

Protection Monitoring Report

UNHCR Brazil

August 2021

I. Introduction and Context

In 2018, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, set up a regional tool to monitor the protection needs and situation of persons that have been forced to leave their country, focusing initially on the Venezuelan Situation. Protection Monitoring is a key process of UNHCR's response and entails the systematic verification and analysis of the violation of rights and protection needs of persons of concern (PoCs) over an extended period. Prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, UNHCR Brazil and partners conducted face-to-face interviews with PoCs with a geographical focus on the state of Roraima.

The current COVID-19 context and measures adopted by States in response to the pandemic required UNHCR and partners to adapt its data collection methodology. This report covers the results of the third of four rounds of data collection to be repeated on a quarterly basis throughout 2021. Data collection was conducted nationwide during the first two weeks of August 2021.

II. Methodology

The third round of UNHCR's 2021 protection monitoring data collection included two different modalities. It focused on (i) a self-administered questionnaire accessed by asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants via online channels (UNHCR and partners disseminated links to the online questionnaire through existing communication channels¹ to respondents who submitted their results through mobile phones or electronic devices), and (ii) remote interviews as well as some in-person interviews specifically in the state of Roraima.

The sampling of this exercise followed a convenience / non-probability methodology, i.e., sample was selected based on accessibility to the population, as respondents most likely would have had prior contact with UNHCR and/or partners and/or access to mobile phones or electronic devices with internet connection.

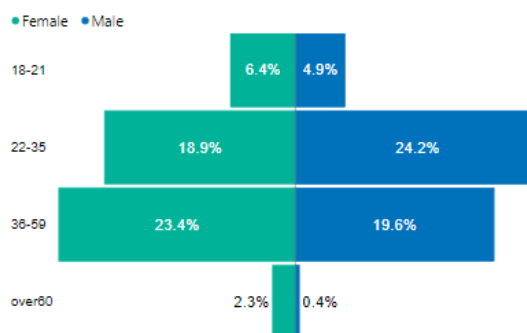
Therefore, the results below are not statistically representative and cannot be extrapolated to the whole population. 114 responses were obtained via the self-administered channel, 316 via remote/in-person interviews totaling 430 responses.

¹ Dissemination included existing and trusted information and communication channels with persons of concern such as the UNHCR [Help Platform](#), social media, WhatsApp groups and community networks.



- **430** questionnaires / **1585** individuals
- **8** distinct nationalities
- Residing in **13** States in Brazil

Head of family 2:



III. Demographic information

- **Average family size:** 3.68 members
- **Heads of family:** 51% of those who identified as heads of family are female.
- **Children:** Almost 68% of families have at least one child.
- **LGBTIQ+:** 11% of those who answered the question on sexual orientation and gender identity identified themselves as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community.
- **Nationalities:** 98% of the population surveyed are Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The remaining respondents are from Colombia, Haiti, Cuba, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria and India.
- **Ethnic group:** 35% of respondents identified as mixed (two or more races / bi-racial); 30% indicated indigenous or native (the increase of indigenous interviewed is due to the focus on some indigenous shelters in Roraima as Janokoida); 11% identified as Caucasians; 8 identified as Black or of African descent and 9% indicated they are unsure about their ethnicity.
- **Time of arrival to the country:** 35% of respondents arrived in Brazil within the last 6 months; 30% arrived between 6 months and 2 years ago; and 35% arrived more than 2 years ago.

IV. Highlights

- **A substantial number of respondents (52%) identify with one or more specific protection needs.** In comparison, around 30% of persons of concern registered with UNHCR in Brazil ³ identify as having at least one specific protection need.
- **59% stated they would face risks upon return to their country of origin.** As with the previous rounds, interviewees of whom 98% were Venezuelan, identified main risks to include lack of food, access to medical services, unemployment as well as risk of danger due to insecurity
- **16% do not possess legal documentation in Brazil,** which in practice may limit access to rights and services, including non-urgent medical care, formal employment, and education. When compared with responses during the second round which took place at

2 Age/sex pyramid – 430 questionnaires, out of which 237 head of families identified their age and sex.

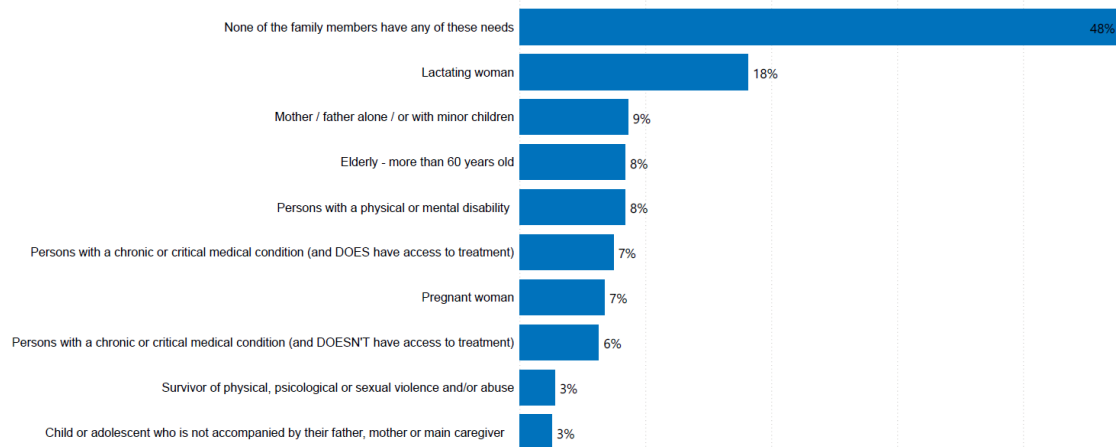
3 Source: proGres V4.

the end of July, this figure decreased from 23% to 16%. This may be explained by Ordinance 6554, of 23 June 2021, which allows Venezuelans and those affected by the situation in Venezuela to enter Brazil by land through any border point. It also allows for access to asylum or migratory residence permits for Venezuelans and those affected by the situation in Venezuela who entered Brazil irregularly during the pandemic, that is, as of March 18, 2020.

- **More than half of head of households who entered Brazil within the last 6 months are unemployed** (56% of 273 family groups) as the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 continues to present challenges in obtaining formal employment in Brazil.
- **The majority of interviewed families indicate their children are enrolled in school (60%), however, 39% do not have the necessary resources to access their children’s education virtually** in times of COVID-19.
- **49% of respondents have access to social assistance benefits which mainly consist of government assistance** i.e., Bolsa Família and Auxílio emergencial,

V. Specific Protection Needs

More than half of the families interviewed (approx. 52%) identified with **at least one specific protection need**, including pregnant or lactating women, single parent households, elderly persons at risk and persons with a physical or mental disability.



VI. Legal status and access to territory

Access to territory and protection from non-refoulement are key protection considerations for refugees and other persons in need of international protection.

59% of respondents agree or strongly agree that their **family members would be at risk if they had to return to their place of initial residence or home country**.

Moreover, during the third round, the protection monitoring questionnaire asked Venezuelans about the reasons or factors contributing to their departure from Venezuela. The majority of the responses were lack of opportunities to earn living and lack of access to food, both 28%, and lack of access to medical services (24%).

A. Entry to the country

66% of interviewees stated they entered the country in a regular or legal manner and registered their entry with the Brazilian immigration authorities. Since March 2020 when the Brazil-Venezuela border closure took effect, irregular entries to Brazil increased through informal border crossings mainly through Pacaraima, in the northern state of Roraima. However, the Ordinance 655, from 23 June 2021, now allows Venezuelans and those affected by the situation in Venezuela to enter Brazil by land or air through any border point. It also allows the access

⁴ Available at <https://in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/portaria-n-655-de-23-de-junho-de-2021-327674155>.

to asylum or migratory residence permits for Venezuelans and those affected by the situation in Venezuela who entered Brazil irregularly during the pandemic, that is, as of March 18, 2020.

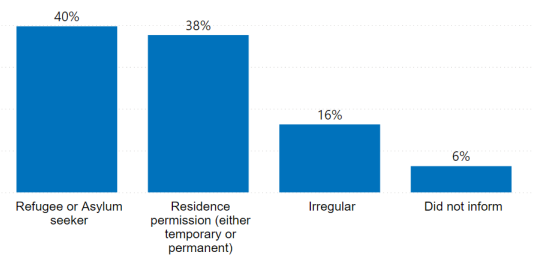
Although **86% of respondents indicated not having experienced any negative incidents with state authorities** (e.g., refusal of entry, deportation, or forced return), the results reveal respondents experienced issues related to their safety and security since having left their homes.

14% respondents indicated they or family members have suffered from or witnessed a protection incident, primarily theft, physical threats, or bribery. This figure is lower when compared to data collected in the first and second rounds of UNHCR's protection monitoring, during January-February and April 2021. One explanation might be the outreach scope of the data collection methodology applied in the third round. Both the online questionnaire via the self-administered modality as well as remote channels favor individuals who have access to electronic devices and internet connectivity and thus have better socio-economic conditions when compared to recent arrivals who were interviewed through UNHCR's registration process in previous protection monitoring exercises, i.e., second round April 2021.

Moreover, **48% of the population surveyed mentioned they have at least one dependent or family member who remained in the country of origin**, original residence, or is in transit. When compared to the second round, this number decreased from 66% to 48%. This may be explained by the Ordinance 655 and the recent permissions for entry by land of Venezuelans and those affected by the situation in Venezuela.

B. Legal Status

16% of respondents represent individuals who entered Brazil irregularly and/or do not have a current legal status. This is a lower percentage of undocumented respondents when compared to other protection monitoring surveys conducted by UNHCR and partners, including the protection monitoring report from January-February and April 2021.



With the Ordinance 655, Brazil now issues migratory documentation to Venezuelans and those affected by the situation in Venezuela who entered irregularly after March 2020.

C. Asylum in Brazil

15% of respondents indicate the intention to apply for asylum though they are yet to do so mostly because of the pandemic (e.g., difficulties in getting online appointments), and lack of information.

A substantial number of respondents, around 40%, indicated that they have already applied, and a decision is pending. However, 27% of the interviewees stated that they have no intention to apply for asylum. This may be explained by the lack of information about the differences between asylum and temporary residence procedures as both, in practical terms, appear to offer similar access to rights and public services in the country. Also, there is the perception that the asylum seeker protocol is not always accepted by service providers as a valid ID document. Brazil is transitioning to apply the "Documento Provisório de Registro Nacional Migratório (DPRNM)⁵, thus replacing the asylum seeker protocol. Other limitations include the fact that asylum seekers and refugees need to request authorization to return to Venezuela, while temporary residents do not need to do so.

VII. Access to rights and services

A. Access to education

- 37% of families that have school-age children stated that they have at least one child **out of school** mainly due to **lack of documentation** or other **school enrollment**

⁵ Please see Decreto 9.277/2018, available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2018/Decreto/D9277.htm.

requirements, though the survey doesn't allow respondents to further detail these challenges.

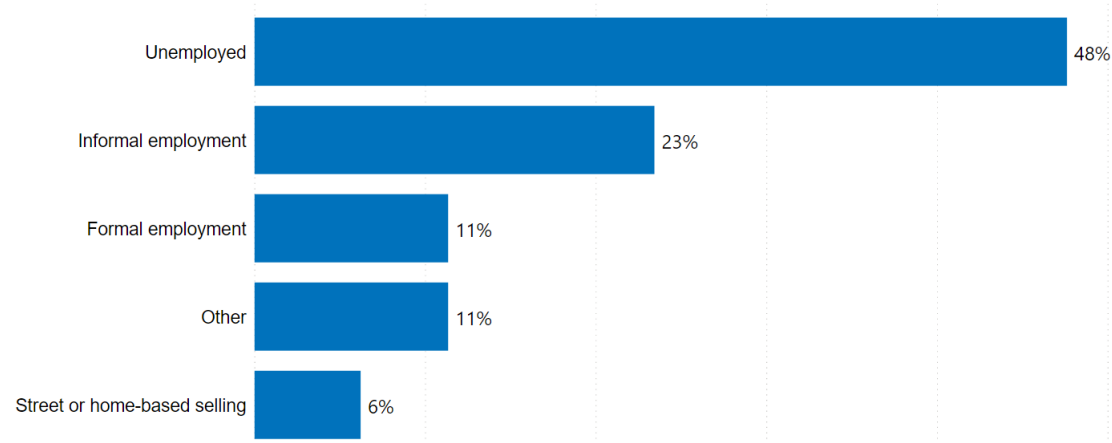
- Even though the majority of interviewed families have their children enrolled in school (63%), **39% do not have the necessary resources and access to receive their education virtually in times of COVID-19.**

The study "Integration of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil" conducted by UNHCR and the World Bank⁶ suggests that Venezuelan refugees and migrants have been academically placed in lower grades at school in Brazil and are more likely to attend overcrowded schools than their host community counterparts being main impediments for Venezuelan children when it comes to integrating in schools. Its results indicate that improvements in school capacity and accreditation of Venezuelan education and degrees may facilitate integration in education.

B. Employment

A total of 273 family groups were consulted on employment.

48% responded that they are **unemployed**, almost a fifth are engaged in informal employment activities to meet the needs of their families (23%) and 11% are engaged in formal employment.



Moreover, unemployment of respondents who arrived in Brazil within the last 6 months increases to 56%.

As in the previous monitoring, the current employment situation of the respondents contrasts with their experience in their respective countries of origin. Only 15% of interviewees indicated having been unemployed in their country of origin, while 26% had informal employment and 25% had formal employment.

The UNHCR and World Bank analysis suggests that Venezuelan refugees and migrants have faced downgraded opportunities in employment occupations and are more likely to take on inferior jobs characterized by their temporary nature, lower wages and longer hours worked. It describes the profile of Venezuelan refugees and migrants employed in the formal sector, when compared to Brazilian host communities as: younger, less likely to be female or white, and more likely to have completed high school. The study concludes that having stronger labor market activation programs that include job intermediation as well as skills and language training should help in overcoming search barriers and matching friction.

C. Social assistance

- 49% of respondents answered they are **receiving some kind of social assistance** (cash allowance).
- For those who indicated they are receiving social assistance from the government, 64% reported they are receiving economic assistance through the emergency COVID 19

⁶ [Integration of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil](#) (UNHCR/ World Bank)

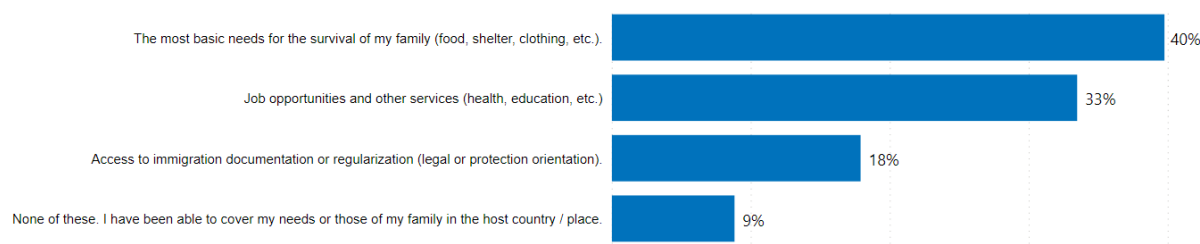
assistance program and 40% from “Bolsa Família” the national social assistance program.

Brazil is among the minority of countries that provide non-nationals access to social assistance programs, regardless of their legal status. Data analysis 7 shows that Venezuelans are increasingly accessing Brazil's main social assistance networks. The participation rates of Venezuelan families in Bolsa Família is lower when compared to the host community but is on an upward trend. Data analysis also demonstrates that Venezuelans registered in Cadastro Único (instrument for collecting data and information that aims to identify all low-income families in the country for inclusion in social assistance and income redistribution programs) are poorer but more educated than their Brazilian counterparts. The study suggests that lower access may be on account of refugees and migrants’ lack of knowledge of their rights and their guaranteed access, suggesting the need to continue providing information and assistance to overcome language barriers.

VIII. Priority Needs

When asked what their most urgent needs and priorities were in the month prior to the survey, 40% answered **basic needs for the survival of their family** such as food, shelter, clothing, among others.

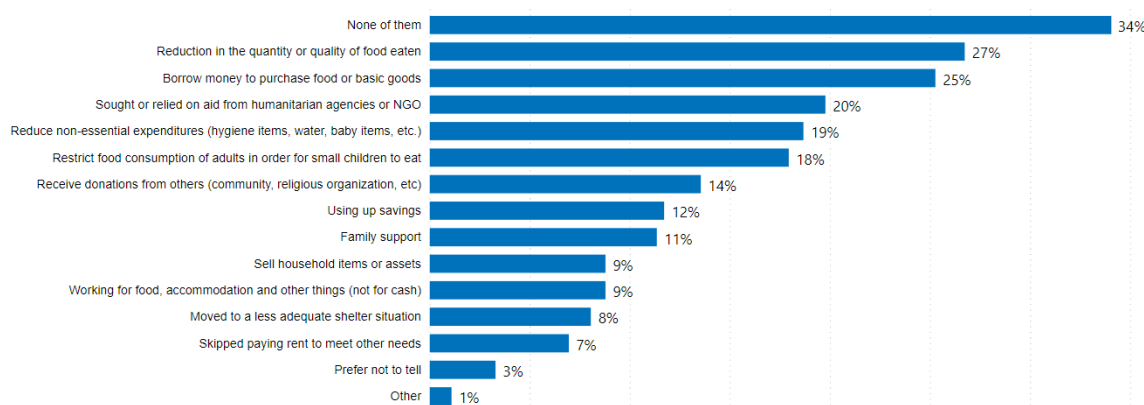
In addition, 33% reported that their priority needs are linked to job opportunities and other services (e.g., health, education) - which represents an increase in this need when compared to other protection monitoring exercises conducted by UNHCR and partners. Other priority needs mentioned by 18% of the population surveyed is access to documentation (legal or protection orientation).



IX. Coping mechanisms

The survey also asked if in the three months prior to data collection, the family members had to resort to coping mechanisms to cover their own / family members' basic needs.

- 40% reported they had to **reduce food, or the quality of food eaten**
- 21% **limit the food consumption** of adults in order for children eat
- 21% informed they had to **borrow financial resources**



⁷ [Integration of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil](#) (UNHCR/ World Bank)

X. Well-being

A total of 273 family groups were consulted on well-being and, as the previous protection monitoring rounds, demonstrated positive indicators in this area.

Most of the population surveyed **consider their interaction/relationship with the local population positive or very positive** (80%) and mentioned they feel safe in the area/community where they now live (72%).

Nonetheless, many of them reported that during the time they have been living in Brazil, they have felt **lonely or socially isolated** (45%). Furthermore, 26% state that they were **discriminated against**, with the perception that it was on account of their **nationality** (93%).

XI. Future plans

- 45% planned to **stay where they currently are** when asked if they have expected to move or change their residence in the short or medium-term.
- 40% answered that they **plan to relocate**. Of those, most of them (86%) responded they are planning to move **to other cities within Brazil**, mainly to the south and southeast of Brazil.
- 10% reported they have been part of the voluntary internal relocation strategy (“interiorização”). By August of 2021, as per the monitoring panel⁸, more than 58,000 Venezuelans were internally relocated.

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⁸ To access the Interiorization Dashboard, please click [here](#).