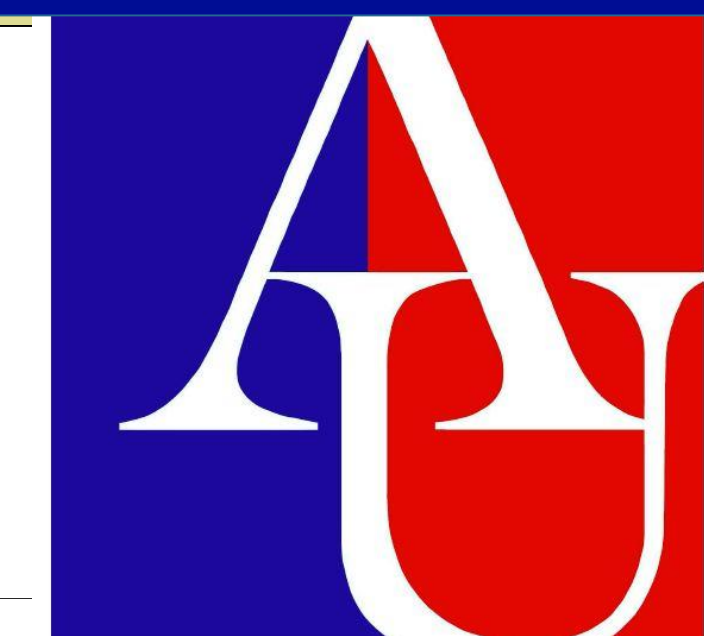# Latin American Migration: An Analysis of Colombia, Peru, and El Salvador

Abstract

This case study analyzes the motivations of Latin American groups that leave their countries of origin with the aim of arriving in the United States. The case study takes into consideration motivations such as a poor economic climate, extreme political unrest, and the disintegration of community systems. The study uses personal interviews, existing research, and available statistics to look at the path from the country of origin to the destination country.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION: Refugees or Economic Migrants?
This is important to note because these terms are key in policies as refugees who flee their countries because of persecution, but also with the goal to sustain themselves, can be denied asylum as they are seen as economic migrants. This issue is at the source of many immigration debates.

Why do these groups migrate?

Colombia
- Economic Opportunity
  - Promoted by the Alliance for Progress 1960's
- Political unrest because of violence due to the drug trade, particularly cocaine, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC)

Peru
- Economic Opportunity
- Corruption within the Government
- In the past they fled because of coups and terrorist groups like Sendero Luminoso

El Salvador
- Economic Opportunity
- 1980's Civil War
  - Lack of economic opportunity
  - Destruction of existing communities
  - Seeking asylum as refugees from persecution by government via gangs and military

How do they arrive to the United States?

Colombia & Peru
- Most acquire travel visas and then stay over their allotted time
  - Not able to participate in the Diversity Visa Program
- Many are sponsored by their family to obtain their green cards
- There is a large number of Peruvians who come for a better university education
- Some Colombians seek asylum

El Salvador
- A large number become clandestine as they travel with "coyotes" or migrant smugglers
- Most refugees walk from El Salvador to the border
- Migrants can obtain legal access to Mexico, but do not realize they need legal access to the U.S. and thus arrive and are left undocumented

In Focus: Remittances

REMITTANCES: *The sending of money from immigrants back to their family who have remained in the country of origin.*
- *Colombia:* $1.3 billion received by households from family remittances
- *Peru:* $200 on average in remittances sent home to their family up to 6 times a year
  - $902 million in 2011
- *El Salvador:* 17% of Salvadoran GDP in 2014 came from remittances, $8 billion of their $52.88 billion GDP
  - Only 0.3% South America GDP (including Colombia and Peru) comes from remittances

	Total Number of Immigrants in the United States	Percentage of Total Immigrant Population
Colombia 2014	707,000	1.7%
Peru 2014	449,000	1.1%
El Salvador 2010-2014	1,255,000	3.1%
Three Countries' Totals	2,411,000	5.9%
Total Immigrant Population in the United States	41,056,000	-

Conclusions:
- Remittances allow migrants to send money back to family who have remained in their home country.
- There is a direct correlation between the number of immigrants in the US from the three countries and the monetary value of remittances being exported back to the country of origin.
  - El Salvador, with the highest number of immigrants in the US, receives the largest amount of remittances from their migrant family members.
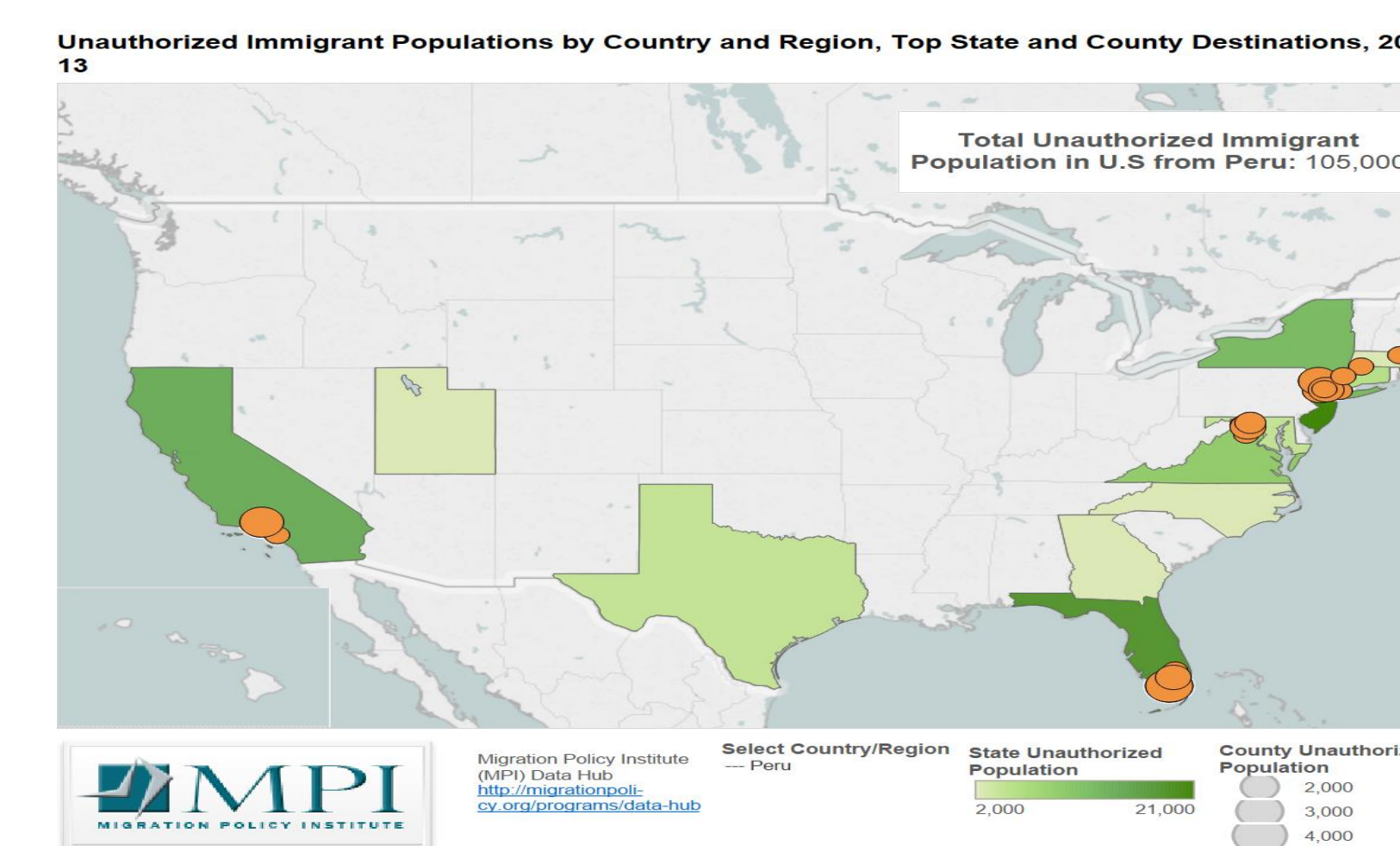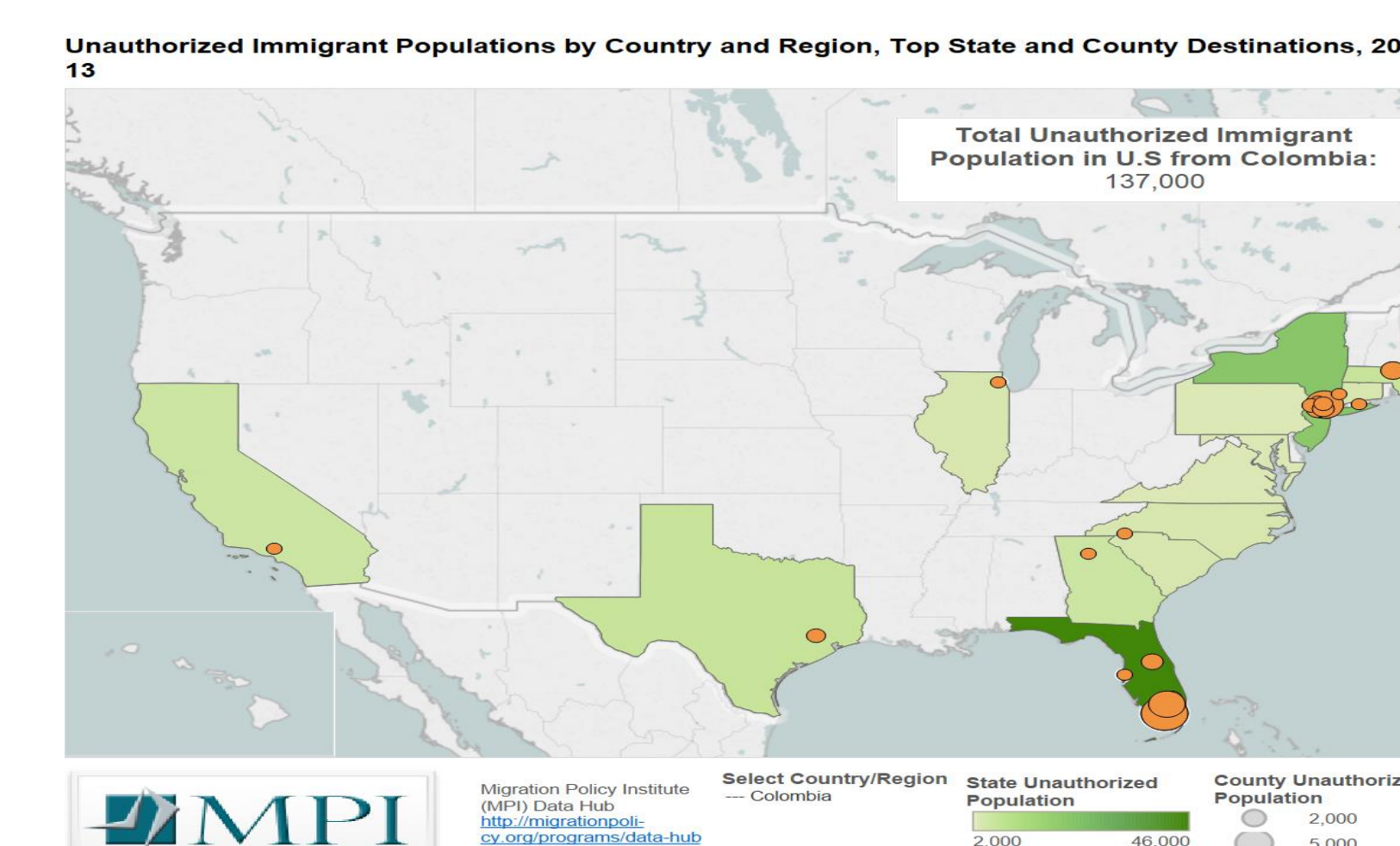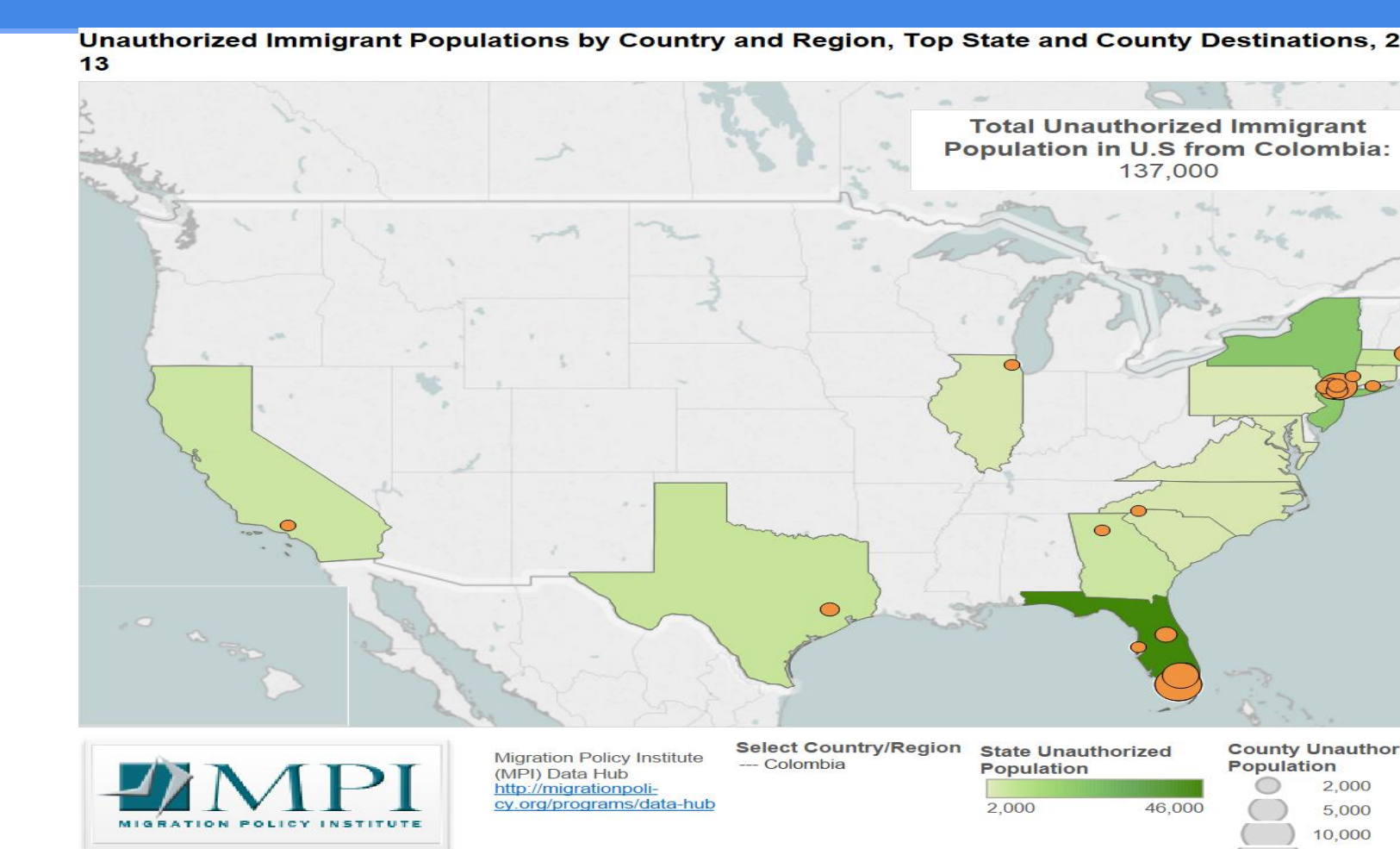
Are they succesfully integrated?

Colombia and Peru
- 50% of Peruvians and Colombians are considered to be fluent in English
- 50% of Peruvians and Colombians have limited English ability
- Over 80% continue to speak Spanish at home
- 33% of Colombian and 31% of Peruvian immigrants have at least a bachelor degree

El Salvador
- Second generation Salvadorans are more integrated as they tend to be raised with more American customs and with a greater English proficiency
- Those that initially arrive face issues with lacking papers validating their education and not having the finances to take English classes
- 69% of Salvadoran Immigrants say lack of English proficiency becomes their biggest barrier (ImmigrantInfo.org)

Migration Statistics

Unauthorized Immigrant Populations by Country and Region, Top State and County Destinations, 2009-13

*These numbers have greatly increased since the collection of this data and these numbers are also contested due to the amount of undocumented migrants as well as those who are considered economic migrants, not refugees or asylum seekers.

Projected Migration Patterns

Colombia, Peru, and El Salvador

- As migration patterns show no indication of decreasing in the coming years, the UNHCR has published plans to harmonize legislation and seek greater protections for migrants along their journey

- There is also an ongoing effort to eliminate the problem of statelessness, especially for unaccompanied minors who undertake the journey

- Furthermore, they would like to increase the speed of the asylum process and promote a path to naturalization or permanent residents for asylees in the United States