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INTERNATIONAL

Venezuelans in Colombia:

Understanding the Implications of the Refugee Crisis in Maicao, La Guajira

Methodology

Research Timeframe
September • December
2018

Research Municipality
Maicao, La Guajira

Techniques & Sampling

19 In-depth Interviews with Governmental Organizations & NGOs

10 In-depth Interviews with Community Influencers

174 Surveys Given to Migrants & Refugees

3 Focus Groups with Migrants & Refugees

5 Personal Narratives from Migrants & Refugees

Non-participant Observation

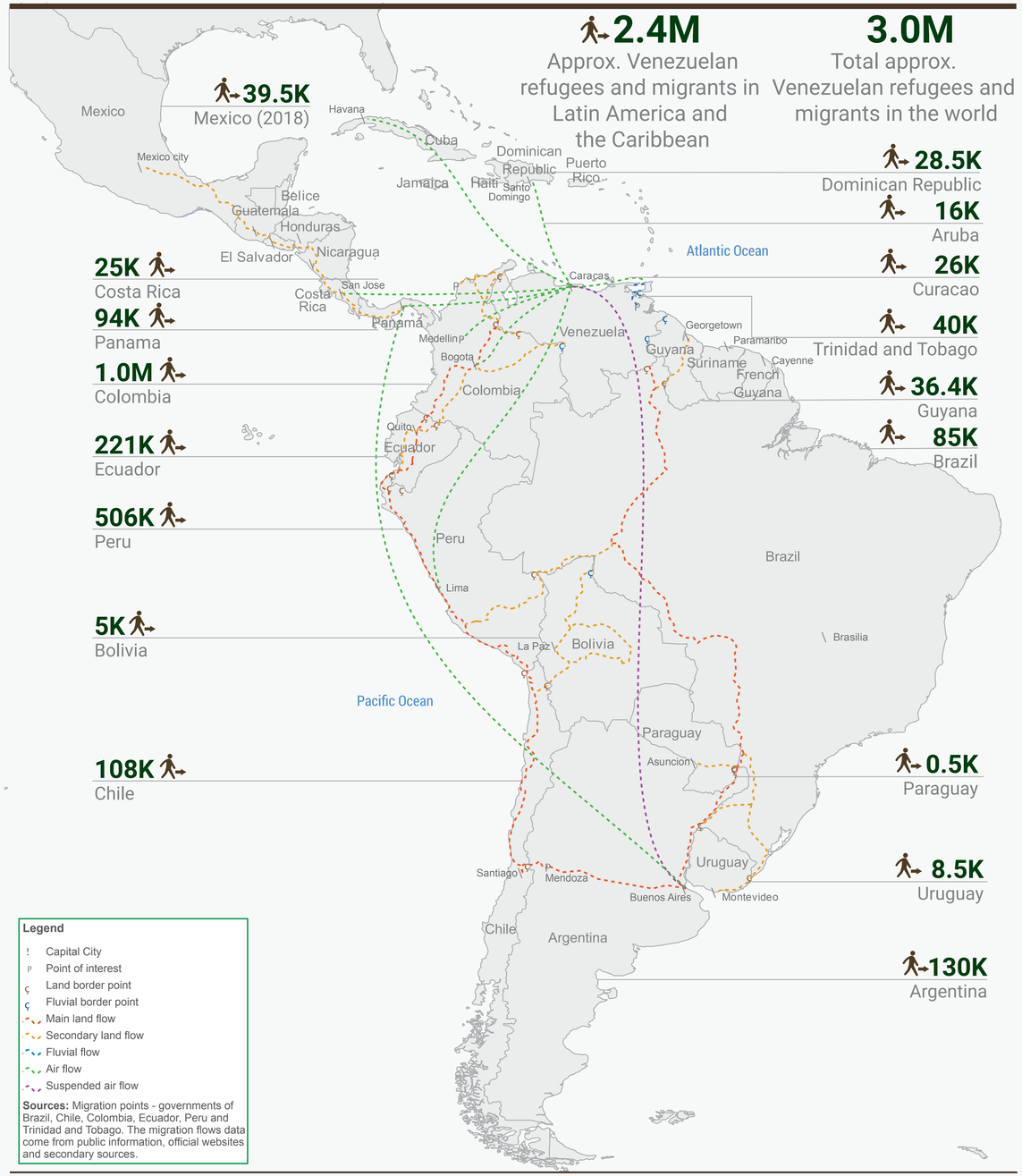
Venezuelan Migration in South America
Who is migrating and where are they going?

Latin America and The Caribbean is Hosting

2.4 million

Colombia	+ 1 million
Peru	+ 500K
Ecuador	+ 220K
Argentina	+ 130K
Chile	+ 100K
Brazil	+ 85K

(Source: UNHCR & IOM Colombia)



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used in this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Creation date: 31 October 2018 **Created by:** OCHA-ROLAC

Evolution of Venezuelan Migration into Colombia

2016

Venezuelans Crossed the Border

52% to buy goods & food

17% to visit relatives

14% for work

(Source: Colombian Minister of Foreign Relations and IOM, 2016)

2017

Crisis Escalation

600K Venezuelans lived in Colombia

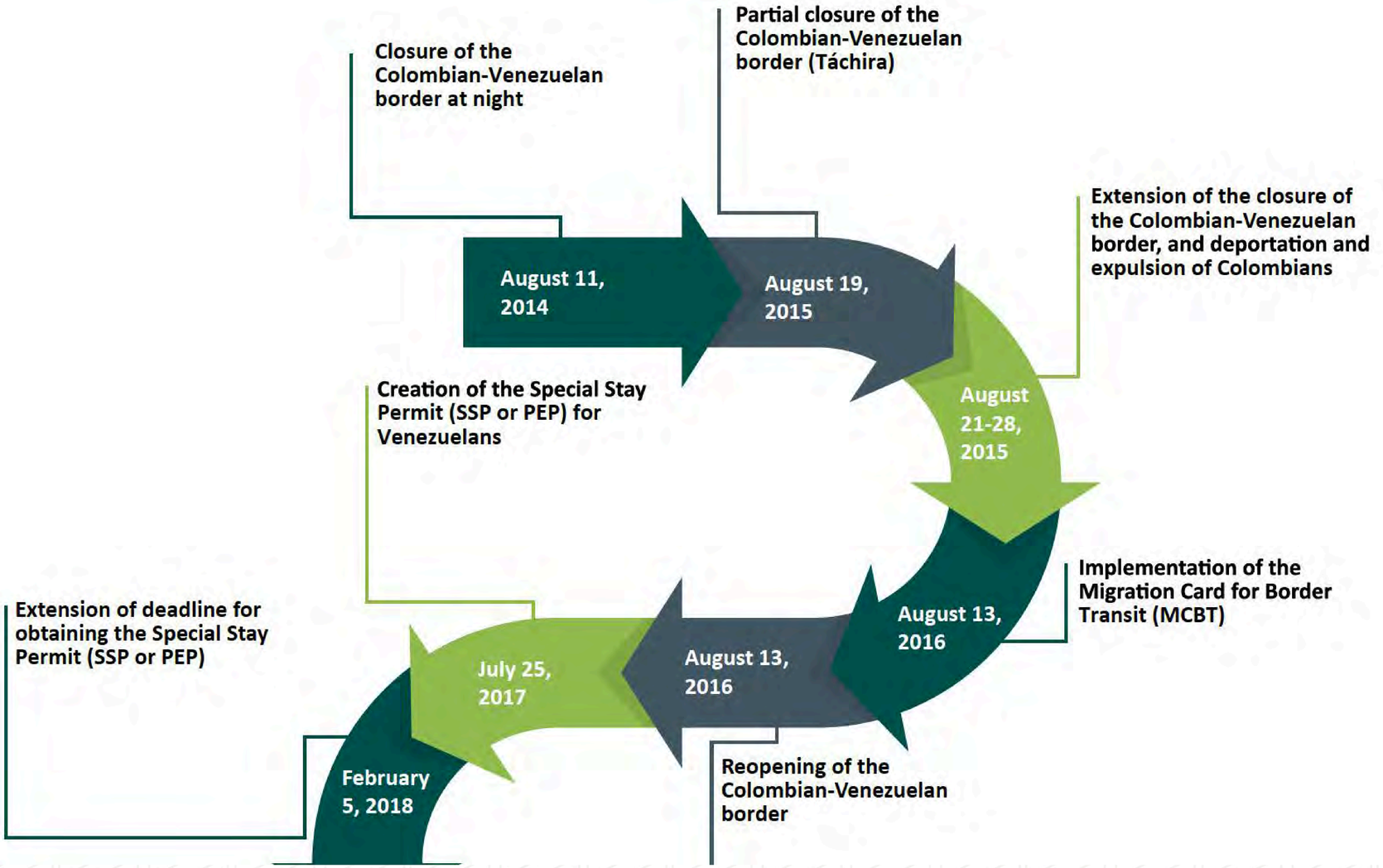
(Source IOM, 2018)

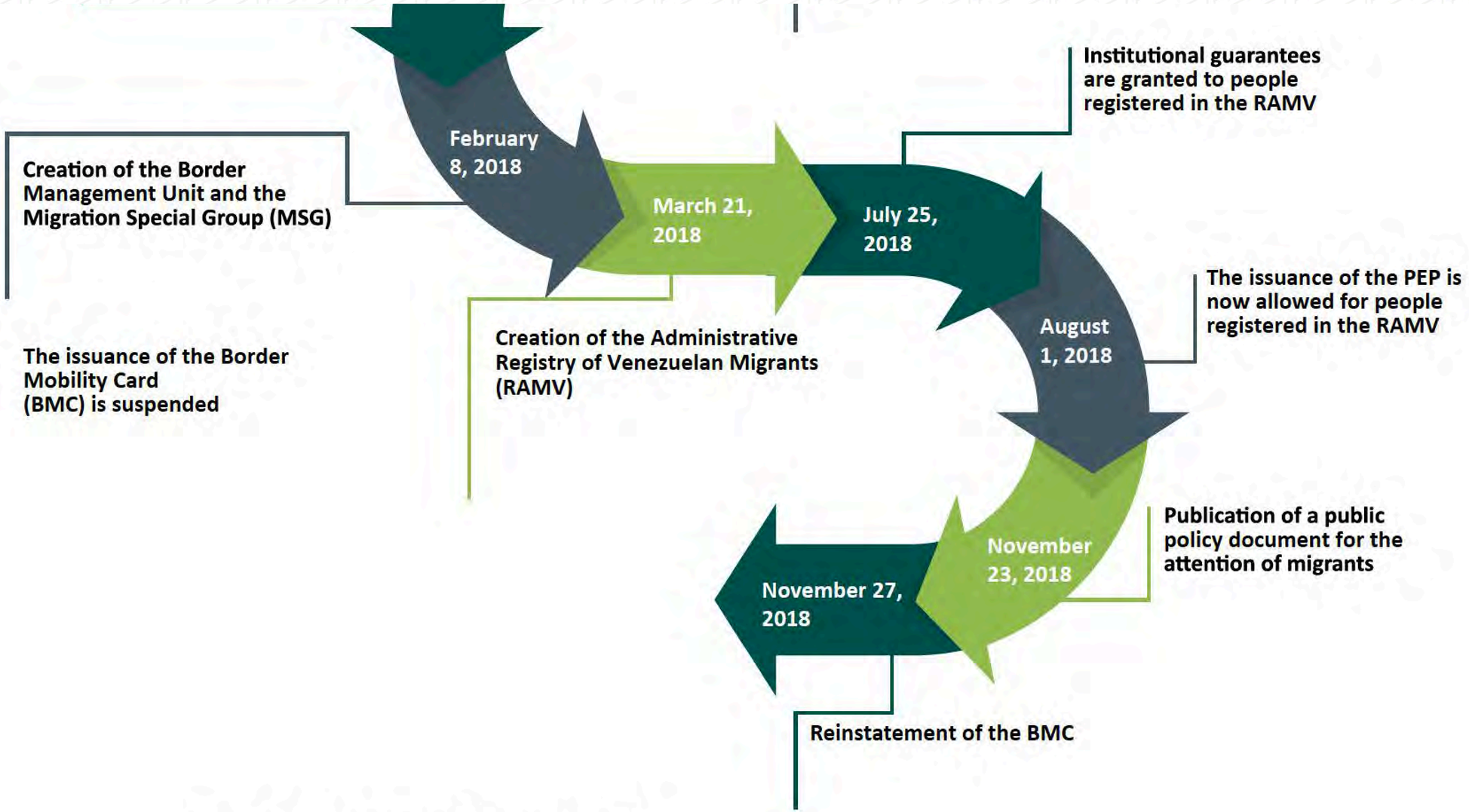
2018

In October, the estimated number of Venezuelans was 1,032,016

(Migration Colombia, 2018)

Chronology of the bilateral crisis and response from the Colombian government (2014-2018).



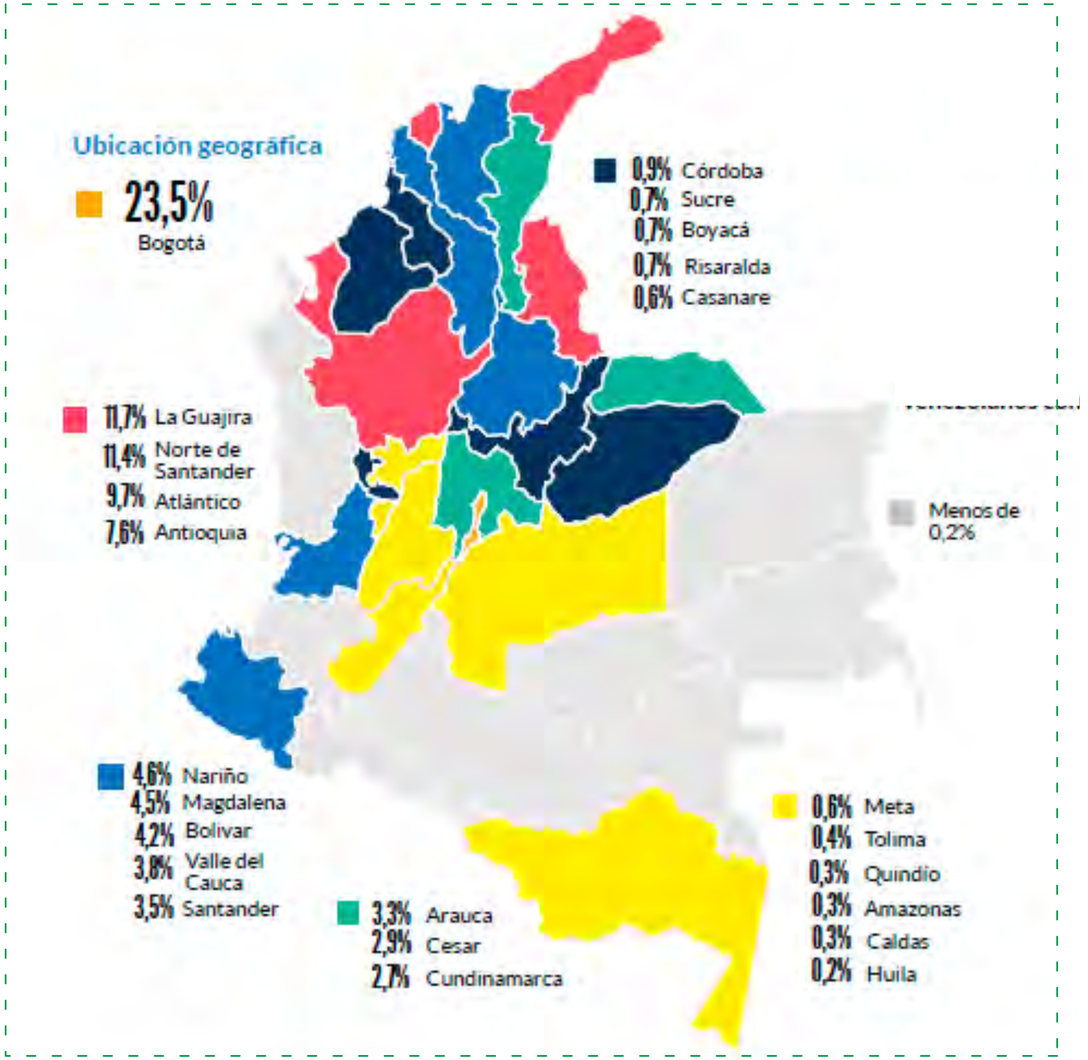


Source: Own construction. December 2018.

Where are the Venezuelans in Colombia?

Migration Status of Venezuelans in Colombia (September 2018)	
Status	**Total**
Regular	573,502
In process to be regularized	240,416
Irregular: exceeds the time of permanence granted	137,718
Irregular: entry through non-authorized crossing point	80,380
Total general	**1,032,016**

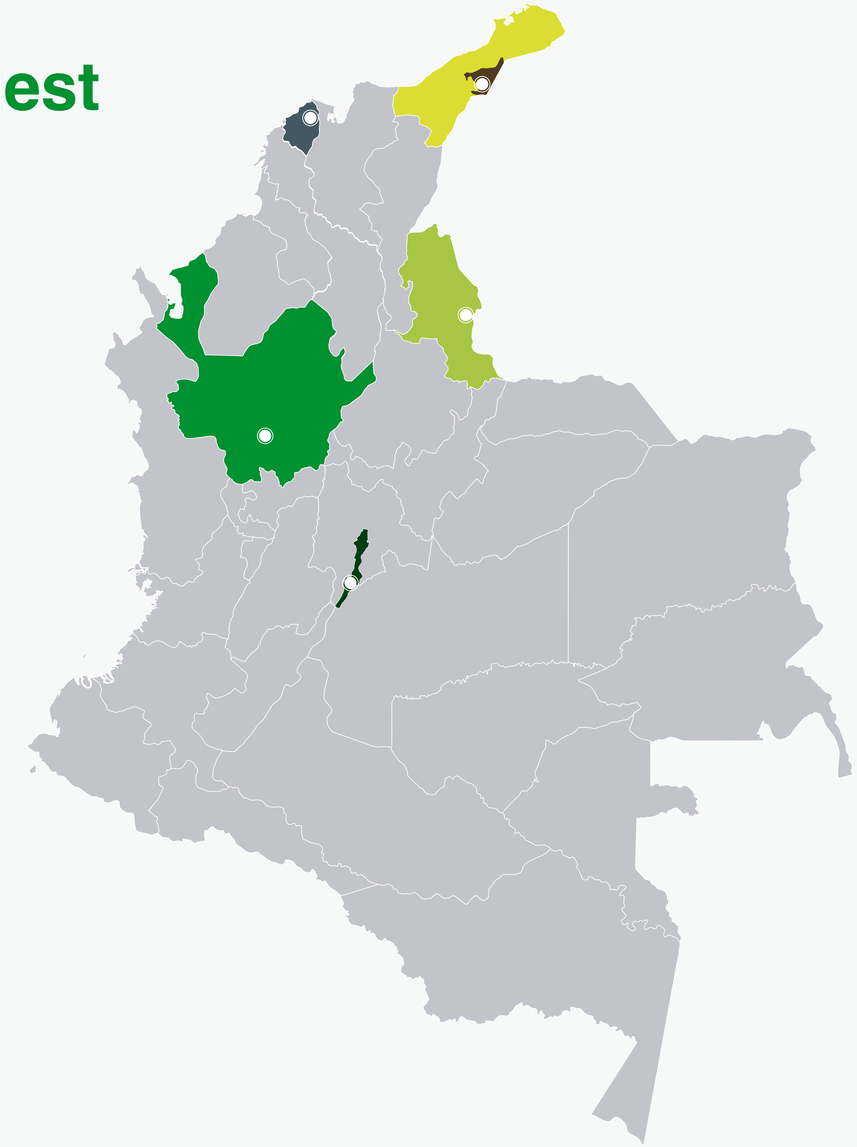
Source: Migration Colombia, 2018.



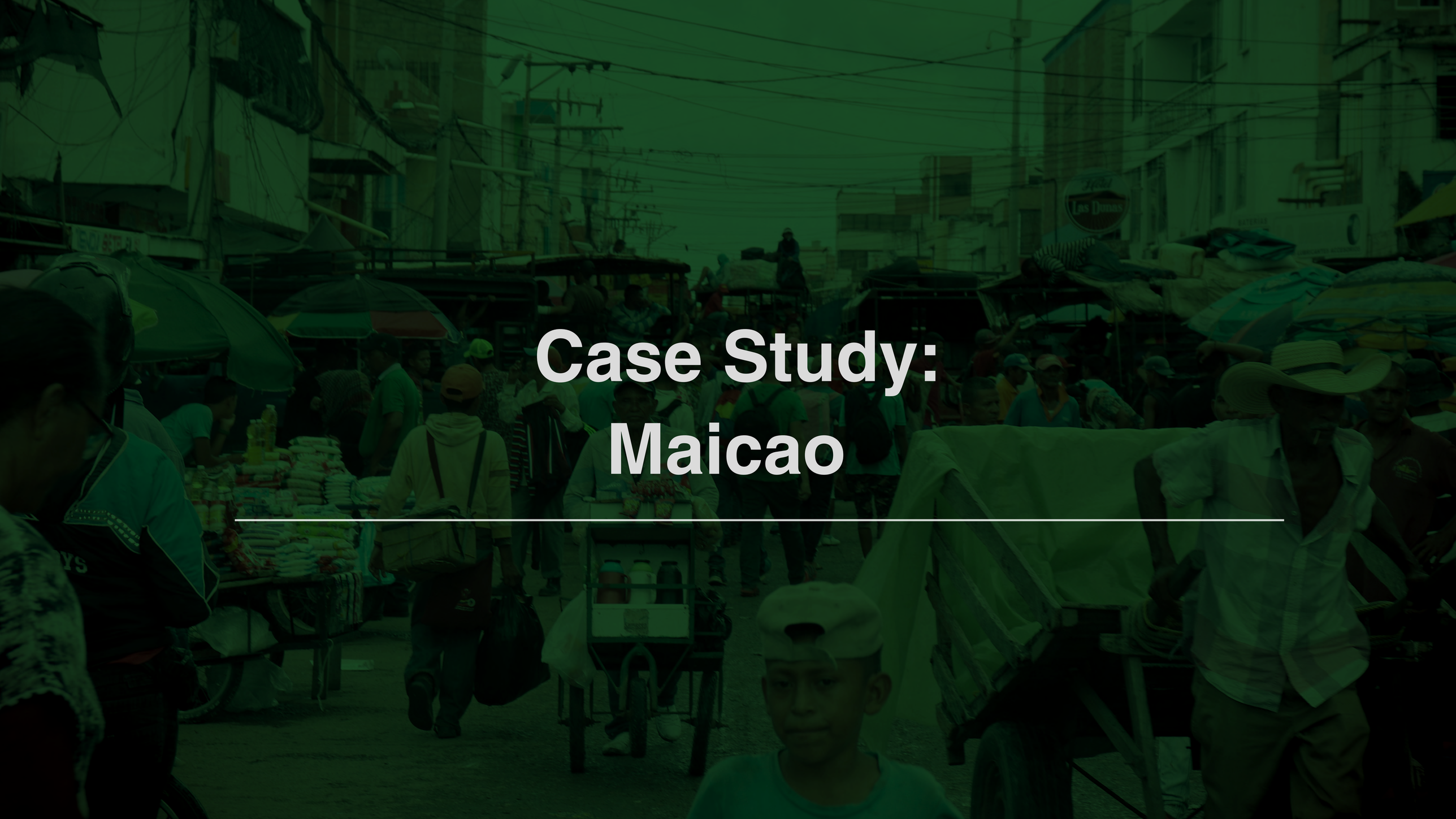
Source: Interagency Group of Mixed Migration Flows [GIFMM], 2018.

Colombian Municipalities hosting the largest Number of Venezuelan migrants

	Municipalities	Number of migrants	Migrants as % of population
	Bogotá	129,921	1.6%
	Cúcuta	54,774	8.2%
	Barranquilla	35,533	2.9%
	Medellín	31,408	1.2%
	Maicao	31,201	19.0%



(Source: Economic and Social Policy National Council, 2018)



Case Study: Maicao

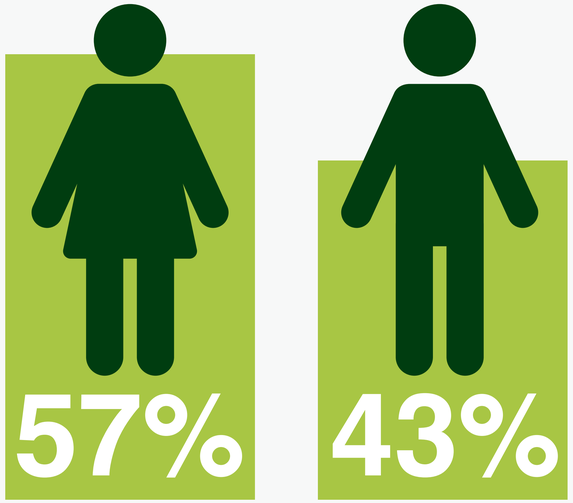
Maicao, La Guajira
Colombia
Venezuela

Historical & cultural relations

Shared borders

Commerce

Profile of Migrants & Refugees



Ages ranged from 18 to 73 years in the sample

39%
18 to 28 years
Youth

58%
29 to 59 years
Adults

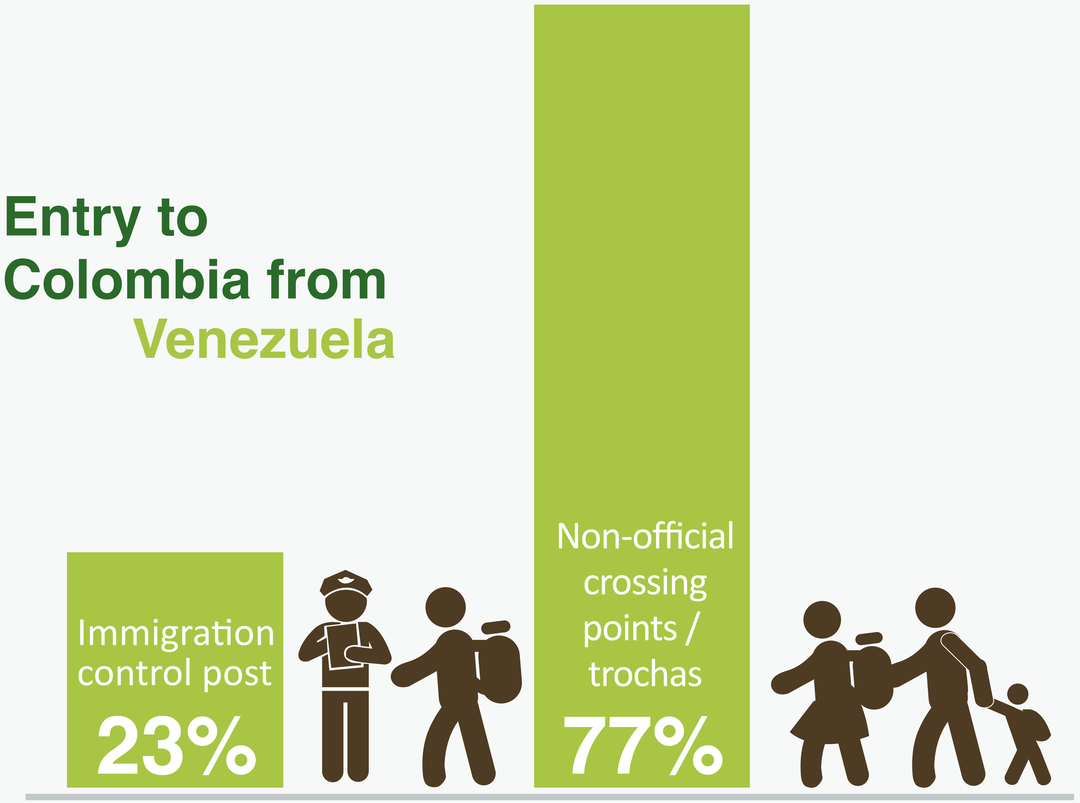
3%
60 years or older
Elderly

176
Minors reported

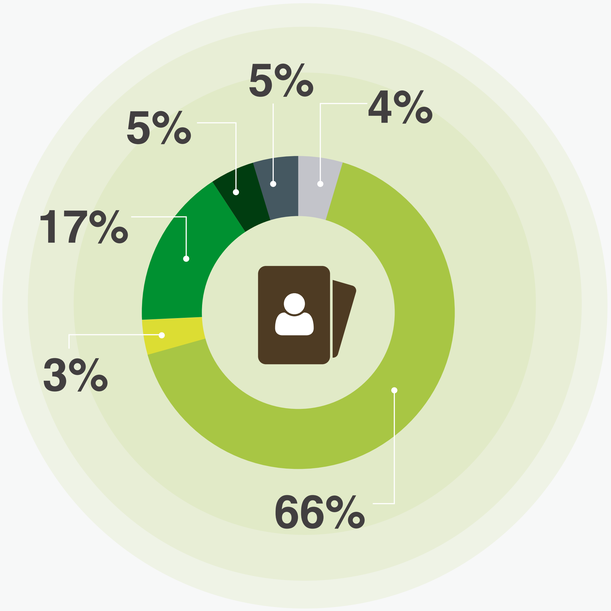
76
Reside with minors

32%
Are sole caretakers of these minors

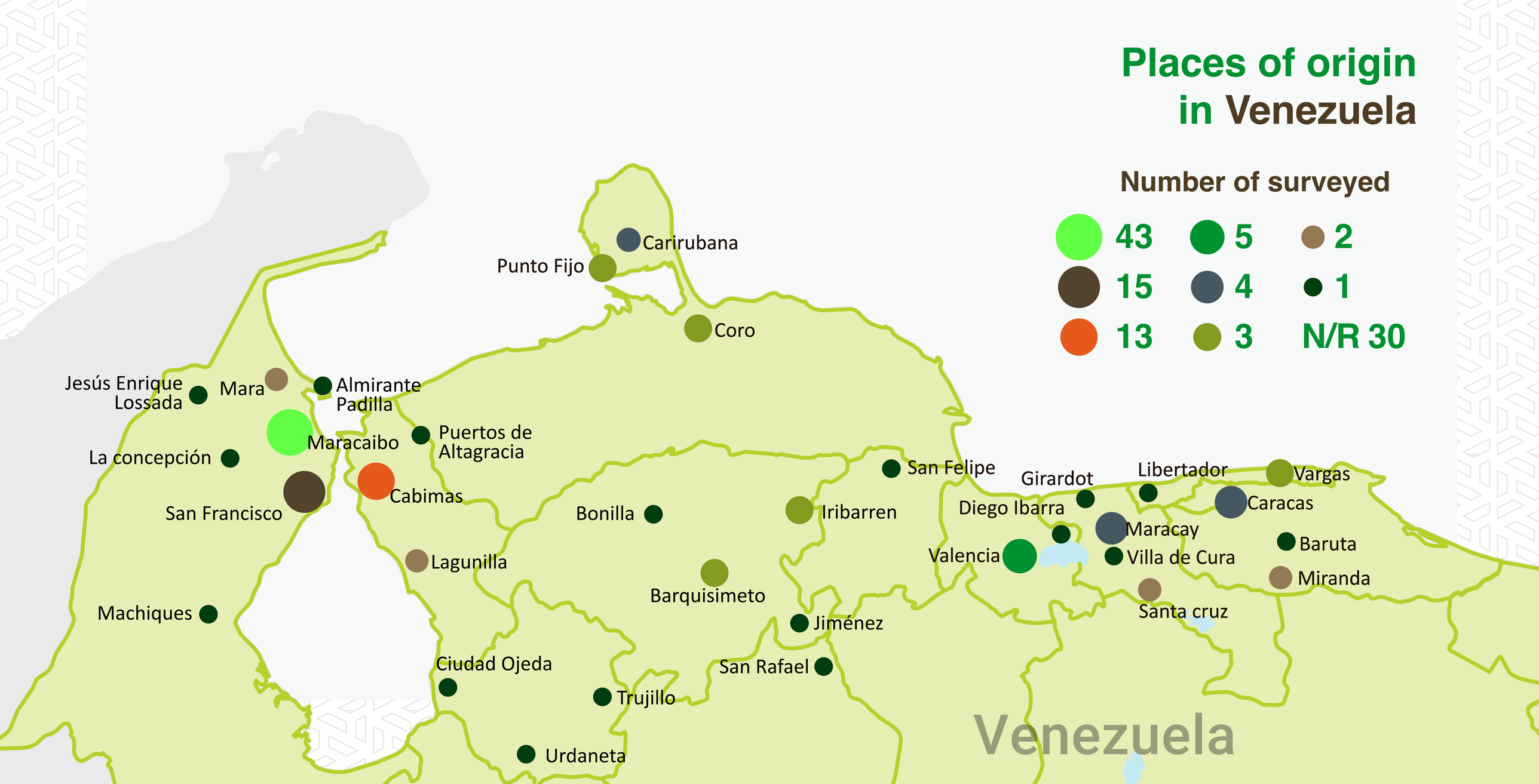
Entry to Colombia from Venezuela



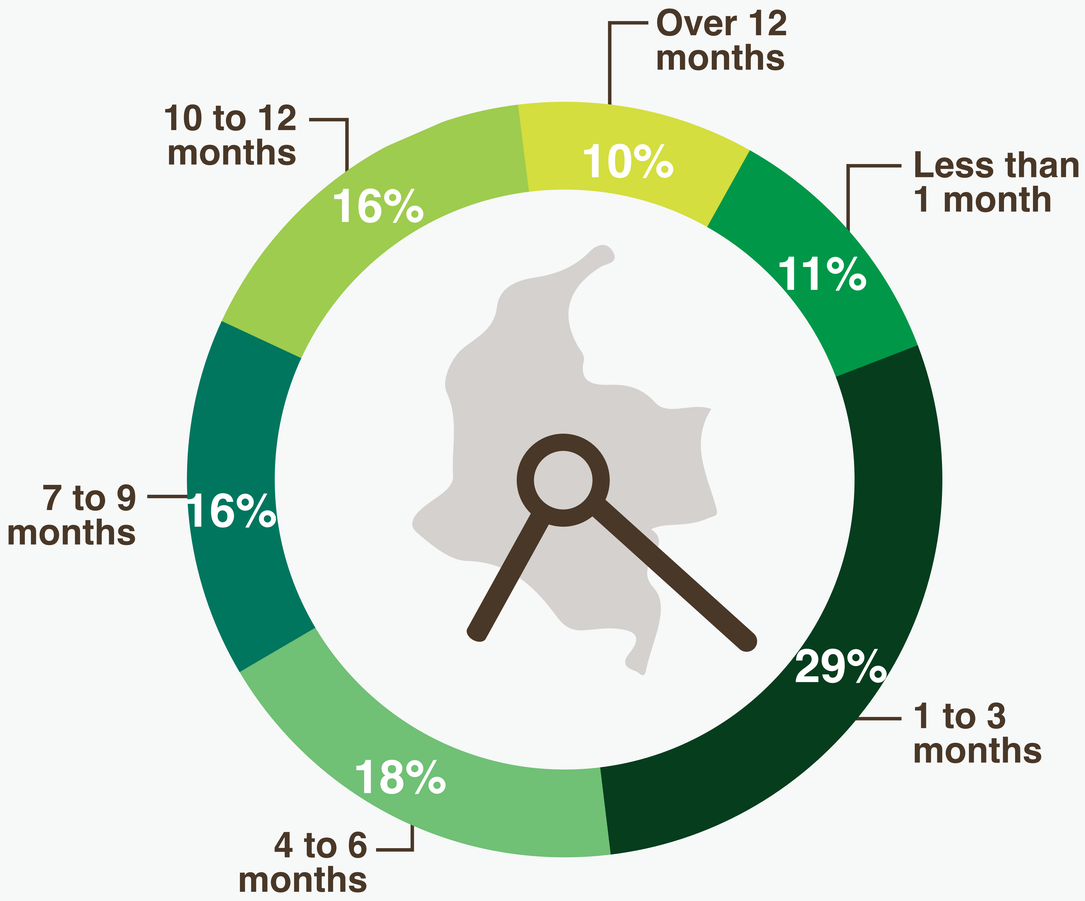
Migration status of participants



- In process
- Nationalized Colombian
- Irregular
- Special Stay Permit (PEP)
- Refugee
- Visitor’s visa


Places of origin in Venezuela
Number of surveyed
43
5
2
15
4
1
13
3
N/R 30
Carirubana
Punto Fijo
Coro
Jesús Enrique Lossada
Mara
Almirante Padilla
Maracaibo
Puertos de Altagracia
La concepción
San Francisco
Cabimas
Lagunilla
Machiques
Bonilla
Iribarren
San Felipe
Barquisimeto
Jiménez
San Rafael
Ciudad Ojeda
Trujillo
Urdaneta
Girardot
Libertador
Vargas
Diego Ibarra
Caracas
Maracay
Valencia
Villa de Cura
Baruta
Miranda
Santa cruz
Venezuela

Length of stay in Colombia



Sources of income*

113 Informal work

13 Donations

9 Formal work

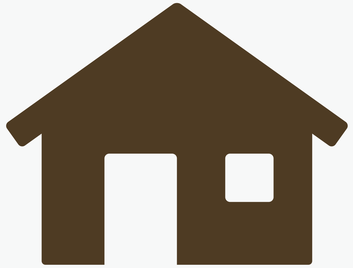
22 From family/ friends

35 Public assistance/ humanitarian aid

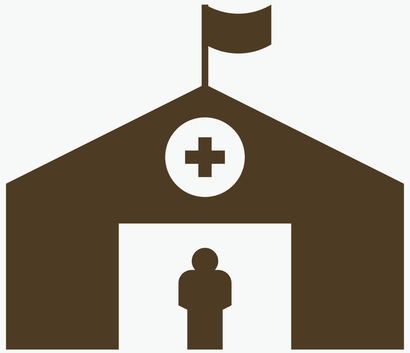
*Some migrants named more than one income source

Housing

Street
36%



Home
39%



Shelter
12%

Other
13%

Perceptions of Local Community

Community Leaders

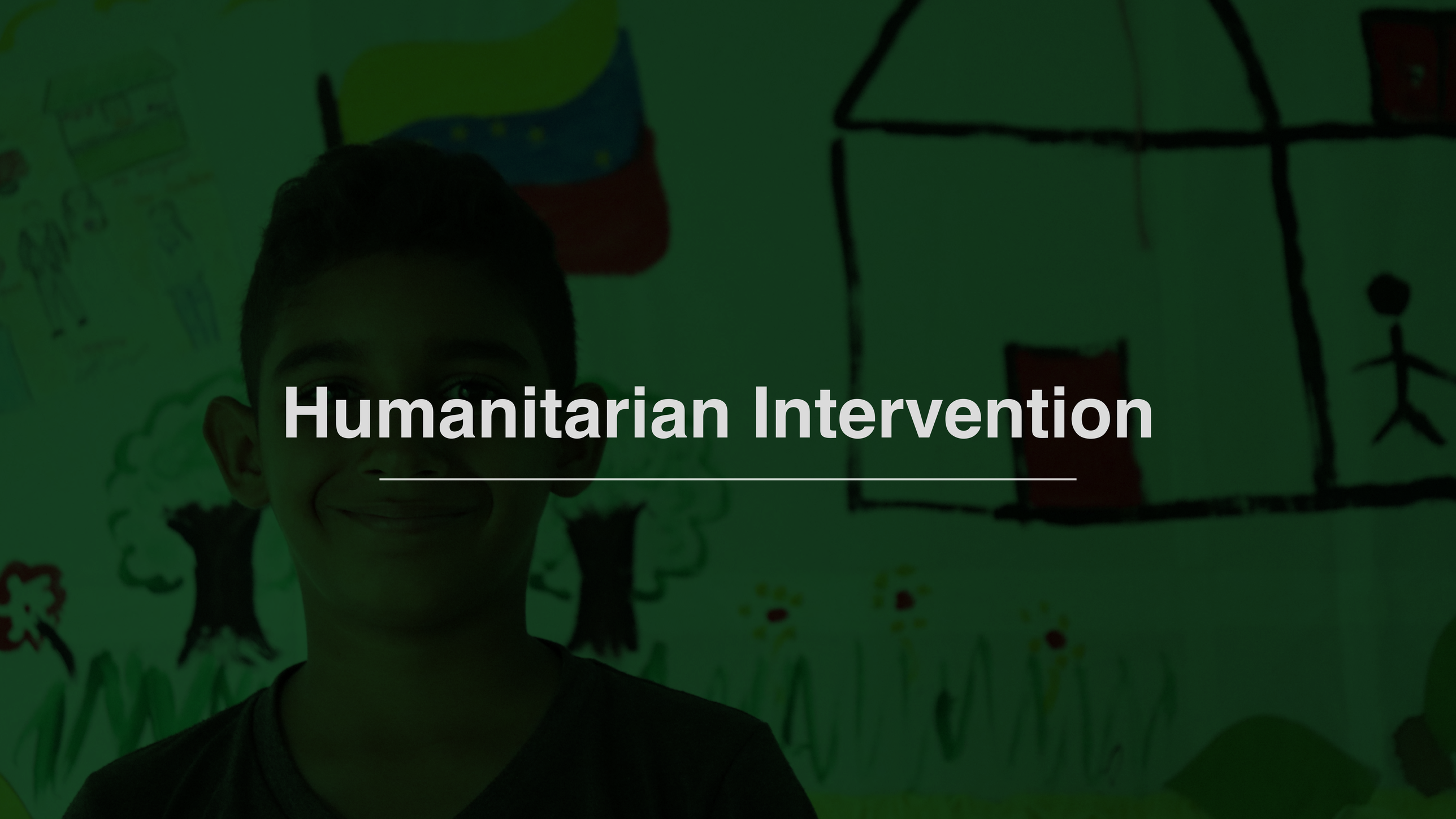
“The Venezuelan is not a stranger for us, [...] we have always kept in contact with them. The problem now is that we have never interacted with them in the situation they are facing. **That is where the conflict has generated.”**

“It is true that many migrants that came here are facing needs, but there are also Colombian families in La Guajira who are hungry, who live on the streets, who are suffering, who have epidemics, and who are **not really receiving the relevant help.”**

Representatives of Local Institutions

“We see some substantial changes because **everything has collapsed**. For example, the health system has collapsed, employment and security [...]. We have crises in all sectors and we have **no capacity to react.”**

“You imagine how **in the beginning, the people welcomed them with affection** [...] because here in this area, we don't forget all that what we received from Venezuela in the past.”



Humanitarian Intervention

Aid received from public and private organizations*

*The total sample was 174. Some migrants reported having received more than one type of aid.

Principal Needs of Migrants*

*The total sample was 174. Some migrants reported having more than one type of need.

Discrimination and Human Rights

Violations Experienced by Migrants*

9 Physical aggression

8 Threats

5 Forced labor

4 Extortion

7 Arbitrary displacement

7 Sexual exploitation

32 Verbal abuse

2 Kidnapping

1 Sexual harassment

* 55 out of 174 surveyed, reported some violation of their human rights. Some migrants named more than one type of discrimination and/or rights violation.

Gaps and Opportunities

Gaps

Accommodation

Food

Employment

Training & education

Social cohesion

Management of information

Opportunities

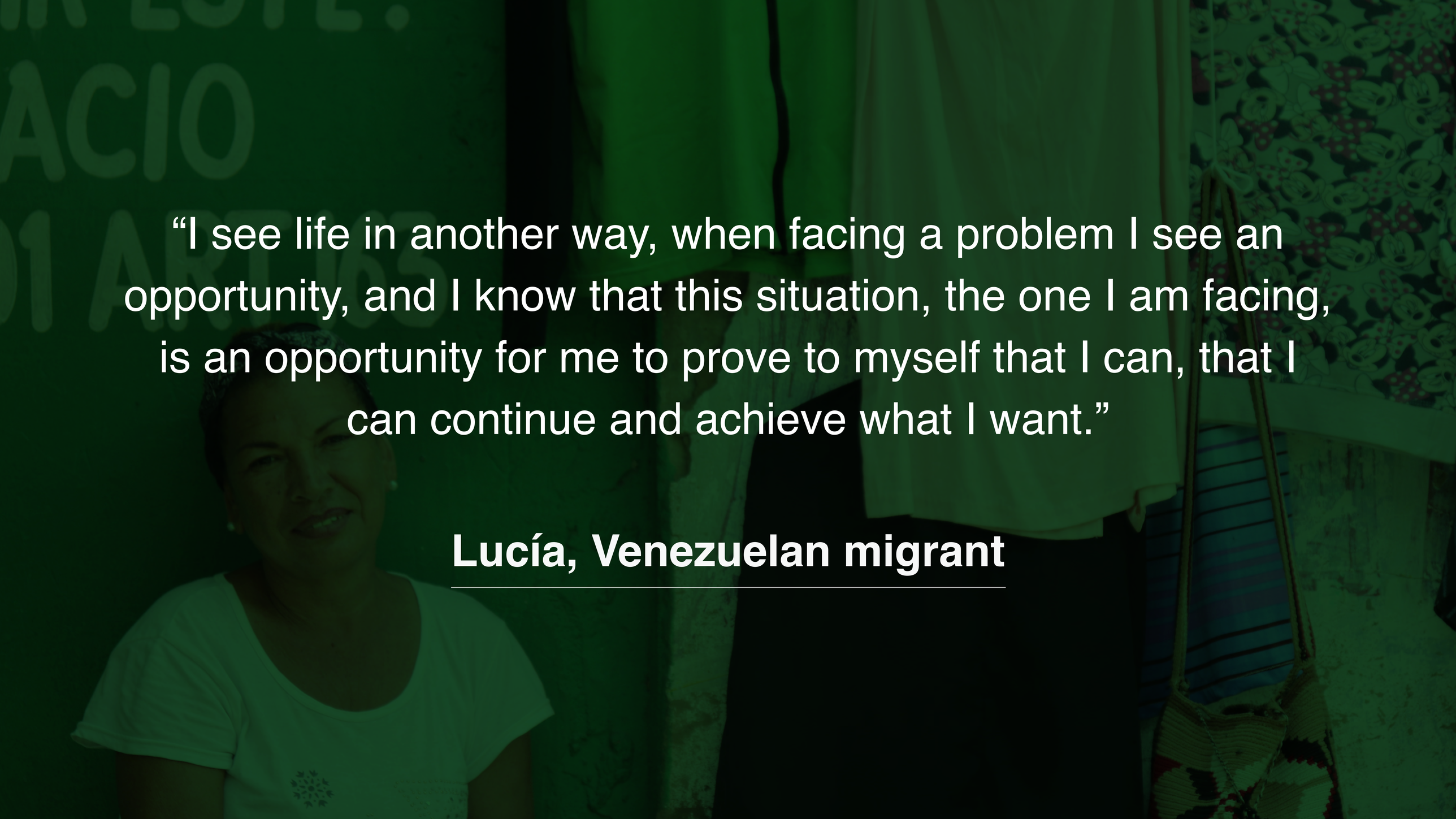
Skilled labor

Entrepreneurship

Arts and crafts

Shared economic and sociocultural past

Consumption



“I see life in another way, when facing a problem I see an opportunity, and I know that this situation, the one I am facing, is an opportunity for me to prove to myself that I can, that I can continue and achieve what I want.”

Lucía, Venezuelan migrant

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EXOVERA

Sayara and Exovera carried out a regional media monitoring in five countries of South America (Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia), in order to understand the media sentiments on ten narratives that address the migration of Venezuelans.

Exovera Narratives is a tool that provides a framework to automatically organize vast amounts of media information the way human brains might. The technology uses proprietary iterated neural network deep learning and machine-driven NLP (natural language processing) processes to detect and quantify narrative currents as they play out in the world's media.

Regional Findings

The 30-day monitoring, carried out from December 2018 to January 2019, yielded the following results:

*Total of articles collected 8,830, total articles containing one or more narratives 3,415, total annotations 4,642.

Percent (%) of Articles by Immigration Narrative by Country & Total (27 December 2018 - 26 January 2019)

Narrative	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador	Peru	5-Country Total
Venezuela migration issue is a crisis	37.6%	24.4%	37.9%	38.3%	34.0%	**36.4%**
Venezuelans are destabilizing, bring violence, insecurity, delinquency	3.3%	2.4%	11.1%	19.8%	12.3%	**7.5%**
The Venezuelans take away/steal our jobs	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	1.8%	**0.4%**
We can't afford to take care of Venezuelans, we need to take care of our own first	2.1%	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%	3.0%	**1.7%**
We need to better control our borders/send migrants home	8.2%	7.3%	9.3%	22.8%	9.3%	**9.8%**
We should welcome the Venezuelans/help our brothers and sisters	18.6%	6.9%	18.8%	14.4%	22.3%	**17.8%**
Venezuelan migrants are just victims, they are not at fault	2.8%	3.7%	8.5%	11.7%	15.4%	**6.3%**
We need international community support to help Venezuelans	2.8%	4.9%	10.6%	7.7%	9.3%	**5.9%**
The international community should get involved	42.9%	62.2%	43.8%	34.9%	55.4%	**45.0%**
International community intervention will only make things worse	4.9%	11.4%	3.7%	4.7%	5.1%	**5.1%**
Total (exceeds 100% because articles frequently contain multiple narratives)	**123.3%**	**123.6%**	**145.3%**	**155.7%**	**168.1%**	**135.9%**

At the regional level, the most prominent narratives were "the international community should get involved" (diplomatically, calling for dialogue to avoid a disaster, etc.) and "the Venezuela migration issue is a crisis".

We observed a spike in some narratives linked to specific events, such as the killing of a pregnant Ecuadorian woman by her Venezuelan partner, and the subsequent response by the Ecuadorian government (mid January, 2019).

Conclusions

1. The migration crisis is amplifying/intensifying **pre-existing socioeconomic problems** in a historically-forgotten region

2. Humanitarian **aid has been key but insufficient** to attend the growing demand – emergency assistance with little long-term planning

3. Programs and policies should include **all vulnerable populations** in host societies to mitigate tensions that may give way to xenophobic clashes between foreign and host populations, including:

- Community **social cohesion** programs as critical for stabilizing crisis and creating **resilience** within host communities

- Focus on developing rapid and **responsive communication channels** between governments, civil society, host communities and migrant populations

Thank you!

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