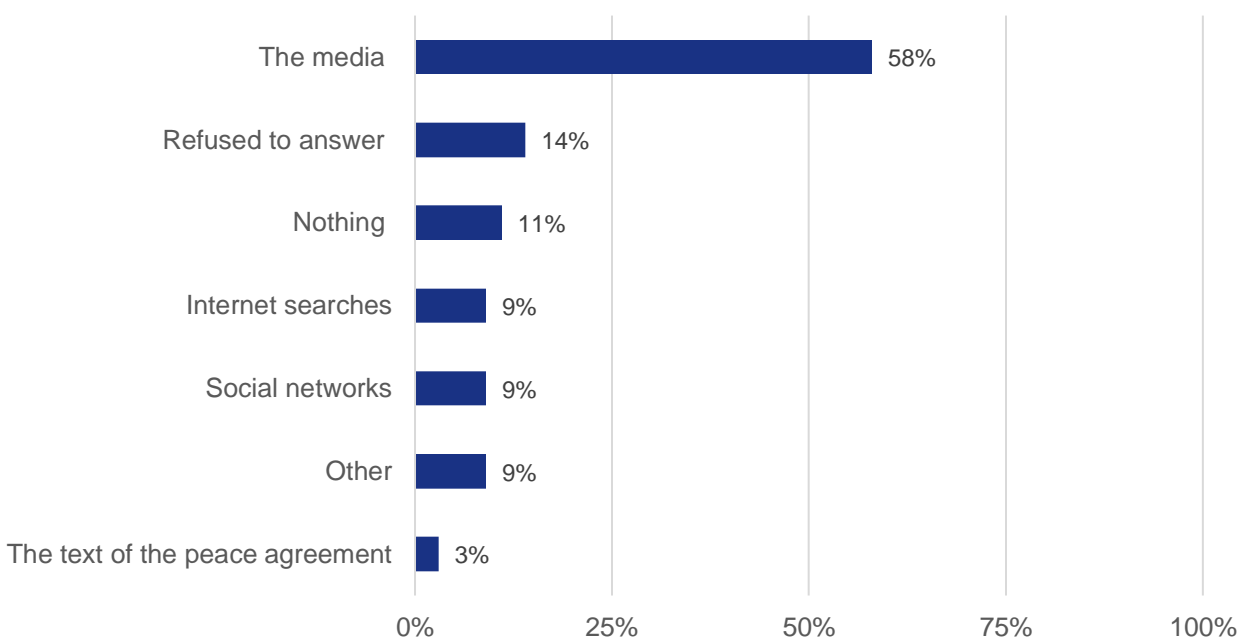
¹⁸ It should be noted that polling is not permitted in Colombia, making it difficult to confirm the gender breakdown of the actual referendum vote.

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benefit some (for example the negotiators themselves, and ex-combatants) more than others (mainly victims of the conflict).¹⁹

Ensuring public knowledge of the peace agreement, and the institutions it created, presented challenges even before the negotiations came to an end, not least because of a lack of public engagement with official sources generated at the negotiating table with the goal of updating the citizenry on progress made. To better understand this relationship between information and perceptions of the peace agreement, the MEAC survey in all 19 municipalities asked a question about respondents' main source of information on the content of the agreement. The results can be seen in Figure 3. In general, respondents reported high levels of information obtained through the news media (almost 60 per cent). Primary sources including the agreement itself were reportedly consulted at low rates: only 3 per cent said they had consulted the text of the peace agreement, while 11 per cent said that they did not consult any source and 14 per cent refused to answer. Similar to the support for the peace agreement in the referendum, there was a significant gender gap in terms of whether or not men and women informed themselves about the agreement.

Figure 3 – “What is your main source of information about the content of the peace agreement?”



Furthermore, the survey data show that there was a small but noticeable difference in the flows of information about the peace agreement to rural and urban communities. For example, 13 per cent of respondents in rural municipalities said that they had no sources of information about the peace agreement, compared to 8 per cent of urban respondents. In fact, the only answer options selected more frequently by respondents in rural municipalities than by those in urban areas were “Nothing”

¹⁹ Observatorio de la Democracia, [“Las Mujeres y la Reconciliación,”](#) 27 May, 2021.

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and “Refused to Answer”, suggesting that these respondents were indeed less informed of the agreement and in some cases unwilling to reveal that they did not consult any sources of information about it. Fieldwork in July 2022 with individuals who had been victimized during the conflict and were currently living in Cúcuta also suggested that lack of information affects support for the peace agreement. Some expressed that they had supported the “No” vote because they did not feel that they could support an agreement about which they knew little to nothing.

This is likely due at least in part to a lack of far-reaching public information campaigns on the many aspects of implementation of the peace agreement. Despite the efforts of Juan Manuel Santos’s Government (2010-2018) to highlight progress in the talks through public information campaigns, knowledge about the peace agreement’s transitional justice components has remained very low. A 2018 AmericasBarometer survey found that only 5.7 per cent of respondents could correctly answer a question that tested their knowledge of the SJP, demonstrating a low level of understanding of this particular mechanism.²⁰ This lack of engagement with primary sources and high reliance on the media for updates about the peace process also likely created space for different outlets to shape and even misinform people about the agreement, which in turn may have influenced – in a negative fashion – attitudes towards the accord and the entities created within it.²¹

Support for the negotiating parties and the agreement itself could shape knowledge of and support for the work of the transitional justice entities that were formed by it. For example, those who are less informed about the agreement may be more distrustful of the transitional justice system. The MEAC survey, therefore, asked eight municipalities (all of those included in the November-December 2021 survey) how often they heard or read about the work of the Truth Commission and the SJP, and then whether or not they trust the work of these entities.

Despite the importance of the Comprehensive System, it appears that many Colombians were not well aware of the work done by the entities that comprise it. Only 30 per cent of respondents stated that they heard about the work of the Truth Commission, while 51 per cent stated that they heard of the work of the SJP.²² Interestingly, a gender gap is also seen here, as 25 per cent of women reported hearing about the Truth Commission, compared with 35 per cent of men, and 45 per cent of women reported hearing about the SJP, compared to 59 per cent of men. In both cases, women were less likely than men to report hearing about these transitional justice components created by the peace agreement.

²⁰ Adriana Gaviria, Carlos Ávila, and Miguel García, [Barómetro de las Américas Colombia 2018. Paz, Posconflicto y Reconciliación](#) (Bogotá D.C., Colombia, 2018): 52.

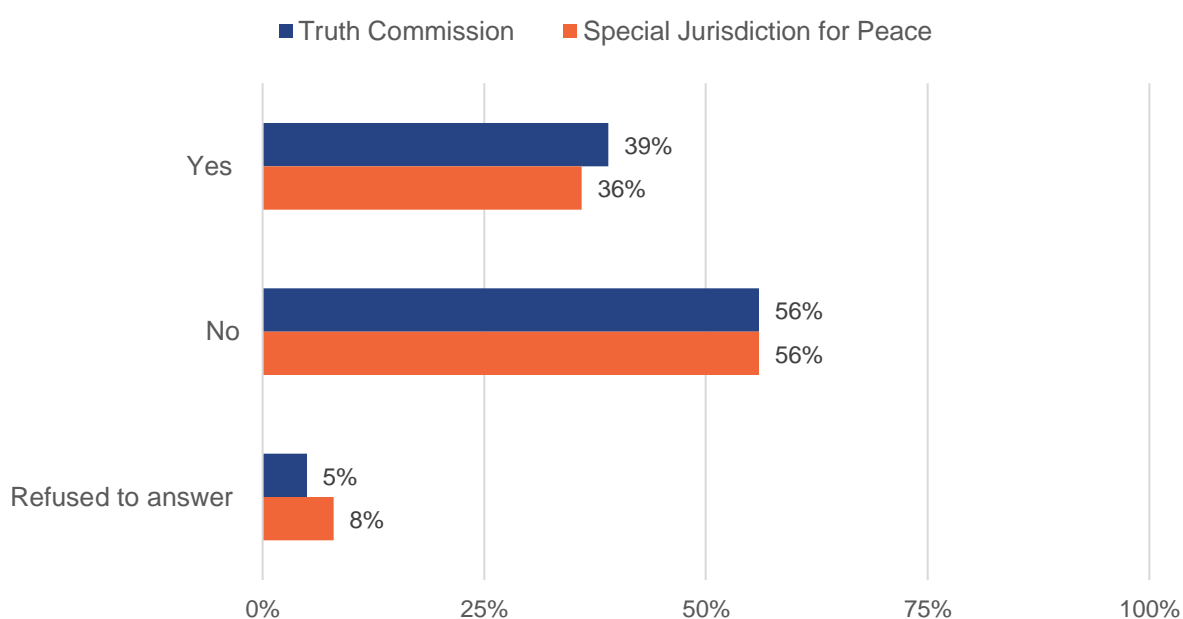
²¹ Misión de Información Electoral (MOE), [Medios de Comunicación y Plebiscito de Refrendación de los Acuerdos de Paz](#) (Bogotá: MOE, 2016); Semana, [“Las cinco mentiras del plebiscito que circularon por WhatsApp,”](#) 9 October 2016.

²² This comprised answers “frequently” and “sometimes”. Due to a programming error, different answer options were presented to respondents when answering each of these questions. For the question “How often do you read or hear about the Truth Commission” respondents were given the answer options of “Frequently; Sometimes; Never; You have never heard about the Truth Commission”. In the equivalent question on the SJP, respondents were not given what was supposed to be an equivalent option - “You have never heard about the Special Jurisdiction for Peace”. The error and the way the statistics were compiled, however, is unlikely to have biased the results as those who had never heard of the Truth Commission are expected to have answered “Never” or refused to answer the question.

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In order to draw the links more closely between knowledge of these entities and trust in their work, the survey then followed up by asking respondents about their levels of trust in the Commission and the SJP. As can be seen in the summary statistics presented in Figure 4, in the eight municipalities where the question was asked, 56 per cent of respondents stated that they do not trust either of these two institutions. A very slightly larger proportion of respondents stated that they do trust the Truth Commission (39 per cent) than of those who reported trust for the SJP (36 per cent). As above, there was a large gender gap in which women were less likely to trust these institutions than men. Only 33 per cent of women said they trust the Truth Commission, in contrast to 45 per cent of men; and 31 per cent of women said they trust the SJP, in contrast to 40 per cent of men. These low levels of trust contrast with a poll of “opinion leaders” such as academics and journalists in 2021, which found that the SJP was the second most trusted Colombian institution.²³ This is perhaps explained because opinion leaders such as academics and journalists have access to more information about these institutions than most community members.

Figure 4 – “Do you trust the Truth Commission / the Special Jurisdiction for Peace?”



To assess the relationship between knowledge and trust in these institutions, a logistic regression model was run. The model controlled for age, gender, and self-identification as a victim. This analysis rendered statistically significant results showing that lower levels of knowledge of these institutions were indeed associated with lower levels of trust. Respondents who sometimes or frequently heard of the work of these entities were 26 percentage points more likely to say that “yes” they trusted them than those who reported never hearing of the work of these institutions, or – expectedly – had never heard of them at all. That is to say, there is extremely high confidence that those who are better informed about the transitional justice system entities trust them more. The regression analysis supports the explanation of the difference between MEAC perception data and the 2021

²³ Cifras y Conceptos. [“Panel de Opinión,”](#) video, 11 November 2021.

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poll of opinion leaders as being related to differences in access to information about the Comprehensive System institutions.

Just as knowledge about these institutions was associated with higher trust, so too is there a relationship between initial support for the peace agreement and confidence in the architecture it helped to create. MEAC sought to ascertain the degree to which community members' perceptions of these two transitional justice entities are affected by their overall views and perceptions of implementation of the peace agreement. To do so, MEAC analysed whether support for the referendum "Yes" vote (as analysed above), perceptions of whether implementation of the agreement is going well, and perceptions of whether the agreement has had a positive impact in the respondent's community were related to trust in the Truth Commission and the SJP.²⁴

The analysis found that support for those three measures were all associated with a higher probability of trust in the Truth Commission and the SJP. In other words, positive initial support for the peace agreement at the time of the referendum, and positive current perceptions of implementation of the peace agreement and its impact, lead to higher levels of trust in the Truth Commission and SJP. This reaffirms the interconnectivity of the different iterations and parts of the peace process and how support for different institutions is often bolstered by initial buy-in to the process, much like the different parts of the peace agreement itself.

Policy and Programmatic Implications

The findings presented in this report come at a crucial moment. The Truth Commission has recently published its report on the drivers and impact of the conflict,²⁵ which recommends that dissemination measures be taken. There is also increased attention to the transitional justice mechanisms created by the peace agreement. The overall implication of the findings presented in this report is clear: transitional justice entities must carry out more far-reaching public information campaigns using sources that the public is consulting – that is to say, the media – so that citizens in all parts of Colombia, especially in rural areas, have credible information about their results. To help prevent and counter disinformation campaigns similar to those carried out in the lead-up to the 2016 referendum on the peace agreement, the institutions of the Comprehensive System should work closely with media outlets to ensure that clear and accessible information about their work is disseminated in a timely fashion. This could be supported by social media outreach to increase engagement.

Furthermore, for the agreement to be successfully and fully implemented, there needs to be public support and trust in the institutions implementing it. The analysis presented in this report makes clear that greater institutional awareness is associated with higher trust. Greater awareness-raising will therefore help bolster trust in the Comprehensive System institutions, which in turn will help support

²⁴ The exact questions asked were: "At the end of the process when the parties reached an agreement and there was a referendum, did you support the "yes" vote?"; "Do you think implementation of the peace agreement is going well?"; "Do you think the peace agreement has had a positive impact in your community?".

²⁵ Comisión de la Verdad, "[Legado de la Comisión de la Verdad. Hay futuro si hay verdad.](#)" 22 July 2022.

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the full implementation of the peace agreement. This is especially important given these entities' central goal of fulfilling victims' rights. Accessible information is essential to fulfilling this goal, as victims can only feel that justice and accountability have been served if they are aware of the work of relevant entities.

Information campaigns should be nuanced, respond to community-specific dynamics of the transitional justice system, and be gender-responsive. To close the gender gap in awareness, such campaigns need to take into account how and why women have less information about the Comprehensive System and more frequently hold less favourable perceptions of them. In order to ensure that information campaigns are accessible and meaningful to women across Colombia, further research should be conducted to ascertain the reasons behind the lower levels of knowledge about the transitional justice institutions. Efforts to address this disparity will be more effective – in terms of both impact and use of resources – if they are based on evidence.

Furthermore, the data analysis shows that there is a relationship between attitudes towards the peace agreement and perceptions of the transitional justice system now, suggesting that efforts to drive forward the work of the Comprehensive System must be part of the full implementation of the broader agreement. This is coherent with the design of the peace agreement itself, which recognized that to successfully build peace, a coherent approach to the interconnected social, economic, security-related, and political issues was necessary. The agreement sets out to address historic marginalization, victimization, and the impacts of conflict from multiple angles. Perceptions of the agreement overall affect perceptions of and trust in its transitional justice components. This suggests that, as the Truth Commission report reinforces, it may be difficult for the Comprehensive System institutions to make more progress if the other components of the agreement are not (or are under) implemented. Progress in fulfilling victims' rights through transitional justice measures, therefore, is unlikely to be made in a truly meaningful way without also making progress on other aspects of the agreement, even those that appear unrelated. This includes community crop substitution programmes and other rural reform initiatives, efforts to dismantle armed groups and improve security conditions for all communities, and of course to reincorporate former members of the FARC-EP into civilian life.

As Colombia ushers in a new Government that will take on the challenges of implementing the peace agreement, it is a good moment to take stock of progress to date and consider what adjustments – such as a robust communications campaign – can help support the transitional justice institutions that seek to advance peacebuilding.

**MANAGING EXITS
FROM ARMED CONFLICT**



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