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The Colombian community in London

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February 2012



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INTRODUCTION

Although most international migration of Latin Americans until the 2000s was to the United States, subsequent flows have been to a diverse range of locations and especially to Europe. While research has increasingly focused on this phenomenon, there remains much more to be explored as Pellegrino (2004: 7) notes: 'with the growth of LAC [Latin American and Caribbean] migrant communities in Europe, the need to better understand the dynamics of such flows, the forces driving them and future trends has also grown.' Colombians have played a very important role in these movements, especially in migration to Spain and the UK (McIlwaine, 2011a). In terms of the latter, Colombians are now the most established group of Latin Americans living in London, as well as being the second largest in terms of population size (after Brazilians) (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

This report outlines the characteristics of this population in London drawing on three research projects conducted between 2004 and 2010. As well as provide a basic socio-economic profile, it also explores their migration trajectories, labour market experiences, social and cultural relations as well as their access to services, links with their homeland and the main problems they face as a population. Although two of the research projects focused on those concentrated in the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, one also included Colombians working in professional occupations.

COLOMBIANS IN LONDON: BACKGROUND

Although the presence of Colombians in the UK and in London dates back to days of Independence, as well as an established presence of elites, large scale movement that included began in the 1970s. While the first arrivals were mainly refugees who joined Chileans and Argentineans, larger numbers entered with work permits between 1974 and 1979 to work in low-skilled jobs in hotels, catering, and hospitals. This group also had the right to settle in the UK after four years. In the 1980s, Colombians arrived with tourist and student visas as well as claiming asylum which increased towards the end of the decade and into the 1990s. This also reflected the intensification of the armed conflict in Colombia at the time (Cock, 2011). A significant number of people who applied for asylum were eventually granted permanent status through being recognised as in need of protection or through processes of regularisation such as the family amnesty in 2003 for asylum seekers with young children (the family exercise).¹

During the 1980s, Colombians were crucial in establishing a range of organisations and projects aimed at helping the wider Latin American community that was growing in the city. With support from the Greater London Council, several organisations were formed, some of which had their roots in former solidarity campaigns. These included the Latin American House, the Latin American Women's Rights Service, Chile Democrático which became IRMO, Carila, the Latin American Advisory Committee, the Latin American Workers Association and La Gaitana Housing Cooperative. These organisations provided a range of welfare, immigration and workplace support for migrants, reflecting a shift from the previous focus on the situation in Colombia and Latin America more widely. More broadly, a range of cultural, commercial and sports ventures emerged at this time such as the football pitch in Clapham Common, as well as nightclubs, shops and cafes (Cock, 2011; Román-Velazquez, 1999).

¹ The Family Amnesty programme gave those who had at least one dependent child in the UK and had claimed asylum before 2 October 2002 the right to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain and gave them full rights to remain in the UK and to work (see <http://www.ncadc.org.uk/resources/familyamnesty.html> - accessed 26 November 2011).

By the end of the 2000s, emigration from Colombia was increasing with 1 in 10 Colombians living abroad (McIlwaine and Bermudez, 2011). In London, over time, the elite Colombians living in London who had been arriving throughout the twentieth century, mostly diplomats, artists and business people, were joined by trade unionists, political activists and working class migrants. Indeed, in recent years, there have been important flows of students and professional migrants arriving in London which also reflects the introduction of managed migration policies that favour high skilled migrants as well as the wider diversification of the population. In addition, secondary migration from other EU countries, especially Spain, has become an important dynamic among Colombians. Indeed, in a survey conducted in the mid-2000s, it was reported that 60% of Colombians in London were either EU citizens or permanent residents (Guarnizo, 2008). Overall then, in the 2000s, the Latin American community has continued to grow despite increasing restrictions on immigration to the UK.

Colombians have been central in the emergence of businesses, media and events aimed at the Latin American population more broadly. These included several newspapers in Spanish (*Express News*, *Extra*), large scale events such as the Carnaval del Pueblo in Burgess Park in South London as well as shopping centres such as Seven Sisters and Elephant and Castle.

In terms of how many Colombians currently reside in the UK and in London in particular, it has been informally estimated that there are between 50,000-70,000, with most living in London (Guarnizo, 2008; McIlwaine, 2005). Recent official statistics from the Annual Population Survey (APS) in 2008 shows that there were 24,040 Colombians living in the UK, of which 15,271 were in London. However, this excludes irregular migrants, as well as those from the second generation.² In a more comprehensive estimate of the Latin American community as a whole also based on the APS, there was an estimated total of 113,578 Latin Americans in London including 17,100 irregular migrants and 17,182 second generation Latin Americans. Colombians are widely thought to be the second largest national group within the Latin American community in the UK (with Brazilians being the largest) (McIlwaine et al, 2011; Linneker and McIlwaine, 2011).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This report is based on three projects with Colombian migrants conducted by the author between 2004 and 2010. The first project was carried out between 2004 and 2005 with 35 Colombian migrants 30 Colombian migrants and 5 employees from 4 Latin American migrant organisations (3 of whom were Colombian themselves). This research focused on coping practices and was conducted among those working in the lower echelons of the labour market (McIlwaine, 2005).

The second project was conducted between 2006 and 2007 among 70 Latin American migrants of which 28 were Colombians together with a further 10 community leaders. In addition, the author carried out participant observation through membership of the Management Committee of a Latin American migrant organisation for 2 years between 2006 and 2008. This project also focused on 'ordinary' migrants working mainly in low-paid employment (McIlwaine, 2007).

The largest study discussed is a large quantitative and qualitative project with the Latin American community as a whole across the socio-economic spectrum carried out between 2009 and 2010. The research included here refers to a short questionnaire survey with 249 Colombian migrants of which 100 included detailed information. An additional 11 in-depth interviews were conducted with Colombians, as well as 3 focus groups that all contained Colombians. This project explored a wide range of issues relating to migration trajectories,

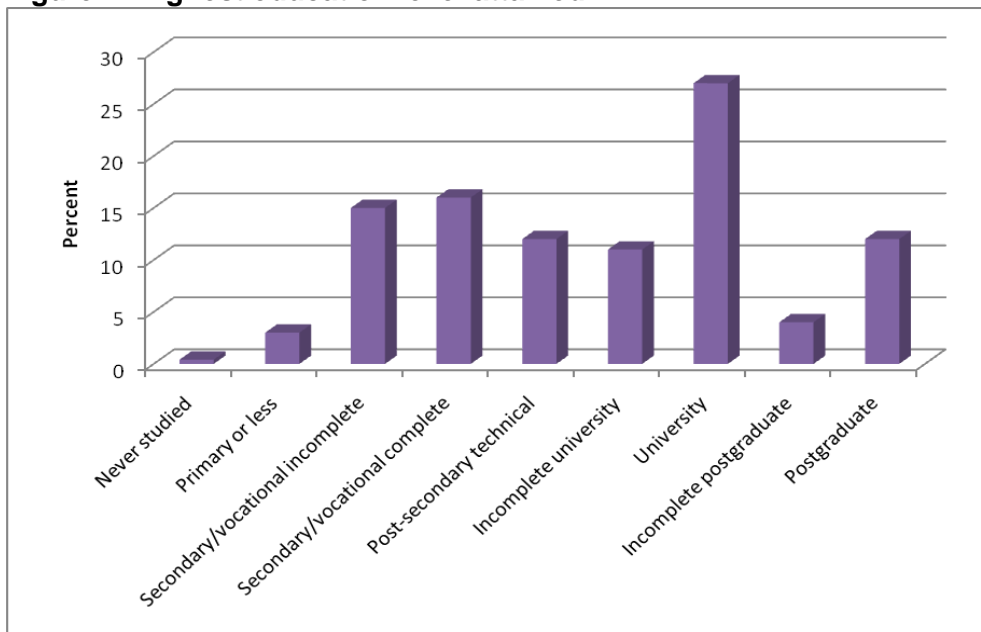
² For example, in January 2010, there were 27,543 Colombians registered at the consulate in London. However, this figure includes those who may have left the country as people do not de-register.

employment experiences, living arrangements and links with homelands. The survey was carried out by a team of Latin American community researchers who utilised a range of entry points including existing contacts, community organisations and snowballing to conduct a purposive sample that was broadly representative of the wider community (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

PROFILE OF COLOMBIAN MIGRANTS IN LONDON

From the survey of 249 migrants carried out between 2009 and 2010, there were slightly more women than men (54% and 46%) included. In terms of age, most migrants were in the economically active age brackets, especially between 30 and 49 years (54%). Colombian migrants are well educated in that more than half (54%) had some form of university education with 16% having postgraduate level. An additional 12% had post-secondary technical qualifications. In turn, only 3% had only primary or less (see Figure 1). Despite high education levels, however, a quarter did not speak English well (24%), while 2% understood none. Only half reported speaking English very well.

Figure 1: Highest education level attained

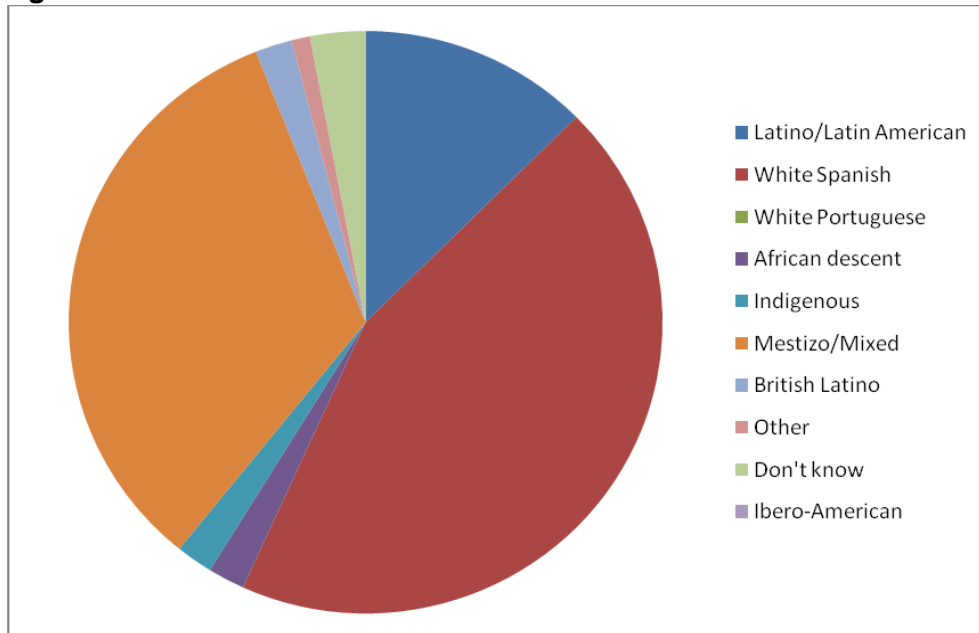


Source: Questionnaire survey (N=248)

In terms of marital status, just over a third of Colombians were single, while 30% were formally married, with a further 9% cohabiting. In addition, 14% were divorced (the highest of all Latin American groups included in the larger survey), while 7% were separated, and 6% were widowed. While 59% were married to other Colombians, it is significant that 16% were married to a British person, 13% were married to another Latin American, and 13% to someone from another country of the world.

Acknowledging that race and ethnicity are open to wide variations in interpretation between Colombia and the UK, 44% of Colombian identified as white/Spanish in terms of their ethnic group with another third stating they were *mestizo*/mixed. In addition, 12.5% identified as Latino with 2% stating they were British Latino (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Ethnic/racial identification



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=96)

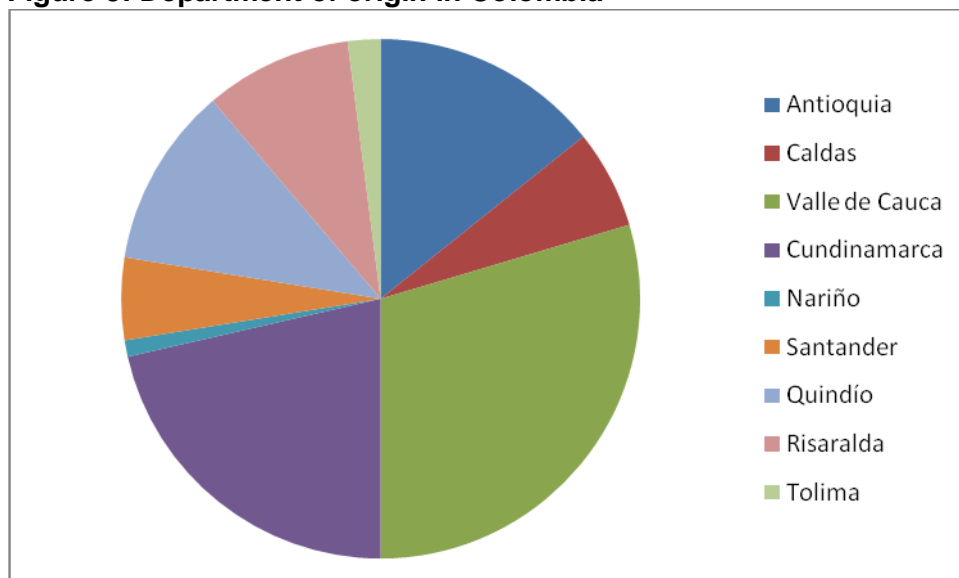
Again bearing in mind variations in interpretation about the meanings of class position, 31% of Colombians referred to themselves as working-class or lower middle-class in Colombia (17% working class and 13% lower middle class), yet in London, 51% identified as such (38% working class and 13% lower middle-class). This suggests that people felt their class position had worsened after migration and that their situation was better back home.

In terms of residence patterns, Colombians lived dispersed throughout London (they were among the most dispersed among all Latin Americans in the wider survey) although there were concentrations in Lambeth (15%) and Southwark (10%), Newham (9%) and Haringey (8%) (see Appendix 1).

MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES

Colombian migrants in London originate overwhelmingly from urban areas (96%). In particular, they have migrated mainly from Valle de Cauca (Cali) (29%), Cundinamarca (Bogotá) (21%), and Antioquia (Medellín) (14%). A further 11% came from Quindío and 9% from Risaralda (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Department of origin in Colombia



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=97)

Why do people leave Colombia?

The main reason why people left Colombia was economic (36%) followed by education or to learn English (27%). Political reasons accounted for only 7% and family for 15% (see Figure 4). However, it is important to remember that people leave for many interrelated issues. For example, Viviana (interviewed in 2010), a 47 year-old from Bogotá who had been living in London since 1978 working as a teacher complained that back home where she was also a teacher she could barely get by:

'I worked three shifts as a teacher. I left my house at 6 in the morning and I got home at 11 at night, every day. The shifts were really hard and we also worked Saturdays. I did this because in every school that I worked they only paid the minimum ... So I said to myself: "with my abilities in another country I will be paid a dignified wage and I'm going to live well and also not have to beg someone for a letter of recommendation"'.

In a similar way, but from a different socio-economic background, 42 year old Esperanza (interviewed in 2007), from Palmira, owned and ran a restaurant in her home town. Although she admitted that economically she was better off than most people in that she earned the equivalent of 3 minimum wages, she was exhausted by the work:

'I lived so stressed out because I was alone and in order to earn these 3 minimum wages, I worked Sunday to Sunday for 6 years and in this time I only had 3 days off ... my decision was to look for better opportunities in my life'.

However, the case of Esperanza also highlights the difficulties in disentangling the reasons for migration. Her husband had been killed in the armed conflict and she was left with sole charge of her daughter who was studying at college and who wanted to become a doctor. Esperanza knew that she wouldn't be able to pay university fees from the restaurant: 'Since she as a little girl, she wanted to study medicine, and I was wracking my brains trying to think how I would pay for it'. So she realised that she would have to migrate abroad, leaving her daughter behind to study.

Adriana's case was typical of Colombians who arrived with work permits in the 1970s and whose movement was linked mainly with the search for better economic opportunities. Adriana (interviewed in 2010) who was 58 years old and from Quindío, arrived in London in 1977. She decided to leave because she was feeling depressed following the death of her father and because she had the opportunity to buy a work permit to move to the UK; her mother

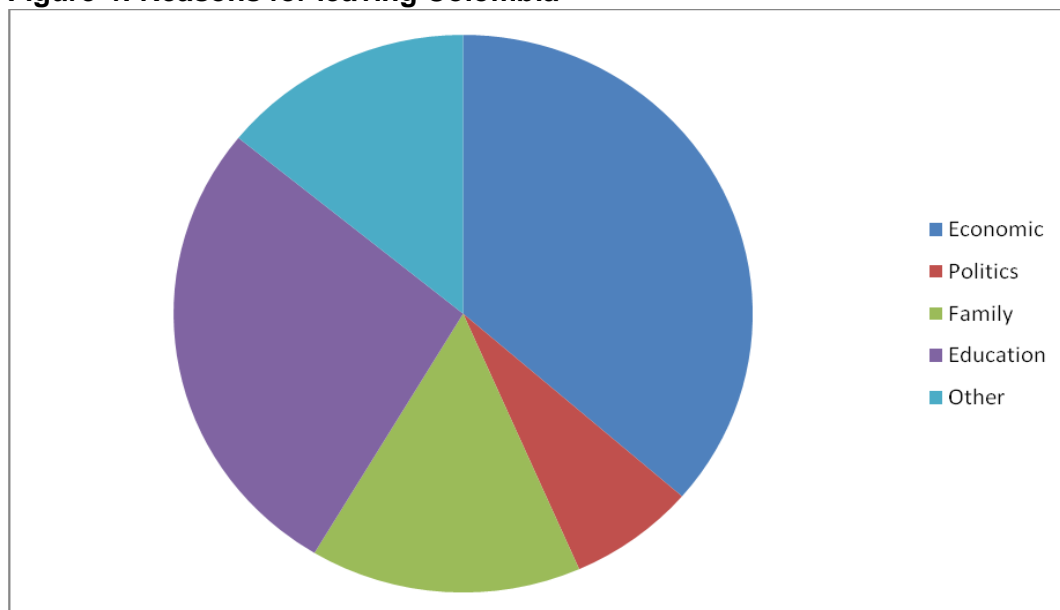
borrowed the money to buy the permit and her plane ticket. Adriana had been working as a check-out operator before she left but she thought she could earn more in London. She was directly contracted to work as a waitress in a hotel in Kensington High Street. She was employed there for several years until she got pregnant and was sacked from her job. She had been working for the past 10 years as a house cleaner and supporting her 17 year old son. She had a British passport that she obtained when she married her Colombian partner whom she met in London (he already had a passport).

The armed conflict in Colombia emerged as important in the political motivations for migration among some Colombians, mainly those who arrived in the 1990s (see above). For example, José (interviewed in 2010) was 37 years old and from Antioquia. José fled Colombia in 1996 when the political situation was especially difficult; he lived in a farming community where he had a small business selling beer and liquor. However, he kept receiving death threats from both the guerrilla and paramilitaries. Because he feared for his life, José decided to use all his savings to fly to London where he claimed asylum on arrival at the airport. He first worked as a painter when he arrived but then he managed to set-up his own clothes shop. It is important to reiterate that political factors invariably intersected with economic and social issues in prompting people to migrate.

Many of those who fled Colombia for political reasons were associated with the political Left. For example, Luz Maria (interviewed in 2005), a 46 year-old from Pereira, was the former secretary of the local Unión Patriótica (UP) or Patriotic Union, which is the political wing of the FARC.³ Just after the party won some local elections in 1999, she and her brother, who was the president, were targeted. Luz Maria was shot in the leg in a gun fight with the paramilitaries, resulting in the need for six operations. She fled from Colombia as soon as she recovered, still fearing for her life.

³ The UP was established in 1985 as part of a series of peace processes and negotiations with the President of the time, Belisario Betancur (elected in 1982). While the UP was made-up of some former guerrilla members, it also comprised a host of left-leaning members whose aim was to reform the Colombian state, reduce poverty, social injustice and address unequal land distribution. However, despite winning of widespread popular support including 14 seats in Congress in 1986, the UP was allowed little freedom to operate and thousands of its members were threatened and killed throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Dudley, 2004).

Figure 4: Reasons for leaving Colombia



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=99)

Why do people come to London?

As to why Colombian migrants chose London, 41% noted that it was because of friends and family already living here, with 15% stating that English language was a draw as well as ease of entry in terms of visas (see Figure 5). Relatives in particular were crucial in facilitating migration, often paying for transport as well as providing accommodation when people arrived. For example, 62 year-old Ana (interviewed in 2005) from Cali noted:

'I came here because my sister was here, she helped me because I didn't have any money and the little that I had worked for, I had saved. Therefore, I came here at her feet, to see what I could do because in Colombia it's difficult to secure work at my age'.

Indeed, not only were social and economic factors intertwined, but they also intersected with the image of London as a tolerant city with a strong cultural attraction. For example, 47 year old Adriana (interviewed in 2010) from Quindío noted that:

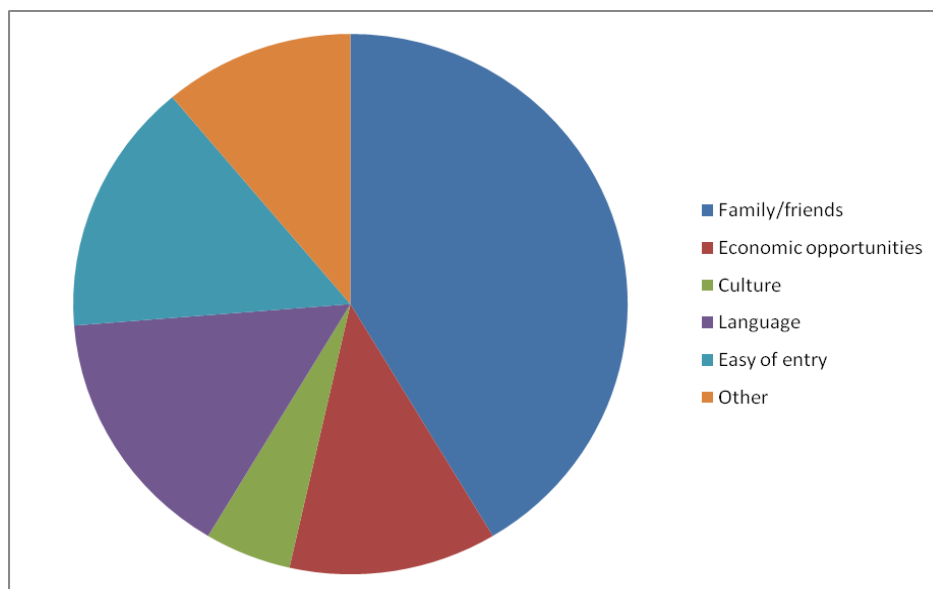
'Well, since I was 14 years old I realised that England existed when I read a geography book about European countries. From then on a dream was born in me of coming to England. I remember that when I read this book, the River Thames, the city of London seemed fascinating to me. From then on I had a dream to come and live in London, to see the Thames with my own eyes, to speak English with the English. Also I wanted to earn money, to earn pound sterling'.

The issue of earning money in a 'strong currency' and securing a job was mentioned by many people. For example, 47 year-old Viviana (interviewed in 2010) from Bogotá who worked as a cleaner in London noted that although she had studied the internet and weighed up exchange rates and job opportunities, she also made her decision based on something more abstract:

'I looked on the internet and I studied the exchange rates to see where the best place might be. London had something, I don't know what it was, just something. I also thought that I might be able to get a job here more easily'.

For those who had experienced insecurity and violence as part of the armed conflict in Colombia, London also represented a safe place to live. For instance, 55 year-old Tomas (interviewed in 2007) from Pereira noted:

Figure 5: Reasons for choosing London



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=100)

'I like the calm and security of life here. Like everywhere, there is delinquency, but not like I have seen. If you go out in the street, there's a 90% chance that you will get home safely, in contrast, in Colombia if you go into the street, there's a 90% chance that you will be attacked'.

In terms of the nature of the flows of Colombian migrants into the UK, while the earliest recorded arrival was 1964, more than half of those in the survey arrived since 2000. However, one-third came in the 1990s, with a further 16.5% arriving before 1990 (see Figure 6). In addition, 99% of Colombians moved directly to London rather than anywhere else in the UK.

Figure 6: Decade of arrival in London



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=248)

Most Colombians migrated to London on an individual basis with 67% having travelled on their own, and with men slightly more likely to arrive alone compared with women. However, just over half (52%) already had relatives living in the city before they arrived. Almost half paid for their move with personal savings (47%) with more than a third relying on family financial support (37%). However, almost 1 in 10 had to borrow money to pay for their move (9%).

On arrival in London, more than half of Colombians intended to return home (51%), usually when they had earned enough money, had finished their studies or learnt English. However, the qualitative research showed that the longer people remained in London, and the more established they became, they often stayed for longer than originally intended. However, uncertainty is also fuelled by the very high cost of living in London which often comes as a surprise and can severely undermine their economic well-being.

Onward migration to the UK

It is also important to note that a third of Colombians (32%) moved to the UK after living in another country beforehand. Of this group, 50% lived in Spain prior to the UK, with 22% having lived in another Latin American country, while 16% had lived in the United States (see Figure 7). Focusing on the movement via Spain, this entailed both legal and illegal movements. Not only are there marked concentrations of Latin Americans in general living in Spain comprising 32% of the foreign-born migrant population (Peixoto, 2009: 7), but there have been a range of regularisation programmes that have allowed Colombians to attain Spanish passports (McIlwaine, 2011b). With such passports, Colombians then have ease of movement and settlement throughout Europe including to the UK. For example, Liliana (interviewed in 2010), who was 41 years old and from Pereira, had lived for 11 years in Gran Canaria before moving to London in 2009. Because she had managed to regularise her situation and obtain a Spanish passport, she was able to move to the UK when the economic recession meant that her hours of work as a security guard were cut and she found it difficult for her to provide for her 3 daughters.

However, others also obtained false documents in Spain, primarily forged Spanish passports.⁴ 27 year-old Clara (interviewed in 2007) recounted how, while she managed to buy false papers in Spain and to enter the UK with these, her boyfriend could not. He bought a false passport in Spain and went to the airport where he was asked to wait by immigration. He panicked and fled the airport. After 2 months in Spain with no money, he ended-up being smuggled into the UK hidden in the back of a lorry:

‘He was smuggled in. He said it was horrible, he could hear the police sniffer dogs outside the lorry. When he got here he cried from happiness and from nerves’.

Others employed smugglers in Colombia such as 43 year old Edilma from Palmira (interviewed in 2007), who recalled how she had her visa application for the UK turned down in Colombia, so she and her husband recruited the help of a trafficker:

‘A man helped us, it turned out to be really expensive, but it was quick, about a month. We paid the money, and all innocent but very anxious, he brought us. He brought us with other names via Spain’.

People generally felt very uncomfortable about having to use this system to enter the country, with it being used as a route of last resort. Julián from Cali (interviewed in 2005) travelled to Madrid on his Colombian passport. On the advice of a Colombian friend living in London, he then spent three days in Madrid sorting out his Spanish passport to enter the UK. Julián said

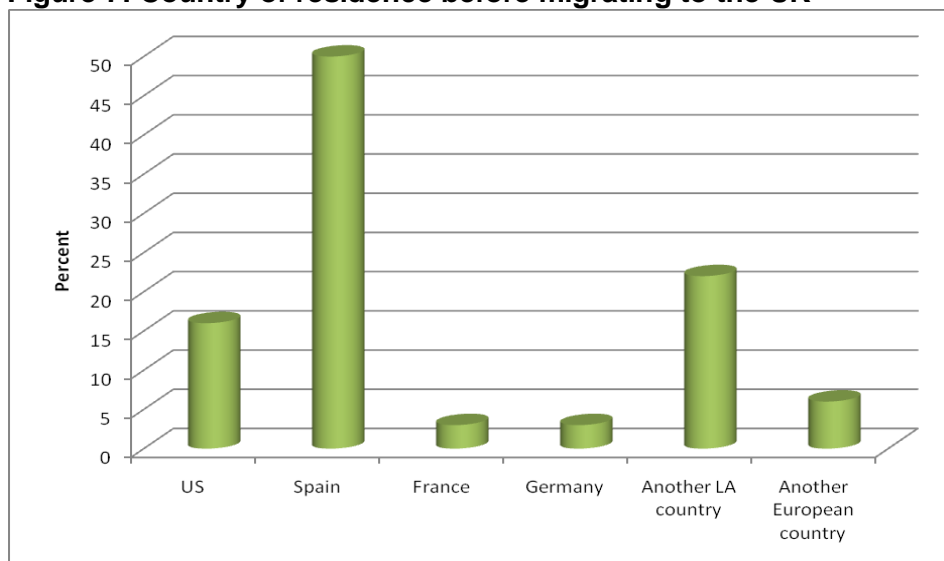
⁴ False Spanish passports cost anything between US\$800 and US\$2000 and are usually passports of naturalised Latin Americans.

how shocked he was that he was going to have to use a false passport, as he had not realised this when he left Colombia; his friend was going to sort everything out for him. He noted:

‘In Colombia, I had always worked honestly, correctly, you know. But I didn’t know anything, what a refugee was, what asylum was, not an idea ... if my friend had asked me to jump in a hole I would have done it.’

As in the case of Liliana, the global economic recession has hit Spain especially hard with one million jobs lost in 2008. This has resulted in the highest unemployment rate in the EU as a whole of 17% (and over 20% among non-EU migrants). This was related to the exodus of migrants from 120,000 in 2006 to 232,000 in 2008 (McIlwaine, 2011c) (see also below).

Figure 7: Country of residence before migrating to the UK



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=68)

As well as entry via Spain, there were several cases of people arriving via other Latin American countries such as Venezuela and Bolivia. For example, 32 year-old Marco (interviewed in 2010) was from Bogotá and arrived in London in 2006. Marco had wanted to move to London for economic reasons and because his girlfriend’s family was living there. He applied for a visa at the British embassy in Bogotá but was refused. He then decided to go to Bolivia where he stayed for a month while he bought a false Bolivian passport. He then flew from Bolivia to London and entered on a tourist visa (at this time Bolivians did not require visas). In another complicated case, Jairo, a 38 year-old from Risaralda (interviewed in 2005), had fled from the FARC who had forcibly conscripted him in 2000 while he was working as a farm labourer. After he managed to escape, Jairo travelled to Bogotá where he boarded a plane to Madrid. After buying a false Spanish passport for 2000 Euros, he then went to London. However, he was deported in 2003 after his asylum claim was rejected, but managed to return the same year after travelling to Venezuela and obtaining a false passport there.

Form of entry into the UK and immigration status

Related with this, more than two-thirds of entry into UK was through temporary visas, especially student visas (32%), tourist visas (11%), and Colombian passports (25%) (before visas restrictions were applied in 1997). However, a quarter had entered with no visa. Significantly, 14% of Colombians entered with an EU passport highlighting the importance of migrating via southern Europe and claiming citizenship through ancestry or naturalisation. Only 3% entered illegally and only 4% claimed asylum on entry (although many more claimed asylum after entry) (see Figure 8). Indeed, claiming asylum has been important in the past for

many Colombians living in London (along with Ecuadorians). Colombians were also major beneficiaries of the family exercise in 2003 because so many had been embroiled in the asylum system.

Indeed, many complained about the long delays in dealing with asylum claims and their feelings of vulnerability and insecurity as a result. The majority had to wait a minimum of a year and a half to have their cases heard, with many waiting between 6 and 8 years. For example, 34 year old Margarita from Armenia (interviewed in 2005) who had Indefinite Leave to Remain, had to wait for 8 years during which time she lived in a state of constant worry, as did her 2 daughters who would regularly ask her if they were staying in London:

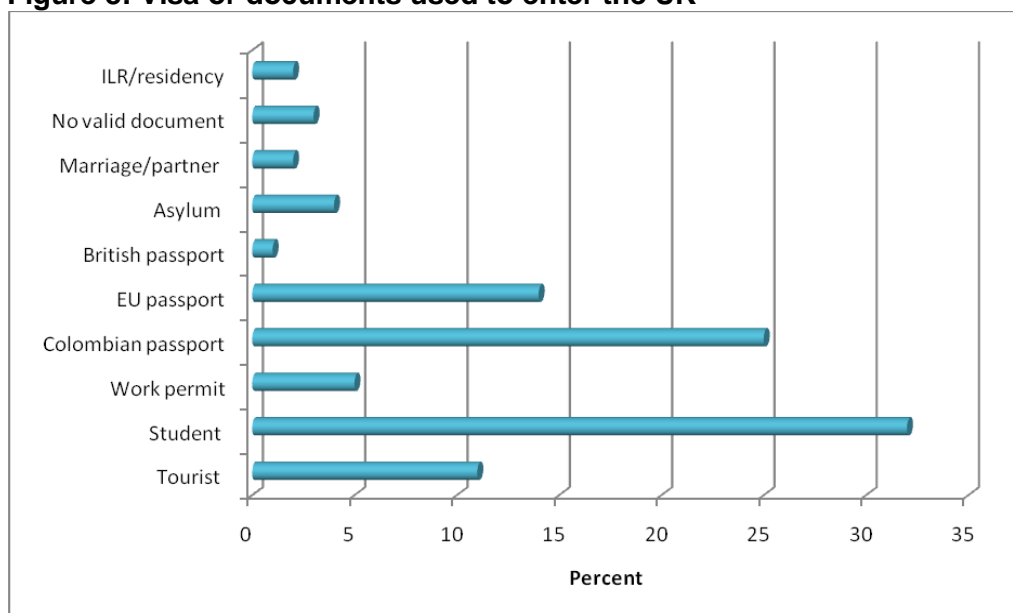
‘It was really hard for us. It was such a long time, such a long time, every day we were thinking, worrying ourselves sick that were going to be deported from here, and thinking about what was going to happen to us’.

Many had to live in hotels during their wait which often proved uncomfortable. For instance, 31 year old Clarena from Quindío (interviewed in 2007) remembered how they had lived in a hotel for 9 months having been sent there directly from Heathrow. She found it very difficult:

‘It was really hard as there were people from different countries with lots of children. People arrived from everywhere and the hygiene was very difficult, I had to clean the bathrooms all the time, and the kitchen, it was really uncomfortable’.

There were also several claims about the chaos of the system and the lack of consistency in the success of applications. Some successful migrants were open about the economic motives behind their claims, while others who had been turned down recounted shocking stories about how their lives had been in danger in Colombia. Luz Maria (interviewed in 2005 – see above) had her asylum claim turned down despite being disabled because of the gun-fight with the paramilitaries who were trying to kill her. She reported that she was completely humiliated by the judge in her case hearing because he openly said that he didn’t believe her story.

Figure 8: Visa or documents used to enter the UK



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=99)

In terms of the immigration status held at the time of the survey, the majority had changed their papers after initial entry. Almost one-third had a temporary visa, most of which were student visas (20%). Only 7% admitted to having no valid documents although irregularity is

likely to be higher than this as some EU passport holders had false passports and some people holding student visas were semi-compliant in terms of working more hours than their visa allowed (see Table 1). Also important is that 36% had British passports, linked partly to the fact that Colombians are the most established of all Latin Americans living in London. However, more specifically, 38% gained citizenship through marriage, 19% through the family exercise, 9% through length of residence and another 9% directly through an asylum claim.

Table 1: Immigration status at time of survey

Type of immigration status	Frequency	Percent
Student	20	20.0
Work permit	4	4.0
EU passport	12	12.0
ILR/residency	12	12.0
ELR	2	2.0
British passport	36	36.0
HSMP	1	1.0
No documents	7	7.0
Other	6	1.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Questionnaire survey (N=100)

LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES

Employment rates among Colombian migrants are high with 81% in work. This is much higher than the overall rate for London residents born overseas and for the London population as a whole. Analysis of the Annual Population Survey also shows that the employment rate for adult Latin Americans in London was 71% in 2008. In addition, Latin Americans have higher employment rates than other foreign born workers in London (55%) and for the London population as a whole (61%) (Linneker and McIlwaine, 2011).

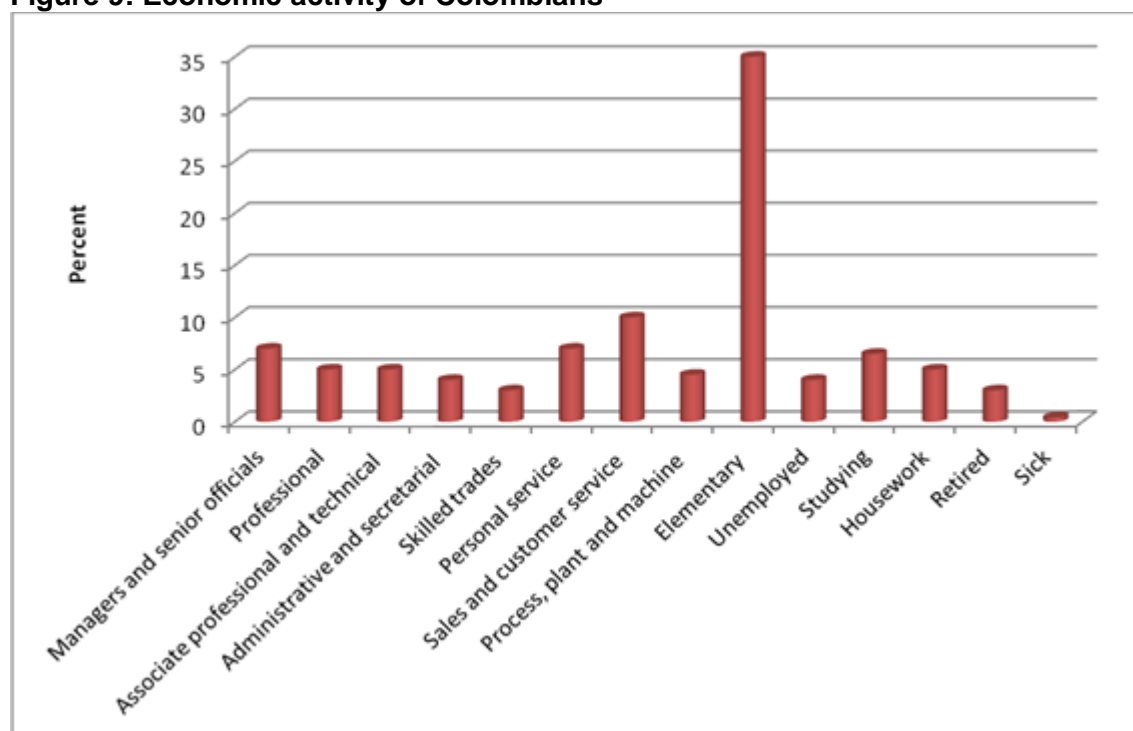
Colombian migrants are concentrated in elementary positions in the labour market in London (35%). These include contract cleaners, kitchen assistants, porters, waiters and waitresses, hotel chambermaids and security guards. This is much higher than for the foreign born and the London population as a whole (17% of foreign born people, and 14% of all people living in London) (McIlwaine et al, 2011: 54). When elementary jobs are added to personal service occupations, which here refer primarily to domestic cleaning and au pairing, over half of Colombians are employed in low-skilled, manual work, this means that 42% work in elementary work. When this is calculated as a proportion of all workers, then 43% work in elementary jobs, and when added to personal services, then 52% of working Colombians work in the low-paid sector. Having said this, 17.5% of all Colombians work in professional, managerial and related occupations (or 21.5% of all workers) (see Figure 9). Again, this is lower than the London population as a whole where 29% of those born abroad and 34% of the London population as a whole work in these sectors (McIlwaine et al, 2011: 56).

Working Colombian men were more likely to be working in professional and managerial jobs compared with women (22% compared with 14%) with a slight concentration of women in elementary jobs (36% compared with 34% of men). Linked mainly with nanny and au pair work, women were also much more likely to be employed in personal service jobs (11% compared with 3% of men).⁵ The year of arrival also affects the economic activities of

⁵ An analysis of the APS for Latin Americans as a whole shows a broadly similar trend although the overall concentration in elementary jobs is more marked. For example, 30% of men were concentrated in routine and semi-routine occupations and another 26% in managerial and

Colombians. Those who have arrived since 2000 are more likely to work in elementary jobs than those who arrived in previous decades (62% of all elementary workers). Conversely, 58% of those who arrived *before* 1989 now work in professional and managerial jobs.

Figure 9: Economic activity of Colombians⁶



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=246)

In terms of their contractual arrangements, 76% of Colombians were employees, with 14% owning their own businesses and another 10% self-employed. Indeed, Colombians had the highest levels of business ownership among all Latin Americans in the larger study, linked primarily with the fact that they are the most established nationality group with the greatest likelihood of having permanent residency and/or British citizenship. In turn, most small business owners serve the Latin American community more widely, mainly in retail and catering (see below). While most Colombian workers have contracts (66%) in general, there remained 15% of all employees who had no contract indicating that they work informally.⁷ However, the vast majority paid tax and National Insurance (87%) which is the highest of all Latin American nationalities in the wider study.

Decline in occupational mobility

Migration to London involves a marked decline in occupational status for the vast majority of Colombians. An extremely small proportion worked in elementary jobs back home (2%). On arrival in London, almost 80% of all migrants ended-up working in elementary jobs, particularly cleaning, washing-up or as chefs or kitchen assistants, all of which were relatively easy to

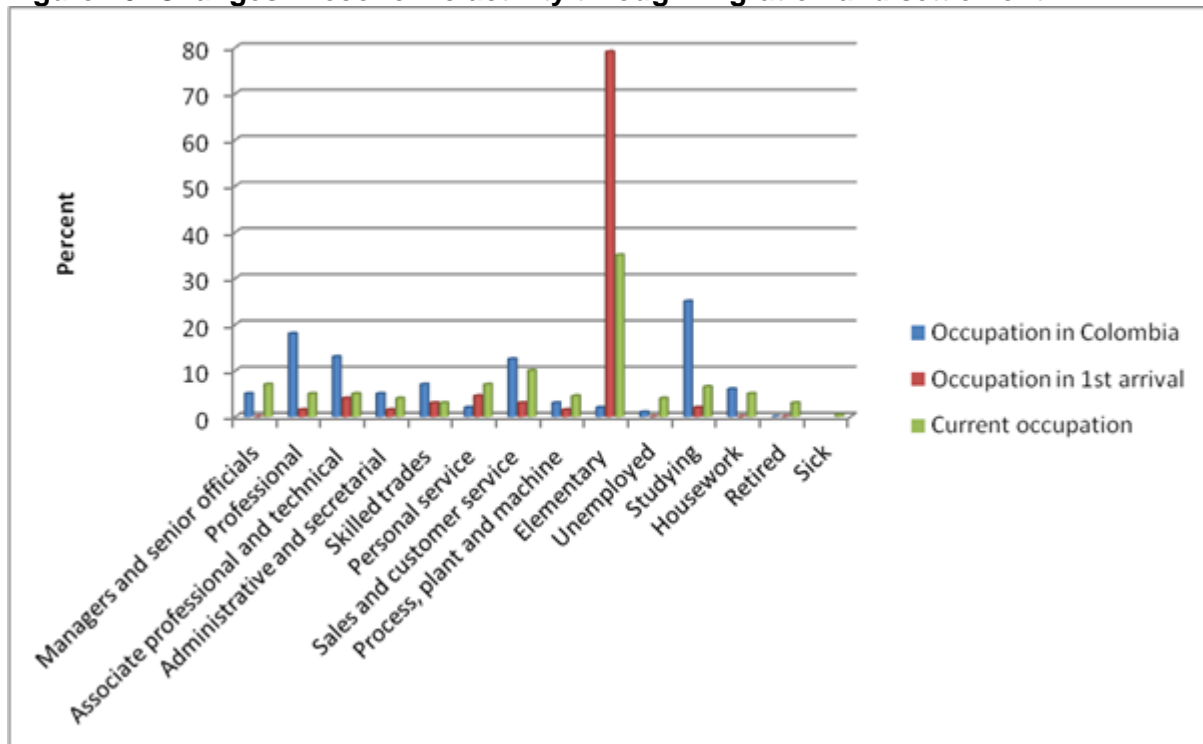
professional occupations in 2008. Among women, 27% worked in routine and semi-routine occupations with 24% in managerial and professional jobs (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

⁶ The occupational classifications used here are the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC, 2000) which is maintained by the Occupational Information Unit (OIU) of the Office of National Statistics. They also include additional categories for those who are not in work (studying, unemployed, housework, sick).

⁷ Informality is defined as: 'The paid production and sale of goods and services that are unregistered by, or hidden from the state for tax, benefit and/or labour law purposes but which are legal in all other respects' (ONS, 2005, 4).

secure and were unlikely to require English language.⁸ This is mirrored at the upper end of the labour market. Back home, 36% of people worked in professional and managerial jobs, yet when they arrived in London this declined to only 5.5% (see Figure 10). Indeed, the actual jobs that people did in their home countries were diverse and included teachers, accountants, pharmacists, designers, bakers, mechanics, engineers, bus and taxi drivers, hairdressers, musicians, nurses, police officers, secretaries, social workers, and small and large business owners.

Figure 10: Changes in economic activity through migration and settlement



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=246)

The case of 48 year-old Pablo (interviewed in 2005) illustrates this. He was former nurse back home who worked as a cleaner in London. He felt very bitter about his treatment in the UK:

'Here, they close doors on those who want to work at their profession ... they don't give you the opportunity to demonstrate what you can do. The problem here is that they don't value people's profession and experience. If you have a high level of English, then yes you can work sometimes, otherwise no. Here, to start work you have to begin at zero, you have to start to take exams again through levels, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. When I reach the last level I'll be an old man, no, no. Look, there's horrible discrimination, you see, although they say that they need people to work in certain areas, it's total lies'.

Although the overall pattern was one of de-skilling, some occupational mobility was possible in that the 80% working in elementary jobs on first arrival reduced to 35% at the time of survey, and the 5.5% employed in professional and related positions increased to 17.5%. However, the most common type of occupational mobility was not from elementary jobs into the professions, but rather from elementary jobs into sales or people setting-up their own business. At the lowest end of the labour market, there was some movement in that people often mentioned having started their working life in London washing dishes in a café or a restaurant, and then moving on to cleaning offices. In some cases, people then became

⁸ People were asked what job they did before they left Latin America, what their first job in arrival was and what their current job was.

cleaning supervisors (although several complained that the extra money was not worth the additional responsibility), but this also required a fairly good grasp of English. In a rare case, 27 year-old Clara from Palmira (interviewed in 2007) spoke of her husband's occupational mobility; he began work in a restaurant washing dishes, then he became a chef's assistant, then he began to work with the Jewish community in a frozen food company as a warehouse operative. He then started work as a driver until finally becoming a secretary in the office of the company.

In a very small number of cases, professional Colombians have been transferred by their companies to London as in the case of 36 year-old Emilio from Bogotá (interviewed in 2010). He had been living in London since 2007 after he was transferred by his Dutch-based bank. He had worked in the credit and risk section of the bank in Bogotá but he had been promoted to vice-president which entailed a move to London.

As noted above, the other important route towards occupational mobility is through entrepreneurial activities. For some Colombians it was possible to set-up their own business as a way of ensuring a decent living. The case of Alonso (interviewed in 2010), a 48 year old from Quindío illustrates this. Alonso left Colombia in 1998 where he had a small business selling paintings after working for a long time in 5-star hotels as a waiter. He migrated to London in search of a better life and to join his wife and young daughter. When he arrived, he worked in office cleaning. However, after 6 years of cleaning he wanted to be his own boss again. He had two friends who had a restaurant in the Elephant and Castle area who wanted to sell it. Alonso used some savings from his cleaning work to buy them out. He was grateful for the opportunities he had been given in London: 'Here, it's easier to make money and there are many more possibilities than in our country because unfortunately in Colombia after the age of 30 you become elderly'.

While men were more likely to establish their own businesses than women, there was evidence of women becoming entrepreneurial in London. For example, 36 year-old Edilma from Pereira (interviewed in 2007) had set-up a small 'remittance shop' (*tienda de giros*) in a well-known Latin American market with another Colombian woman using savings from her former cleaning work. She was just starting out and had kept on her part-time cleaning job for two hours every morning.

Although the decline in occupational status is broadly similar for men and women, evidence from the qualitative research showed that women tended to cope better with this transformation than men mainly linked with changing gender roles. Acknowledging that women's employment rates were already high in Latin America (McIlwaine, 2010), economic independence was repeatedly mentioned by women as a key aspect of improvements in women's lives. Although participation in the labour market does not automatically engender improvements in women's lives, especially for those working in the lower echelons of the labour market in cleaning and catering, independent access to income can make a tangible difference to women's lives. For example, 32 year old Isabel from Cali who worked as a cleaner (interviewed in 2007) said that she would be ashamed to do such a job in Colombia, but here, she said it was normal. As well as stating:

'Here, I'm very independent; if I was in Colombia I would have to depend on my husband ... to clean is normal for me but in Colombia I would be too ashamed, but here no. This country is very open ... in my own country, if I were to clean they would look down on me. There, only those who are really poor clean, the poorest. But here, I'm not ashamed, nor do I complain like some others'.

Thus, women tended to be much more pragmatic about cleaning, and tended to value it more as a job. In contrast, men often found it psychologically difficult to work in 'feminised' occupations perceived to be women's work such as cleaning and catering (see also Datta et

al, 2009). For those from professional backgrounds in particular where it would have been unheard of them to carry out any domestic labour and where they probably had paid staff to do this work, the decline in status was keenly felt. For example, 44 year old Edgar from Pereira (interviewed in 2007) who had also owned a bookshop and book distribution company in Colombia and who had worked in several cleaning jobs in the past (he owned a Colombian clothes shop at the time of interview) pointed out:

'Unfortunately, because I didn't know the language, I had to clean, this was really hard. In my life, I had never done cleaning, but to arrive and to have to dust, to wipe, to brush-up, it affects your self-esteem, you feel really, really bad, bad because you come with the idea of improving your life ... not that the work is dishonourable, it's fine, it's a job, but the truth is, it's very difficult when you have a certain status in life, a good standard of living, and having to clean is very difficult'.

Conditions of work and pay

Many Colombians worked fragmented hours; this can mean they work part-time and it can also indicate that they work full-time hours but in a range of different jobs. For example, 38% worked less than 35 hours per week, while 47% worked between 35 and 48 hours. A further 15% worked more than 48 hours which is more than is permitted by the European Working Time Directive. Women were much more likely to work part-time than men (55% compared with 26%) linked with their disproportionate responsibility for childcare and other reproductive work in the home. Part-time working was also most common among those employed in elementary jobs (44%).

This was not always by choice, but because of the nature of many cleaning, catering, personal service and sales jobs which are only available for 3-4 hours at a time. These are often part-time and require people to work very unsociable hours, usually in the early morning and in the evenings. Reflecting this pattern, 27% of Colombians had more than one job and 43% had more than two jobs. Women were more likely to have more than one job than men (31% compared with 24%). Most of these additional jobs were in cleaning or related work. For example, 25 year-old Julián from Cali (interviewed in 2005), who was a janitor at a building in Canary Wharf, worked on Saturday mornings doing window cleaning in order to be able to send money back to Colombia for his daughter and mother: 'I do 4 hours for £20 which I have to do because if not then I wouldn't be able to pay for things and above all to send money to Colombia which is my priority'.

In a small number of cases, people also carried out small-scale income-generating activities as in the case of 50 year-old Alejandro from Pereira (interviewed in 2005) who sometimes did painting and decorating work at weekends as well as his regular cleaning job during the week. In addition, he and his wife regularly made and decorated cakes that they sold to local Colombian restaurants along with *arepas* or *tamales* (Colombian pasties) that they sold to friends. These extra activities were essential for their survival, especially to pay their tube fares: 'We can get by through doing these things, we have to pay for the train, it's the only way we can survive, we can do it during the day'.

In terms of wages, the majority of Colombians earned more than the National Minimum Wage (with only 6% paid less than NMW) which at the time of survey was £5.73.⁹ However, only 43% earned more than the London Living Wage at the time of £7.60 - which is the rate that is required to lift people out of poverty in London. In addition, 6% were paid less than the legal minimum (see Table 2); these tended to be those who were irregular and had no recourse to complain officially. Marcelo (interviewed in 2005) from Pereira who was 38 years-old also

⁹ This hourly rate includes those who are paid by the month as well as those earning annual salaries. Their hourly rates of pay are derived using the weekly hours of work they themselves identified in our survey.

noted how those with National Insurance numbers were paid more: 'I would be paid more if I had "the national", but because I don't I'm paid less and I can't complain as I have no papers'.

Table 2: Hourly rates of pay by National Minimum and London Living Wages

Hourly rates of pay	Frequency	Percent
Below National Minimum Wage	8	5.9
Between National Minimum Wage and below London Living Wage	69	50.7
London Living Wage or above	59	43.4
Total	136	100.0

Source: Questionnaire survey (N=136)

Some people also identified their monthly earnings with a median of £700 and a mean of £932. The lowest rates were for those working in elementary jobs and the highest were for managers and senior officials. Also important here is that Colombians had the lowest median earnings of all nationalities in the survey (a median of £1000 across all nationalities with Brazilians earning the most at £1200). This can probably be attributed to the fact that the Brazilians who were earning monthly salaries were mainly professionals and business owners while many Colombians who earned monthly wages were in cleaning and catering (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

Workplace exploitation

One-third of Colombians had experienced problems in the workplace. This was mainly working for longer hours than they were paid for (16%) although verbal abuse was also a problem (see Table 3). Women were more likely to complain about problems than men (34% compared with 29%) especially in relation to verbal, physical and sexual abuse. However, several women also complained that they had been sacked when they fell pregnant such as Adriana from Quindío who lost her waitressing job in a hotel in Kensington. People also complained about being exploited because they did not speak English. For example, 29 year-old Sara from Bucaramanga (interviewed in 2007) recounted a previous job she had at McDonalds:

‘In McDonalds, I was treated really badly, and I didn’t speak English very well and they put me on the till. The customers treated me badly and I gave the wrong orders. Then they sent me to clean the bathrooms and to collect rubbish in the streets around the block. They made me do everything; they take advantage of people’s needs and make people do everything. They paid me £5 per hour and in 1 year, I didn’t receive a rise’.

Another dimension of problems in the workplace that emerged from the qualitative research was that exploitation occurred among Latin Americans. For example, Yaneth, a 33 year old from Narino (interviewed in 2010) reported how she had been mistreated at the hands of her Colombian managers in the hotel where she worked as a chambermaid:

‘Another bad experience I had was in a hotel where I worked where they offered us extra hours to do spring cleaning. After I had finished I had earned about £1000 or nearer to £1500. When they gave me my payslip, they hadn’t paid me the full amount – only £600. I went to complain to the manager who was Colombian. I wasn’t able to recuperate the money. In a similar way, those who were illegal got nothing, they lost more than £1000’.

As mentioned above in relation to wages, irregular migrants were more likely to experience exploitation in the workplace than those with papers. For example, 56 year-old Hernan from Cali (interviewed in 2005) reported:

'Here, they pay by the month, and at the end of the month, they say "listen brother, because you're undocumented we're not going to pay you because we can't give you a receipt" You have to stay quiet ... it's a terrible problem that rarely comes to light in public'.

In addition, problems among irregular migrants were growing as immigration legislation was getting stricter and the pressure on employers to check immigration papers of their employees intensified and became more punitive. Many irregular migrants spoke of losing their jobs because they did not have the correct documentation.¹⁰

Table 3: Problems experienced by Colombians in the workplace

Type of problem	Frequency	Percentage of working adults identifying problems (n=76)
Not being paid for work carried out	12	16%
Verbal abuse	9	12%
Working longer hours than paid for	2	3%
Paid less than minimum wage	6	8%
Unfair dismissal	5	7%
Accident at work	1	1%
Sexual harassment	1	1%
Physical abuse	1	1%

Source: Questionnaire survey

Notes: Frequency is based on those who identified problems. More than one problem was often identified.

Although those working in the lower end of the labour market were the most likely to identify problems, those employed in professional positions also complained. For instance, Juan who was 30 years-old from Bogotá (interviewed in 2010) and a lawyer with a masters degree from University College London, stated that he had experienced discrimination in his job working for an investment bank in the city. He said that because he didn't go to an English public school or to Oxford or Cambridge universities, many doors were closed to him. He felt bitter because he said that he went to the best university in Colombia (University of the Andes) but that meant nothing to his work colleagues. In a similar way, 55 year-old Francisco (interviewed in 2007) who was also a trained lawyer (who had studied at night school on London) complained about racism in law firms which was so extreme he didn't finish his training:

'I began my training in a very powerful company of lawyers but I only lasted 6 months because there was so much racism and discrimination. I was the only person of 1,700 lawyers who was Spanish-speaking and the only one who did not go to Oxford or Cambridge and the only one who was older than 40; the rest were 22, 25, 30. It was much too stressful and humiliating therefore I decided that it wasn't worth it. There are more important things in life such as dignity, peace of mind, tranquillity'.

ACCESSING WELFARE BENEFITS, SAVING AND BORROWING

The widespread economic hardship experienced by Colombians was ameliorated for almost a third (29%) through claiming welfare benefits (most of which were in-work benefits). The most commonly claimed type of benefit was the working tax credit, followed by housing benefit and

¹⁰ The Immigration and Asylum Act 2006 increased employers' responsibility for checking their workers immigration documentation. This legislation came into force in February 2008 with the result that employers can now be issued a civil penalty fine of up to £10,000 for each undocumented migrant worker found in their employment (UKBA) (MRN, 2008).

council tax relief. However, there was also a widespread belief that claiming benefits was not appropriate as Marcelo (interviewed in 2005) noted:

'Just like many of my Colombian friends, we aspire to have permission to work, not to live off benefits, that's what we want, not to live off this help, without any self-esteem, but by our own hands, a job that we can do with dignity such as driving a bus'.

For those unable to access benefits, the only other option was to borrow money. Indeed, 45.5% of Colombians had borrowed money at some point since they had arrived in London. This was mainly for daily expenditures such as buying food and education expenses. Over half (57%) borrowed from formal sources, mainly banks, with more than a quarter turning to friends or family (27%). In addition, 38% of Colombians admitted to having current debts.

As well as borrowing money, some managed to get-by through 'renting' bank accounts, especially when they first arrived and if they were irregular. For example, Yaneth spoke about her experiences of having to borrow both immigration papers and a bank account from a friend when she first arrived to work in a cleaning job. She complained that this friend deducted £10 per week for this service (when she earned £50 per week at this time). Yaneth noted: 'I felt very uncomfortable about this; every time I got paid I had to contact her and ask for my money. Sometimes she wasn't available, and it was a really uncomfortable situation'. Among the small proportion of people without access to a bank in the UK (3%), the only option was to use a cheque cashing service – a service used by 7.5%.

Many Colombians also developed longer term practices to invest in their futures through saving and sending remittances (see below). Almost two-thirds saved money (62%), amounting to a median of £63 per month. Based on median figures, approximately 17% of weekly personal income was being saved. Generally, those with higher incomes were more likely to save.

The qualitative research highlighted how people make sacrifices in London in order to be able to save for the longer term back home as 45 year old Pancho from Antioquia noted:

'I'm not satisfied. Cleaning is not my work. I do it only out of necessity. The job I did back home was very different [a teacher]. I came here to work for money. Anything will do. The jobs here are dirty work, but they will do in order to meet your goals or to save, to have money and to be able to send money home'.

In a similar way, 32 year old Mateo from Bogotá, Colombia reported that he sacrificed his current situation in order to save money for his future: 'My strategy is to have as few expenses as possible here so that I can save. There's no point in wasting money here'.

THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS HAS EXACERBATED ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

The hardship experienced by Colombians has been exacerbated in recent years by the global financial crisis. Although the crisis affects everyone in London, the qualitative research highlighted how there are also specific effects experienced by migrants. In relation to the labour market, there was a general perception that although jobs were still available, exploitation in cleaning and catering in particular was thought to be increasing. This was because more people were looking for work and so managers and supervisors could take more advantage. Danilo was a 32 year old from Medellín who had a Highly Skilled Migrants Programme (HSMP) visa. After working for a catering agency as well as studying English when he first arrived he returned to Colombia and applied for the HSMP as an architect. However, not long after he got a job in an architectural practice he lost it due to the crisis and he ended-up working as a waiter:

'Because of the crisis ... construction was affected and so were architecture companies ... the large projects stopped and so they began to let staff go.' However, he also pointed out: 'To have a salary as an architect there [in Colombia] that is really low or to have a salary the same or better as a waiter here, I prefer to be here,' illustrating the fact that few people planned to return home as a result of the economic crisis.

The migrant-specific effects also relate to reductions in remittances sending, with many noting that they sent less money or had to stop altogether in order to make sure they could get by in London (see below). As Francisco from Bogotá noted: 'Before I sent money, but now I can't because my situation has changed ... now because I lost my job all my savings are being invested in surviving'. In addition, some migrants spoke of the crisis causing devaluation in their currency affecting remittance sending. Yaneth also noted: 'I would like to save more at the moment because of the crisis and to invest in Colombia. But the crisis means I can't. The exchange rate is so low that I can't send money at the moment'.

HOUSING, HOUSEHOLDS AND GENDER RELATIONS

Housing

Many Colombians face pressures in securing adequate housing in London. This is reflected in the fact that 40% were not satisfied with the quality of the housing they lived in. Although those working in sales, elementary and machine operative jobs were the least satisfied with their housing with almost half expressing their concerns, almost a third of people working in professional and managerial occupations were also unhappy, highlighting the extent to which accessing adequate housing represents a problem for the community as a whole.

Colombians are concentrated in the private rental housing sector with a third residing in rented accommodation on their own account and another one-fifth living in sub-letting arrangements (which is private rented accommodation even if it can occur within social housing) (see Table 4). Therefore, more than half of Colombians lived in some form of private rented accommodation. This proportion is more than three times greater than for London as a whole (21%) (DCLG, 2009: 11). Private rented accommodation is usually more likely to be used by those who have arrived most recently, and/or who are irregular and who earn the least. Irregular migrants were the most likely to be subletting, linked with their difficulties in accessing housing by formal means.

Table 4: Type of accommodation

Type of accommodation	Frequency and percent
Owner occupier (including outright, mortgage and shared)	13
Rent council	10
Rent housing association	14
Private rented	33
Sublet	20
Lives in employer's home	3
Lives rent free	4
Temporary accommodation	3
Total	100

Source: Questionnaire survey (N=100)

Colombians have better access to social housing (including council and housing associations) than many other Latin Americans (24% as opposed to 16% in general) (see Table 4;

McIlwaine et al., 2011). This is the average for London as a whole (24%) (DCLG, 2009: 11), and reflects the fact that many Colombians are well-established in the city and have permanent residency and citizenship. Colombian women were also much more likely to live in social housing than men (42% compared with only 6%).

Rates of owner occupation were also very low (see Table 4) and more people had a mortgage (10%) than owned outright (3%). This is much lower than the average owner-occupation (including those with a mortgage and owning outright) for London as a whole (55%) (DCLG, 2009: 11). Not surprisingly, owner occupation was concentrated among those with British or EU citizenship and among professionals and managers.

The proportions of Colombians living in temporary accommodation were comparatively low at 2%, although this is the same as the London average (MacInnes and Kenway, 2009: 89) and the highest among all Latin Americans. In addition, 1% of Latin Americans were homeless, which is slightly higher than those newly recognised as homeless in London in 2007 (ibid.: 87).

In addition, 26% of Colombians shared their home with another family indicating overcrowding (with an average of 2 other families). Although approximately 14% explicitly identified overcrowding as an issue, this is certainly an under-estimate. This was mainly because some people reported living alone because they cooked alone or maintained individual finances yet they lived in larger houses where, for example, the living room was used as a bedroom or where several adults shared bedrooms (both indicators of over-crowding). Even acknowledging this, the rate of 14% is high compared to London as a whole where 6.8% of households are overcrowded (DCLG, 2009: 12).¹¹ Overcrowded conditions are associated with low-skilled work and irregularity. For instance, 39% of elementary workers shared their homes compared with 9% of professional and managerial workers. Men were more likely to be living in housing with other families than women (32% and 20%).

Household structures

The mean household size among Colombians was 2.7 with the largest household having 7 people. This is larger than the UK average of 2.4 persons in 2008 (DCLG, 2009: 12). It is also slightly larger than the local authority with the largest average size in England and Wales of 2.64 – London Borough of Newham.¹²

Almost a quarter of Colombians lived in couple households with no dependent children (24%) which is lower than the average of 35%. Another 22% lived in multi-person households, which is much higher than the population nationally (8%).¹³ 19% lived in couple households with dependent children, which is lower than the UK average of 28%. Another 22% were people living alone which is lower than the national average of 29%. A further 13% lived in lone parent households, which is higher than the national average of 7% (see Figure 11) (DCLG, 2009: 25).

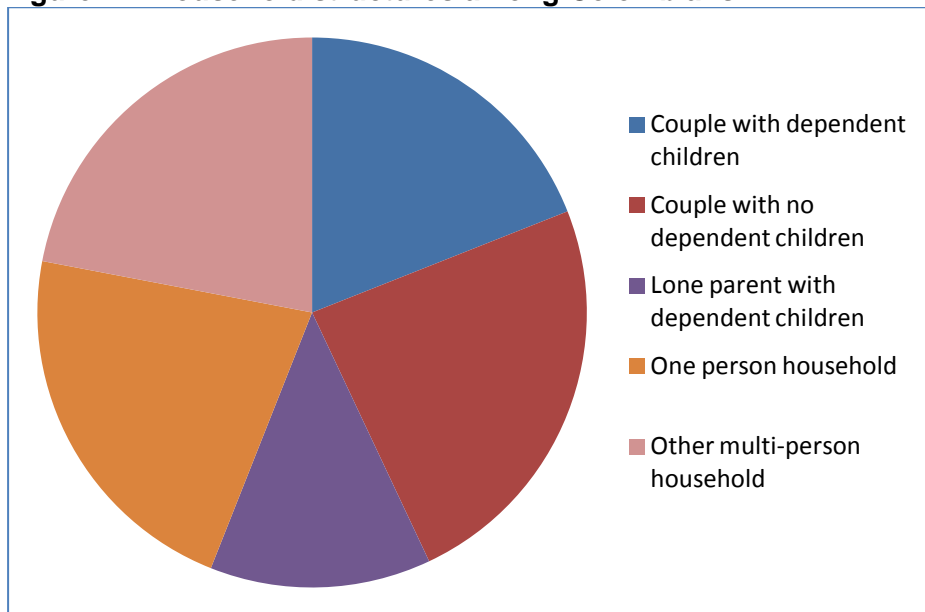
¹¹ Other estimates suggest overcrowding to be 25% of households in Inner London and 13% in Outer London (MacInnes and Kenway, 2009: 92).

¹² Office of National Statistics. Available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/commentaries/housing.asp> (accessed 1st September 2010).

¹³ A multi-person household refers to 'a group of two or more persons living together who make common provision for food or other essentials for living' (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/techreport/hhChar.pdf> (accessed 10 February 2011)). The definition used here also draws on that used in the English Housing Survey to include 'flat sharers, lone parents with non-dependent children only and households containing more than one couple or lone parent family' (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/surveyofenglishhousing/sehlivetables/surveyenglish/224421/> (accessed 10 February 2011))

Colombians who had arrived more recently were more likely to live in multi-person or single person households, rather than family households. For example, more than half of those who arrived since 2000 lived in multi-person households or single person households. Multi-person and lone person households also tend to be associated with low incomes and economic vulnerability. 28% of elementary workers lived in single person households with a further 19% living in multi-person units. In contrast, those who are settled are more likely to live in households comprising couples and children. As such, more than half of people living in these households arrived before 1999, compared with 39% who arrived after 2000.

Figure 11: Household structures among Colombians



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=100)

Transformations in gender relations and ideologies

Gender relations and ideologies (referring to the norms and ideals about expected behaviour between women and men as well as the roles that are deemed appropriate for people because of their gender) among Colombians change according to pre- and post-migration experiences with both positive and negative outcomes (see also McIlwaine, 2010; McIlwaine and Carlisle, 2011). Drawing on the qualitative research, many younger migrants felt that changes in gender relations had occurred back home before they migrated. For example, 29 year-old Sara from Bucaramanga (interviewed in 2007) and who had been an engineer with a cattle-farming company noted: 'I always saw my father supporting my mother who was a really hard worker; he always let her work. Within my family, the husbands help the wives in the same way as they do here.'

Although women and men's experiences in the labour market influenced how gender relations and ideologies transformed (see earlier), changes at the household level were also identified. On one hand, people spoke of men contributing more to domestic labour in the home than they did in Latin America. This was usually prompted by working practices outside the home; in cases with both partners working often long and irregular hours, people had to share housework such as cooking. Maya, who was 38 years old and from Palmira (interviewed in 2010) noted:

'Here, we both have to contribute at home. He [her husband] never used to help in Colombia, not even wash a dish, but here he has no choice, we both work. I don't think he has changed what he really thinks, but he can't complain'.

Similarly, 45-year old Esperanza from Bogotá (interviewed in 2007) stated:

'Here, women are valued more in all ways. I had a partner in Colombia and here I have one here. There, my husband did nothing, he never helped to wash a plate, he never helped me to look after my daughter, he came home from work and he did nothing. My husband here [also Colombian], since my daughter was born knows how to change a nappy; in hospital they taught him. Here, they let men into the birth, this is fundamental for me, it helps you, they feel the pain you feel. When the men visit, they are asked if they are helping, they look after for you. Men here are much better and they behave much better'.

Maya's views were reflected by others who suggested that changes indicate transformations in gender practices rather than ideologies which are more resistant (McIlwaine, 2010). 45 year-old Nuria (interviewed in 2010) said:

'The majority [of men] are *machistas*.¹⁴ It doesn't matter where they live, they are *machistas*. But opportunities change and women have more independence here. Women change and men change but men only change because they have to, they don't change what they really think'.

Just as some men felt disempowered by having to work in low status, 'feminised' jobs, some also resented having to do housework resulting in tensions in the home which sometimes led to domestic violence (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Focus group discussion outcomes with 3 Colombian women aged between 36 and 45

<p>How has life changed for women and men in London compared with Colombia?</p> <p>How life changes for women in London</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More independent of men• Machismo still exists but it does change a little• There are more opportunities for work for women in cleaning in particular in houses• Women have more rights• It's easier because women have access to benefits especially single mothers• Women can leave men because they are more protected• There no extended family on top of you• There's more freedom• There's less social life• More time at home – always at home or work <p>How life changes for men in London</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men have to look after the children• They have to learn to cook• Machismo is the same in terms of their attitudes• Men find it harder to get work• Men can't work in houses if they have no papers (women can) <p>Effects for both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More separation among partners in London• Less domestic violence• Women are more protected and this prevents domestic violence – you can't do that here
--

¹⁴ A '*machista*' is someone who adheres to the norms and ideals of machismo. Machismo refers to a 'cult of exaggerated masculinity' involving 'the assertion of power and control over women, and over other men' (Chant with Craske 2003: 14 cited in McIlwaine, 2010: 287),

For women with regular status and who accessed statutory and non-statutory services, there was a perception that women had more legal rights in London and that the state would protect them. For example, 42 year-old Angela (interviewed in 2010) thought that all men were *machista* wherever they lived but that in the UK, women were protected by the laws:

'In Colombia if your husband hits you, you have no rights but here you do. Men are afraid to hit women here because they know that women are protected. But men don't really change. The situation changes. In Colombia, if a man hits you, the state doesn't help. If you have no job it's hard to leave. The man is the main breadwinner, he is the centre of the house and the woman is dependent on him and there is lots of pressure from all the families to stay together. There, women are less likely to have an education, women don't work – the only job you can get is as a domestic so she has to depend on a man. He is then the responsible one. The one responsible for working, for putting food on the table. You can't leave as easily. Here, you have more opportunities to leave, to earn your own money. But men are still *machista*'.

However, for women who are irregular or on temporary or dependent visas, or are unable to speak any English, seeking assistance from the police or other public agencies is not an option due to fear and lack of information. In these cases, women respondents reported that they will end-up worse off than back home in Latin America. Not all women were aware of their rights or were willing to report crimes, especially domestic violence. While organisations such as the Latin American Women's Rights Service provide specialist services to support women experiencing violence against women, lack of information was identified as an issue. For example, in a focus group of Colombian women conducted in 2010, one participant said that for her in London:

'The main problem is lack of information. When you arrive, and especially if you don't know anyone, it's really hard. I didn't know about LAWRS. I didn't know where to find a job, to find help when I was in trouble and I couldn't ask because I couldn't speak English'.

Men also recognised these changes and the potential conflicts they created. Alonso (interviewed in 2010) who was 48 years-old noted:

'It's difficult here for partners, for women and men because here the woman wants to live like a Colombian and to live like an English woman. As a Colombian she wants her husband to look after the household economically and as an English woman she wants to go out wherever she wants without saying anything. Therefore, there are a lot of changes'.

Also important is that men tend to view migration in more temporary terms while women are more likely to want to settle permanently. According to the survey, half (50%) of men wanted to stay in London for 5 years or less compared with less than a third of women (38%). Angela (interviewed in 2010) spoke about how her husband wanted to return home:

'My husband wants to go back to Colombia, to buy a house, to set up a business. But I don't want to go back. For what? Here I can have more opportunities. My children will speak 2 languages. I have more freedom here. He always talks of going back but I don't want to. I'm worried I'll lose my opportunities and my independence. But he thinks life will be better for him'.

ACCESSING SERVICES AND ROLE OF MIGRANT COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Accessing health care

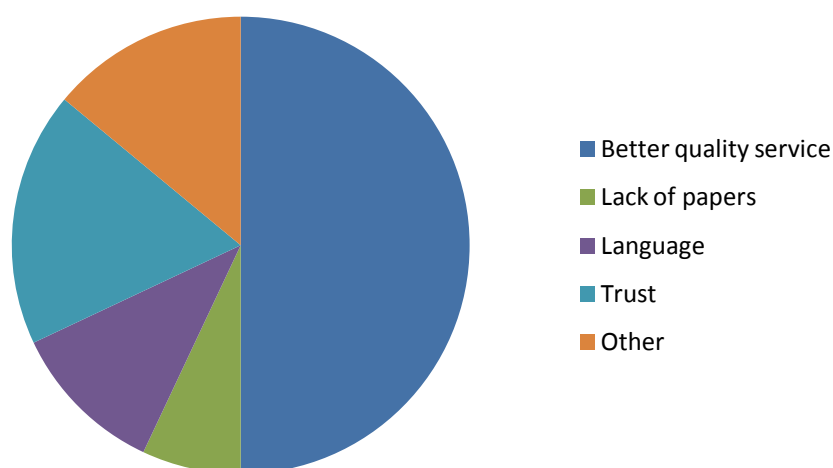
Although the vast majority of Colombians had access to a GP, it is still significant that 13% did not.¹⁵ Those without access tended to be irregular migrants who were afraid to approach a GP for fear of deportation. However, the issue of quality of care is also important. A common complaint was that health professionals were not interventionist enough and that they often only prescribed painkillers. For instance, 29 year old Jorge (interviewed in 2010) spoke about how he was treated when he had an ankle injury:

'You should only go to the GP if you are dying. The GP has no use for me, if you sick, you are sick. I tried to go when I hurt my ankle, I went to an emergency GP and I had to wait 6 hours as it more swollen and bruised. They told me I wouldn't die and to go home. They did check it but they just gave me a tablet, nothing else, no x-rays, nothing'.

This lack of faith in the system is partly reflected in the fact that 33% had also used a private doctor, of which 17% were Latin Americans.¹⁶ Indeed, when asked why they used private doctors, the largest proportion mentioned a better quality service (50%), followed by trust (18%) and language (11%) (see Figure 13). Although the numbers are small, it is important to note that those working in elementary jobs were more likely to use private services (19%) than those professional and managerial positions (9%). This suggests that income is not a major reason for such consultation.

Also very important is that 36% of people reported using health services in their home country when they travelled there. This tended to be dental treatments as well as full physical check-ups. For example, 42 year-old Milena from Cali (interviewed in 2007) spoke about how she returned home every two years to get dental treatment and to see her private doctor who gave her a full check-up. She also went to a dermatologist.

Figure 13: Reasons for using private doctor



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=28)

¹⁵ GP practices have discretion on who to register as patients. However, having a legal immigration status is not a requirement for registering.

¹⁶ In the UK as a whole the vast majority of consultations with a doctor are done through the NHS rather than privately. For example, in the General Lifestyle Survey 2008 only 3% of people who reported seeing a doctor in the 14 days before the survey went to a private doctor.

Role of migrant organisations

Migrant community organisations play a variety of roles in the Latin American community, ranging from cultural and sports associations to organisations that offer advice and services. Organisations in London linked with Latin America are diverse with some promoting cultural awareness of the continent while others actively serve migrants. For example, there are several societies for elite Latin Americans and British people with an interest in Latin America. Others have their roots in solidarity movements in the 1970s and 1980s and evolved into migrant welfare organisations (see earlier). There are also some more specific associations that deal with particular issues among migrants such as the elderly, sexual health, women's rights and business support. There are also small football leagues that are quite informal as well as some associations of people who come from the same town. Some have also formed small initiatives to help people in need in their countries of origin (see below). Colombians and Chileans in particular have played especially important roles in the establishment and evolution of these organisations.

Almost half of Colombians have used migrant organisations (46%), which is much higher than for Latin Americans as a whole (32%). This probably reflects their established status as a group as well as the fact that many organisations were established by Colombians (such as Carila and LAWRS, for example). Indeed, Colombians were the most likely to be leaders in organisations (6%). Those least likely to use migrant organisations according to their occupational status were those working in elementary jobs (36%) although there were no other marked variations. Women, however, were much more likely to use their services compared with men (60% and 32%).

The specific organisations that were most commonly accessed by Colombians were LAWRS (19%) Carila (17%) and IRMO (12%) (see Table 5). These organisations provide a range of services including advice on welfare, health and immigration issues. Although these three organisations do not specifically serve the Colombian community, the interviews with representatives from these groups showed that Colombians were the main country of origin of (followed by Ecuadorians). Specific data on the demand for services offered was obtained from several migrant community organisations. Different organisations offer different services and therefore their number of users does not necessarily reflect all the needs of Latin Americans but the demand for those services that the organisations can provide. At the two organisations that provide immigration advice (IRMO and Casa Latinoamericana), this was by far the service with the largest number of users, accounting for half of the clients in one and for over 60% of clients in the other. Welfare advice, covering issues such as housing, benefits, finances and debts had a high demand in all three organisations (see Figure 14 on LAWRS, IRMO and Casa Latinoamericana).

Table 5: Migrant community organisations accessed

Migrant community organisation	Frequency	Percent
LAWRS	8	19.0
IRMO	5	11.9
Carila	7	16.7
Casa Latinoamericana	4	9.5
Latin American Disabled Project	1	2.4
Latin American Elderly Project	3	7.1
Latin American Workers Association	2	4.8
Advisor or Private Lawyer	2	4.8
Other	8	19.0
Don't know/not applicable	2	4.8
Total	42	100.0

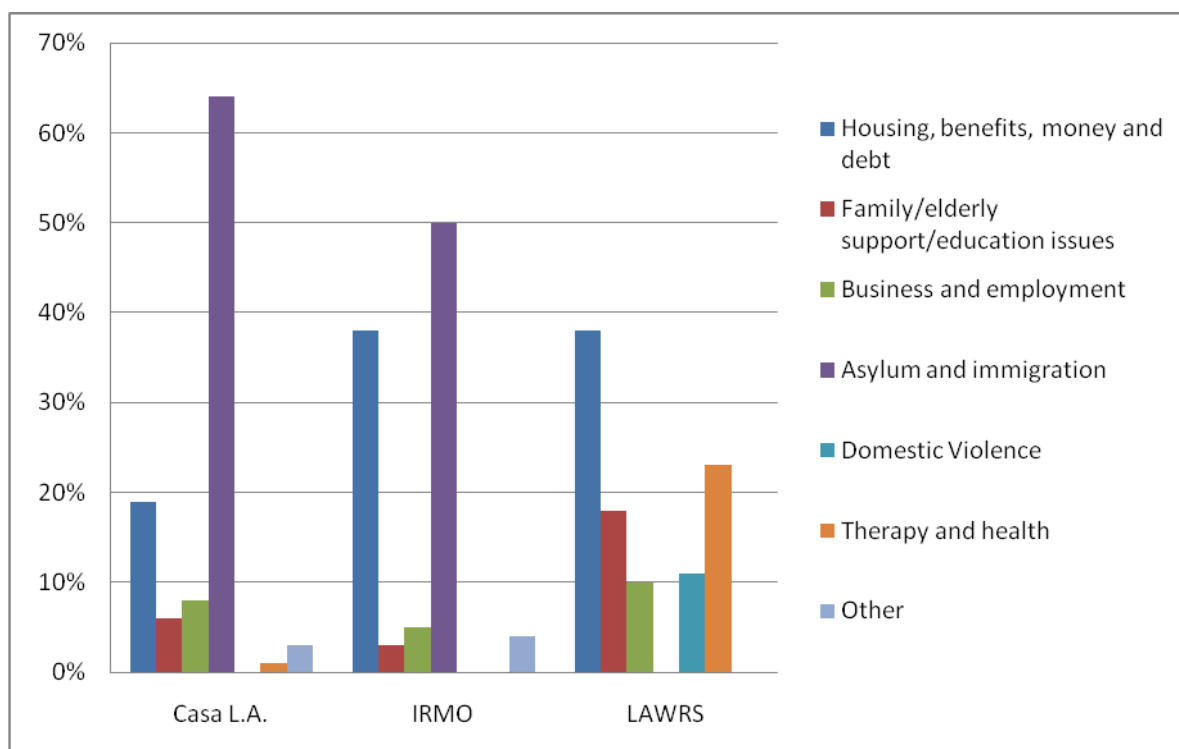
Source: Questionnaire survey (N=42)

While many people have not used the services of migrant community organisations, in many cases they were aware of their existence. Many just had not had the need to use them. In other cases, respondents preferred to solve their problems on their own. For others, organisations provided valuable assistance either in a moment of need or in a more recurrent way. For example, some people had had specific support from organisations when going through their asylum cases. Alonso (interviewed in 2010 – see above) used an interpreter and a legal adviser from a community organisation to help him fill in his application forms. Like many, however, he had little interest in these organisations once he got his settled status: ‘I don’t use their services any more. Now that I have my papers, what’s the point?’ In other cases, some people had used the services of migrant organisations on multiple occasions and for various reasons.

One of the main roles of migrant community organisation is to help migrants to access public services and to get information on mainstream services with most seeking them out for. Viviana (interviewed in 20110 – see above), for example, was a victim of abuse at the hands of her British husband and spent some time at a women’s refuge which she accessed through a migrant organisation:

‘To get to the refuge I went for help to Carila where I was given advice and then I got some help from Latin American Women’s Aid. When that happened, they could not give me the address of the refuge beforehand. Instead, I had to go to a place nearby and then they would take me there. We applied for Income Support and we received some assistance’.

Figure 14: Main services provided by 3 migrant organisations



Data: Casa Latinoamericana: users April 2008 – March 2009; LAWRS: users 2009; IRMO: users 2009.

Source: Service provider interviews

Other service providers used by Colombians in relation to advice, most often immigration advice, were private advisors and lawyers. Indeed, 42% of people had used a private lawyer or advisor. Almost half of these had consulted a lawyer using legal aid, with a further 22% using a Latin American lawyer and 29% using a lawyer without legal aid. Costs varied from £10 per hour to £5,000 for the whole case. Although many people consulted lawyers for immigration advice, they also used them for other reasons such as establishing businesses, divorce or probate. According to a Latin American lawyer working very closely with the community, immigration issues are the most common, followed by employment abuses (mainly people being dismissed without pay), and people getting caught with false papers (linked mainly with the recent crack-down). Those in managerial and professional jobs were more likely to consult private lawyers (52%) compared with elementary workers (28%). Perceptions of lawyers were mixed. In general, people often felt that paying someone to deal with problems meant a better service was secured. However, there were also cases of people paying large sums of money and getting nothing in return.

Role of churches

Almost 90% of Colombians identified with some form of religion, mainly Roman Catholic (76%), but also Evangelical Christian (10%). 66% attended church services with 31.5% of people attending every week and another 34.8% going sometimes. Among those who attended church, 76% went to Roman Catholic services while 21% went to Evangelical services. The vast majority of people attended religious services specifically aimed at Latin Americans (held by Latin American priests and pastors in Spanish or Portuguese). More women than men went to church services on a weekly basis (40% compared with 23%).

Many people also used churches as source of services and advice for Latin Americans that extend beyond religious guidance and practices and included immigration, education and health support. For example, a priest from the Catholic Chaplaincy (interviewed in 2010) noted:

‘The services through the chaplaincy are baptisms for children, information for young people, bible study, prayer groups, charismatic groups ... everything is in Spanish and is free for them. We also provide advice. We have a free GP for people, and a lawyer in Spanish who comes and gives advice every Thursday for free. She works with legal issues and gives free advice. We also have a group of doctors who can help people who can’t visit doctors and they give prescriptions.’

The church also provides social and psychological support to help people to cope with living in London. As 50 year-old Jaime (interviewed in 2005) who attended a Catholic mass stated: ‘We support each other because we’re here for the same reason. We understand each other’. However, the support was usually among fellow church goers as 28 year-old Milena (interviewed in 2005), who was part of an Evangelical church noted: ‘I trust in some people from my church, but not those who aren’t Christians.’

For non-believers, the church can still provide support, with several people admitting to not believing in God but going to church in order to make friends. For example, 43 year-old José from Cali (interviewed in 2010) noted:

‘I go to all the churches, but I don’t believe, I go in order to socialise, to make friends, to construct a network of friends who are my sources of support. That’s my objective, not faith’.

Although there was little difference in attendance patterns among those in different occupation groups, there was some controversy among Colombians about the tithes that people had to

give to the Evangelical churches in particular.¹⁷ This was highlighted by 45 year old Edilberto (interviewed in 2010) who did not attend church because he felt the church tricked people into handing over money: 'I think it's very false to make people give money and then tell them – I will help you if you are a brother, I will help you if you donate, I will only help you if you are in my church.'

SOCIAL RELATIONS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Social networks and trust

As well as formal organisational support, there were also informal support networks among Colombians in London. A core aspect of social networks is friendship. Latin Americans had relatively strong friendship networks. They identified a median of 5 friends, with more than half having 5 friends or less and only 8% having no friends. Friends provide an important emotional and economic support function. They provide an escape from people's working lives as well as the provision of contacts that can lead to jobs, and can also serve as a source of small-scale borrowing to tide people over. Evidence from the qualitative research highlighted how the vast majority of people secured their jobs through friends, most of whom were other Colombians/Latin Americans. As 37 year-old Marina (interviewed 2005) noted:

'For example, my heart is very big, I can tell you honestly that I've helped and tried to help people who've just arrived, to try and help them get established, to tell them how to get a lawyer, to call friends who could get them jobs as cleaners'.

For those with few friends, lack of time and over-work were the main reasons identified in the qualitative research as described by 32 year-old Mateo (interviewed in 2010):

'The truth is that I go to work and home and then from home to work. I don't go out much and I don't have many friends'. Nevertheless, overall those working in elementary jobs had just as many friends as professional and managerial workers.

The creation of social networks is underpinned by levels of trust which reflect a mixed picture with just over half (53%) saying they trusted other Colombians/Latin Americans. This trust was rooted in helping others out in times of need, especially in terms of finding work and accommodation. The reasons why people did not trust others were linked with a selfishness (23%), sense of individualism (18%), or envy (13%) within the community. Immigration status also played an important role Yaneth (interviewed in 2010) noted:

'People have different preferences and among us we are envious if someone has papers. There is also a lot of competition for jobs, people always ask you how much you earn, if you have papers. If you introduce someone to a friend they first ask if you have documents as if it's a competition'.

Similarly, 27 year-old Clara (interviewed in 2007) pointed out:

'I tell you, here, your worst enemy is the same Colombian. Don't talk to anyone, don't tell anyone about your situation, if you do, you'll be reported. I had my papers but it was a taboo to tell anyone they had arrived. Everyone comes here in the same way, and it's ridiculous that no-one talks about it, it's a world of lies'.

¹⁷ Evangelical churches are funded through contributions from their members. This is normally an offering of a tithe (*diezmo*) which is approximately 10% of a person's income) (see http://www.comunidadcristianadealicante.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=2 (accessed 1 November 2010).

Trust was more commonplace among those from professional and managerial backgrounds (with 69.5% saying they trusted others) compared with only 36% of those in elementary jobs. This is probably linked with the greater precariousness of people's situation when they work in elementary jobs for low wages and under poor conditions. It is also important to point out that although people may state explicitly that they do not trust other Colombians or Latin Americans, they continue to socialise with them and participate in many cultural and commercial activities (see also below; Cock, 2011). For example, 48 year-old Alonso who owned a restaurant pointed out:

'There is no trust, the community is totally divided, everyone. Everyone envies everyone else. Everyone talks about everyone else, it's horrible that we are not united ... everyone does their own thing, everyone talks about people and things that they shouldn't'.

Despite these views, Alonso only socialised with other Latin Americans and when he went out it was always to Latin American places such as a disco.

Although 76% stated that they identified with others from the same nationality, there were also some tensions among different Latin American nationality groups with Colombians tending to see other nationalities as more united. For instance, Edilma (interviewed in 2007) said: 'there is a lot of envy, they [Colombians] don't help each other, Ecuadorians are more united'. Colombians also suffered from stereotyping linked with drugs; they repeatedly complained about others making comments about Pablo Escobar, mafias and so on. For example, Alejandro (interviewed in 2005) stated: 'Listen, when you're taken in, when you're questioned, when you walk down the street, when you talk about Colombia, Colombia is always linked with drugs'. Julián (interviewed in 2005) echoed this:

'When I first arrived at the building where I work, all they would say was "Colombia mafia, Colombia nice drugs". This is really difficult. Very few would even mention Colombia football, nice football, it was always mafia and drugs'.

As a result of this continual stereotyping, people reported that they stopped saying they were from Colombia, and instead, often said they were from another Latin American country or from Spain.

Cultural activities

Attendance at Latin American cultural events was important for Colombians with more than two-thirds participating in the summer carnivals such as the Carnaval del Pueblo (74%). Hometown fiestas and Independence Day celebrations were also important, but participation in these was lower (52% and 58% respectively). People participated in cultural activities regardless of their occupational background or income although men were more likely to attend festivals every year, for example, compared with women (40% and 22%). However, although quantitatively there was little difference in participation in these events according to social class, several middle and upper class people stated that the carnivals were too 'popular'. For example, 29 year old Juan (interviewed in 2010) who was a city trader said that although he enjoyed going to Colombian restaurants such as la Bodeguita, he didn't like the carnivals:

'In 2004, I went to the Carnaval del Pueblo but it was very popular and very messy. I didn't like it. It wasn't my taste. It was very popular. I prefer to go to the National Portrait Gallery for example'.

Another dimension of engaging with Latin American culture on a daily basis is through using Latin American services and shopping areas such as Elephant and Castle and Seven Sisters markets with levels of use very high (88%). The main services accessed were cafes or

restaurants, buying food and ingredients, sending money home and using hairdressers. Qualitative data shows that people from all socio-economic backgrounds used these places although the working classes tend to use them more regularly.

Among those who said they did not go to or did not like Latin American commercial places, especially the shopping areas, the main reasons were that they were dangerous, that there was a lot of gossiping there, and that the police and immigration officers went there to try and find irregular migrants. Jorge, a 29 year old (interviewed in 2010), noted that: 'they are very dangerous, there are hidden places. It's not the Latinos who attack there, but I've heard of muggings.' Similarly, 32 year-old Isabel (interviewed in 2007) reported:

'Seven Sisters is a place where you can't go, it's tremendous; it's all about making gossip. They talk about who came the week before with such and such a woman ... they say, this young guy takes drugs, this other one is illegal. That's what Colombians do there'.¹⁸

LINKS WITH COLOMBIA: CONNECTIONS AND REMITTANCES

Colombians maintained strong and regular contact with their friends and family back home. The vast majority (96%) kept in touch regardless of socio-economic grouping. 74% kept in contact at least once a week, with 23% communicating every day and 18% every 2-3 days. 68% sent money or gifts. This contact was maintained through landline telephones (among 73%), email (47%) and internet chat (39%) with the former facilitated by the availability of cheap phone cards.

The importance of remittances to Colombia cannot be under-estimated. Research elsewhere has shown that in 2009, remittances to Latin America as a whole totalled \$58.8 billion representing a decline from \$69.2 billion in 2008 linked with the global financial crisis. This is comparable with foreign direct investment (FDI) and much larger than overseas development assistance (ODA). In 2006, remittances represented 3.3% of GDP in Colombia.¹⁹

Colombians had strong economic connections through remittances and gifts with 54% sending money at last once a month or more frequently (although this was less than for Latin Americans as a whole who sent 64% - McIlwaine et al, 2011: 86). In the words of Edgar: 'We have a noble heart, because everyone, the vast majority, 90% of people help our families back home'. Almost two-thirds of remittances were sent through local Latin American money transfer agencies (72.5%). Men were slightly more likely to send remittances than women (71% and 64%) although 8% of women had sent money previously and since stopped compared with only 2% of men. There were also some variations according to occupation with professional and managerial workers less likely to send remittances (56.5%) than those in elementary work (78%). Again, it is important that 57% of those who were unemployed sent remittances as well as 25% of students. A median of £2,000 was sent home annually which represented 8% of personal weekly income in remittances. Colombians also saved 17% of their personal weekly income, some of which would probably be remitted at some point (see above).

¹⁸ Gutiérrez (2007) notes that Seven Sisters is also known as 'Seven *Chismes*' (Seven Gossips) (cited in McIlwaine, 2007).

¹⁹ See <http://www.ifad.org/remittances/maps/latin.htm> (accessed 23 September 2010). In 2009, Colombia received \$4.13 billion in remittances, Brazil, \$4.75 billion, Ecuador \$4.49 billion, Bolivia \$1.02 billion and Peru \$2.66 billion (http://www.iadb.org/mif/remittances/lac/remesas_co.cfm accessed 23 September 2010).

It is important to point out that those on lower incomes make major economic sacrifices to send money home (Datta et al., 2007). For instance, 28% of professional and managerial workers and 25% of elementary workers sent more than £5,000 even though elementary workers earned considerably less. Evidence of hardship emerged in the qualitative research with those on low incomes experiencing the most difficulties. 55 year-old Tomas (interviewed in 2005) noted that he had worked really hard in the past in order to send money to his ex-wife and children in Colombia:

'I worked tremendously hard. Not any more, but in the past I killed myself. I used to get up at 4am, and work all day and all night ... I worked to support them, and because of this I have nothing here because I sent it all to them. I also sent to my brothers and my family. For me, December signified millions as I gave presents to everyone'.

In a more extreme case, 56 year-old Hernan (interviewed in 2005) was making huge sacrifices for his family in Colombia, living in dire circumstances in London in order to be able to send money to his wife and daughter. He sent £290 per month back home, leaving only £25-£30 for himself. He used this mainly for transport costs (only travelling by bus as this was cheaper) and he fed himself through an occasional can of sardines, or through out-of-date sandwiches that a friend saved for him from her job in a café. He lived clandestinely in a workshop in Waterloo arriving late at night after the owner had left and leaving early in morning before he arrived back (he had obtained the key from a former employee).

Most people sent money home for family maintenance²⁰ (56.5%) highlighting the importance of remittances for the daily survival of families and individuals. However, while this was the main use of remittances, the most common secondary uses were paying off debts, education expenses and house building (6% in each case) and people often sent for more than one reason. Therefore, Hernan (see above) not only sent money for living expenses but he had also sent enough in three and a half years for his wife to build a new house and an extra storey that was being rented out in order to provide extra income. In many cases, remittances are also used to fund the migration of family members to the UK. Marcelo (interviewed in 2005) not only paid for his wife's education in Colombia (at university where she trained to be a teacher), but also for her and their son's fare to join him.

Only once families back home received enough to live from, did migrants think about channelling funds into investments or collective remittances. In general, there was little evidence of widespread collective remittance-sending through Home Town Associations (where specific organisations are set-up to channel funds into the home areas of migrants). However, a couple of cases were reported; one was by 50 year-old Alejandro (interviewed in 2005) who had established a community organisation that did a lot of small-scale fund-raising to develop projects in his home area. One of these was a cancer rehabilitation centre where those who had had chemotherapy could go to recover. Similarly, 50 year-old Jaime (interviewed in 2005) who had been a community leader in Colombia had continued to work for his community in London with the support of his church (San Ignacio in Seven Sisters), again through fund-raising to develop projects for the elderly and poor.

The few cases that emerged from the qualitative research were informal. For example, 34 year-old Nuria (interviewed in 2005) sent money to set-up and run a school restaurant for malnourished children in the community where she used to work; 27 year-old Adriana (interviewed in 2005) sent money to community leaders in her home village to distribute to the very poor; and 39 year-old Susana (interviewed in 2005) continued to help the displaced peasants she had worked with previously by organising fund-raising events among her friends.

Economic vulnerability in London is also linked with the phenomenon of reverse remittances.

²⁰ This includes food, rent and household bills.

This is where migrants in destination countries receive remittances from family and friends back home in order to help them out. This usually occurs during times of specific need such as periods of unemployment (see Datta et al., 2007; Wills et al., 2011). This emerged as an issue for several Colombians in relation to the effects of the global recession. For example, 45 year-old Cesario from Risaralda (interviewed in 2010) had been living in London since 2008 after living in Spain for 10 years. He had worked as an office cleaner, but had lost his job 3 months before he was interviewed. His wife and 4 children (all aged under 18) lived in Colombia and depended on the remittances sent by Cesario. Before he lost his cleaning job, he sent money home for family maintenance and education expenses of his children, sending an average of £3,000 per year. However, when he lost his job, his wife had to send him some of their savings that had previously accrued so that he could survive until he got another job.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination was perceived to be an issue by 67% of Colombians. Women were more likely to identify discrimination than men (70% and 63%). Younger people aged between 18 and 29 were the least likely to identify discrimination (50%), with older people aged between 60 and 69 being most likely to mention it (80%), followed by those aged 40-49 (77%). Analysis by immigration status showed that irregular migrants were especially likely to identify discrimination (88%). However, 72% of people with British passports identified discrimination suggesting that the processes are more deep-seated than simply acquiring legal status.

The most common type of discrimination, by a wide margin, was workplace exploitation – identified by 74% of those who reported discrimination as an issue. Almost a third spoke of discrimination in public places and on transport, with just under a quarter mentioning housing and accommodation. One-fifth identified educational disadvantage, hostilities on the part of the police, and health care problems. Under a fifth spoke of problems in banks and difficulties in interacting with state officials (see Table 6).

Table 6: Types of discrimination identified by Colombians

Type of discrimination	Frequency	Percent
Workplace abuses	49	74
Housing and accommodation	16	24
Education	14	21
Police	14	21
In public places/transport	21	32
Health service	13	20
Banks	12	18
State officials	11	17
Total	n=66	

Source: Questionnaire survey

Note: Some types have been identified more than once

The concentration of many Colombians in low skilled and low paid jobs affects their perceptions of discrimination. Evidence from the qualitative research showed that they were stereotyped as cleaners and that British people often assumed that they were not able to do other jobs. 28 year-old Enrique (interviewed in 2005), who was a cleaning supervisor recounted how he felt after the British manager of his building spoke down to him because he couldn't understand his English:

'It's very humiliating, the way he spoke, to receive a rebuff like that from the people here. It hurts me, do you understand, it's something that represses you, that stops you getting on, something that holds you back'.

However, even worse, and indeed more frequently mentioned was that Colombians and Latin Americans exploited their own people, generating a deep resentment and mistrust (see

below). For example, 36 year-old Carmen (interviewed in 2010) noted: 'The main problem is in jobs when [cleaning] supervisors take advantage of people with no papers. These are our own people. They make them work for a month and then don't pay them'. She went on to state:

'Colombians have arguments and if they are illegal, they report them to the immigration. Why is it that when there is a house of Colombians, that the immigration arrives? I think that the Colombians tell on each other so that there are more jobs for each other'.

Another important type of discrimination also identified above was the stereotype of Colombians with involvement with the drugs industry (see also above). For example, 24 year-old Luis (interviewed in 2010) stated:

'There is a stigmatisation of those of Latin American origin. They think that we are not capable of some things. In addition, they think that Colombians sell and grow drugs'.

As well as police harassment, young people felt vulnerable to discrimination by private law enforcement guards. 17 year-old Rafael (interviewed in 2010) spoke about his experiences in a shopping centre:

'One time I went out and we went to a shopping centre and the security guards stopped us because they thought we were suspicious. I think it was because we were young and we were not English. There was a group of young white people close-by and they asked them nothing'.

Another issue to emerge was that some felt that Colombians and Latin Americans themselves are responsible for discrimination especially through their separatism. However, this was expressed mainly by people who spoke fluent English and who worked in professional jobs. For example, Reynaldo (interviewed in 2010) who worked as a recruitment consultant said that he didn't feel much affinity with other Latin Americans. He noted: 'I think that, although it's difficult to generalise, Latin Americans close themselves in a lot. They will say, let's go here because there are other Latinos there'.

However, although the proportion of Colombians believing that there was discrimination, there was also a sizeable minority who did not. For example, 30 year-old Samanta (interviewed in 2007) stated:

'I don't think that the Latin community is discriminated against in London, I think that other groups such as the Arabs and Turks are more discriminated against. In the United States the Latin is a thief, but here, maybe because there aren't that many of us, because they don't know much about us, there are a lot of people who are interested in knowing about Colombia'.

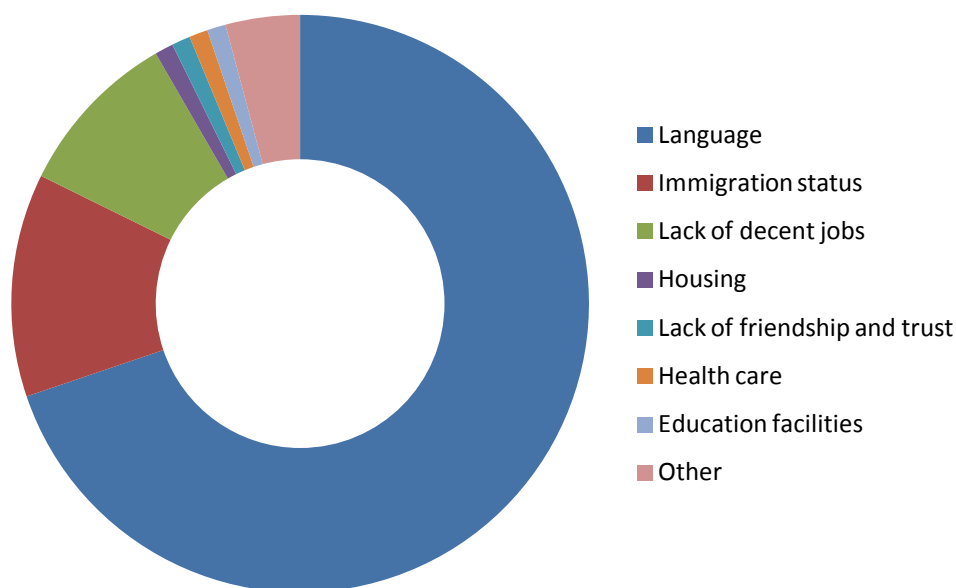
MAIN PROBLEMS AND NEEDS FACING COLOMBIANS IN LONDON

The main problem identified by Colombians affecting their lives in London was overwhelmingly lack of English language skills mentioned by more than two-thirds of people (69%). This was followed some way behind by immigration status (12%), specifically the difficulties in regularising and attaining permanent residency in London (see Figure 15). Interestingly, Colombians were much more concerned about language difficulties than other Latin American nationalities (58% as a whole identified it – McIlwaine et al. 2011: 125). This is possibly due to the fact that they are more established and have realised the importance of learning English in order to settle effectively in London. Women were more concerned about language than men (74% and 64%) while men perceived immigration status as more of an issue than women

(15% and 10%). Language problems also relate with employment opportunities (see above) as noted by 43 year- Sebastian (interviewed in 2007):

‘In this country if you don’t speak English you are not going to have a future. To go anywhere you have to study English to be able to support yourself economically. Now with the Olympic Games coming, the doors of work are going to open and if you want your economic situation to improve you have to learn English’.

Figure 15: Main problems affecting Colombians in London

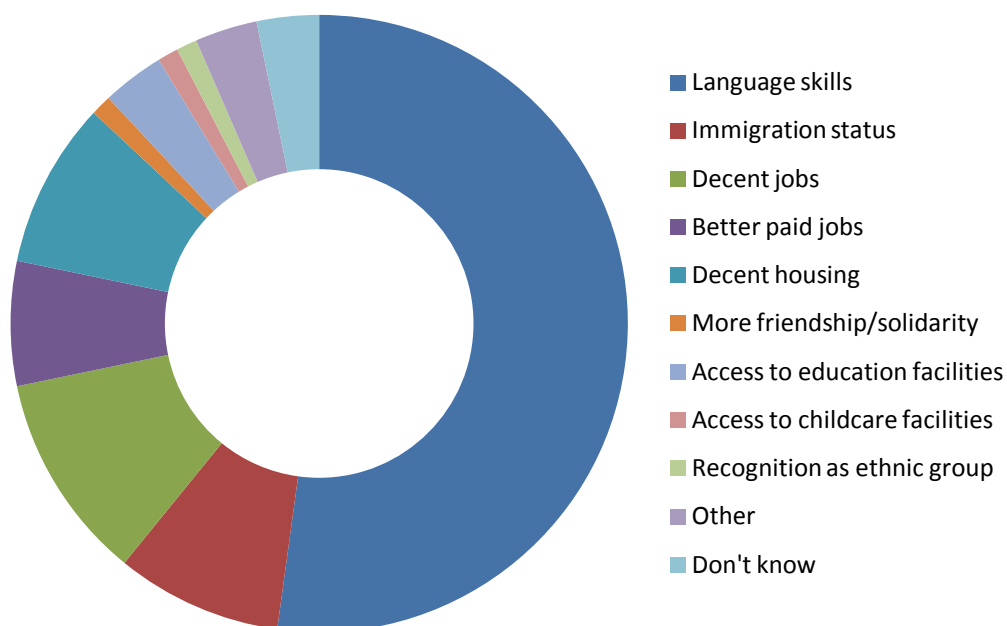


Source: Questionnaire survey (N=97)

Although the challenges faced and needs identified are interrelated, respondents were asked about them separately. Related to the problems, the main need to emerge was providing improved language skills in English mentioned by over a third (50.5%), followed by decent jobs (10.5%) and regularised immigration status (8%) (see Figure 16). Again, Colombians were the most likely to identify language as their main need compared with other Latin Americans (38% - see McIlwaine et al. 2011: 126). Men were more concerned with addressing language skills than women (54% and 47%) as well as immigration status (13% and 4%) and decent jobs (13% and 8%). In contrast, women were more concerned about better paid jobs (10% and 2%) and housing (10% and 6.5%). Again, the issue of language was viewed as interrelated with other problems as in the words of 38 year-old Santiago (interviewed in 2007):

‘The main barrier that us Latins face here is the language and the lack of knowledge of the system and the facilities available to use in this country. Work opportunities are bound up with the language. There is exploitation at work when people don’t speak English. If you can’t speak English you can’t defend yourself against the supervisors, sometimes you have to do the work again. There are people who take advantage of this’.

Figure 16: Main needs identified by Colombians in London



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=95)

There was also a close relationship between language and immigration status in that those without papers were unlikely to be able or to afford to learn English. People were afraid to go to classes in case they were reported to the authorities. Because of fear of deportation, people felt it was better to work as hard as possible in case they were caught and deported; they would have something to show for their time in London. Indeed, once immigration status was secured then people could begin to learn English.

Interventions to address problems and needs

Colombians were also asked what projects they needed. Reflecting the discussion above, one-third identified language training, with a further 24% mentioning an amnesty for irregular migrants, and 16% citing job training (see Figure 17; also Box 1 on individual suggestions). There was a general consensus that English classes needed to be provided for all people regardless of immigration status and at times that were suitable for people who were working, such as on Sundays. Most wanted these classes to be free and with good teachers who were native English speakers. Clearly, the issue of an amnesty for irregular migrants is beyond the scope of a specific project addressing problems of Latin Americans in particular. However, there was widespread support for broader campaigns such as the Strangers into Citizens campaign that calls for an earned amnesty.²¹

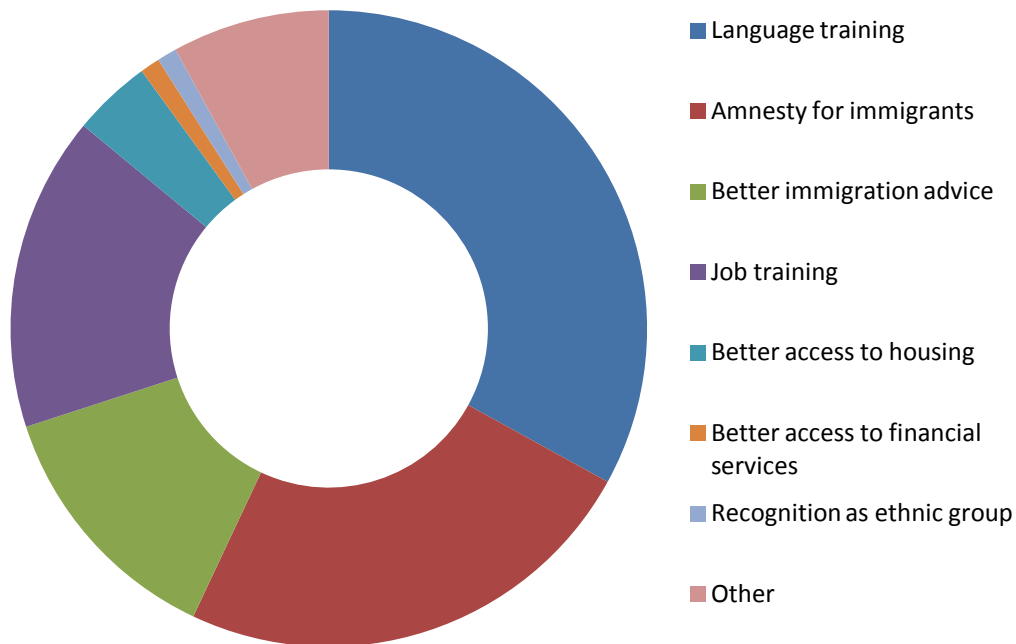
Alonso (interviewed in 2010 – see above) who had a British passport stated:

‘People are always asking: when are they going to do it? Will there be a regularisation or not? Is there going to be an agreement or something? And so far they know nothing,

²¹ This campaign calls for a an “earned amnesty” or “pathway into citizenship”, open to those with at least six years in the UK, who present employer and character references, a clean criminal record, and proficiency in English” (http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/assets/pdf/SIC_Briefing_volumel.pdf). Accessed June 24 2011.

this is the thing, therefore if someone could help them. They have done marches, and the church is asking for legalisation. This is essential because there are lots of people working honourably, coming here for their families, but they don't have papers, it is essential for them so that they can have services'.

Figure 17: Main projects needed for Colombians in London



Source: Questionnaire survey (N=100)

Wider processes of integration and lack of information also emerged as an issue; many did not know where to start looking for assistance. For example, Reynaldo (interviewed in 2010 – see above) said he felt that if people had more information about wider society then this isolation might not occur so much:

'Many people arrive here and because of the lack of information, they don't know what they have a right to, what is available here for people; for example, many people come with the dream of studying and there is a lot of help to study, but they don't have the information.'

Overall, the need for integration that could be facilitated through some form of pathway to regularisation and citizenship, together with improved language training emerged as central to addressing the problems and needs of Colombians and Latin Americans more widely in London.

Box 1: Examples of projects suggested by Colombians

Emilio, 36 years old from Bogotá, Colombia. Vice-president in a city bank: 'The community needs more access to credit and assistance in opening bank accounts'.

Camilo, 21 years old from Cali, Colombia. Cleaner: 'There need to be projects on work training and work integration. Also projects that help to create more solidarity for the Latin community so that there is more integration and so that they feel less enclosed, less shut-in in their daily life'.

Danilo, 32 years old, from Antioquia, Colombia. Waiter: 'I think it would be good to have something to keep Latinos connected with their country ... it could be a good website or an organisation who has a radio station or internet site. A Latin radio station would be good where you could have news programmes, music. Television would be ideal but initially you could do it by the internet. That way people could keep in touch with Colombia without being there'.

All interviews undertaken in 2010

Appendix 1: Borough of residence among Colombians

London borough	Frequency	Percent
City of London	1	0.4
Barking and Dagenham	1	0.4
Barnet	13	5.4
Bexley	0	0
Brent	3	1.3
Bromley	2	0.8
Camden	12	5.0
Croydon	1	0.4
Ealing	4	1.7
Enfield	1	0.4
Greenwich	3	1.3
Hackney	11	4.6
Hammersmith and Fulham	9	3.8
Haringey	19	7.9
Harrow	5	2.1
Havering	0	0
Hillingdon	0	0
Hounslow	1	0.1
Islington	14	5.9
Kensington and Chelsea	4	1.7
Kingston Upon Thames	2	0.8
Lambeth	37	15.5
Lewisham	12	5.0
Merton	1	0.4
Newham	22	9.2
Redbridge	1	0.4
Richmond Upon Thames	4	1.7
Southwark	24	10.0
Sutton	2	0.8
Tower Hamlets	11	4.6
Waltham Forest	3	1.3
Wandsworth	7	2.9
City of Westminster	9	3.8
Total	N=239	100

Source: Questionnaire survey

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