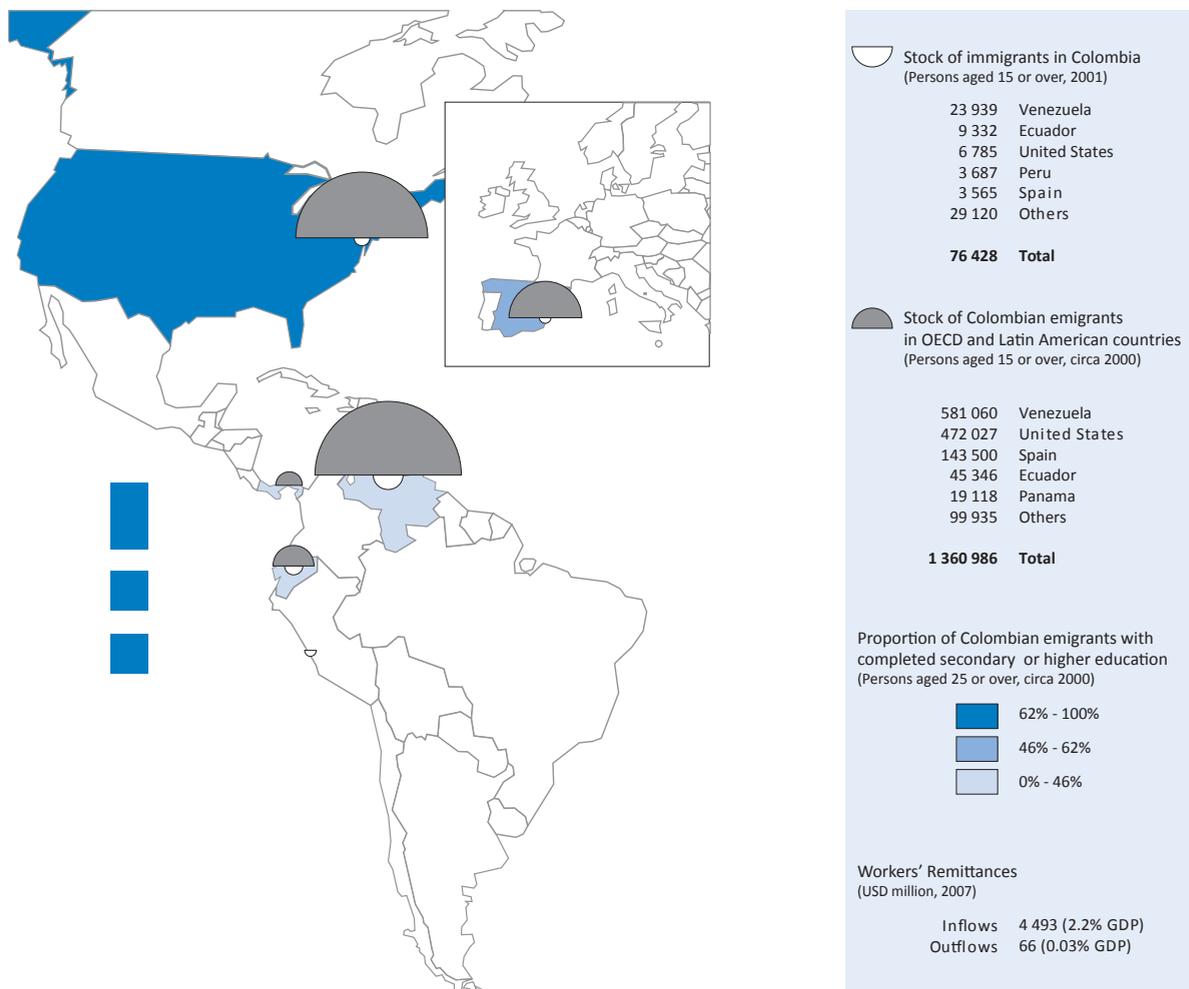


COLOMBIA

Migratory outflows have increased substantially in recent years in Colombia. Economic and political factors have fuelled both voluntary and forced migration.

Colombia

Figure 1. Stock of Migrants and Level of Education of Colombian Emigrants to OECD and Latin American Countries



Note: This Figure reports the stock of migrants recorded in national censuses and workers' remittances in balance-of-payments data. It will therefore not reflect unrecorded formal or informal flows, which may be material.

Source: For details on definitions and sources, please refer to the Statistical Annex.

- Colombian** society has experienced large-scale emigration flows over recent decades. Some 4.7% of Colombians now live abroad. Venezuela and the United States are the main countries of destination, followed by Spain, Ecuador and Panama.
- Past** and present immigration levels in Colombia are relatively low in comparison to other Latin American countries and immigrants make up only 0.3% of the country's population.
- Colombian** migrants in the United States have a higher level of education than is observed for other destinations. Some 72% of immigrants in the United States have completed secondary or higher education, while for those living in Venezuela and Spain the proportion is 22 and 47%, respectively.

Migration History and Policy Developments

Throughout most of Colombia's history immigration and emigration flows have been low compared to other Latin American countries. Nevertheless, economic factors and internal conflicts have driven extensive emigration of Colombians during recent decades. According to the latest round of the national census around 4.7% of the population live abroad (over 1.3 million people), most of whom are in Venezuela and the United States. Figures from the national statistics office put the figure higher, estimating that as many as 3 million Colombians are resident in another country.

This is mostly but not completely the result of emigration in recent years. The first significant wave of Colombian emigration took place from the late 1960s. Colombians emigrated principally to Venezuela and the United States, taking advantage of the oil boom in the neighbouring country or the opportunities provided by the US Immigration Act of 1965. Later, from the mid-1980s, the economic slowdown and rise in unemployment in Colombia encouraged outgoing migratory flows. In this period, migration patterns reflected the labour programmes for low-skilled migrants in the United Kingdom and the permanent permits available through the US Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

By the late 1990s, macroeconomic difficulties had undermined popular confidence in Colombia's prospects. In 1999 Colombia's economy shrank by 4.2% in its first economic recession in more than 50 years. Simultaneously the internal security situation deteriorated as guerrilla and paramilitary groups strengthened. Civilians were increasingly caught up in the conflict, forcing much of the population to flee from rural homes to urban areas or to leave the country.

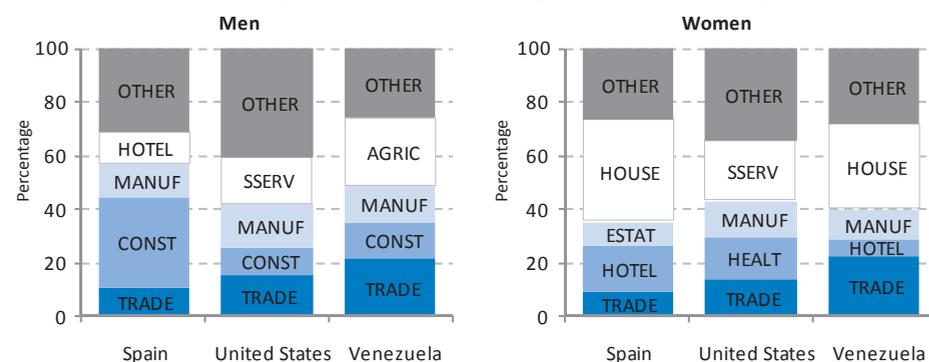
Despite the significant improvement in the macroeconomic scenario, the progressive reduction in crime and violence and more restrictive immigration policies in North America and Europe, Colombian emigration has not decreased during the last decade. It is estimated that some 46 000 Colombians emigrated to OECD countries every year between 1996 and 2006 (OECD, 2008). As one response the Colombian government has engaged in active policies to maintain links with the communities abroad. One example is ColombiaNosUne, an initiative aimed at identifying and providing assistance to Colombian emigrants and supporting entrepreneurial networks.

Immigration has been correspondingly low over this period, and has never in the modern period been a major phenomenon in Colombia. Government inducements aimed at encouraging European immigration were provided from the early 20th century onwards, but they remained largely unimplemented partly as a result of Colombia's internal conflicts, such as the undeclared civil war known as La Violencia (1948-60).

Labour Market

Labour-market participation rates of Colombians abroad tend to be higher than those of natives, providing evidence of their economic motivation to migrate.

Figure 2. Distribution of Colombian Emigrants by Activity in Three Main Destinations (circa 2000, percentage of total workers)



Note: Sectors of activity are recorded according to the International Standard Industrial Classification, Rev. 3. The following abbreviations are used AGRIC: Agriculture and fisheries; ESTAT: Real estate, renting and business activities; CONST: Construction; HEALT: Health and social work; HOTEL: Hotels and restaurants; HOUSE: Employment in private households; MANUF: Manufacturing; SSERV: Other community, social and personal service activities; and TRADE: Wholesale and retail trade.

Source: OECD Development Centre calculations, based on OECD (2008), Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries and the 2000 round of national censuses for Latin America (processed with ECLAC Redatam+SP on-line).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/717046631764>

Figure 2 shows the occupational profile of employed Colombians in three main destination countries: Spain, the United States and Venezuela. While the bulk of immigrants in Spain and Venezuela are concentrated in few low-skilled activities, Colombians in the United States are employed in a broader spectrum of sectors.

Among males, construction and agriculture are respectively the main activities for Colombians in Spain and Venezuela and in these countries domestic service is the main source of employment for Colombian women. This contrasts with the experience of migrants in the United States, where Colombians are present in more skilled sectors such as personal services, health, manufacture and trade.

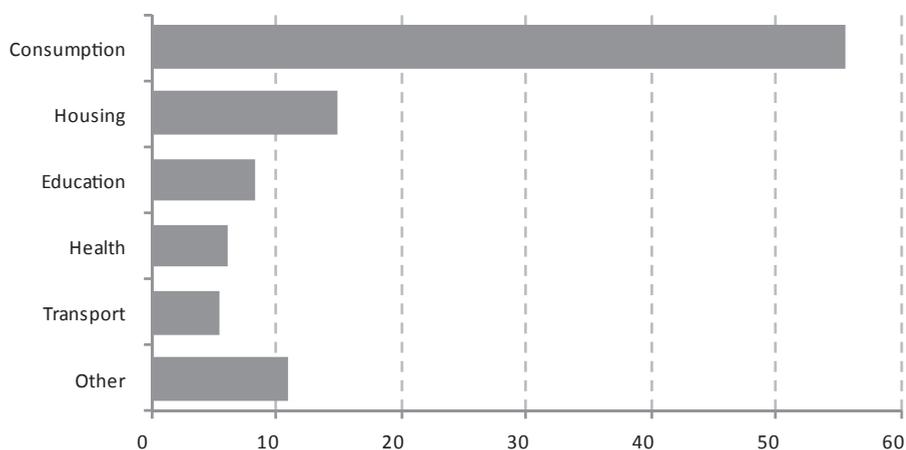
These differences in occupational profile are consistent with the levels of educational attainment in these groups. One of the features of Colombian emigration to the United States is its high level of education. More than 72% of migrants to this country have completed secondary or higher education, and of these 28% have completed university or technical studies. By comparison the corresponding figures in Spain were 47 and 19%.

In order to improve the labour insertion of emigrants, the Colombian government has implemented technical training programmes for its citizens abroad. One example is that for Colombians resident in Spain, which offers courses jointly certified by the Colombian National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) and the Spanish educational system. Additionally, SENA has concluded several bilateral agreements with local NGOs to support migrants who have temporary work contracts in Spain.

Relationship with the Country of Origin and Integration in the Host Country

Remittance inflows are increasingly important to the Colombian economy. In 2007 remittances represented 2.2% of Colombian GDP, almost three times the proportion in 2000. Remittance outflows, reflecting low levels of immigration, account for less than 0.1% of GDP.

Figure 3. Principal Uses of Remittances in Colombia, 2004
(Percentage of total current expenditures)



Source: DANE, Survey of Households in the Central Western Metropolitan Area (2004).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/717061424241>

The 2004 Survey of Households in the Central Western Metropolitan Area (AMCO) indicated that 18% of households received international monetary transfers, of which 56% were in the middle socio-economic groups. Remittances were an important source of income for households in AMCO: they received on average monthly transfers of USD 173, equivalent to 10% of average household income in Colombia.

As shown in Figure 3, the principal use of these resources was to fund consumption (55%), especially of food and basic services. Remittances were also an important source for the acquisition of durable assets. Around 10% of the recipient households put remittances towards house purchase and 40% had invested in housing improvement in the last five years. *Mi casa con remesas*, a joint initiative between the private sector and the IDB, accounts for much of this phenomenon. This initiative facilitates house purchase in Colombia for households that regularly receive international transfers. Additionally, the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with the construction sector organises housing fairs in the principal countries of destination to promote house purchase to Colombians abroad.