

A stylized, hand-drawn map of Quito, Ecuador, in pink lines on a white background. The map shows a dense network of streets and landmarks, including the historic center and the surrounding hills.

Profile
at a glance

Ecuador

Quito

“The profiling was for actors in Quito to situation of register other Colombians.”

Ivan Cardona, profiling advisor, JIPS



an opportunity to compare the registered refugees to

After decades of armed conflict, a tenth of Colombia's population has been internally displaced and over 400,000 people have become refugees. Most refugees are in Ecuador, with over two thirds having settled in urban areas. The Colombian population is diverse, including registered refugees, asylum seekers and others. However, existing information focuses mainly on the registered caseload.

In 2013, JIPS and Tufts University supported UNHCR Ecuador in conducting a profiling exercise of Colombians living in Quito with different migratory situations. The goal was to obtain updated and agreed-upon information about their living conditions, access to rights and degree of social integration, and to see how registered refugees compared with Colombians who were not registered.

A coordination platform comprised mainly of Ecuadorian institutions oversaw the exercise. The platform included the government (the Foreign Ministry and the National Statistics Institute), municipal authorities of Quito, and academics (the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences) as well as UNFPA and the Norwegian Refugee Council. Two local partners, Instituto de la Ciudad and Perfiles de Opinión, managed data collection, analysis and reporting.

What methods were used?

The profiling used a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection, including a household survey, semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. The target population were households with at least one Colombian, and the geographical coverage focused on urban and peri-urban areas of Quito municipality. Data collection was concentrated in the 23 (out of 167) neighbourhoods in Quito with higher than average density of Colombians, according to estimates from the registration database and local organizations.

One challenge was the selection of a large enough sample for each of the three target groups (registered refugees or those pending decisions;

rejected asylum seekers and those who never applied; and those with other types of migratory situation).

The Colombian population in Quito is relatively small and dispersed amongst the local population, and there is no complete sampling frame. The initial multi-staged random sampling design was therefore complemented with the identification of households through local organizations and in common meeting places, as well as with purposive (“snowball”) sampling. The potential bias introduced by these methods was found to be low, as the main demographic characteristics of households selected by each method turned out to be very similar, giving confidence in the representativeness of the findings.

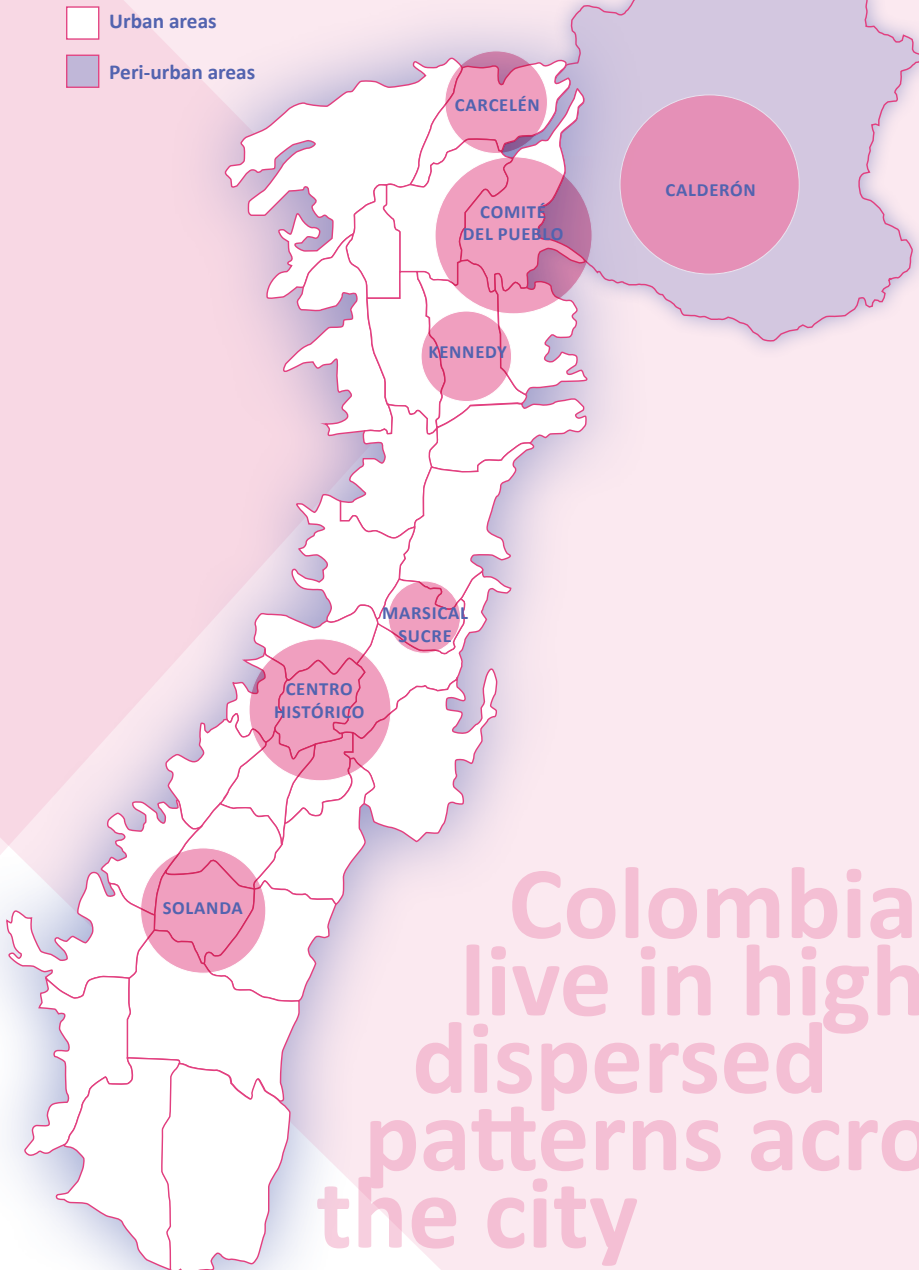
1,856 household survey interviews completed

- 1,059 registered refugees and asylum seekers
- 394 rejected asylum seekers and those who never applied
- 403 other types of migratory situations

45 semi-structured individual interviews

4 focus group discussions

Map: Distribution of interview households across Quito neighbourhoods



Colombians
live in highly
dispersed
patterns across
the city

“It is very important to understand the social networks of refugees, as these are how they find jobs and housing.”

Miguel Viera, profiling focal point, UNHCR Ecuador

What was the impact?

The study identified relative vulnerabilities across different groups of the Colombian population in Quito. This information can be used to inform advocacy activities at both local and national levels, and to identify programming options that match the needs and capacities of the population. Some changes have already occurred in Ecuador that are in line with recommendations from the study findings. While it is not possible to say that the study led to these changes, the study findings provide evidence that support these changes and could support further advocacy.

The policy shifts that align with the study findings are:

- The Ecuadorian government moved to allow the children of refugees in the country to use their parents' refugee cards as a means to access basic education.
- A free telephone information service for refugees and asylum seekers in Ecuador, "1800 refugio", will likely receive greater funding given that the profiling exercise identified a lack of information about services and other support as being an area that should be improved.
- Social and economic integration programmes will be rolled out to larger sectors of the refugee population, such as information technology education being made open to younger refugees, whereas this was only available to adults.

Involving actors at both the national and local (municipal) levels in the coordination platform not only ensured a wider buy-in for the profiling exercise and its results, but it also meant that policy recommendations were identified and discussed with authorities at both levels.

What were the findings?

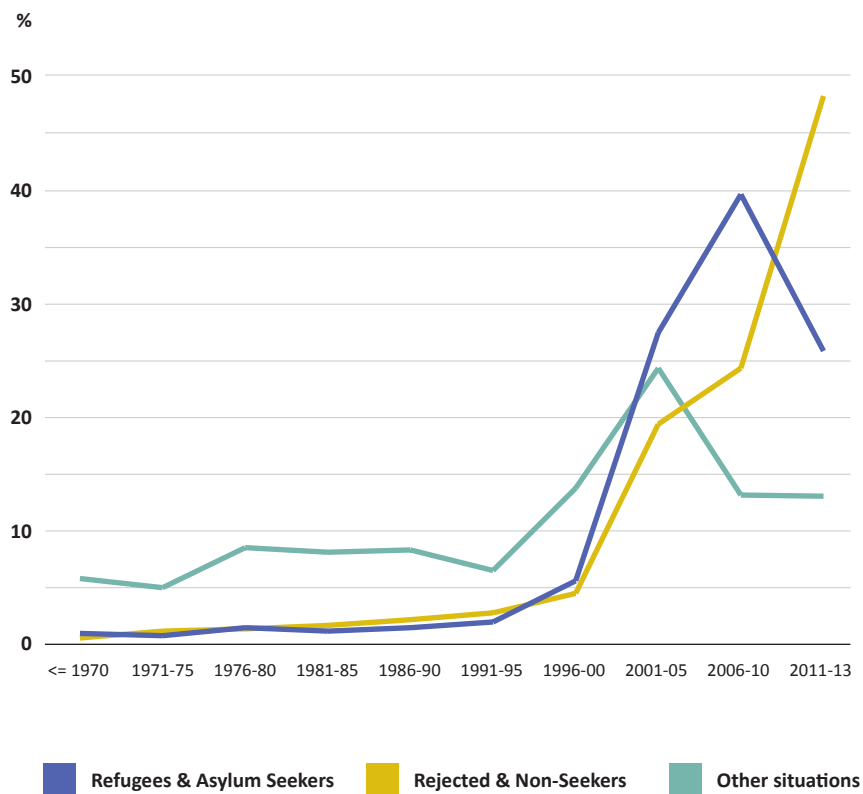
The profiling exercise showed that the migratory situation appears to influence the living conditions, access to rights and the integration of Colombians residing in Quito. Those with rejected asylum claims and who never applied were worse off than recognized refugees or pending asylum seekers. The latter group also experienced levels of living conditions and socio-economic integration lower than Colombians with access to other types of documentation or status.

The main differences between households in different migratory situations concerned access to education, housing and employment. Lack of documentation, lack of economic resources and discrimination were the key obstacles to access for migrants in each of these sectors.

Migration patterns

Just under half (47%) of those who had their asylum claims rejected had arrived in Quito between 2011 and 2013. In 2012, the government of Ecuador introduced additional requirements for granting asylum. Of the registered asylum seekers, 39% arrived between 2006 and 2010, when a large-scale registration policy was implemented. Most (75%) of those in other migratory situations arrived in Ecuador before 2005. Their longer residency probably improved their access to migratory regularization.

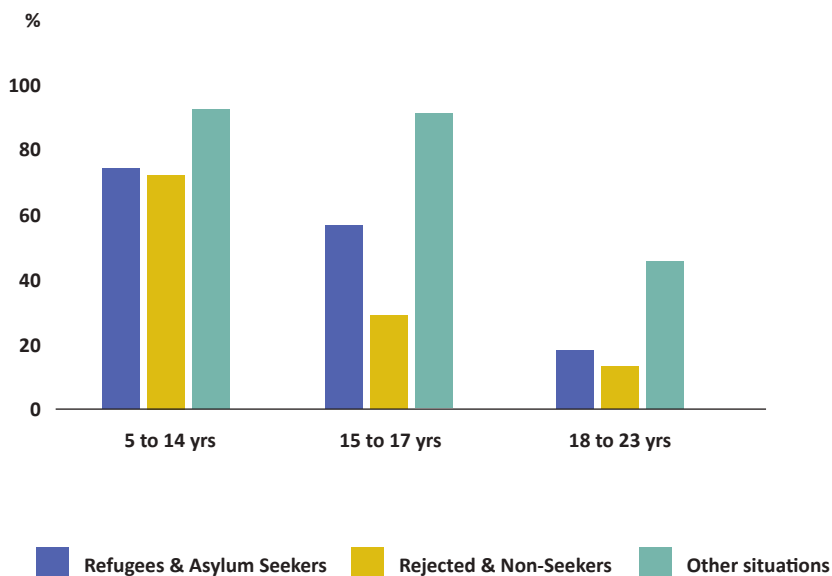
Figure 1: Distribution of population according to period of arrival in Ecuador



Access to education

Children from households with other migratory situations had much greater access to primary and secondary education (94%) than children from refugee or asylum seeker households (75% and 58% respectively) or those from rejected or non-seeker households (74% and 29% respectively).

Figure 2: School attendance rates for children and young adults



Less than 20% of young adult refugees are in higher education

Housing

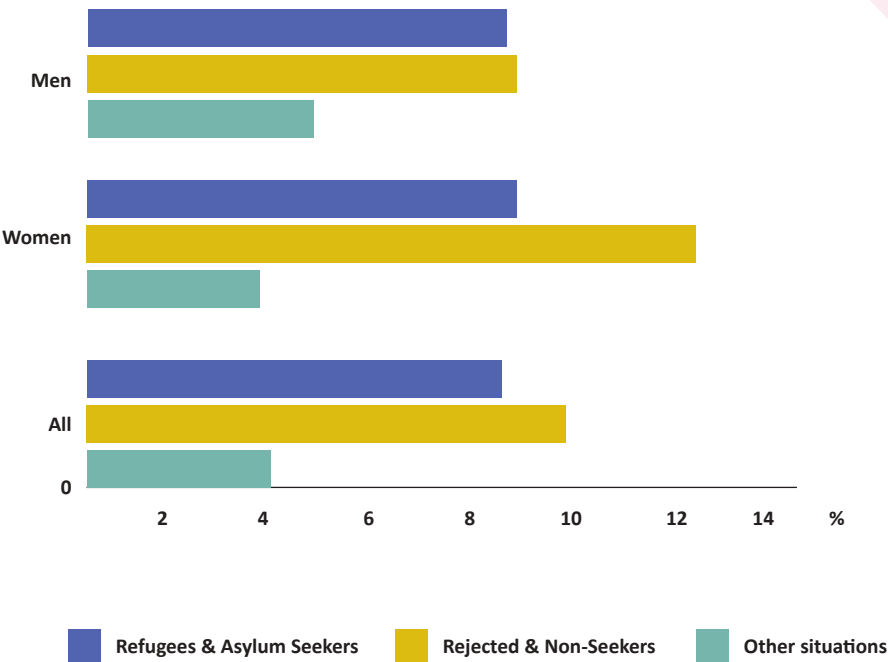
Less than 5% of households with refugees, rejected asylum seekers or non-seekers own their current place of residence, compared with a quarter (24%) of households in other migratory situations. Overall, most Colombians (88%) live in rented accommodation.

Economic situation

Unemployment rates for economically active individuals in households with refugees, rejected asylum seekers or non-seekers are higher (8% for men and 9-12% for women) than in households with other migratory situations, where the unemployment rate is 4-5% for both sexes.

A key difference between groups is access to a bank account. Almost 65% of households with other migratory situations have a bank account, compared with 26% of refugees and 21% of asylum seekers or non-seekers.

Figure 3: Unemployment rates across economically active population, by sex

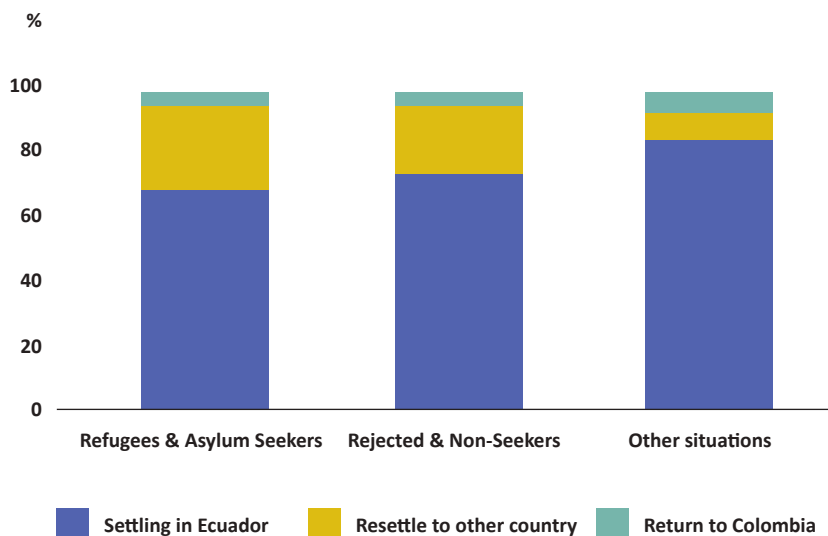


Social integration

Most households in all three categories expressed interest in settling permanently in Quito, though slightly fewer households with refugees (69%) and rejected or non-seekers (75%) expressed this sentiment compared to households with other situations (84%). Less than 6% of all households expressed an intention or desire to return to Colombia.

Various factors have contributed to the desire of Colombians to remain in Quito. These include feelings of greater security in Quito compared to Colombia, and integration into the social fabric of Ecuador through binational marriages as well as birth within the country.

Figure 4: Distribution of households according to residence intentions





“The big lesson we were left with from this profiling was to undertake prior sensitization work with the refugee population.”

Rodrigo Sánchez, project manager, Perfiles de Opinión

What were the profiling lessons?

The challenges of collecting data on small and hidden populations in urban settings mean:

- Methodologies must be flexible and field-tested, with enough time to allow for changes to take place if necessary. Resorting to alternative sampling approaches might be needed when the density of the target population is very low. The limitations should be clearly explained to stakeholders at the beginning of the process.
- A thorough mapping and triangulation of information is an essential first step that should draw upon the knowledge of local actors.
- Building trust and confidence through transparency and clear communication with the target groups is crucial to facilitate access to a refugee population that has blended into its host community. Otherwise valuable time is spent in efforts aimed at locating a population that is not immediately visible, and that often does not want to be found.
- The profiling exercise benefited from the continuous guidance and advice from a range of government, municipal, non-governmental and academic actors. Regular communication and meetings during key moments of the exercise were vital in keeping everyone updated throughout the process. This institutional framework ensured the buy-in of stakeholders interested in the results from a policy and programming perspective.

*More information about this profiling exercise and the profiling tools can be found at:
<http://www.jips.org/en/field-support/country-operations/ecuador/quito>
The profiling data is also available upon request.*

This summary provides a glimpse into a collaborative urban profiling process. Governmental, nongovernmental, international and national actors contributed to the process, working together to outline the objectives, methodology and implementation of the exercise.

JIPS supported these actors to undertake an in-depth study of the situation of Colombians residing in Quito, adapting an internationally endorsed methodology for profiling displacement situations.

This glance into the profiling exercise hopes to spark interest in both the findings and the impact of the profiling process in general.



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