



IOM International Organization for Migration



COLOMBIA

MAPPING EXERCISE
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2007

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The aim of this Mapping Report is to guide IOM's outreach activities and communications strategies. The report does not purport to be exhaustive. The mapping consultant who conducted the exercise and wrote the report on behalf of IOM has taken every effort to ensure accuracy in his/her reporting and the views expressed in this report are his/hers. IOM cannot be held responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies.

INTRODUCTION

AIM OF THE MAPPING EXERCISE, TARGET GROUP AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the mapping exercise carried out by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was to identify the main channels of information used by potential beneficiaries of IOM's voluntary return programmes, which are open to asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The aim was also to identify the location of their communities in the UK. The ultimate goal of the mapping exercise is to help IOM to improve its communications with diaspora communities in the United Kingdom through media articles, advertisements, and presentations to community groups.


IOM designed a questionnaire with 20 questions divided into two sections. The first section asked about preferred media channels (i.e. newspapers, radio stations, and television) and other sources of information (i.e. community organisations, festivals and commercial outlets) which are available to Colombians in the UK. This section also requested information about the geographic locations and size of the Colombian community in the UK. The second section of the questionnaire requests baseline data from each respondent about their gender, age and length of stay in the UK.

The exercise covered ten weeks between June and August 2007 and involved an intensive process of networking with community members, organisations, and leaders. A Colombian researcher who has been resident in the UK for five years was employed by IOM as a mapping consultant to carry out this work. The consultant had previously undertaken academic research into the Colombian diaspora in the UK. Her inside knowledge of the community and established links with Colombians across the UK proved to be an essential resource for this exercise.

A number of approaches to collecting data were used, including in-depth unstructured interviews, "snowball" sampling and the questionnaires. Most of the fieldwork was carried out in London. This involved extensive networking with organisations and visits to meeting places well known to Colombian migrants. But the exercise was also carried out in areas of the city where Colombians are present but in smaller numbers and supported by fewer community organisations. One visit to Birmingham was also made, previously known as a meeting place for Colombians settled in the Midlands, and important contacts were established in cities such as Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, Swansea and Glasgow.

In total, the consultant collected 40 questionnaires from Colombian nationals from a wide range of backgrounds. In London, these were obtained during visits to community organisations, commercial outlets, meeting places and churches. Other questionnaires were completed online by other Latin American nationals, who knew or had links with Colombians in other cities of the UK.

Overall, the sample used to gather the information requested by IOM was carefully selected. Differences between respondents in age, length of stay, geographic location, and the strength of their local community yielded diverse information about the channels that the Colombian community uses to communicate among itself and the ways that they prefer the information to be delivered. Some sectors of the community prefer Colombian newspapers, radio stations or information provided by community organisations. Others prefer to seek information through web pages which cater for the Colombian diaspora or from British organisations that include Latin Americans among their clients.



This report includes tables and charts with all the questionnaires' results and presents recommendations on how to communicate effectively with the Colombian community. In addition, an extensive list of contacts has been created which merges data provided by the questionnaire with that gathered through the fieldwork. This will be used by the IOM Information team to disseminate information on voluntary return programmes to Colombians in the UK.¹

However, it is important to emphasise that the mapping exercise relied on a limited number of questionnaires that were completed by those who selected themselves to be part of this study. It is not possible to make water-tight generalisations from them about the Colombian population in the UK. This is especially the case given the enormous diversity within the Colombian community itself, including the variety of socio-cultural backgrounds, the point in time at which migrants arrived, and their degree of integration into the Colombian community and the host society.

¹This document is confidential and does not form part of this report.

1 COLOMBIANS IN THE UK

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE COLOMBIAN COMMUNITY

Colombian migration to the UK started in the mid 1970s as a consequence of a UK government programme created to alleviate the shortage of workers in three specific areas: domestic services; the hotel and catering industry; and health care. From 1975 until 1979, when the work permit scheme ended, it is thought that more than 6,000 Colombians arrived and settled in the UK.

The second wave of migration took place between 1980 and 1986 and was characterised by the arrival of the relatives and friends of those who had migrated during the previous period. Most of the new arrivals entered the country as students or tourists and overstayed their visas to become undocumented migrants. However, there are also reports of Colombians who were smuggled into the country through Dover or using forged Spanish, Venezuelan or Mexican passports.

Previously, most Colombians left their country in order to escape its economic crisis. But, the next phase (1986- 1997) was characterised by the migration of thousands of Colombians who were fleeing from violence and political persecution. The security situation in Colombia deteriorated dramatically during this period and, as a consequence, it is known that more than 20,000 Colombians sought asylum in 26 different countries. In the UK's case, asylum applications rose from 15 in 1986 to 1,185 in 1997, making a total of 4,233 during the period.

The escalation of armed conflict, and the large number of people displaced internally as a result of the violence, has led to quite a widespread perception that Colombia is one of the more dangerous countries in the world today. However, it would seem that the British authorities believe that Colombians who come to Britain do so for largely economic reasons. This is reflected in the many asylum applications that are rejected and the increasing barriers against entry to the UK from Colombia. From 1997 Colombians required a visa to enter the UK. As a result, asylum applications dropped to 425. This measure was reinforced by the implementation of a transit visa in 2000, after which applications steadily fell from 360 in 2001 to only 50 in the first quarter of 2005. Similarly, the percentage of applicants who gained refugee status was low. Between 1992 and 1996 the refusal rate was 93%. The number of Colombians granted exceptional leave to remain at the initial decision in the 1993-2001 period was 27, whereas 536 were refused in the same period. During 2004 and 2005, 9 people were granted asylum.

Since the likelihood of applying successfully as a refugee is now limited, Colombian migrants have returned to migration practices which were popular during the second wave. The number of students and tourists who overstay their visas has increased.

Whatever the conditions of exit, reception and settlement, Colombians have developed a complex network of social services, media, recreation, and businesses. Today, the Colombian community is one of the best organised and prosperous of the Latin American communities in the UK. Nonetheless, finding a job is harder than it used to be and the crackdown on illegal immigrants by the UK authorities has increased social tensions within the diaspora. Cases of Colombians exploiting other Colombians are becoming more common. This may mean that there is a greater inclination to return home but it must not be forgotten that thousands of families have a better standard of living in Colombia because of remittances from the UK.

1.2 SIZE AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS OF COLOMBIANS IN THE UK

It has been difficult to establish the size of the Colombian population in the UK. According to Colombian academics, the total was 48, 627 in 1998. Since then, estimates in other studies range from 50,000 to 200,000, recently reaching a consensus figure of about 150,000, including the undocumented population. However, these figures contrast with the official estimates. In the 1991 Census the figure was 3,991, rising to 12,330 in the 2001 Census.² The reasons behind these discrepancies are: the obvious difficulties with measuring irregular migrants; the omission of Colombians with a short-term right of admission (e.g. students and tourists); and the exclusion of Colombians who have become British citizens.

It is clear that the vast majority of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants live in London but there is very little information about Colombians living elsewhere in Britain. Despite consulting sources such as the Colombian Embassy and Consulate, it was impossible to obtain information on the number of Colombians dispersed across the UK. However, it is possible to say that there are Colombians in Birmingham and the surrounding area, in Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, as well as in Glasgow and Swansea.

Most Colombians do live in London but the exact number is unknown. It is possible to say that the highest concentrations of Colombians can be found in South London areas such as the Elephant and Castle, the Old Kent Road, Brixton, Vauxhall, and Peckham; and in North London areas like Seven Sisters, Tottenham Hale, Dalston, and Finsbury Park. There are also Colombians, albeit fewer in number, in Kilburn, Kensal Green and Willesden Green, Forest Gate, East Ham, Camden Town, and Shepherds Bush.

Colombian leaders in the borough of Lambeth each gave quite different estimates for the population in this area. According to one of them, the population easily amounts to 20,000. Another gave a figure closer to 10,000. It is also impossible to use official data because the 2001 census did not discriminate between different South American nationalities by area. For instance, there are estimates that only 3,700 South Americans live in one borough but they do not specify which countries they come from. The same applies to the boroughs of Southwark (2,446), Lewisham (1,717), Haringey (1,884) and Camden (1,821).

² Source: *2001 Census*. (Key Statistics for Local Authorities). Crown Copyright, 2004.

Geographical Spread of the Colombian Community in the UK, 2007



Based on estimates supplied by the Colombian Consulate in London

2 MAPPING EXERCISE OUTCOMES

INFORMATION CHANNELS

2.1 MEDIA

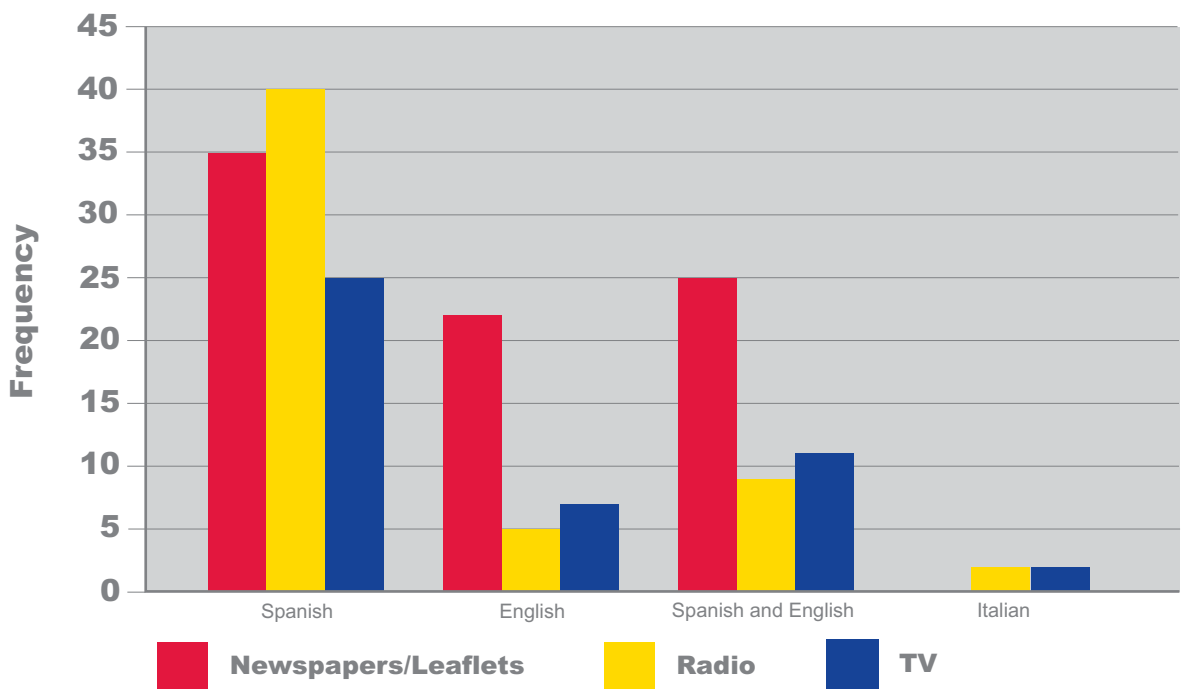
This section aims to identify the main channels of information used by Colombians in the UK. It also provides information about the language in which Colombians prefer to obtain information and the frequency with which they access the different media sources.

The data presented here is based on the answers to the questionnaires that were completed by the Colombian population in London. Data about information channels in other cities was obtained through personal communication with Latin American leaders or community organisations in other cities of the UK.

Media Comprehension

Respondents were asked in which language they could best understand information presented by the media. Figure 1 shows that the highest number of interviewees felt more comfortable receiving information in Spanish. However, English is also understood by a relatively high percentage of the sample. Respondents preferred written media in English, whereas Spanish is the first option for radio and television. A small number reported that they could understand information in Italian.

Figure 1: Preferred Language for Media Comprehension

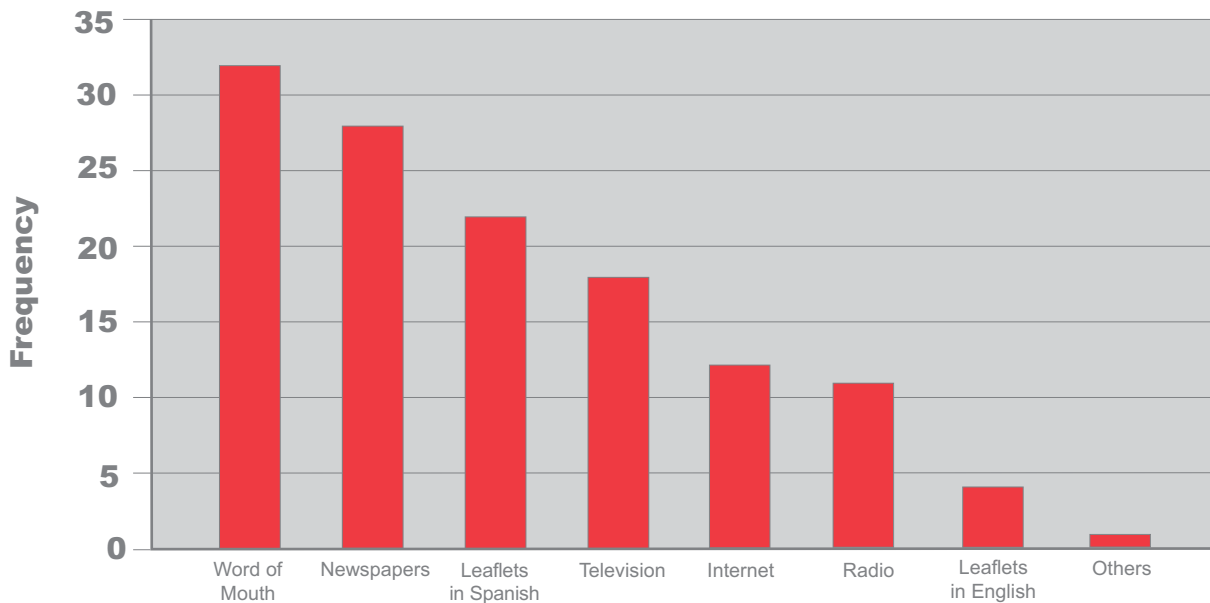


Command of the English language is often relatively low among the older population and recent arrivals. Many Colombians still cannot communicate in English, despite living in the UK for many years. They rely on the complex social network that Colombians have developed in London. On the other hand, migrants between 25-35 years old, who have spent an average of 3-4 years living in the UK, can access information in both Spanish and English.

Information Sources

Respondents were asked which were the most common sources of information used by Colombians. Word of mouth was the most trusted.

Figure 2: Most Common Sources of Information

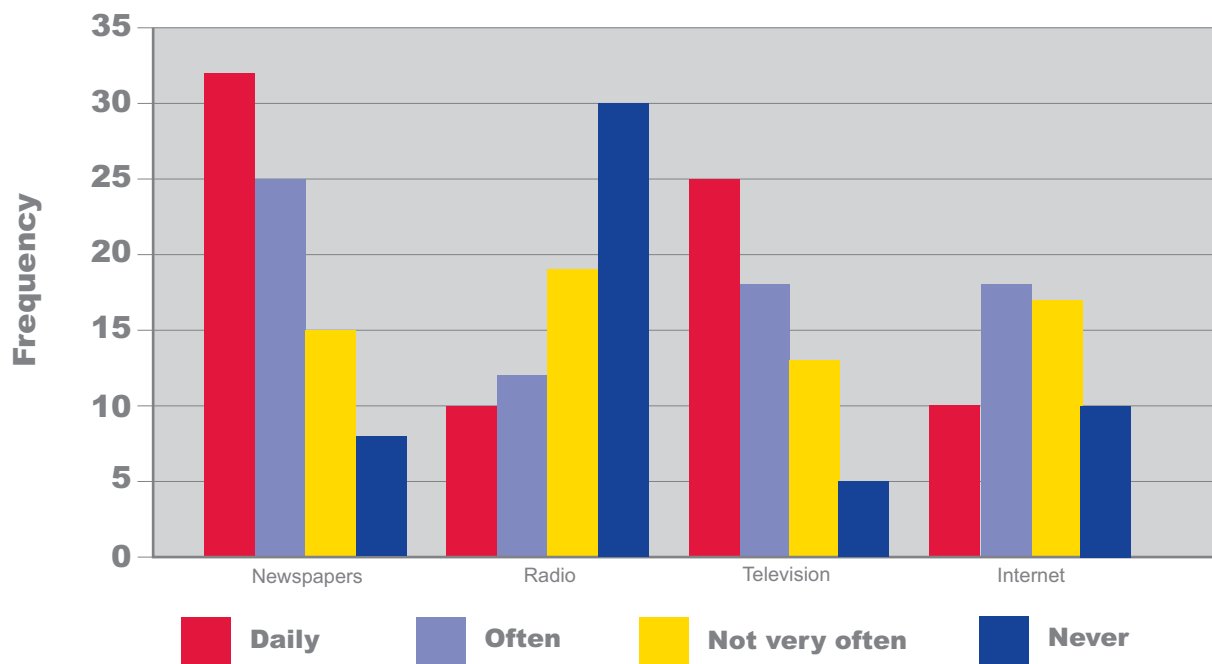


Frequency of Media Consultation

This question asked how often respondents used various kinds of information. The responses, and conversations with community leaders, suggest that Colombian newspapers play a very important role in informing the community. The younger generation tends to prefer the Internet as a source of information. Colombian television is also important, although it is available to a smaller number of households. Radio is less important.

More of the respondents to questionnaires distributed in the Elephant and Castle and in Seven Sisters preferred TV than elsewhere. In those areas, there are two Colombian shopping centres with TV screens which show Colombian television and Colombians visit the centres to watch national TV.

Figure 3: Frequency of Media Consultation



Newspapers and Publications

The following table lists the newspapers that Colombians read frequently, whether in English or Spanish. Colombians seem to prefer newspapers that are distributed free of charge. Many interviewees said that, if they needed information about a specific topic related to their community, they relied on information provided by the Colombian media. Newspapers in English are seen more as entertainment and are more browsed than actually read.

When access to Colombian newspapers printed in the UK is difficult or sporadic, people also turn to online versions of the most important Colombian newspapers and magazines.

Table 1

CATEGORY	LANGUAGE	TITLE
Colombian Newspapers printed in the UK	Spanish	Noticias Latin American Express News Extra
Colombian newspapers and magazines available via internet	Spanish	El Tiempo El Expectador Semana Revista Cambio
UK Newspapers	English	Metro Sport London Lite The London Paper The Sun The Guardian The Independent

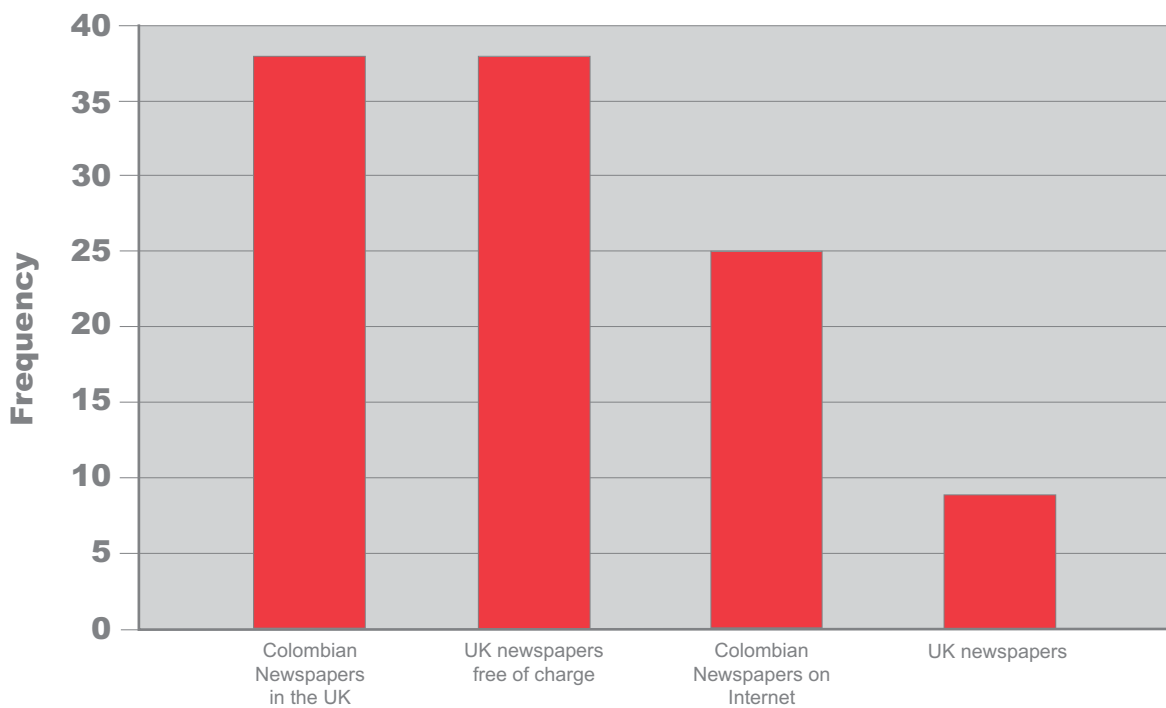
Only the younger population and new arrivals mentioned publications such as *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador* or *Semana*. The *Guardian* and *The Independent* were only mentioned by a few Colombians who work for community organisations.

By and large, the Colombian media was more popular than the UK media. Colombians have more than fifteen years of experience in providing high-quality publications for the migrant community and those publications reach almost every area of the city where Colombians and Latin Americans are present.

Noticias Latin America is thought to distribute 30,000 copies across London and the UK. It reaches approximately 120,000 people, although none of the people contacted in Birmingham, Leeds and Bristol reported noticing the newspaper in those cities. There is only one publication in Spanish that is distributed among the Latin American community in the north of England. Its name is *Hola* and it is published in Leeds.

At the time of this study, there were no magazines or newsletters produced by the Colombian or Latin American community in London. A few respondents said they read magazines from Spain. Only seven respondents mentioned reading UK magazines distributed free of charge, such as *Sport*, or those which provide information about jobs and accommodation.

Figure 4: Newspaper Readership



Most Common Sources of Information



Radio

Respondents were asked which radio station they preferred and how often they listened to it. However, the results have to be analysed with caution. It seems from the responses that Colombians do not consider the radio as an important source of information. A large number of them responded that they never listen to radio stations. On the other hand, in-depth interviews with Colombian leaders, informal conversations with interviewees and observation suggested otherwise.

Radio has actually been one of the most important channels of communication and cultural reaffirmation for Colombians and the Latin American community since the late 1980s when Colombians started to be part of *Spectrum Radio* (an originally clandestine radio station created as the voice of the minority communities in London) and then of *Sound Radio* (1503 AM). The daily programmes not only create a space for music, sport, news, and religion but also a political space where community leaders debate policies which affect the migrant community.

Currently, the Spanish-speaking community in London listens to *Radio Lider* and *Viva la Radio*.

However, Colombians who reported listening to the radio are people who have been living in London for a long time or have strong links with the Colombian migrant community. The new migration wave formed by middle class students or young professionals rarely has any links with the community already settled in London. The great majority either ignores it or is not interested in being part of it, including accessing the media sources which the long-term community has created. Instead, they prefer to listen to Colombian radio stations on the Internet.

Colombians aged between 18-34 said that they listened to various English speaking radio stations for entertainment, but they still preferred Spanish-speaking ones (whether UK- or Colombian-based) for information.

Table 2

CATEGORY	LANGUAGE	TITLE
Spanish-language in the UK	Spanish	Radio Lider Viva La Radio En Contacto
English Radio Stations	English	Hearts FM Virgin
Radio Stations in Colombia	Spanish	RCN Radio Caracol Radio Las 40 Principales La FM

Television

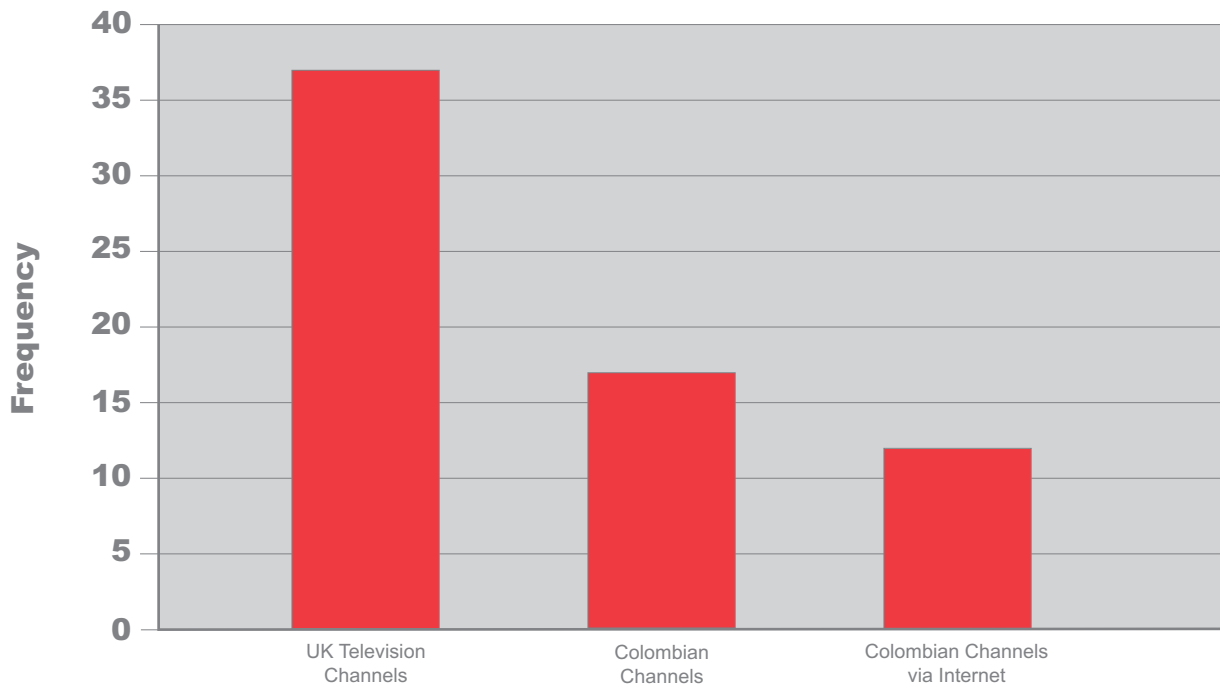
Most of the people interviewed did not have access to Colombian television at home and only a few could watch television in Spanish using providers such as SKY. Respondents who said they watched television in their preferred language daily or often were people who regularly visit Colombian shopping centres and restaurants which show Colombian television. Alternatively, they could afford either the £250 installation cost of the device needed to access Colombian channels or the monthly payments for digital TV.

Accessing Colombian TV through the Internet seems to be more common but, again, is most frequent among younger people. Colombians in the UK can access a wide range of national TV using www.jump.tv or by going directly to the web pages of *Caracol TV* and *RCN Television*.

Respondents in areas with few Colombians commonly said they never watched television in Spanish.

It is doubtful that even the vast majority that watched UK television channels use them as a source of information about topics that concern the well-being of the Colombian community in the UK.

Figure 5: Access to Television



Internet

31 out of 40 respondents regularly used the Internet. However, some respondents said that it was their younger relatives who used it and helped them to communicate with their families back home. The Internet was usually accessed in the home or in Internet cafes. Despite being free of charge, accessing the Internet in libraries was not a common practice because of time restrictions and the difficulty of finding an available computer.

It is increasingly common to find Colombians visiting web pages created to integrate the migrant community into the UK, especially in London. They provide information about different kinds of activities that the community organises, as well as useful information about the legal requirements needed to live in the UK and contact details for some of the most representative organisations dealing with issues such as immigration advice, visas, and housing.

There are also some trans-national sites which are designed to keep Colombians in touch with home no matter where in the world they are living. Internet sites such as *Conexion Colombia* or *Colombia nos une* provide information about a wide range of services that Colombian migrants can access while being abroad and about the political and economic situation that they will find if they decide to return.

Table 3

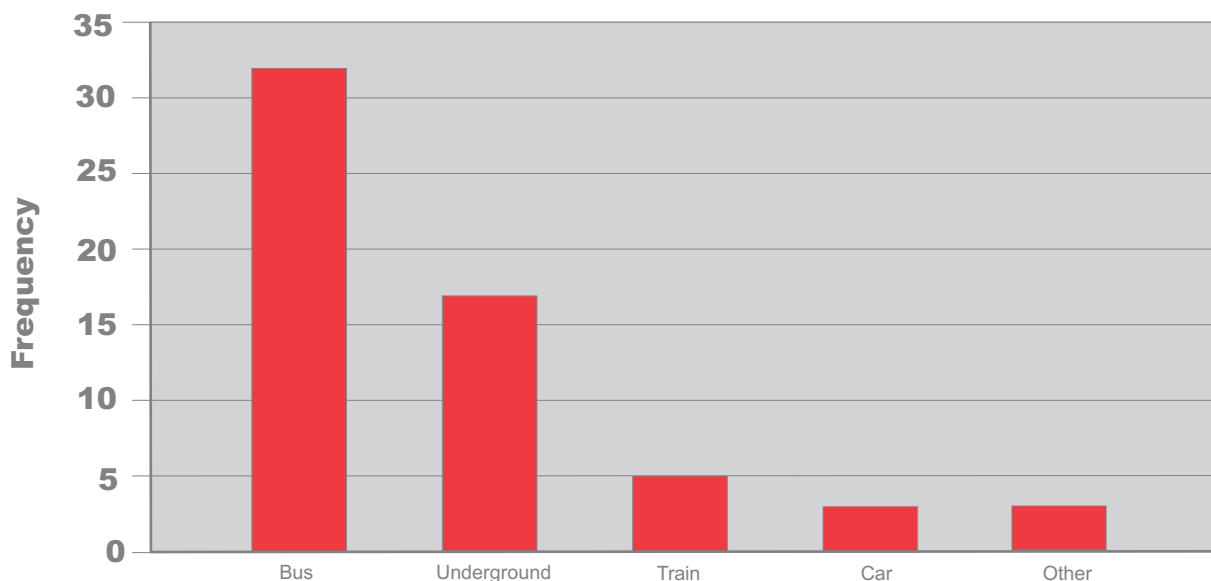
CATEGORY	NAME
Search Engine	Google MSN
E-mail	Hotmail Yahoo G-mail
Colombians in the UK and Abroad	www.encontactolondres www.latinoutlook.com www.conexioncolombia.com www.colombianosune.com www.colombianosenespana.com Nodolondres

2.2 USE OF SERVICES

Transport

The vast majority of interviewees reported that bus services were their principal means of transport, followed by the Tube. Use of the train was only mentioned in the questionnaires completed in Forest Gate and Manor Park. The combination of bus and Tube was also common. Only 3 out of 40 respondents reported using their own cars.

Figure 6: Means of Transport



The community reported numerous incidents involving the police looking for irregular migrants at bus stops in the area of the Elephant and Castle and the Old Kent Road. Some people are now reluctant to use certain bus routes and this has led to a switch to cycling. Informal conversations with some Colombians suggested that it can be better to travel by Tube to avoid such checks even though it is more expensive.

The bus routes more frequently used by the community are:

Table 4

AREA	BUS ROUTE
Vauxhall, Stockwell and Brixton	155, 35, 40, 21, 343
Elephant and Castle, Clapham, Old Kent Road, Camberwell and Peckham	155, 35, 40, 21, 343
Forest Gate, Manor Park and Ilford	125
Dalston, Seven Sisters, Tottenham, Hale, Walthamstow	149, 76, 243
Kilburn, Willesden Green	52, 98
Sheperd's Bush, Hammersmith	260, 72, 94, C1, 148
Holloway Road, Finsbury Park, Islington	43, 17, 4, 29, 91, 259
Leyton, Leytonstone and Stratford	55, 69, W15, 158, 58
Camden	46, 253, 168, C2, 134, 88

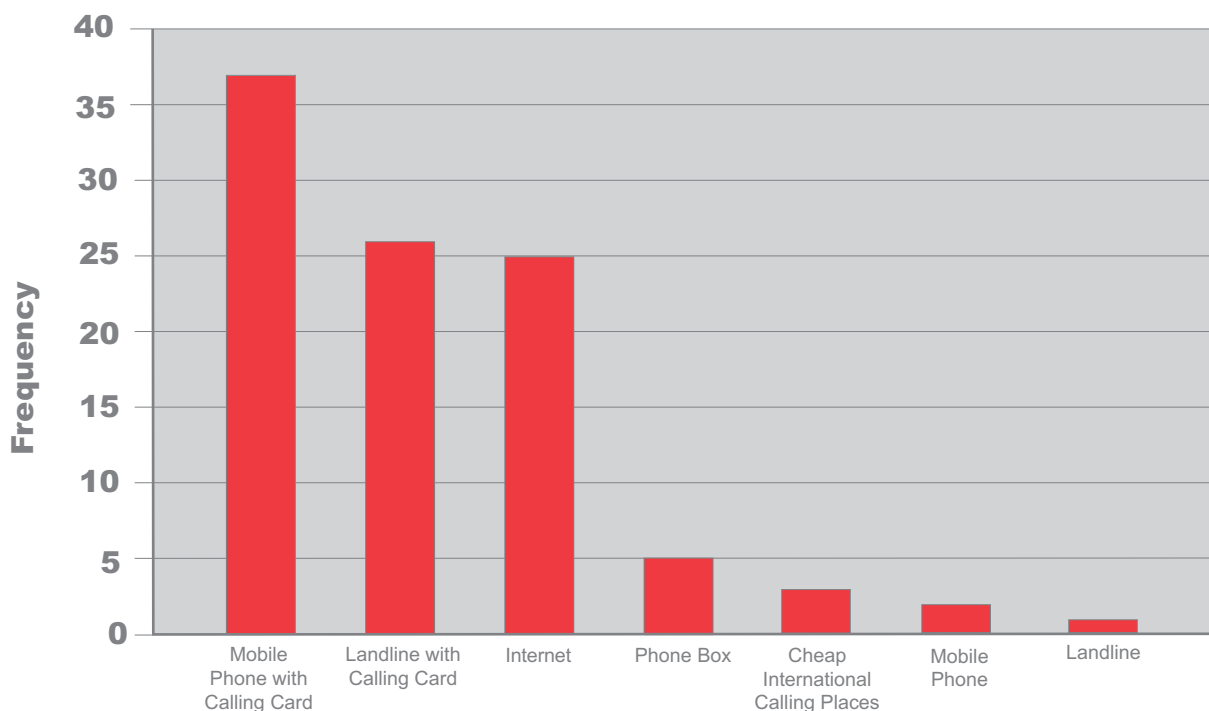
Phone Calls

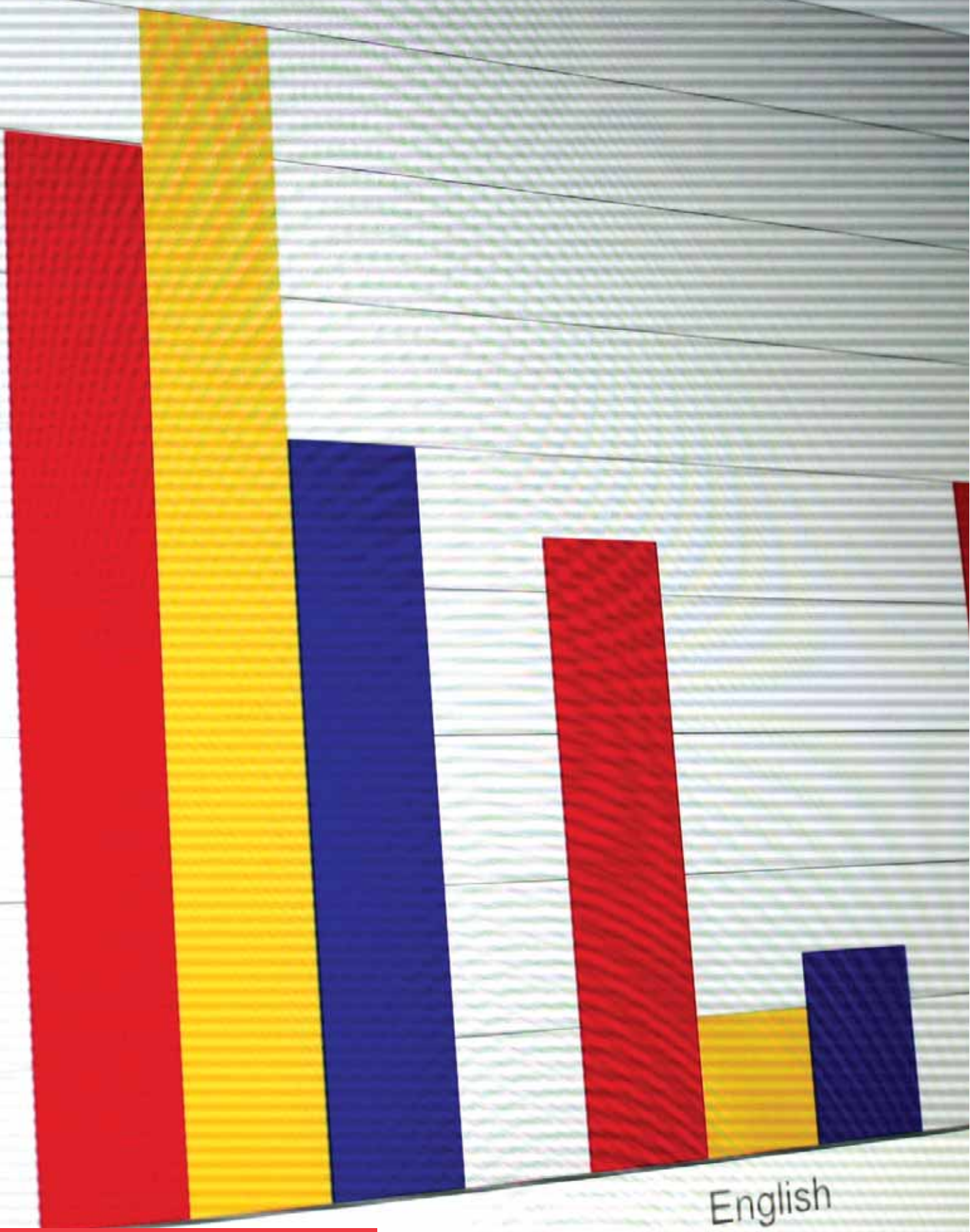
Colombians maintain relatively frequent contact with their families and friends back home. 29 out of 40 respondents reported that they called Colombia at least once a week. This is, in part, facilitated by the proliferation of cheap international calling cards that can be used either from a landline or mobile phone, as well as Internet sites such as *Skype* or *Hotmail Messenger*.

Using outlets that offer calling services is less common now. The price of a ten minute conversation can be the same as or more than using a calling card.

The most common cards are *Super Calling*, *Unity Card* and *American 1st*. A £5.00 card can be bought for £3.00 or £3.50 in almost every area where Colombians live.

Figure 7: Phone Calls





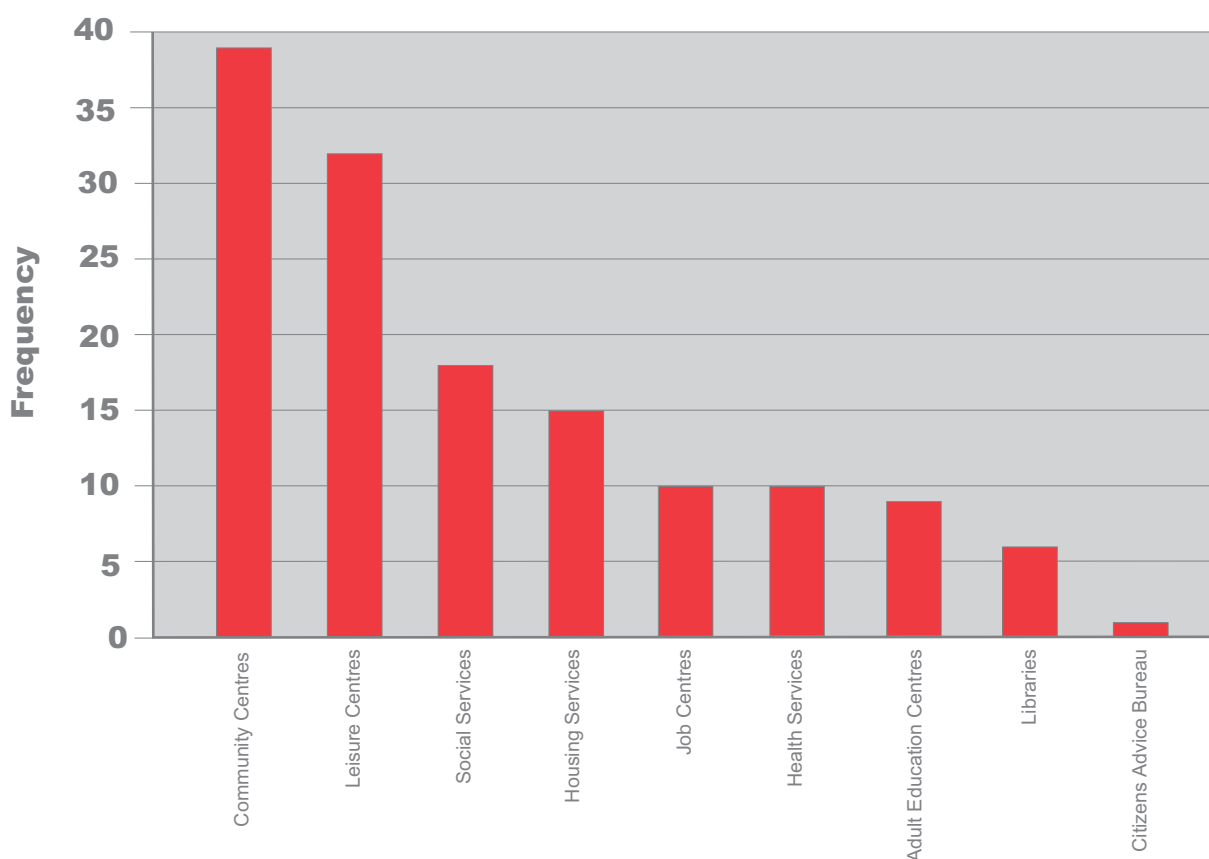
English

Local Services

Interviewees were asked which local services are used as a source of information. According to community leaders and Colombians in general, the community has developed a very well organised network of social services that is able to provide information and advice to the migrant community. These organisations cover everything from immigration advice to recreation and health services. These institutions are trusted as they are seen to have trained and skillful staff. They are very much in touch with the problems that the Colombian community face, can give advice in Spanish and are not connected to the UK Government.

Citizens Advice Bureaux are not often used. Apart from libraries or the Job Centres, which are of course provided by UK national or local government, respondents relied on services provided by the community.

Figure 8: Social Services

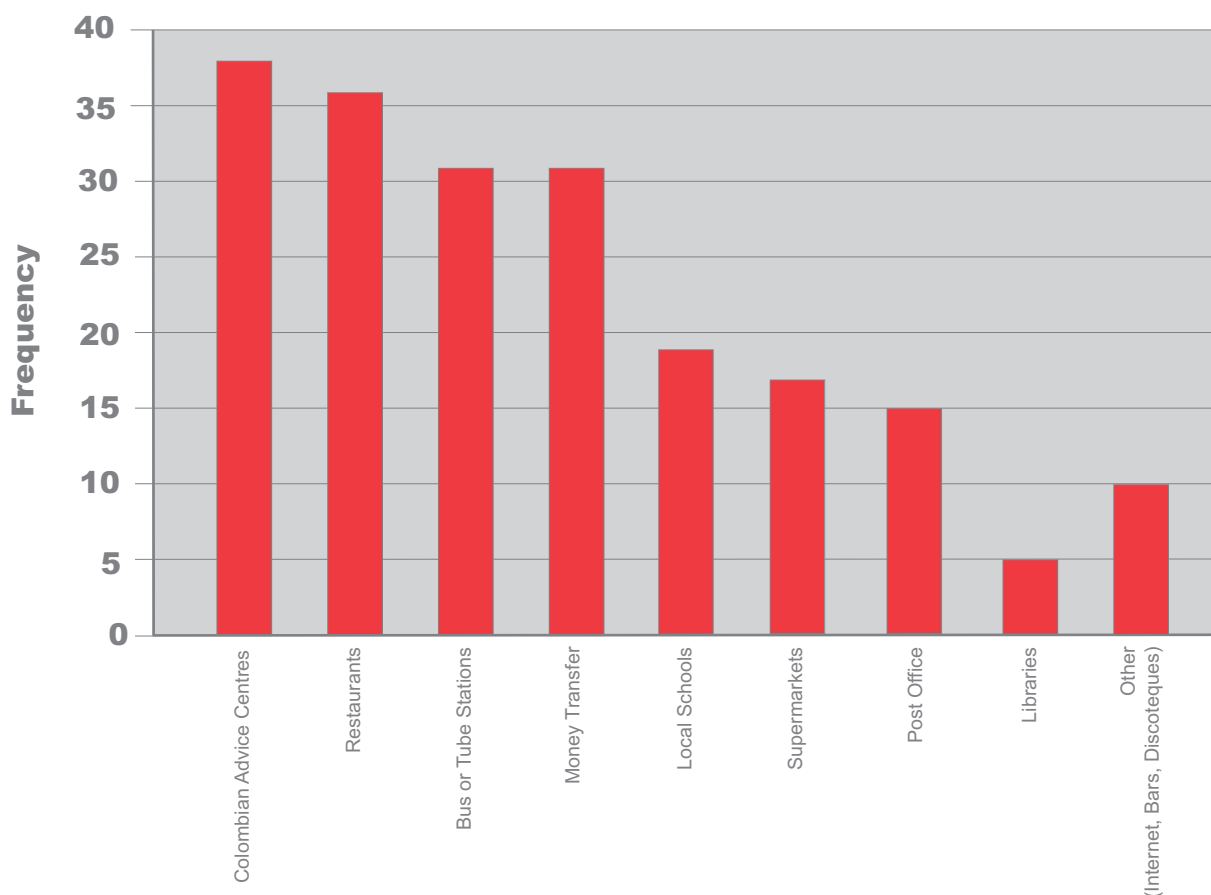


Respondents who rated Citizens Advice Bureau higher than the services offered by the Colombian community were new arrivals with a limited interest, or contact with, the settled community.

2.3 PREFERRED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Most interviewees would prefer to find information about the voluntary return programmes in places that Colombians visit frequently or places to which they go for advice, information or entertainment. Post Offices, supermarkets and libraries were also mentioned, although with much less frequency.

Figure 9: Recommendations for Location of Publicity Material



Respondents understood these places as belonging exclusively to the Colombian/Latin American community. For instance, the 'local school' was interpreted as the language school where second generations learn Spanish and about Colombian culture and history.

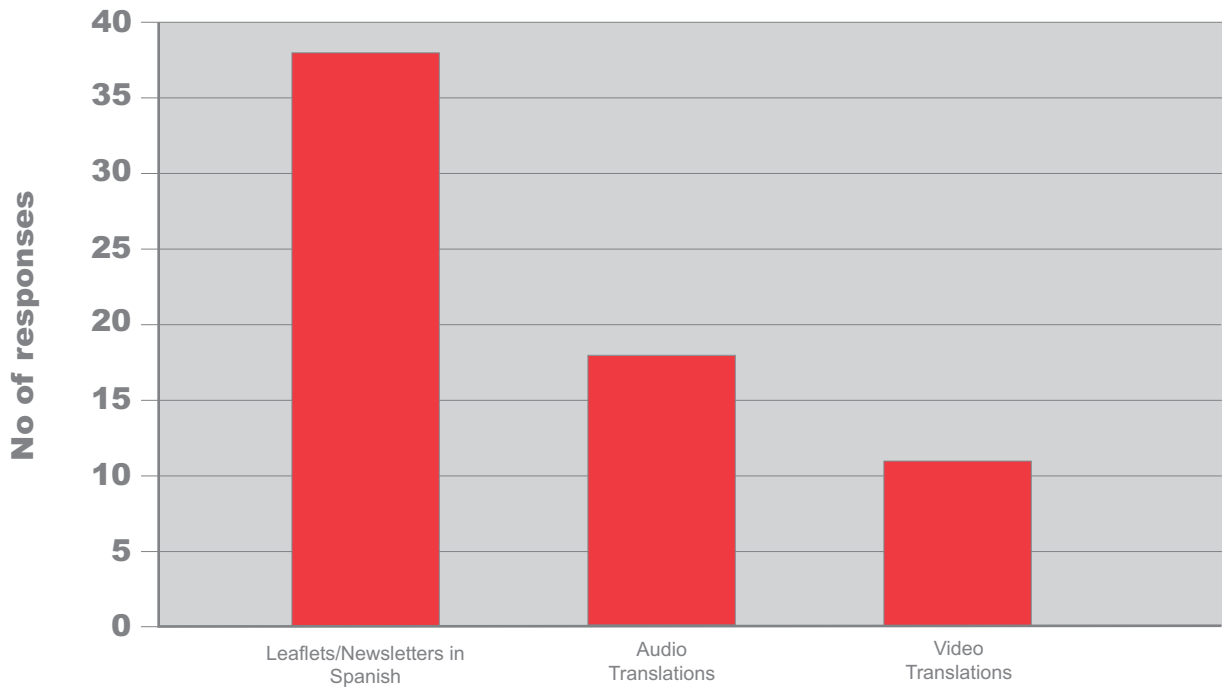
Respondents were also asked in which format they would prefer to receive information. The options were: leaflets or newsletters translated into Spanish; audio translation; and video translation. 38 of the 40 respondents preferred leaflets because of their practicality. In cases where the information needed to be more precise, the use of video and audio translations would be considered (i.e. presentations, seminars, workshops). But, only 18 out of 40 mentioned audio translation and only 11 out of 40 mentioned video translation.

During the mapping exercise, the representatives of most Colombian organisations and meeting places agreed to display information permanently about IOM. However, they felt that the fact of being an irregular migrant or asylum seeker was stressful enough: the information should not be intimidating or "in the face" of people. Some restaurants and community organisations refused to display posters bigger than A4

size. Others only agreed to have small leaflets in their waiting rooms that people can take home inside their wallets or bags.

Discretion is highly valued in a community with such a large number of undocumented migrants. Moreover, the mission of the vast majority of Colombian organisations is to find ways to help secure legal status in the UK for irregular migrants. Displaying information about a return programme can be seen as contradicting this, which could lead to the loss of clients and, most importantly, loss of community credibility.

Figure 10: Preferred Format for Information



2.4 THE COLOMBIAN COMMUNITY NETWORK

The mapping exercise was successful in discovering the most relevant organisations, groups, events and leaders that can form bridges between IOM and the Colombian migrant community. A list of contacts and recommendations was prepared for IOM with information about the most effective channels of information in the Colombian community, and the best way to publicise it. Table 5 lists the organisations and places most frequently mentioned by interviewees, where Colombians access information.

Table 5

ADVICE	NAME
Advice	Imro (Indo American Refugee and Migrants Organisation) Carila (Latin American Welfare Group) LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights) LAWA (Latin American Women's Aid) CORAS (Colombian Refugee Organisation) La Casa Latinoamericana Migrant Resource Centre
Entertainment	Club "Los Anos Dorados" Football ground on Clapham Common Carnaval del Pueblo (Annual) Bars and Discotheques Latin American Basketball League
Worship	Catholic Churches in Stockwell and Seven Sisters Evangelical group in Chadwell Heath

It has already been noted that, compared with other Latin American communities, Colombians have developed a highly complex community network, which ranges from advice and support to business and entertainment.

However, not all areas where the Colombian community is present show the same level of organisation and community cohesion. For instance, the community settled in Newham or Shepherd's Bush only has one or two places where the population can gather. This affects the degree of knowledge about IOM in the community. In areas such as the Elephant and Castle or Seven Sisters, the vast majority of people knew about IOM and its voluntary return programmes. There were plenty of debates about the way it works and who it can help in the Colombian community. On the other hand, in areas such as Forest Gate, Manor Park, and Stratford, the voluntary return programme had to be introduced to people for the first time.

In cases where the population does not use organisations or community groups, IOM should try to engage with other meeting places, such as football grounds and evangelical congregations. Taking Newham as an example, the evangelical church in Chadwell Heath could be an important place for the distribution of information about the programme.

3 MAPPING EXERCISE OUTCOME

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This part of the questionnaire was designed to collect baseline information about the sample. Each respondent gave information about their age, gender and length of residence in the UK.

3.1 GENDER

23 of the 40 people in the sample were men and 17 women. The reason for this imbalance is that most of the questionnaires were completed in the most representative Colombian shopping centres, where more men than women were present. Access to women was easier when interviews took place in the waiting room of community organisations. (It is also important to mention that most of the Colombian leaders are women).

The interviewees agreed to be part of the study after reassurances that IOM was not interested in enquiring about personal information, such as address or legal status.

3.2 AGE

The first Colombians arriving in the UK were predominantly middle-aged men. Nowadays, the number of younger men and women arriving in the UK exceeds the number of migrants between 35 and 44 years old. This can be explained in two ways. First, Colombia's economic stagnation and violence has had more of an impact on the younger generation with lack of expectations forcing many young students and professionals to try their luck in other countries. Secondly, current migration policies favour those young enough to enter the work force. Thirdly, Colombians using forged passports or being smuggled into the UK are more likely to be under 40.

The table below shows that the majority of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years old.

Table 6

AGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Under 18	1
18-24	10
25-34	18
35-44	4
45-54	3
55-64	2
65 or over	2
No answer	0

3.3 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN THE UK

The majority of the sample had been living in the UK for between 3 and 5 years. Predictably, the respondents in this range were also between 25 and 34 years old. This proved that the new arrivals are young. People who have been living here for more that 10 years were either community leaders or migrants who came to the UK during the first and second waves of migration.

Table 7

TIME	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Less than 12 months	2
1 year to less than 3	8
3 years to less than 5	18
5 years to less than 10	6
10 years or more	5
No answer	2

4 CONSTRAINTS

The Mapping Assistant's previous knowledge of the community and its dynamics proved to be very valuable since it facilitated access to information and to certain sections of the population that were initially reluctant to participate. Overall, the community was eager to know more about IOM and the voluntary return programme, and was also open to a discussion of its pros and cons.

The main constraint when approaching community leaders and individual members of the community was that there were all sorts of misconceptions about the voluntary return programme and IOM itself.

These are the points that some community leaders highlighted during interviews.

- The Colombian community in the UK is highly politicised and, in some cases, their agenda is to denounce the policies of developed countries, which they believe contribute to poverty and violence in Colombia. Consequently, they concentrate on fighting for the right of Colombians to seek asylum and residence.
- The community relies heavily on information transmitted by word of mouth. IOM should do more to tackle misinterpretations and misconceptions by distributing updated information about the voluntary return programmes and its improvements.

The first stages of the mapping exercise were characterised by a marked hostility and reluctance to co-operate, even when some organisations were eager to distribute information among their clients. At the time that the survey took place, there was a general idea that IOM was part of the Home Office and that the voluntary return programme seeks to collaborate with the British government in “getting rid of” an unwanted population. Many interviewees said they were scared of IOM and thought that IOM would pass confidential information to the British authorities. They feared that this would eventually make it easier for the Government to identify not only the strategies that irregular migrants use to stay in the country, but also to trace the undocumented population.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The information provided here relies on intensive networking and observations made during the exercise as well as the results from the questionnaire.

Media Strategies

- Long-running advertisements in newspapers, radio, and television should be accompanied by interviews with IOM caseworkers, as well as articles offering clarification of the misconceptions that the community has about the programme.
- It is important to present stories of Colombian returnees.
- IOM should advertise in trans-national Colombian Internet sites that reach the migrant population and on TV channels that can be accessed through the Internet. This could help in reaching the younger generation. IOM should also advertise with online versions of Colombian newspapers and magazines.
- IOM should emphasise in advertisements that it is an independent organisation that cares for the migrant population and is not part of the British government.
- IOM should consider complementing the advertisements with permanent columns in the Colombian and Latin American media where IOM would answer any question that the community has about the programme.
- IOM should organise focus groups, presentations and events. This could strengthen relationships between IOM and the community as well as help to provide accurate information about the programmes.
- IOM should try to identify Colombian and Latin American media in other cities in the UK, using the same strategy as in London.
- IOM should consider advertising in UK's free newspapers, such as *Metro*, *London Lite* and *The London Paper*.
- IOM should advertise on the bus routes most frequently used by the community.

Community Outreach and Promotion of IOM's Voluntary Return Programme

- The mapping exercise was able to identify Colombian organisations that have a negative perception of the voluntary return programme. IOM should communicate with those organisations, inviting them to meetings and events and establishing a permanent working relationship that would keep them informed of any development in the programmes.
- IOM should establish a close working relationship with Colombian leaders. They can give IOM access to the community and persuade the undocumented population to listen to what IOM has to offer.
- It is extremely important that IOM reinforce the message about confidentiality. At the moment, there is a mistaken perception that IOM will pass confidential information to the Home Office.
- During the mapping exercise many Colombian and Latin American organisations in London and other cities showed great interest in organising presentations, workshops and training sessions in order to learn more about the programmes and transmit accurate information to their community. IOM should not let this opportunity pass and should initiate such events as soon as possible.
- Information about IOM and its programmes should be discreet and not intimidating. For example, A4 posters and pocket size leaflets should be used. The presence of IOM at activities and gatherings should be with community approval.
- IOM should explore other ways of approaching the community, for instance, religious groups or UK charities that work with the refugee or undocumented population in the UK.
- IOM should put emphasis on trying to reach the Colombian community outside London. At the moment, information about its population and its community organisations is virtually non-existent. This reduces IOM's ability to reach Colombians who could eventually benefit from the voluntary return programme.



IOM UK

21 Westminster Palace Gardens,
Artillery Row,
London SW1P 1RR

Freephone: 0800 783 2332

Tel: 020 7233 0001

e-mail: iomuk@iom.int

www.iomuk.org



IOM International Organization for Migration



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