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THE MIGRATION PULSE

Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador

HIGHLIGHTS

- It is estimated that nearly 3.6 million people have migrated out of Venezuela as of May 2019. Out of these, nearly three in five have migrated to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Food shortages (32%) and high food prices (25%), followed by lack of work (24%) and insecurity and violence (24%) were the most frequently reported reasons for leaving the country.
- In the host countries, Venezuelans are mostly concerned about lack of work/unemployment (40%) and not being able to work due to an irregular migration status (28%). This was followed by discrimination and exploitation (21%), and the lack of affordable housing (15%).
- Food consumption remains a concern for many migrants. Sixty-three percent of Venezuelans are concerned about not having enough food to eat in their host countries. Single women living with children and women living alone tend to be more concerned than men in the same situation.
- Overall, 15 percent reported eating only one meal during the previous day. Compromising food consumption was found to be particularly higher among migrants in Colombia.
- A majority of Venezuelans are applying food-based coping strategies (63%). Among all respondents, 18 percent reported skipping meals or eating smaller portion sizes and 17 percent have gone a whole day without eating in the past month. Venezuelans who migrated in 2019 tend to be applying more severe coping strategies than those who left their country in 2017 or 2018.
- While host communities are less concerned about having enough food to eat compared to migrants, there is still a fairly high proportion who adopted food-based coping strategies (49%).
- Despite facing difficulties, large proportions of the host communities showed neutral or positive attitudes towards Venezuelans. Nevertheless, some respondents raised concerns about impacts on employment, as well as increasing crime rates and living costs.

Background

According to the 2019 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, an estimated 3.6 million Venezuelans have decided to leave the country and it is projected that by the end of the year, this number may reach up to 5.3 million people.¹ Colombia is hosting over 1.1 million Venezuelans, which includes people who decide to stay, people in transition to other countries, and those moving back and forward between Colombia and Venezuela. Peru is the second largest destination country in the region, while Ecuador is an important transit country, with a majority of Venezuelans transiting to Peru.

As the situation inside Venezuela and host countries continues to be extremely dynamic, it is critical to monitor how it changes over time and how it is affecting the needs of displaced Venezuelans and affected host communities. The Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping unit (VAM) in Headquarters in close collaboration with the VAM team in the Regional Bureau in Panama (RBP) designed and implemented a web survey² with the objective to better understand and assess the overall situation of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well as the challenges they face along their journey and in respective host countries. A similar web survey was administered to affected host communities to assess their situation and perceptions in relation to the arrival of Venezuelans in their respective countries. This report presents the key findings of these web-surveys.

Methodology and coverage

The survey ran in all three host countries in March 2019. It was comprised of both close-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for a complementary quantitative and qualitative analysis. In total, **761 Venezuelan migrants** were surveyed: **253 in Colombia**, **246 in Ecuador** and **262 in Peru**.³ Only migrants who left Venezuela since 2017 were considered, and the survey covered migrants who have settled, those who are still on the move as well as circular migrants who are moving back and forward. The latter make up about 24 percent of the sample. Respondents originated from all states in Venezuela. In addition, **11,506 host community members** were surveyed in areas with high concentrations of Venezuelans: **3,786 in Colombia**, **4,824 in Ecuador** and **2,896 in Peru**.

Given the nature of the web-based methodology, this survey only covers literate internet users. However, internet is widely available and used across the three countries.⁴ To mitigate against biases introduced by the technology, a weighting system was introduced. For each target group, a specific weight was assigned to each respondent based on the age and sex composition of the respective populations.⁵

Figure 1: Geographic coverage of the web survey



Borders on the map do not necessarily represent recognized international borders.

¹ All figures mentioned are from the Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (December 2018): Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela: <https://r4v.info/en/documents/download/67282>.

² WFP contracted RIWI Corporation to implement web-based surveys using its patented Random Domain Intercept Technology (RDIT™). Detailed information regarding RDIT can be found on the service provider's website: <https://riwi.com/>

³ The minimum sample requirement was 240 (90% confidence interval and a margin of error inferior to 6%) for each group, which was reached and exceeded for all.

⁴ World Bank (2017): Individuals using the internet (% of population): <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/it.net.user.zs>.

⁵ Colombia: migrant population figures are based on a study conducted by the Colombian Ministry of Exterior:

<http://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/venezuela/TODO%20sobre%20Venezuela.pdf>

Ecuador: migrant population figures are based on a WFP study in Ecuador in 2019.

Peru: Due to limited data in Peru, it was assumed that the distribution of migrants was similar to the one in Ecuador as a majority of migrants transit from Ecuador to Peru. Hence, the age and sex distribution of migrants in Ecuador was used to calculate the weights in Peru.

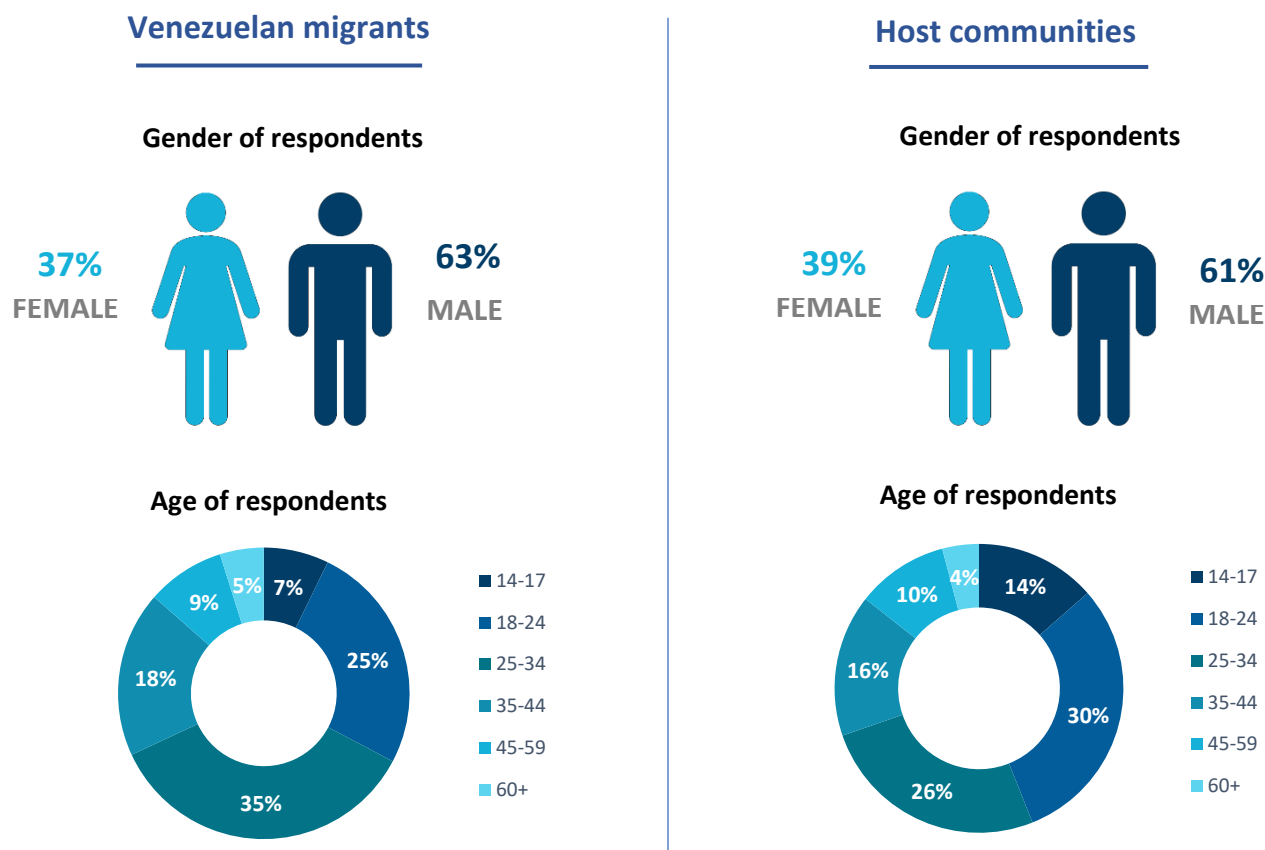
Colombia: population figures are based on OCHA's [Populations Estimates and Projections 1985-2020](#)

Ecuador: population figures are based on the National Institute for Statistics and Census' [Population Projections 2010-2020](#)

Peru: population figures are based on the National Institute for Statistics and Information's [Population Estimates and Projections 1950-2050](#)

Profile of survey respondents

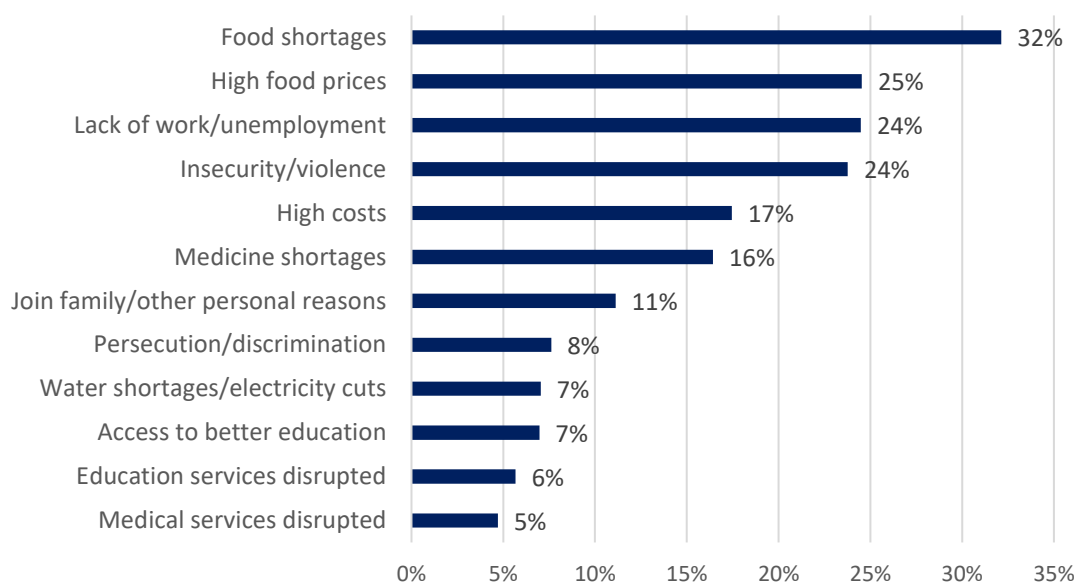
Of the Venezuelan migrant respondents, 37 percent were women and 68 percent were below 35 years of age. In the actual migrant population in Colombia and Ecuador, about half are women and 70 to 80 percent are below the age of 35. Similar findings were found among host communities, with 39 percent of women respondents and 70 percent below the age of 35. The survey reached and captured the voices of all sex and age groups and sample weights were introduced to compensate for any bias to reflect the actual population distribution.



Drivers of displacement

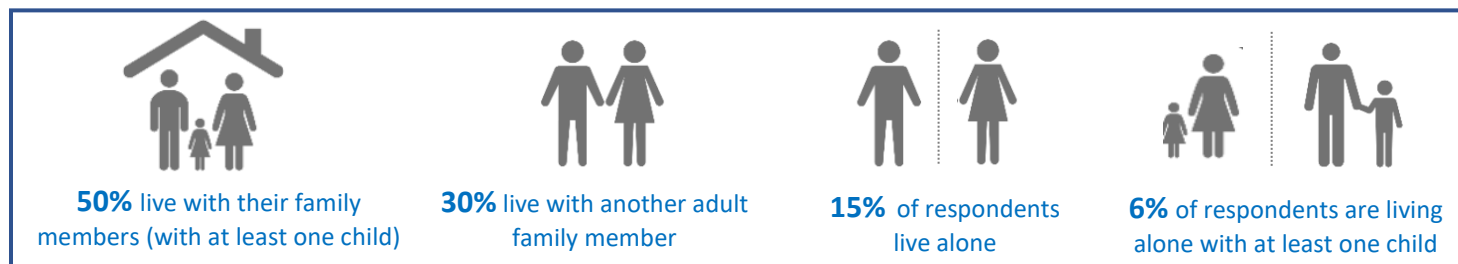
Venezuelan migrants were asked to select the two main reasons why they ultimately decided to leave Venezuela. When combining these drivers, food clearly comes out as the main factor driving people to leave. In fact, respondents across all three host countries reported food shortages (32%) and high food prices (25%), followed by lack of work (24%), insecurity and violence (24%) and high costs of non-food essential goods and services (17%) as the main reason for leaving the country. Fourteen percent of respondents also mentioned they left for other reasons.

Figure 3: Main drivers of migration
(Multiple response - top 2)



Living situation in host countries

Of the Venezuelan respondents, the majority reported living with other immediate family members. Fifteen percent reported living alone, of which more than one third are women, and 7 percent are minors (14-17 years old). Another 6 percent are single persons living alone with at least one child under 18, of which 43 percent are women. On average, the household size reported across all host countries was three people.



In terms of accommodation arrangements, 39 percent of migrants said to be renting a room or a small space for themselves and their family, while 34 percent are renting an apartment or a house. Another 11 percent reported to either be hosted for free or living in a shelter provided by a humanitarian organization. More concerning, 7 percent of respondents said to be living on the street or the beach. The remaining reported other accommodation types.

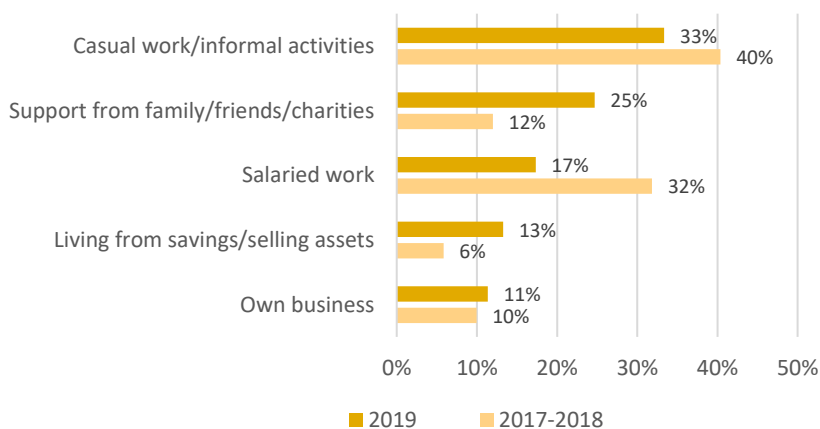


Notably, accommodation arrangements change by year of migration. In fact, 20 percent of Venezuelan migrants who arrived in 2019 reported to be homeless, living either on the street or beach. This compares to only 5 percent of migrants who left Venezuela in 2018 and 2017. Moreover, 7 percent of Venezuelans who arrived in 2019 live in shelter provided by humanitarian organizations compared to only 3 percent of those who arrived in 2018 and 2017. Those who have stayed longer are more likely to rent a house or an apartment: 42 of those who left in 2017, 33 percent of those who left in 2018 and only 22% of those who left in 2019. This could indicate different wealth levels of migrants who left Venezuela during different years, but could also be an indication of increased integration over time. The assessment also found that in Peru, there is a higher share of Venezuelans who are renting a room or small space (53%) compared to Colombia (35%) and Ecuador (36%).

Livelihood activities in host countries

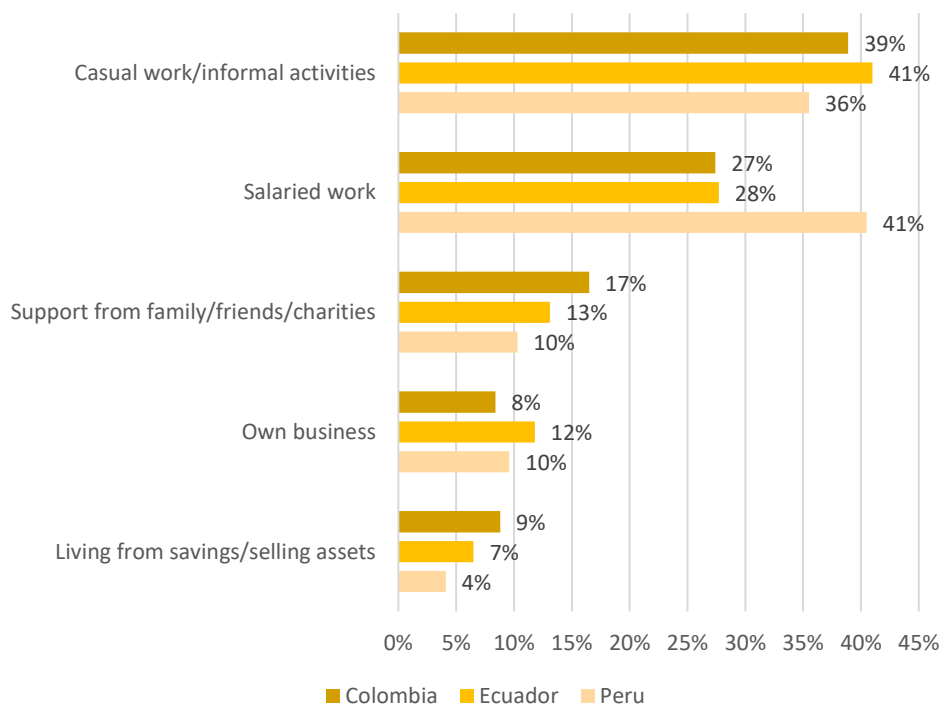
The main sources of income reported were informal and casual work (39%), salaried work (30%) followed by support from family or charities (14%), own business/trade (10%), and living from savings or selling assets (7%). Women tend to be relying slightly more on informal and casual work (41%) compared to men (38%). A decisive factor is also the year of departure, with people who moved in 2019 relying to a much greater extent on support and from depleting their savings and other resources (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Main livelihood activities by year of departure



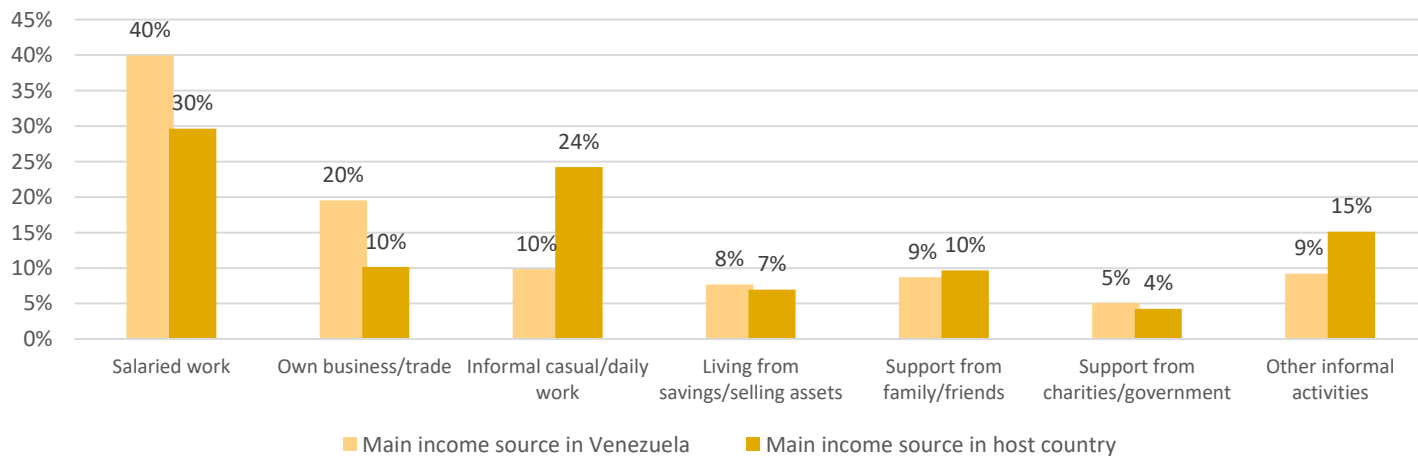
Income sources varied across the different host countries (see figure 5). Noticeable is the high percentage of Venezuelans in Peru receiving a regular salary. Support was also found to be higher among Venezuelans in Colombia.

Figure 5: Main livelihood activities in host countries



Respondents were also asked about their main income source in Venezuela before they migrated (see figure 6). In comparison, income sources in host countries have become much more unstable with many more people relying on informal casual labour and other informal activities compared to before.

Figure 6: Change in livelihoods

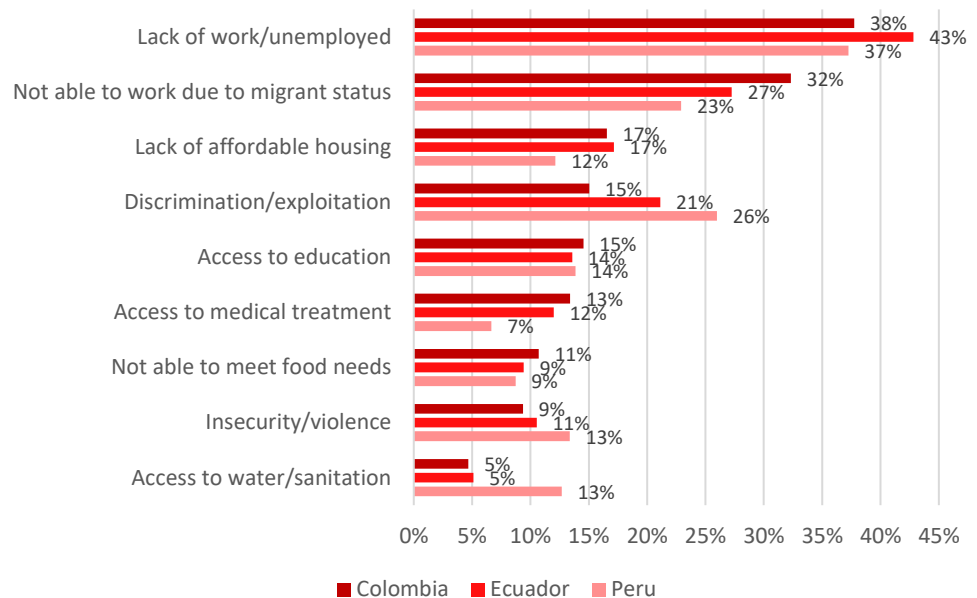


Main concerns of migrants

As a proxy to better understand the needs of Venezuelan migrants in host countries, respondents were asked about the top two main concerns they are currently facing. When results are combined, respondents across all three host countries reported lack of work (40%), and not being able to work due to irregular migratory status (28%). This was followed by discrimination and exploitation (20%), lack of affordable housing (16%) and access to education (14%). It is worth noting that women are slightly more concerned about the lack of employment (42%) compared to men (39%). In addition, women are also more concerned about access to education (16%) than men (12%). Men, however reported discrimination and exploitation (21%) to a greater extent than women (18%). Overall, only 10 percent of respondents reported not being able to meet food needs as their top 2 concerns, but this may be related to the fact that their access to food is now relatively better compared to the situation in Venezuela.

Figure 7: Migrants' main concerns in host countries

Figure 7: Migrants' main concerns in host countries
(Multiple response - top 2)



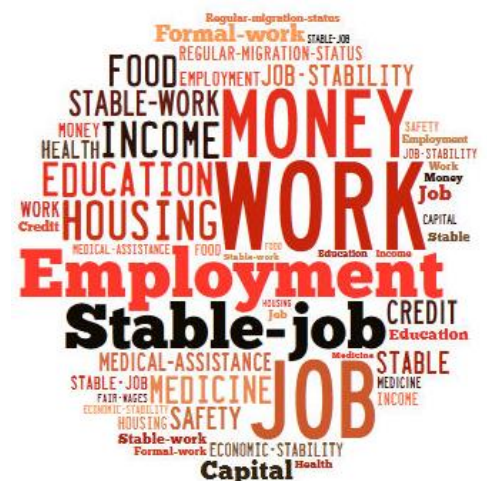
In the words of respondents - Migrants

Venezuelan migrants were asked an open-ended question about the type of help they would need to improve their situation in their current location. Employment, job stability, regular migration status and housing were most often reported.

One Venezuelan woman expressed the urgent need for: *“A job to support food and rent expenses, as well as sending money to family back home”*, while a Venezuelan man mentioned the need to *“work formally through a regular migration status”*.

Housing was also an issue frequently quoted: “*we do not have beds to sleep in. We sleep on mattresses on the floor, we have nothing*”. Some respondents also referred to the issue of discrimination and xenophobia in host countries. A young male reported: “*I need a better job, where I am not discriminated against*”.

What type of help do you need to improve your situation in your current location?

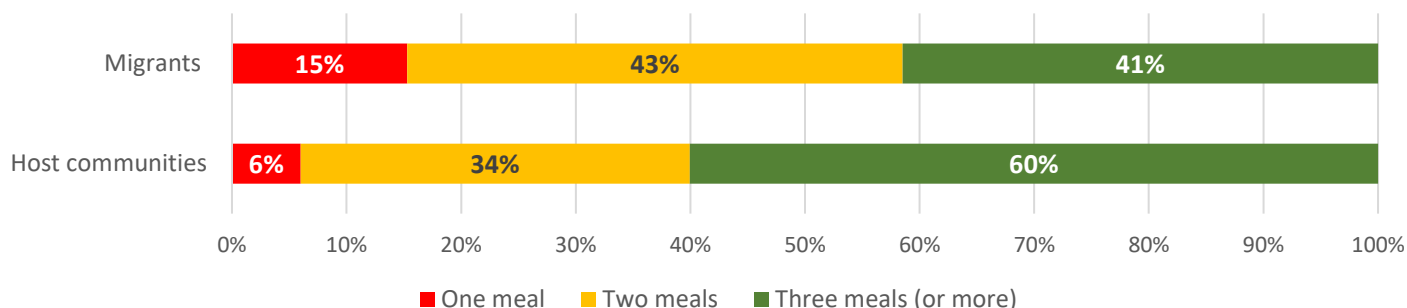


⁶ UNHCR (March 2018): Venezuela Situation. Responding to the needs of people displaced from Venezuela: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Venezuela%20Situation%202018%20Supplementary%20Appeal.pdf>

Food security situation

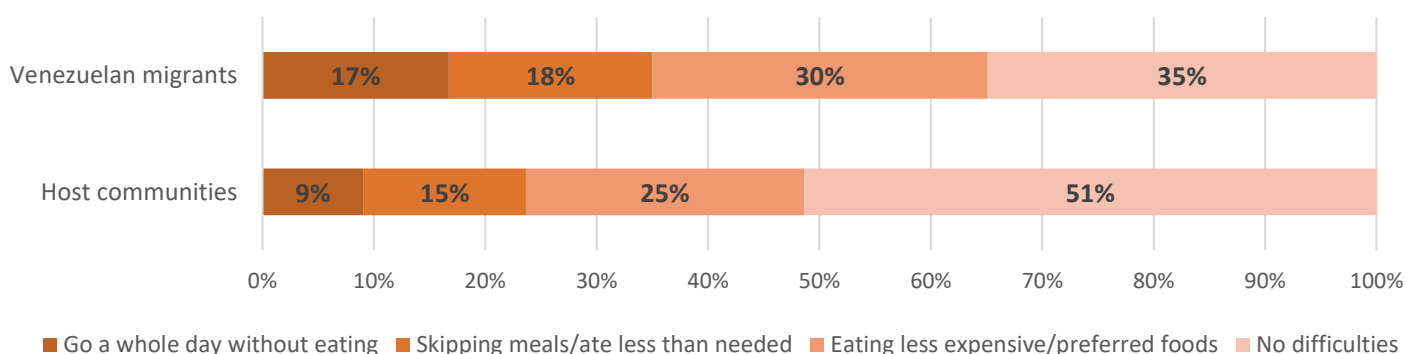
Overall, 63 percent of Venezuelan migrants expressed that they were worried about not having enough food to eat. This compares to 44 percent of host communities. Single women living with at least one child (84%) and women living alone (69%) tend to be more concerned than men in the same situation (68% and 52% respectively). In terms of food consumption, a majority of Venezuelans reported consuming two or three meals in the previous day, while 15 percent reported eating only one meal. Women tend to be compromising the number of meals eaten in a day more than men, with 16 percent reporting eating only once compared to 14 percent of men. Among host communities, 6 percent reported eating only one meal.

Figure 8: Number of meals consumed in the previous day - migrants and hosts



Applying food based coping strategies due to the lack of food or means to buy food was widespread. Results from the survey show that nearly one in five Venezuelans skipped meals or ate smaller portion sizes than needed in the past 30 days. Another 17 percent reported that they went at least one whole day without eating over the past 30 days. This was also found to be particularly high among single women living with a child below 18 and women living alone (both 21%) compared to single men with children (20%) and men living alone (12%). Although to a lesser extent, a group of host communities are also changing their consumption behaviors to meet their food needs (see figure 9).

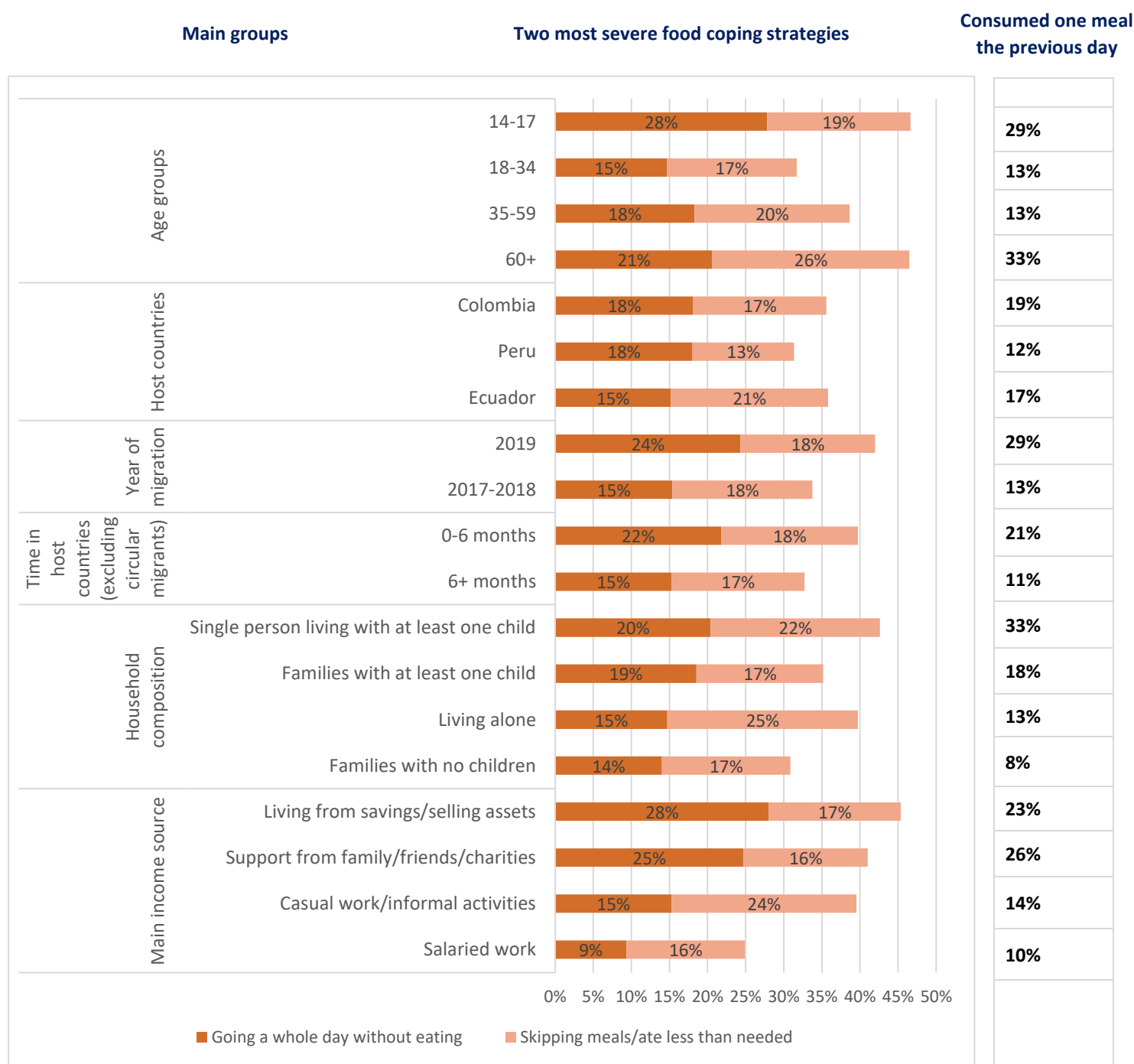
Figure 9: Food coping strategies - migrants and hosts



Who are the food insecure Venezuelans?

Food security status varied according to key characteristics of respondents. Figure 10 provides a summary of these variations. Minors (14-17) and the older generation of migrants (60+) are both applying more severe coping strategies and compromising their food consumption to a greater extent than other age groups. Moreover, migrants in Colombia are slightly worst off than those in Ecuador and Peru.

Figure 10: Food coping and food consumption by migrant groups



Recently arrived migrants (2019) as well as migrants who have been established in host country for 6 months or less were found to be more food insecure than those who arrived earlier and those who have been established for a longer period, with a higher proportion of respondents applying extreme coping strategies and eating only one meal per day. Noticeable

are also those migrants with children under-18 tend to be more food insecure than people living alone or families without children under-18. Migrants with very unstable livelihoods, including depending on savings or selling their assets as well as those living off of support from families, friends or charities are particularly more vulnerable to food insecurity than other groups and deserve special attention.

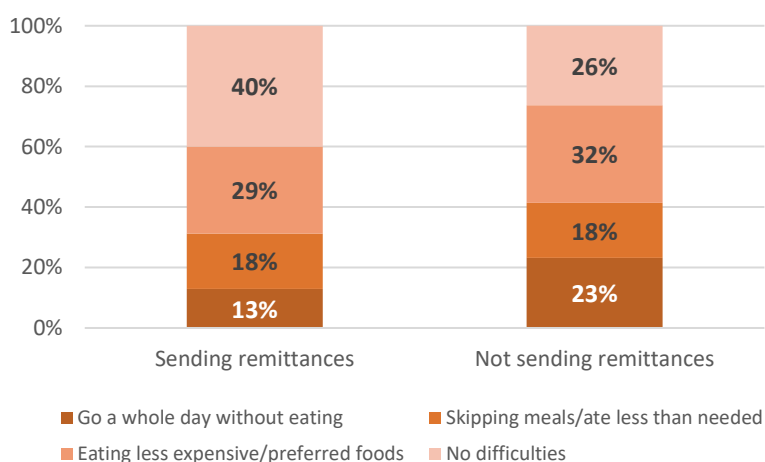
Family left behind and role remittances

Nearly one in two Venezuelans reported that they left immediate family members behind in Venezuela. Of these respondents, 38 percent said to have left their partner and child(ren) behind, 34 percent left only their child(ren) and 28 percent left their partner. These findings were supported by previous assessments. According to IOM (2018), half of Venezuelan migrants interviewed in Peru had left minors in Venezuela.⁷ Similar findings were also confirmed by a WFP assessment conducted in 2018, where many Venezuelans living in Colombia reported to have children still living in Venezuela.

Sixty-three percent of respondents reported to be sending remittances back home. Out of these, 70 percent are sending money, 12 percent are sending goods and 18 percent are sending money and goods. Twenty-eight percent said that they did not send remittances because they could not afford it. Figure 11 shows that overall those able to send remittances generally tend to engage less in food coping strategies.

Out of those who left immediate family back home, 71 percent are sending remittances. This compares to 56 percent of those who did not leave family behind. Additionally, a higher percentage of Venezuelans in Peru are sending remittances (73%) compared to Venezuelans in Colombia (62%) and Ecuador (60%).

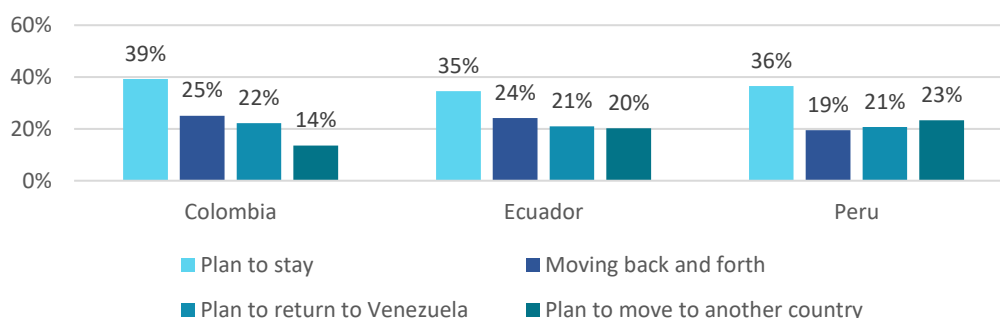
Figure 11: Remittances and food coping



Intentions to stay or move on

Among the sample, 37 percent of Venezuelans migrants plan to stay in their current location, while 21 percent plan to return to Venezuela. Another 24 percent reported to be moving back and forth between Venezuela and their host country, and 18 percent plan to move to another country. Not surprisingly, those with families left in Venezuela were more inclined to wish to return. Figure 12 shows the difference in intentions by host country.

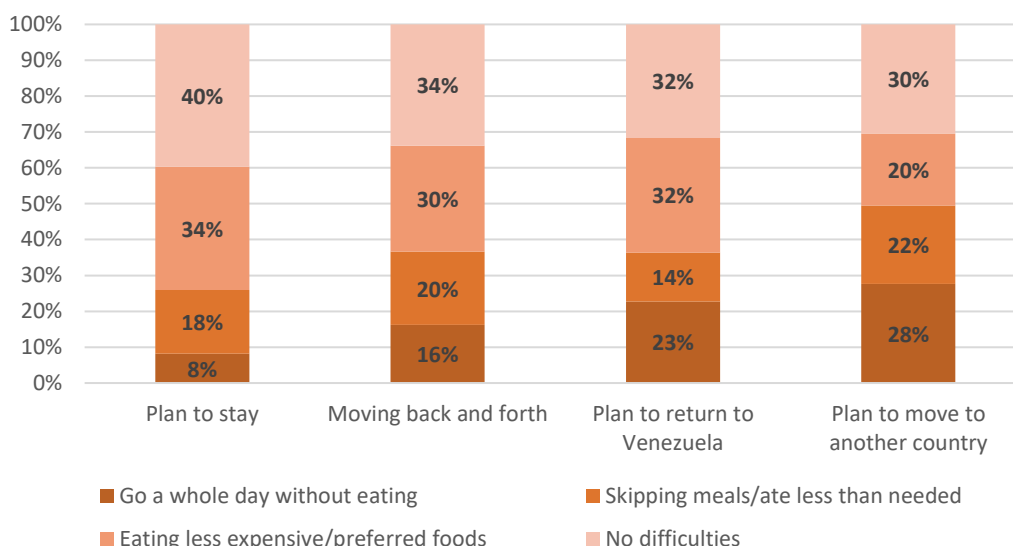
Figure 12: Intentions to stay or move by host country



⁷ IOM (November 2018): DTM – Flow Monitoring of the Venezuelan Population in Peru: https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/DTM_R4%20-%20English.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=5154

Figure 13 illustrates that those who plan to move onwards to another country tend to apply more severe food coping strategies compared to other groups, indicating that people who are on the move have not yet found the conditions to stabilize and also that food security does play a role in the decision for people to stay or move on.

Figure 13: Food coping strategies by intentions to stay or move



Final destinations also vary according to the host country. Among those wishing to move on from Colombia, their preferred destination is Brazil (24%) followed by the US/Canada (20%). In Ecuador and Peru, respondents indicated Chile as their favored final destination (26% and 29%, respectively).

In the words of the respondents - Migrants

Through an open-ended question, respondents were asked under which condition they would return to Venezuela. Availability of food and medicine, as well as restoring economic-stability, purchasing power and social-safety were most frequently mentioned. This young Venezuelan man expressed this in the following way: *“If we would return, it would only be under the condition that the country reestablishes its social and economic stability, access to education and security for all”*.

Other respondents expressed their wish to remain in their host community, such as this Venezuelan man in Ecuador: *“For the moment we would not return, we like Ecuador, its people and its environment. Here, we can benefit from a stable economy where nobody suffers”*.

Under which condition would you return to Venezuela?



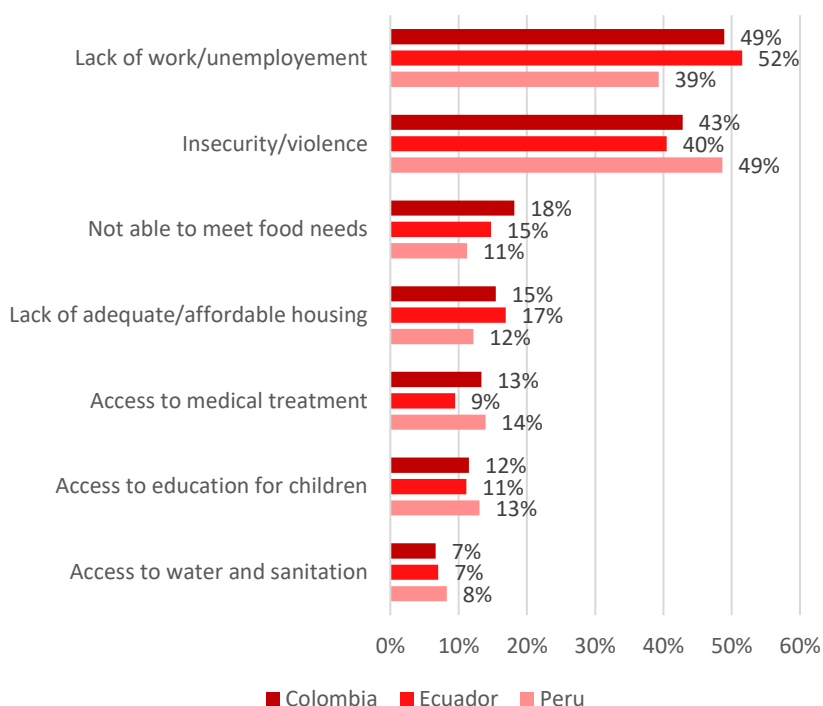
Main concerns of host communities

When asked about their top two concerns, also host communities cited the lack of work/unemployment (49%) as one of their main challenges. This is closely followed by insecurity/violence (42%), demonstrating that safety is a major concern across all three countries (see figure 14). Women tend to be more concerned about insecurity and violence (45%) and unemployment (53%) compared to men (39% and 44%, respectively).

Interestingly, not being able to meet food needs was reported by 16 percent of the host communities. While, overall migrants are consuming less meals and are more likely to adopt food coping strategies, there is a group of host communities that also struggles to meet their food needs.

Across countries, noticeable is the higher share of respondents in Ecuador reporting lack of work/unemployment compared to Colombia and Peru. Moreover, insecurity/violence was found to be a greater concern in Peru than in the other two host countries. Not being able to meet food needs was reported by close to one in five respondents in Colombia.

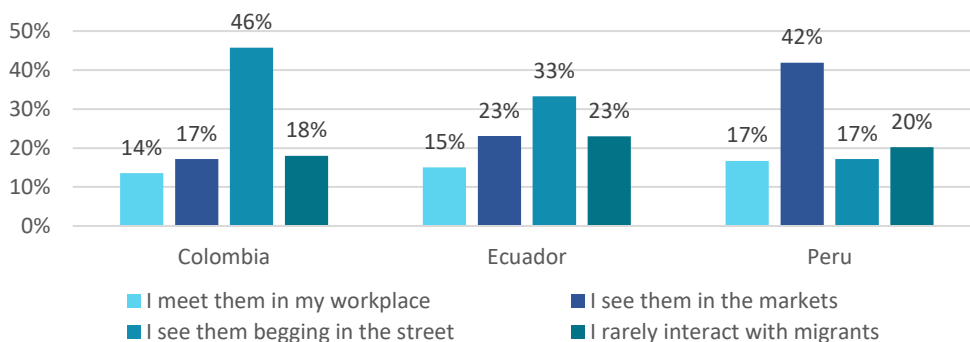
Figure 14: Host communities main concerns
(Multiple response - top 2)



Interactions between migrants and host communities

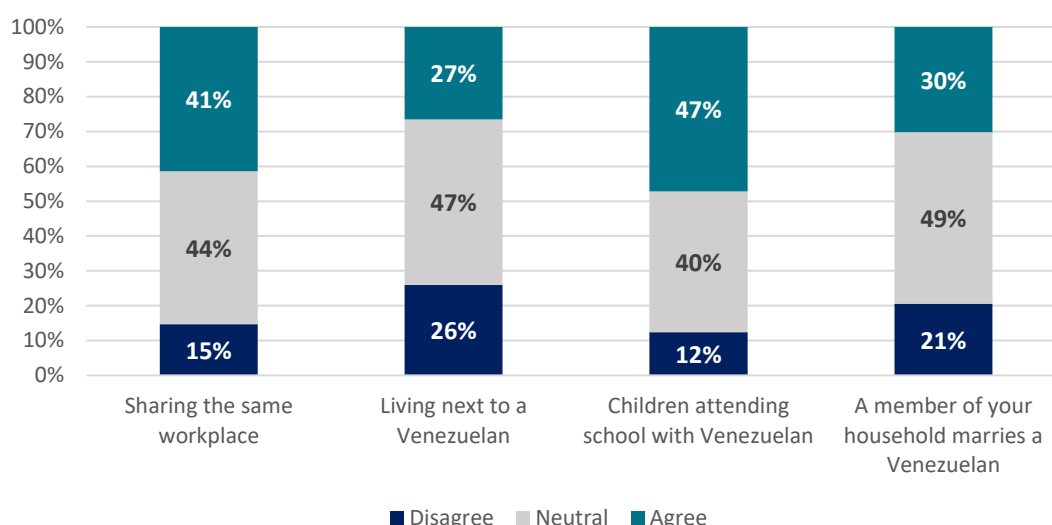
Host communities were asked if they had noticed or experienced change in their communities due to the arrival Venezuelan migrants. Overall, a majority of respondents reported that they did not notice a change, although this varies across host countries. A higher share of respondents in Colombia (54%) and Peru (52%) reported experiencing change compared to Ecuador (44%). Figure 15 illustrates differences in the locations where interactions take place between Venezuelans and host communities. Most strikingly, there is a high percentage of respondents in Colombia who mainly meet Venezuelans begging in the street, an indication that migrants who are able to migrate further may tend to be better off. However, overall relatively few meet Venezuelans in their workplaces.

Figure 15: Locations of interaction between Venezuelan migrants and host communities



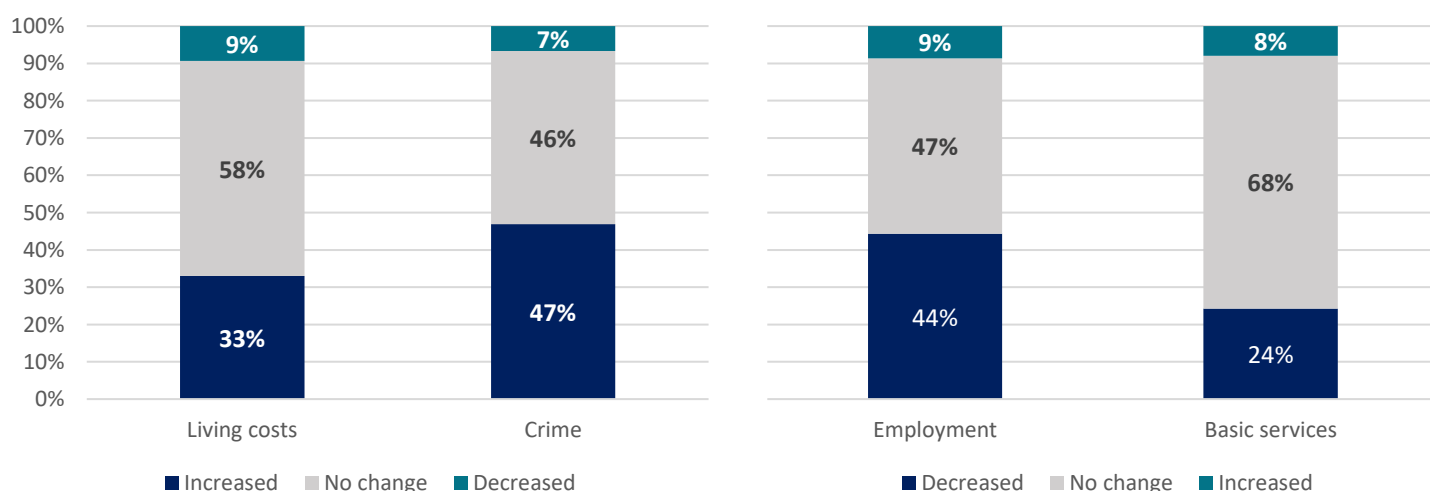
Perceptions of host communities towards Venezuelan migrants were found to be either neutral or positive for the most part (see Figure 16), showing that the general attitude towards migrants is more welcoming than disapproving.

Figure 16: Attitudes towards Venezuelan migrants
(host communities were asked: "do you agree or disagree with...?")



However, host communities did express concerns about potential impacts of Venezuelan migrants on their living conditions and livelihoods. They are concerned about impacts on employment opportunities and crime rates. Some differences were found among host countries. Overall Colombians expressed slightly higher levels of concern. They reported a greater impact on living costs (35%) compared to Ecuador (32%) and Peru (28%). Moreover, the impact on employment was felt as more important in Colombia (46%) and Ecuador (44%) than in Peru (39%). Finally, the impact on crime rate was felt to be greater in Colombia (49%) and Peru (48%) compared to Ecuador (45%).

Figure 17: Perceived impact reported by host communities



In the words of the respondents – host communities

Host communities were asked if they supported Venezuelans and if so, how. Many respondents responded that they were helping by giving food. One young woman in Colombia wrote that *“when Venezuelans pass asking for food, I try as much as possible to give them non-perishable foods to help them”*. Many others also said that they gave support through buying their products, such as this woman in Ecuador who wrote: *“I try to support by teaching our dialect so they feel more included, as well as buying the products they sell to help them bring income to their families in need.”* In Peru, respondents said to be helping by trying to find jobs for Venezuelans, having them work in local businesses, to promote integration.

Concluding remarks

The remote assessment in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru found that there is a significant group of Venezuelans who are highly vulnerable to food insecurity despite reporting less concern to meet food needs in their current location – as they most likely perceive their situation as better as before. The food coping and food consumption indicators in this survey point to specific groups of migrants that require special attention.

Across all host countries, **women migrants** tend to be more concerned about having enough food to eat and compromising their food consumption more than men. The analysis revealed that single women living with children and women living alone are particularly more vulnerable, as a high majority worry about food and adopted extreme food coping strategies to bridge food gaps compared to men in the same situation. **Younger people** between 14-17 years as well as the **older generation** (60+) also reported significantly higher levels of severe food coping compared to other age groups. In addition, Venezuelans who have **recently migrated** (2019), who have been **established for a short period** (0-6 months) as well as those **living in Colombia** are struggling more to meet their food needs. Instability of income is directly correlated with vulnerability to food insecurity. In fact, Venezuelans **depending on support** or **living from savings or selling assets** were also found to apply higher levels of extreme food coping mechanisms and eating only once in the previous day.

One in three Venezuelans expressed their **plan to stay** in their current host country, while one in five intend to move back and forth between Venezuela and their host country. Those who did report desire to continue their journey to another country tend to be more food insecure, indicating that food security does play a role in people's decisions to stay or continue their journey.

Despite expressing less concern about having enough food to eat in comparison to migrants, meeting food needs was reported as one of the main challenges faced by **host communities**. In fact, nearly half of host communities surveyed reported to be applying food coping strategies. In addition to food, there is a growing concern of insecurity and violence, which has been especially reported by women in host communities across all three countries. Overall, large parts of the host communities were found to have a neutral to positive attitude towards Venezuelans, despite some concerns of discrimination and exploitation reported by Venezuelans.

As the situation inside Venezuela continues to be extremely volatile and the number of migrants is expected to significantly grow by the end of 2019, it is recommended to **monitor the situation of displaced Venezuelans** and affected host communities over time. Concerns and intentions are likely to change as new dynamics emerge in host countries. Evidence shows that continuing support to both Venezuelans and impacted host communities is fundamental. On-going or recently completed assessments in host countries will allow for ground-truthing of these web-survey results, while defining more detailed characteristics of groups to be targeted for assistance.



vam
food security analysis

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